

[0100] Next, as the user pushes the icon 20 in with the finger tip 16 held in touch with the icon 20, the pressure sensor senses the pushing force P equal to or larger than P2 ( $P2 \leq P$ ), as shown in FIG. 17 (step 305). In response, the control unit 17 displays a image (3) on the display screen 2 for indicating that the user can start moving the icon 20, as illustrated in FIG. 16 (step 306). For indicating that the user can start moving the icon 20, for example, the icon 20 may be further changed in color, size and the like. Here, the icon 20 is shown as changed in size and color.

[0101] Though not shown, when the user releases the finger tip 16 from the touch panel 9 with the image (3) displayed on the display screen 2 (step 306) so that the pushing force P is reduced to less than P1, this results in a selection of a function associated with the icon 20, causing the control unit 17 to determine and activate the selected function.

[0102] However, when the user reduces the pushing force P applied by the finger tip 16 on the image (4) to satisfy  $P1 \leq P < P2$  shown in FIG. 17, and moves the finger tip 16 present within the area of the icon 20, the icon 20 is dragged following the moving finger tip 16. The image (4) in FIG. 16 is displayed on the display screen 2 in this event, wherein the icon 20 is reduced in size from that displayed on the image (3) (step 307). In this event, when the user releases the finger tip 16 from the touch panel 9 in the middle of the movement so that the pushing force P becomes smaller than P1, the dragging operation is interrupted, the icon 20 automatically returns to the initial position (x0, y0) (step 312), and the initial image (1) illustrated in FIG. 16 is displayed on the display screen (step 300).

[0103] Assume that the user continues to drag the icon 20 (steps 307-309), then moves the icon 20 to a predetermined position (x3, y3), and pushes the icon 20 in with the finger tip 16 which applies the pushing force P increased to P2 or larger ( $P \geq P2$ ), as shown in FIG. 17 (step 309). In response, the control unit 17 displays a image (5) in which the icon 20 is displayed, for example, in the same state as in the image (3), as illustrated in FIG. 16. The icon 20 is settled at this predetermined position (x3, y3) (step 310). Then, as the user releases the finger tip 16 from the touch panel 9 so that the pushing force P becomes smaller than P1 ( $P < P1$ ) as shown in FIG. 17, the control unit 17 displays a image (6) on the display screen 2, wherein the icon 20 is settled at the position (x3, y3) as originally displayed (step 311). Subsequently, the flow returns to step 300. In this manner, in the third specific example, a movable object such as an icon displayed on the screen can be moved to a predetermined position likewise through a simple touch operation.

[0104] The foregoing embodiment is suitable when a plurality of operators share the same terminal since no operator will inadvertently move the icon 20 (erroneously touches and moves the icon 20). Also, since the operator is required to push the icon 20 in for determining a movement of the icon, the foregoing embodiment can reduce erroneous operations which could result in erroneous determination of destination. Particularly, when the destination has a different meaning and/or a value depending on the position (for example, "transmission tray," "dust box" and the like), such erroneous operations can be reduced because the destination of the icon 20 is determined after the operator intentionally pushes the icon 20 in.

[0105] In this embodiment, the drag-and-drop operation may be used likewise in combination with a push-in operation for activating a function associated with the icon 20 with an operation similar to that in the aforementioned embodiment.

[0106] When a plurality of icons having different types of functions are displayed on the display screen 2, these icons may be dragged and dropped in such a manner that any of the aforementioned first to third methods is assigned to each type of function associated with an icon, so that a different drag-and-drop operation may be used for each type of function. Of course, the drag-and-drop operation may be disabled for an icon which has a particular function.

[0107] FIG. 18 is a flow chart illustrating a fourth specific example of the function control performed by the control unit 17 in FIG. 5. In this specific example, an object such as an icon representative of an item is displayed on the display screen 2 as a touch-driven member which supports the drag-and-drop operation and has a processing function such as a purchase of a desired item. Therefore, the function provided in the fourth specific example may be referred to as a drag and function selection. In the fourth specific example, the display unit is provided with functions generally available in a digital content delivery terminal.

[0108] FIG. 19 in turn illustrates images displayed on the display screen 2 in the process of the function control performed by the control unit 17 in the fourth specific example. The images include an object display region 21; a function setting region 22; objects 23, 23' (which are icons representative of items in this example, but not limited thereto); a guidance 24; a "PURCHASE" button 25; and a "CANCEL" button 26.

[0109] FIG. 20 further shows a change in the pushing force P for executing the operation in the fourth specific example of the function control. Specifically, FIG. 20 denotes sequential numbers (1)-(5) corresponding to the images in FIG. 19 along a time axis.

[0110] Referring first to FIG. 18, steps 400-402 and 411 are similar to steps 100-102 and 113 in FIG. 7, wherein the finger tip 16 is not in touch with the touch panel 9, and a image (1) illustrated in FIG. 19 is displayed on the display screen 2. The image (1) includes an icon (object) display region 21 for displaying icons 23 indicative of a variety of items and capable of activating functions associated with items set in a function setting region 22; and the function setting region 22 for indicating a menu of modes for activating functions such as "PURCHASE," "LISTEN FOR TRIAL," "DISPLAY COMMENTS," and the like, when the items are, for example, music contents. It should be noted that these are merely exemplary items, and the present invention is not limited to those mentioned above. Also, a different function menu may be displayed depending on the type of items.

[0111] As the user brings the finger tip 16 into touch with the position at which the icon 23 associated with a desired item is displayed on the image (1) appearing on the display screen 2, the pressure sensor senses a pushing force P smaller than P2 and equal to or larger than P1 ( $P2 > P \geq P1$ ), as shown in FIG. 20 (step 402). In response, the control unit 17 (FIG. 5) determines whether or not the position at which the screen display 2 is pushed in by the finger tip 16 falls