METHOD FOR ADVERTISING AND SELLING PRODUCTS ONLINE

REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a Continuation-in-Part (CIP) of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/712,380, entitled "Method for Advertising and Selling Products Online," filed Nov. 14, 2003, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Presently, when a person wants to sell a product, she may choose one of several options. A first option is to list the product on any one of several well-known web-based online bidding sites, such as www.eBay.com. A second option is to advertise the product in a classified advertisement in a local newspaper. A third option is to advertise the product in photo-based classified advertisement publication that is specifically designed for providing pictured advertisements. A fourth option is to print flyers and post the flyers in conspicuous locations, such as at the seller's office, in the seller's apartment or housing complex or community, at the seller's school, etc. A fifth option is to tell her friends, family, and co-workers about the product, such as via email. There are several other options available to the seller, as known by those skilled in the art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] There are many problems with the above options. A problem with the first option (e.g., eBay) is that the potential buyer base is limited to those who are already regular eBay users. Those who read newspaper classified ads only, for example, will not learn about the product for sale online. A problem with the second option is twofold. First, to properly describe an item, a classified ad may have to be very long; because classified ads are usually priced by length, such an option may be relatively expensive. Second, many products are not amenable to advertisement with words only (i.e., they need a picture), such as furniture, cars, boats, clothing, antiques, pets, homes, and so forth. A problem with the third option, which partially solves the problems of the second option by providing a photograph, is also twofold. First, the price of advertising is often relatively high, and often there is a price for the publication that may deter potential buyers from reading the publication. Second, such publications are usually limited only to advertisements for cars for sale. A problem with the fourth and fifth options is that it is usually used in conjunction with one or more of the first three options, and so it requires the seller repeating the work of providing and formatting the information about the item for sale. The present invention aims to solve one or more of these and other problems.

[0004] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a method for advertising and selling products online may comprise: a) providing to a customer an item information template for inputting information into an electronic information database; b) prompting said customer via said template to enter item information into said database about at least one item for sale by said customer; c) creating an electronic web page associated with one of said customer and said item; d) displaying said item information on said web page; e) creating and providing said customer with an electronic address; and f) assigning said electronic address to said web page so that said item information displayed on said web page is viewable when said electronic address is accessed, wherein said electronic address has a primary address and a secondary address, said primary address assigned to a main web page and said secondary address having at least one of the following properties: said secondary address is chosen at least in part by said customer, and said secondary address contains no more than fifteen characters. The item information may include one of a digital photograph and a digital video of said item for sale. The primary address may include a designation of a geographical region, wherein said geographical region includes one of a city and a state.

[0005] In a preferred aspect, the method may further comprise encouraging said customer to advertise said electronic address in a non-electronic medium, such as a flyer, a newspaper advertisement, a magazine advertisement, or a classified advertisement in a newspaper.

[0006] In another preferred aspect, the method may further comprise advertising said electronic address in a non-electronic medium. The method may further comprise querying said customer as to whether said customer desires to submit a classified advertisement to a newspaper and, if so, automatically submitting a classified advertisement request to said newspaper on behalf of said customer.

[0007] In another preferred aspect, said secondary address may be chosen at least in part by said customer and approved by said customer. In another preferred aspect, said secondary address may contain no more than 10 characters.

[0008] In another preferred aspect, the method may further comprise providing said customer with an option, such as a one-click option, of creating a flyer based on said item information, wherein if said customer chooses said option, said item information is automatically formatted for a flyer, a flyer is automatically created, and said customer is enabled to print said flyer.

[0009] In another preferred aspect, the web page may be associated with said customer, wherein said displaying said item information on said web page comprises displaying only said item information on said web page. Alternatively, said web page may be associated with said item, wherein said item information is about exactly one item for sale by said customer.

[0010] In another preferred aspect, the method may further comprise charging said customer a price for performing steps a)-f), further comprising providing to said customer a comparison of: an estimated cost of running a long classified advertisement in a local newspaper containing information comparable to said item information; and a sum of said price and an estimated cost of running a short classified advertisement in said local newspaper containing said electronic address and substantially less information than said item information.

[0011] In another preferred aspect, said web page may be associated with said main web page, further comprising providing a search engine configured to allow customers to search a plurality of web pages associated with said main web page based on at least one of the following: location of an item for sale; type of item for sale; and price of an item for sale.