frequently than said predetermined intervals in which the full scan of all of said frequency channels is carried out.

16. The network as claimed in claim **15**, in which said one of the mobile units carries out the partial scan at five second intervals.

17. The network as claimed in claim **1**, in which said one of the mobile units identifies all said stationary access points with a signal quality at least equal to a threshold value, and selects for association the most eligible one of the access points having the lowest loading factor, and in which, when a plurality of said stationary access points has an equal lowest loading factor, the stationary access point having the highest received signal quality is selected.

18. The network as claimed in claim **17**, in which the threshold value is set below the highest received signal quality.

19. The network as claimed in claim **1**, in which one of said plurality of the mobile units, associated with one of said stationary access points and experiencing an unacceptably low signal quality, roams and excludes said one of the stationary access points from selection.

20. The network as claimed in claim **19**, wherein the unacceptably low signal quality is achieved when more than 50% retries, CRC errors or missed beacons are experienced.

21. The network as claimed in claim **19**, in which the excluded one of the stationary access points is re-included for selection when the received signal quality exceeds a predetermined limit.

22. The network as claimed in claim **19**, in which, if none of the stationary access points is identified for re-association, said one of the mobile units continues to associate with a current one of the stationary access points.

23. The network as claimed in claim **3**, in which each of the mobile units, associated with a current one of the stationary access points and achieving a satisfactory level of communication, makes a selection decision at selected intervals.

24. The network as claimed in claim **23**, in which the satisfactory communication level is achieved when 50% or fewer retries, CRC errors or missed beacons are experienced.

25. The network as claimed in claim **23**, in which an eligible group of said stationary access points is selected from all the stationary access points having a signal quality above a predetermined threshold; the group including a current one of the stationary access points having a signal quality above a further predetermined threshold; and the most eligible access point being selected from all the stationary access points having the lowest loading factor; wherein the stationary access points having a loading factor of more than a given proportion of the loading factor of the current one of the stationary access points are excluded; and wherein, when a plurality of the stationary access points has the same loading factor, the stationary access point having the highest signal quality is selected as the most eligible access point.

26. The network as claimed in claim **25**, in which the predetermined threshold of the eligible group is below the highest received RSSI value, in which the further predetermined threshold of the current one of the stationary access points is further below said highest received RSSI value, and in which the stationary access points having a loading factor of more than 75% of the loading factor of the current one of the stationary access points are excluded.

27. The network as claimed in claim **23**, in which each of the mobile units carries out a partial scan of the stationary access points at given intervals and performs roaming immediately after the partial scan.

28. The network as claimed in claim **1**, in which the communications network is included in one of an inventory, price verification, mark-down, portable point of sale, order entry, shipping, receiving and package tracking system.

29. A method of operating a cellular communications network including a plurality of access points in communication with each other and operatively connected to a host, and a plurality of mobile units, comprising the steps of:

a) broadcasting a probe packet to all of the access points in a predetermined range from one of the mobile units that is broadcasting the probe packet, each of the mobile units using frequency hopping spread spectrum radio frequency communications;

b) detecting the probe packet being broadcast, and responsively sending probe response packets from the access points within said range back to said one of the mobile units;

c) minimizing interference among the probe response packets;

d) scanning the plurality of the access points at predetermined intervals; and

e) selecting a group of eligible ones of the access points from the plurality of the access points, by selecting a most eligible one of the access points from the group according to received signal quality at said one of the mobile units and loading factor.

30. A data communications network, comprising:

a) a plurality of stationary access points operatively connected to a host, a plurality of mobile units, each of the mobile using frequency hopping spread spectrum radio frequency communications, one of the mobile units including a transmitter for broadcasting a probe packet to all of the access points in a predetermined range from said one of the mobile units that is broadcasting the probe packet,

b) said access points within said range including respective receivers for detecting the probe packet being broadcast, and for responsively sending probe response packets back to said one of the mobile units,

c) a selector for selecting a most eligible one of the access points from the plurality of the access points on the basis of received signal quality at said one of the mobile units and loading factor at each of the access points, and

d) a physical area within which all the mobile units are kept, said area having an exit adjacent which one of the access points is located.

31. The network as claimed in claim **30**, in which said one of the access points at the exit includes a directional antenna for transmitting an alarm signal in the vicinity of the exit.

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