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**WO 03/100554 A2**

(54) Title: SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PROVIDING PRE-POINT-OF-SALE INCENTIVE MARKETING

(57) Abstract: A system and method for providing incentives within a retail environment involving identifying shopping behavior indicators and providing incentives based on the identified shopping behavior indicators. Shopping behavior indicators comprise information related to a specific customer product selection, the information selected from the group consisting of: product type, name, brand, quantity, grade, price per unit, UPC, weight, source, shelf life and the like. These characteristics are a strong indicator of instantaneous consumer needs and desires. The present invention identifies one or more incentive offers associated with the shopping behavior indicators and provides the identified incentive offer after a customer has selected a specific product package and before the point of sale. The incentive offer may be provided in the form of a coupon that is printed at the time of product selection or preprinted and applied to a product package at any time before customer selection of the product package, including at centralized packaging and distribution facilities.

## SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR PROVIDING PRE-POINT-OF-SALE INCENTIVE MARKETING

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### Field of the Invention.

5           The present invention relates, in general, to coupons and other retail sales incentives, and, more particularly, to software, systems and methods for providing pre-point-of-sale incentives in retail grocery stores, preferably occurring at or near the point of product selection by a consumer.

#### Relevant Background.

10           Manufacturers and retailers use a variety of incentive mechanisms to motivate consumer shopping and purchasing behavior. Shopping behavior refers generally to the selection of one retail store over another, whereas purchasing behavior refers to the selection of particular products to purchase irrespective of the retail store. Historically, these incentives take the form of  
15 discounts or coupons that encourage store or brand loyalty, test price points, or simply encourage a consumer to purchase a particular product.

          Given the expense of incentive systems to manufacturers and retailers, it remains a continuing problem to improve efficiency. Coupon distribution has a significant impact on efficiency. Coupon distribution will affect who receives a  
20 coupon, how the coupon is received, and when the coupon is received. Any or all of these factors may affect the consumers ability or willingness to redeem the coupon. Untargeted coupons distributed through newspapers and magazines, for example, generally have a very low redemption rate. Most people are familiar with receiving coupons for products they do not use, often at  
25 inconvenient times. Direct mail coupons offer the potential of targeting based on demographics, or upon consumer-specific shopping history. These targeted methods have higher redemption rates, but remain relatively inefficient.

          Recently, point-of-sale (POS) coupons have been introduced. POS coupon systems enable a retailer to print coupons that are specifically relevant

to a particular consumer based on items purchased during a particular transaction, and/or based upon shopping history. These coupons are intended to provide an incentive for the consumer to return to the issuing store at some time in the future. The coupons can be based on products purchased to either  
5 improve brand loyalty, or to encourage the consumer to try a competing product (e.g., house brands). Moreover, POS coupons may encourage purchase of other goods or services offered by the retailer such as pharmacy, photo processing, or video rental.

Commercially available printers may be used for generating coupons at  
10 a point-of-sale, such as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,723,212 issued on Feb. 2, 1988 and entitled Method and Apparatus for Dispensing Discount Coupons or as further disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,910,672 issued Mar. 20, 1990 and entitled Method and Apparatus for Dispensing Discount Coupons. As disclosed  
15 in these patents, systems may be provided to generate coupons at the point-of-sale based upon the type of product purchase. In the disclosures of the above-captioned two patents, a coupon relating to a particular type of a product is generated based upon a bar code reader determining that a triggering or competing product has just been purchased by the consumer.

In spite of the high level of control promised by POS coupon systems,  
20 they provide their incentive after a sale is complete. In many cases, an *incentive to buy brand Y next time has little effect when the consumer just purchased brand X...it may be weeks or months until the product must be purchased again.* Even when the incentives relate to products not purchased, it is unlikely that the consumer will re-enter the store immediately to take  
25 advantage of the incentive. Hence, the consumer is likely to misplace, discard, or simply forget about the coupon before it can be redeemed.

An alternative coupon distribution method is to attach coupons to products themselves either as instantly redeemable coupons or for redemption upon a subsequent purchase. Such coupons can be for the product to which  
30 they are attached (e.g., a box of cereal), or for complementary products (e.g., a

coupon for milk attached to a box of cereal). In addition to manufacture coupons, specialty areas of grocery stores such as meat, fish, deli, pharmacy and similar departments may use attached coupons to provide various incentives as well. For example, a bakery department may attach a discount coupon to some packages in order to encourage sales of day old bread. However, such coupons are not specifically relevant to the purchasing consumer as they are printed and attached to products in advance of a consumer purchasing decision. Moreover, the pre-printed coupons cannot flexibly cross-sell a variety of other products or services within the store.

Hence, a need exists for a system and method that provides retail incentives before the point-of-sale, while retaining an ability to make the incentive specifically relevant to a particular consumer or particular purchase.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Briefly stated, the present invention involves system and method for providing incentives within a retail environment involving identifying shopping behavior indicators and providing incentives based on the identified shopping behavior indicators. Shopping behavior indicators comprise information related to a specific customer product selection, the information selected from the group consisting of: product type, name, brand, quantity, grade, price per unit, UPC, weight, source, shelf life and the like. These characteristics are a strong indicator of instantaneous consumer needs and desires. The present invention identifies one or more incentive offers associated with the shopping behavior indicators and provides the identified incentive offer after a customer has selected a specific product package and before the point of sale. The incentive offer may be provided in the form of a coupon that is printed at the time of product selection or preprinted and applied to a product package at any time before customer selection of the product package, including at centralized packaging and distribution facilities.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 shows an networked retail environment in which the present invention is implemented; and

Fig. 2 shows example label coupons in accordance with the present invention.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is directed to a coupon system implemented in a retail grocery store having one or more specialty departments. In these specialty departments, a consumer selects goods and interacts with the retailer before the point-of-sale. During this interaction, a label of some kind is often printed to identify the product and pricing. The present invention leverages this installed system of label printing to provide incentive coupons at the point of product selection. These "label coupons" can be used to direct consumer purchases during the immediate shopping session, rather than requiring a subsequent trip back to the store.

These label coupons are readily used to provide incentives to purchase complementary goods and/or services. For example, when a consumer selects a cut meat from the meat department, a coupon for complementary sauces, vegetables, or other products can be printed. The value of the coupon can be readily adjusted based on the value of the meat (or other product) selected. In another example, a consumer may select a number of picnic type items from the deli department which could produce a coupon for discounted film or photo processing. It is contemplated that the pre-point-of-sale incentive system of the present invention can be implemented with great flexibility and provides advantages that both complement and replace some of the advantages of prior coupon systems.

The preferred implementations involve dynamic coupons, where the coupon identifies a qualifying product and/or a discount amount in response to the customer-selected product identified by the label to which the coupon is

attached. This allows the coupons to be product-specific in that coupons for “turkey” at a deli department can be different than coupons for “roast beef”. However, it is contemplated that pre-printed coupons may also be provided. Pre-printed coupons can be department-specific rather than product-specific.  
5 For example, pre-printed coupons at a fish counter may be different than pre-printed coupons at a deli counter.

In either case, incentives are provided to a customer based upon customer product selection, and are provided before the point-of-sale. An important aspect of the present invention is the recognition that at the point of  
10 product selection the consumer is expressing unique and valuable information about the consumer's immediate, instantaneous desires, needs and intentions. This expression is fundamentally different than what is expressed by reviewing the customer's shopping history, for example.

At the same time, the present invention enables the marketer to use this  
15 information immediately by providing incentives that are responsive to this immediate expression of desires, needs and intentions. Some in-store coupon systems attempt to provide incentives based on shopping history or other information so as to direct the consumer to a particular product selection, rather than in response to the product selection. As a result, they fail to utilize this  
20 extremely valuable information provided by the customer's product selections at the point in time where this information is most valuable. Whether the incentives are printed dynamically or are pre-printed and affixed to the product that is selected, the act of providing the incentive based in whole or in part on the product selection and before the point of sale is a powerful tool for affecting  
25 in-store customer behavior.

Although the particular examples provided herein are directed to retail grocery stores with conventionally-defined specialty departments, it should be understood that the invention is broadly applicable to other environments. For example, department stores may provide an opportunity for label couponing as  
30 products are selected in one department to provide incentives to use other

departments. Also, specialty departments may be flexibly defined to include any product selection point where it is practical for the retailer to print a label with appropriate incentives in accordance with the present invention prior to the point-of-sale.

5 Fig. 1 shows an exemplary retail environment having a number of specialty departments. Each specialty department is represented by one or more terminals 103 that include label printing devices, often integrated with a scale or other department-specific mechanism. For example, the deli department typically has a scale and label printer. A pharmacy department has  
10 printers for prescription labels and drug information sheets that are specific to the particular transaction. These systems may be stand-alone, or may be coupled to one or more centralized data possessing systems such as server 102 through an in-store network 101. Network 101 may comprise a local area network (LAN) or wide area network (WAN) of any topology, and may be  
15 entirely private or involve public communication channels such as the Internet. All or part of network 101 may be implemented by wireless links.

In each specialty department 103, a customer selects products and/or services that are provided by the retailer. For example, a meat department will provide a customer-selected quantity of a customer-selected product. In a deli  
20 department, a wide variety of goods may be selected. Significantly, these customer selections are made before the customer reaches checkout 105. Hence, after the product selection the customer remains in the store to continue shopping.

The present invention is readily adapted to various styles of label  
25 printers and label media. The particular examples herein show single sided, single ply label printing media. However, dual side printing is easily implemented and may be especially useful when coupons are pre-printed. Moreover, coupons may be printed on multi-ply paper such that the pre-printed coupons appear underneath the product identification label. A variety of label  
30 printing devices are used at centralized packaging and distribution sites as well.

The present invention is readily adapted to operate with any printing system in the distribution chain of a product where a label/coupon can be printed or applied to the packaging with knowledge of some characteristic feature of the product that is being labeled. For example, when meat, cheese, and other perishable products are labeled, the labeling systems are aware of what the product is, the product grade, the package size, use-by dates, and a variety of other kinds of information that are unique to the particular package being labeled. These characteristics are effective shopping behavior indicators because, eventually, a consumer will select the particular package based on some or all of these characteristics. Hence, a coupon or other incentive can be applied to the package based on these characteristics in a way that is responsive to the customer selection criteria, even before the customer has made the selection. The various unique characteristics of a particular package can be used to anticipate the customers desires, needs and intentions which are in turn used to select a particular incentive to be applied to that package.

By way of a simple example, a consumer that selects a ten pound package of hamburger patties likely has different shopping intentions than another consumer that selects a one pound package of loose ground beef. One might anticipate that the first consumer is planning a large barbeque while the second consumer is shopping for everyday needs. This anticipatory knowledge is used to select the coupons applied to the package so as to provide incentives for other products that would be used by the consumer given this anticipatory knowledge of the consumers' shopping intentions. In this manner, pre-printed coupons provided after the customer's selection. These and similar modifications are within the scope of the present invention.

The present invention is particularly useful in affecting in-store consumer behavior. The present invention recognizes that incentives provided at the point of customer selection, yet before the customer reaches the point of sale to consummate the purchase, provide a unique method to monitor and affect in-store customer behavior. Based on the product selection, the terminal in the

specialty department queries an incentive database to identify incentives that are associated with the customer's product selection. In many cases, there may be a pool of incentives that are available, and processes implemented in the terminal select one or more incentives from the pool. The selected  
5 incentives are implemented as printed coupons. Preferably, the coupons are printed integrally with pre-existing label printing processes so that little overhead is incurred to provide the coupons.

The incentive database comprises information about available manufacturer or retailer sponsored incentives and implements an association  
10 between products and incentives. A given product may be associated with one or more incentives. Similarly, a given incentive may be associated with one or more products.

The incentive database may be maintained locally in each terminal, but is preferably implemented in a shared resource such as server 102. In  
15 particular embodiments, a fixed number (e.g., three) of coupons are printed for any product selection. Where more than the fixed number of incentives are associated with the product selection, a round-robin or random process may be used to identify the fixed number of incentives that will be printed as coupons. The coupons may be pre-printed on the tape used to print the label, in which  
20 case the selection of which coupons are associated with a particular label is pre-established. Alternatively, the present invention may be implemented by mixing pre-established or pre-printed coupons with dynamically generated coupons. For example, the label tape may be pre-printed with coupons for a particular product type, and the discount amount filled in during the label  
25 printing process based on the particular customer selection.

Fig. 2 shows an exemplary label coupon 200 in accordance with the present invention. A label coupon 200 includes a product selection information portion 201 that contains information relevant to the particular customer's selections. For example, this information may include a product name, brand  
30 name, weight, quantity, unit price, shelf life information, and the like.

Additionally, each label comprises one or more label coupons implementing incentive offers for selected products. The selected products are preferably based upon the customer selected product, and are preferably associated with complementary goods and/or services. The coupons may implement  
5 incentives for manufacture goods and/or services, or private label (i.e., house brand) goods and/or services.

The selection of which goods and/or services are complementary to a given customer product selection is left to the manufacturer, retailer, and marketing organizations. The association of a given incentive to a given product  
10 may change at any time. Moreover, other criteria may be taken into account in selecting a particular set of incentives to implement (i.e., print) for a particular product selection instance. For example, customer shopping history, previously selected products, customer demographics, or other information may be taken into account in the selection of incentives from the pool of available incentives  
15 associated with a particular customer product selection. This information may be supplied by using a shopping card or loyalty card, for example, or by any other available customer identification means such as smart cards, bank check information, biometrics, or the like in combination with customer profile data or database. Also, the incentives may be based on a variety of criteria related to  
20 the particular customer selection. For example, a different set of coupons may be printed for a customer selecting ten pounds of hamburger patties (suggesting a large picnic) than would be provided to a customer selecting one pound of hamburger patties (suggesting a simple family meal).

In one embodiment, each coupon is printed with a barcode indicator that  
25 can be scanned at the register 105 for redemption. Coupons that are used will be matched against purchased items in a conventional manner. Coupons that are not used can be logged for analysis to determine in real time whether a particular incentive is having a desired affect on customer behavior.

Coupons may be implemented as conventional coupons with a specified  
30 expiration date, or may be specified to expire upon this shopping session.

Allowing coupons to extend to subsequent shopping sessions encourages store loyalty. Providing for immediate coupon expiration encourages specific customer behavior, and allows resources allocated to the coupon to be reallocated to existing shoppers.

5           Although the invention has been described and illustrated with a certain degree of particularity, it is understood that the present disclosure has been made only by way of example, and that numerous changes in the combination and arrangement of parts can be resorted to by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, as hereinafter claimed. For  
10           example, coupons are now provided in printed form, but the present invention is readily extended to non-paper coupon types such as might be implemented with RF ID tags or the like by programming label coupons into the label tag that accompanies the product.

CLAIMS

## WE CLAIM:

1. A system for providing an incentive in a retail store comprising:  
defining an incentive that is based in part on one or more  
5 characteristics of a specific product;  
applying the incentive to the specific product;  
providing the incentive to a shopper at a point after the shopper has  
selected the specific product and before a point of sale.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the incentive is printed integrally  
10 with a product identification/quantity/pricing label applied to the specific  
product wherein the label is otherwise used to indicate specific information  
about the specific product.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein the incentive comprises an  
incentive to buy a product and/or service that complementary to the specific  
15 product selected by the shopper.
4. The system of claim 1 wherein the selected incentive comprises  
an incentive to buy a product and/or service that is different from the specific  
product selected by the customer.
5. The system of claim 1 wherein the incentive is printed before  
20 customer has selected the specific product from the specialty department  
location and made available to the shopper after the specific product is  
selected.
6. The system of claim 1 wherein the incentive is provided on a  
label that is printed at a centralized packaging site and the incentive is based  
25 at least in part upon some quantitative and/or qualitative characteristic of the  
specific product.

7. A product label for attaching to a package containing a product, the product label comprising:

a product information portion; and

5 a coupon having an incentive offer wherein the incentive offer is chosen based upon at least one characteristic feature of the product contained within the package, wherein the at least one characteristic feature is one that is used by a shopper to select the package.

8. The product label of claim 7 wherein the incentive offer is selected to complement the at least one characteristic feature that is used by the shopper to select the package.

9. A method for providing an incentive within a retail environment comprising:

15 identifying shopping behavior indicators comprising information related to a specific customer product selection, the information selected from the group consisting of: product type, name, brand, quantity, grade, price per unit, UPC, weight, source, and shelf life;

identifying one or more incentive offers associated with the shopping behavior indicators; and

20 providing the identified incentive offer after a customer has selected a specific product package and before the point of sale.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the information is selected to reveal some aspect of current customer shopping intentions.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the act of providing the incentive is based upon supplemental information in addition to the shopping behavior indicators.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the supplemental information comprises customer shopping history.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein the supplemental information comprises previously selected products.
14. The method of claim 11 wherein the act of providing the incentive offer comprises printing a coupon in a central packaging location and attaching the printed coupon to the product package.
15. The method of claim 11 wherein the specific customer product selection comprises a packaged meat product, and the act of providing the incentive offer comprises printing a coupon in a central meat packaging location and attaching the printed coupon to the product package before the product package is presented to the customer.
16. A method for implementing a marketing incentive program comprising:  
within a retail environment, after a product selection has been made but before a product purchase has been completed, providing an incentive coupon based upon the product selection but for goods and/or services different from that of the product selection.
17. The method of claim 16 wherein the act of providing an incentive coupon is based upon supplemental information in addition to the product selection.
18. The method of claim 16 wherein the supplemental information comprises customer shopping history.
19. The method of claim 16 wherein the supplemental information comprises previously selected products.
20. The method of claim 16 wherein the supplemental information comprises customer demographics.

21. A system for generating a printable discount coupon in a retail store comprising:

a plurality of terminals at specialty department locations, each terminal including a label printing mechanism, and having an interface for receiving  
5 information about a customer's product selection;

an incentive datastore having data describing available incentives, the available incentives being associated with particular product selections; and

mechanisms within the terminals responsive to received information about a customer's product selection to access the incentive datastore to  
10 obtain at least one incentive description associated with the customer's product selection and print a coupon implementing the incentive using the label printing mechanism.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein the coupon is printed integrally with a product identification/quantity/pricing label otherwise used by the  
15 specialty department to indicate specific information about the customer's selected product.

23. The system of claim 21 wherein the coupon implements an incentive to buy a product and/or service that complementary to the customer's product selection.

24. The system of claim 21 wherein the selected incentive  
20 comprises an incentive to buy a product and/or service that is different from the customer's product selection.

25. The system of claim 21 wherein the coupon is printed after a customer has selected a particular, specific product from the specialty  
25 department location and before the customer has completed a purchase transaction.

26. The system of claim 21 further comprising:  
a communication network coupled to the plurality of terminals;

a central controller coupled to the communication network comprising data processing mechanisms and the incentive database.

27. A locally printable product label comprising:  
a product information portion having information specifically relevant to  
5 a particular consumer selection printed thereon; and  
a coupon having an incentive offer that is specifically relevant to the particular consumer selection.

28. The product label of claim 27 wherein the product information and coupon are printed after product selection but before point of sale.

10 29. A terminal for use at a specialty department in a retail environment, the terminal comprising:  
a label printing mechanism;  
an interface for receiving information about a customer's product selection; and  
15 coupon processes operable at the time of a customer's product selection that are responsive to received information about a customer's product selection to identify at least one incentive description associated with the customer's product selection and print a coupon implementing the identified incentive using the label printing mechanism.

20 30. The terminal of claim 29 further comprising an incentive datastore stored within the terminal, the incentive datastore containing data describing available incentives, the available incentives being associated with particular product selections.

25 31. The terminal of claim 29 further comprising an interface for coupling to an external incentive database, the incentive datastore containing data describing available incentives, the available incentives being associated with particular product selections.

32. The terminal of claim 29 further comprising department-specific mechanisms for performing department specific functions independent of the coupon processes.

5 33. Software for generating a coupon in response to a consumer product selection comprising:  
product selection processes for identifying information about a specific customer product selection, the information selected from the group consisting of product type, name, brand, quantity, grade, price per unit, UPC, weight, source, and shelf life;  
10 coupon selection processes for identifying one or more coupon offers associated with the information identified by the product selection processes; and  
printing processes for printing a product label comprising both information about the specific product selection and a printed representation  
15 of the coupon offer.

34. A method for implementing a marketing incentive program comprising:  
within a retail environment, after a product selection has been made but before a product purchase has been completed, providing an incentive  
20 coupon based upon the product selection but for goods and/or services different from that of the product selection.

35. The method of claim 34 further comprising:  
charging one or more manufacturers an amount based on the number of coupons provided;  
25 providing the retailer a first share of revenue generated by charging the manufactures, while providing a marketing entity that provides the incentive coupon a second share of the new revenue.

36. The method of claim 34 comprising:  
charging one or more manufacturers an amount based on the number  
of coupons provided;  
retaining all of the revenue generated by charging the one or more  
5 manufacturers in a marketing entity that provides the incentive coupon; and  
subsidizing label costs incurred by the retailer using revenue retained  
by the marketing entity.

37. A system for providing an incentive in a retail store comprising:  
selecting a cross-merchandising incentive to be provided with a  
10 product at a specialty department location;  
printing a coupon reflecting the defined cross-merchandising incentive  
on a label that is to be affixed to the product; and  
providing the coupon to a shopper at a point after the shopper has  
selected the specific product and before a point of sale.

15 38. The system of claim 37 wherein the incentive is selected based  
on a consumer's product selection criteria implied by the consumer's selection  
of a particular specialty department.

39. The system of claim 37 wherein the incentive is selected based  
on a consumer's product selection criteria implied by the consumer's selection  
20 of a particular package of product.

40. The system of claim 37 wherein the incentive is selected based  
on a consumer's product selection criteria implied by the consumer's selection  
of a particular package of product.

41. The system of claim 37 wherein the coupon is printed before  
25 customer has selected the specific product.

42. The system of claim 37 wherein the coupon is provided on a  
label that is printed at a centralized packaging site.

43. The system of claim 37 wherein the coupon is printed in-store.

44. The system of claim 37 wherein the coupon is printed at the specialty department.

5 45. The system of claim 1 wherein the coupon is printed using a printer coupled to equipment used to package the selected product.

46. The system of claim 1 wherein the coupon is printed using a printer coupled to equipment used to weigh the selected product.

10 47. A method for providing incentives comprising the acts of:  
estimating a consumer desire from a product selection in a specialty department; and

providing a coupon based on the estimated consumer desire, wherein the coupon is for a product different from the product selected in the specialty department.

15 48. The method of claim 47 wherein act of estimating consumer desires comprises estimating the consumer desire based on the type of specialty department from which the product is selected.

49. The method of claim 47 wherein act of estimating consumer desires comprises estimating the consumer desire based on the type of product that is selected.

20 50. The method of claim 47 wherein the act of providing a coupon comprises:

providing a plurality of coupons on a roll of product labels;  
printing package-specific information on one of the product labels; and  
25 affixing the coupon and product with package-specific information to a package containing the consumer's product selection.

51. The method of claim 47 wherein the act of providing a coupon is based upon supplemental information in addition to the estimated consumer desire.

5 52. The method of claim 51 wherein the supplemental information comprises customer shopping history.

53. The method of claim 51 wherein the supplemental information comprises previously selected products.

54. The method of claim 52 wherein the supplemental information comprises customer demographics.

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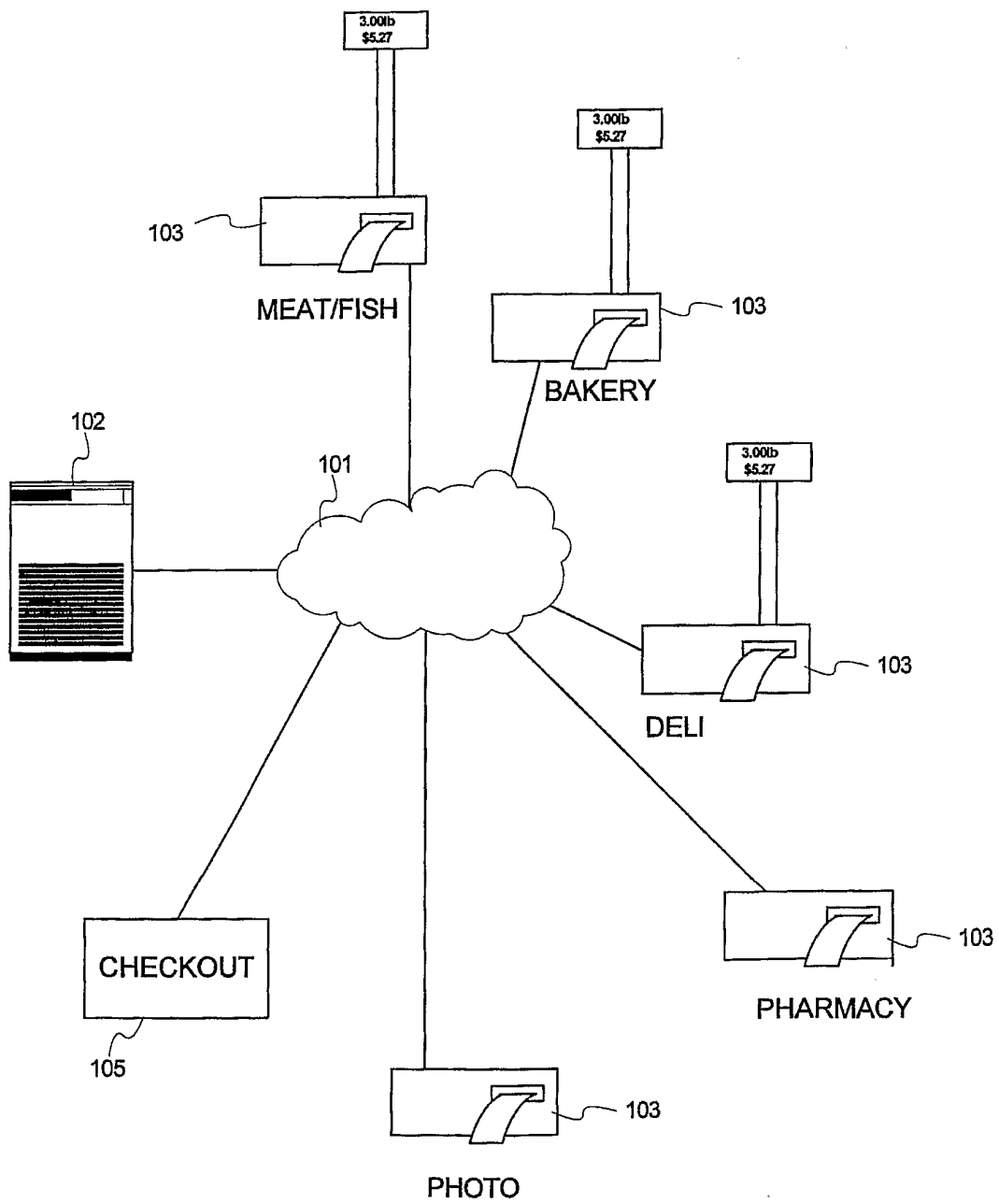



FIG. 1

201









TURKEY BREAST CAJUN ARMOUR SWIFT

TARE	5/2/2002	SELL BY
0.01 LB	01:29:32 PM	5/15/2002
NET WT./COUNT	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
0.52 LB	\$5.99/LB	\$3.11

205

 **SAFEWAY**

\*1014070764\*

	<b>TOMATO KETCHUP</b>	\$1 <sup>00</sup> off
		
	Salad Dressing	Buy one, get one free
		
	America's favorite Mustard	25¢ DISCOUNT
		
	Film processing	\$1 <sup>00</sup> off
		

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FIG. 2