Capacitive Fingerprint Sensors - Technology and Patent Infringement Risk Analysis

Description: Fingerprint sensors using capacitive technology represent a fast growing market, especially in smartphones. The fingerprint sensor vendor Idex forecasts an increase of 360% of the number of fingerprint sensor units in mobile devices and of the fingerprint sensor market between 2014 and 2017 (source: N+1 Singer, Idex, 2014). A new generation of capacitive fingerprint sensors has emerged in the last few years and have been incorporated in the last generations of smartphones of companies like Apple, Samsung or Huawei. The market growth for fingerprint sensors is also supported by a new phase of IP development, revealed by an increase in the number of new patents related to capacitive fingerprint sensor published since 2012 (source: Knowmade, ‘Capacitive Fingerprint Sensors Patent Landscape’, 2015).

Fingerprint sensors are greatly appreciated by smartphone’s users. Indeed, such biometric authentication mode is easier and quicker than a password to access the device. It also allows to give selected access to applications for each user of the device. Thus the fingerprint sensor needs to be trustworthy.

In a patent infringement action, the potential sales volume plays a major role for assessing the damage award. Thereby, this study is naturally focused on the fingerprint sensor components designed by 3 leaders of fingerprint sensing solutions and integrated in the devices of 3 major smartphone vendors: TMDR92 (AuthenTec, Apple iPhone 5S), FPC1020 (Fingerprint Cards, Huawei Ascend Mate 7), VAL004A8-T (Synaptics-Validity, Samsung Galaxy S5) and B1202A0-01 (Synaptics-Validity, Samsung Galaxy S6).

Contents:

1. Introduction
   - Scope of the Study
   - Rationales for Choice
   - Key Features of the Report
   - Objectives of the Report
   - Terminology for Patent Analysis
   - Methodology
   - Patent Search Strategy

2. Companies Presentation
   - AuthenTec
   - Apple
   - Fingerprint Cards
   - Validity & Synaptics

3. Products Presentation
   - Fingerprint Sensor Supply Chain
   - TMDR92 – iPhone 5S
   - FPC1020 – Ascend Mate 7
   - VAL004A8-T – Galaxy S5
   - B1202A0-01 – Galaxy S6

4. Executive Summary

5. Tear Down
   - Physical Analysis Methodology
   - Fingerprint Sensor Characteristics
   - Packaging
   - Sensing Area
   - Technology Comparison

6. Patent Analysis
   - Patent Infringement Risk Potential
   - IP Portfolio
- TMDR92 – Apple iPhone 5S
  - Patent Identification
  - Patent Infringement Risk
  - Conclusions
- FPC1020 – Huawei Ascend Mate 7
  - Patent Identification
  - Patent Infringement Risk
  - Conclusions
- VAL004A8-T – Samsung Galaxy S5
  - Patent Identification
  - Patent Infringement Risk
  - Conclusions
- B1202A0-01 – Samsung Galaxy S6
  - Patent Identification
  - Patent Infringement Risk
  - Conclusion

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