

selected as a rental object and a content decision button shown in the bottom right of the screen is pressed by the mouse operation and the like.

[0073] Then, a screen as shown in FIG. 5 appears on the display unit of the user terminal 110. FIG. 5 is an explanatory view showing one example of a selection screen. A customer enters the order information relative to the rental of the content data on this screen (Step S302). The input is made by a keyboard operation and the like. In the example shown in FIG. 5, there are "rental period", "delivery destination", "delivery start date and time", and "secret key delivery date and time", as the order information.

[0074] The "rental period" indicates the rental period of the content data, and a customer can select one from one week, one day, two days, and a customer's desired period. The "delivery destination" indicates the address of a terminal of a delivery destination of the content data (phone number). That is, in the form of this embodiment, it means the address of the delivery destination terminal 120. When the delivery destination terminal 120 is a telephone terminal, the telephone number of the corresponding terminal is supplied to the "delivery destination", and when the delivery destination terminal 120 is an information terminal such as a personal computer, the Internet address of the corresponding terminal is supplied to the "delivery destination".

[0075] The "delivery start date and time" indicates the delivery start date and time of the content data, and a customer can select one from "instant" and "customer's desired date and time (specified below)". The "secret key delivery date and time" indicates the delivery date and time of a secret key necessary for reproducing the content data, and a customer can select one from "simultaneously with this order", "delivery start time and date", "delivery completed date and time", and "customer's desired date and time (specified below)". The "secret key delivery date and time" has the detailed selection items as the above, because the contract as for the rental period is effected at a delivery completed point of a secret key. This takes into consideration, a risk of delivery interruption due to a network accident occurring during the delivery of the content data to the delivery destination terminal 120, and the difference of access bandwidth between the delivery destination terminal 120 and the network 100.

[0076] Prior to order, a customer must register the profile including the name, the phone number, the address, and the electronic mail address into the center server 130. This profile may be registered there separately from the input of the order information (from another screen not illustrated), or it may be registered into the center server 130 prior to the input of the order information.

[0077] After entering the order information as shown in the above, a customer presses the order button displayed on the top right on the screen by the mouse operation and the like. Here, assume that the order information is selected as shown in FIG. 5. Then, the user terminal 110 sends the order information to the center server 130. The center server 130 creates customer identification information for identifying a person who made an order (customer) and the order content from the received order information. Namely, it creates the information indicating the correspondence between the person who made an order and the order content.

[0078] The center server 130 stores the created customer identification information into a storing medium such as a database and the like provided therein. The customer iden-

tification information is sequentially stored in every order. Alternatively, the center server 130 may store the customer identification information with the same information classified into every item for the purpose of easy classification and collection of the data. The predetermined item includes, for example, sex, generation, and occupation of a customer. The center server 130 sends the customer identification information to the delivery server 140. It also sends the same information to the user terminal 110, in order to confirm the order information. At this time, the settlement confirmation screen as shown in FIG. 6 is represented on the display unit of the user terminal 110. FIG. 6 is an explanatory view showing an example of the settlement confirmation screen.

[0079] In the settlement confirmation screen shown in FIG. 6, a column for a payment method is displayed, in addition to the selected result on the selection screen shown in FIG. 5. As the payment method, there are four types: "credit card", "debit method", "electronic money", and "payment through a financial institution". A customer selects any payment method from these payment methods (Step S303). The selection is made by marking the check column corresponding to the desired payment method with the mouse operation and the like.

[0080] When the "credit card" is selected as the payment method, a screen for entering the number of a credit card and the like appears on the display unit of the user terminal 110. When the "debit method" is selected, a screen for entering a specified bank, a specified account number, and the like appears there. When the "electronic money" is selected, a screen for entering the account number and the like of the electronic money account appears there. When the "payment through a financial institution" is selected, a payment sheet and the like is separately sent from the content rental dealer to the customer.

[0081] A customer selects the payment method and presses a reference button displayed on the top right of the screen by the mouse operation and the like after entering the necessary information. Then, the user terminal 110 sends the settlement confirmation information previously supplied, to the center server 130. The center server 130 performs the settlement processing of a rental charge based on the received settlement confirmation information.

[0082] When the "credit card" is selected as the payment method, the center server 130 checks the credit authorization of the customer by having access to a credit authorization network built by a credit card company and the like, and when the credit of the customer can be verified, it settles up the rental charge.

[0083] When the "debit method" is selected, the center server 130 sends the information such as the account number and the like of the customer to a gateway provided in the customer's financial institution, and withdraws the rental charge out of the customer's bank account through a credit authorization network built by a financial institution and the like.

[0084] When the "electronic money" is selected, the center server 130 withdraws the rental charge out of the customer's electronic money account, in the same procedure as in the debit method".

[0085] When the "payment through a financial institution" is selected, the content rental dealer sends a payment description sheet and a predetermined payment sheet to a customer's address or residence. The content rental dealer settles up the rental charge when confirming that the rental