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(54) **METHOD FOR COMPANIES TO CONDUCT TRANSACTIONS DURING MEDIA BROADCASTS**

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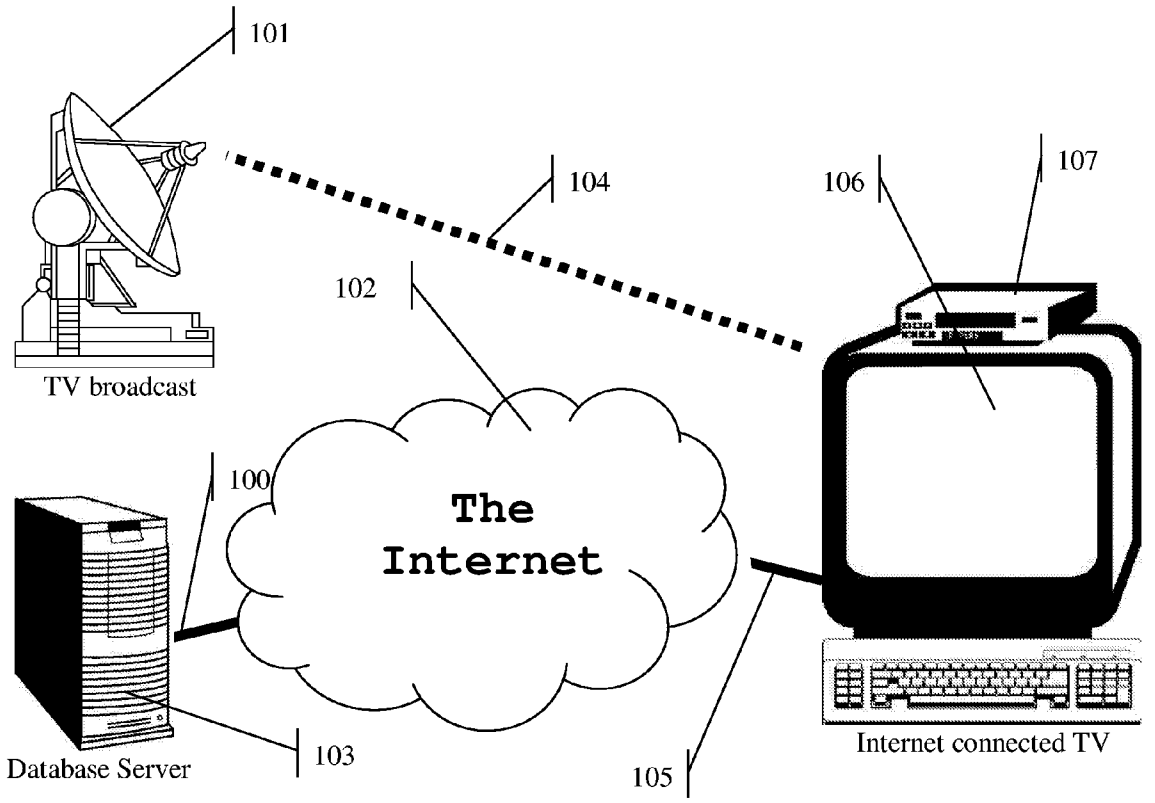
(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **725/32**; 725/135; 725/105; 725/23

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and method that allows a company or companies to conduct commercial transactions with broadcast viewers immediately during a broadcast or at a later time. The amount of time a viewer spends watching a particular broadcast is recorded along with information about the company or companies sponsoring the broadcast. The viewer accesses a central database, which sends back to the viewer advertisements, coupons, discounts, contests, product information, and product purchase information, based on information about the viewer and the specific times the viewer watched broadcasts or segments of broadcasts that were sponsored by the company or companies.



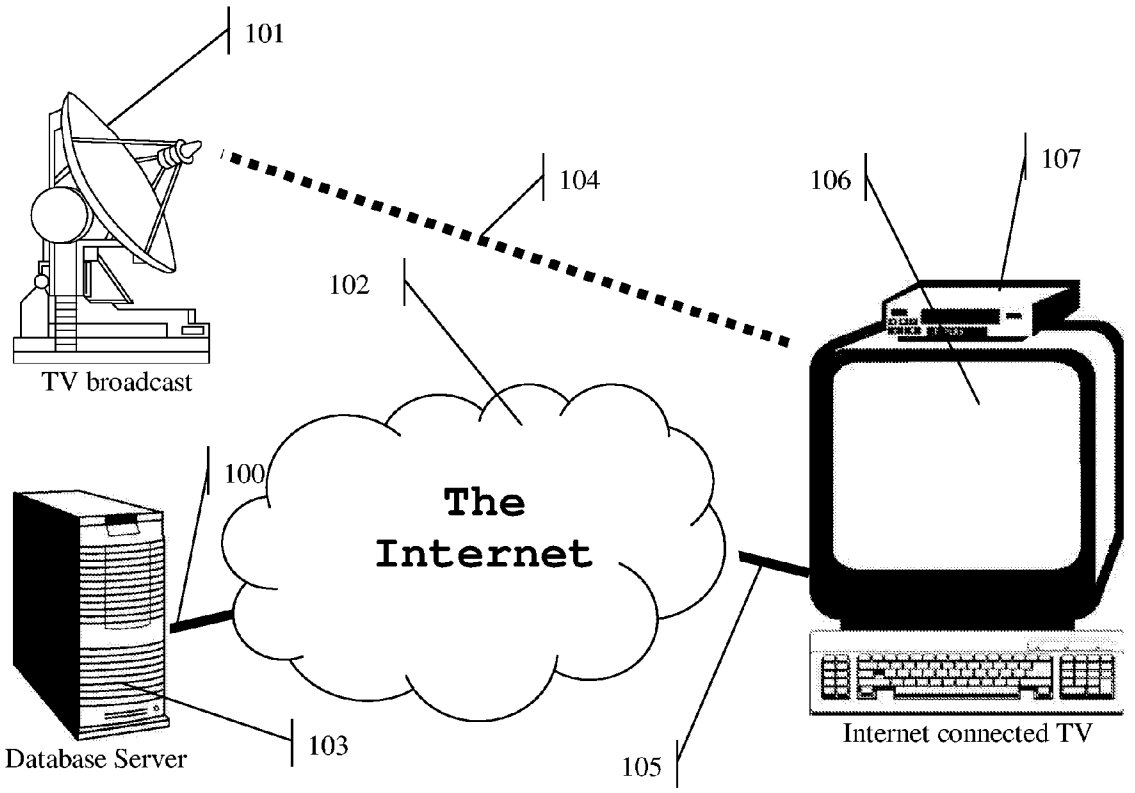

101
104
106
107
102
TV broadcast
100
The Internet
Database Server
103
105
Internet connected TV

**Figure 1**

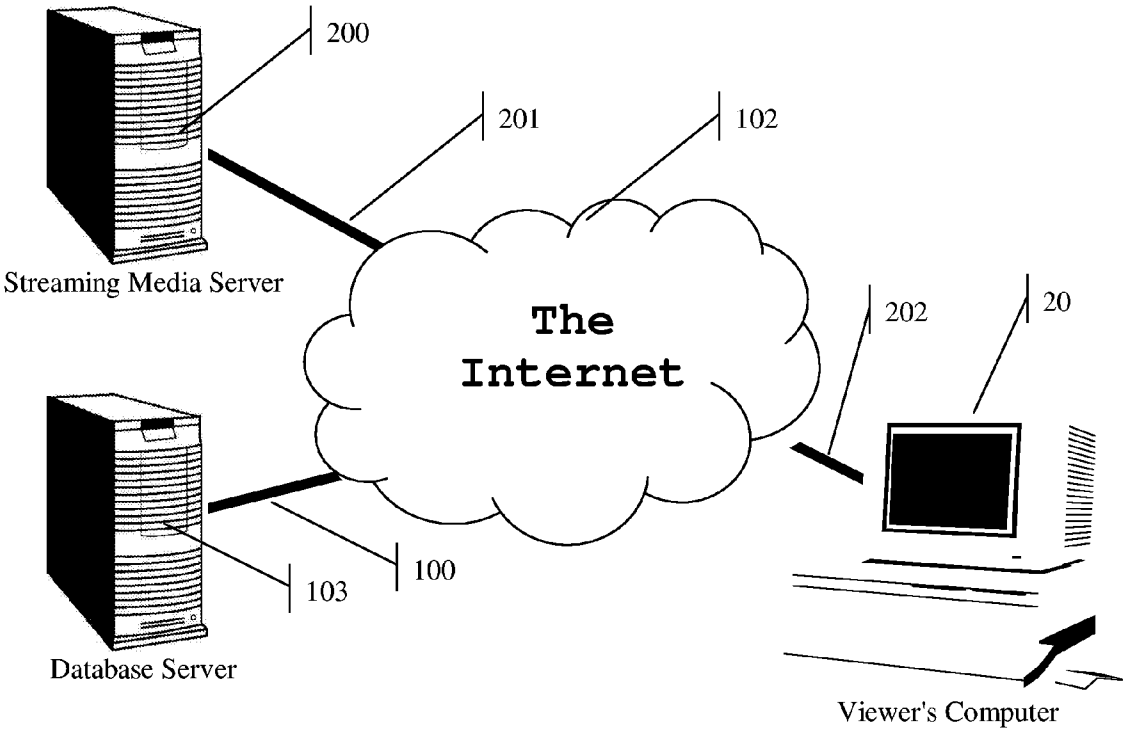



Figure 2

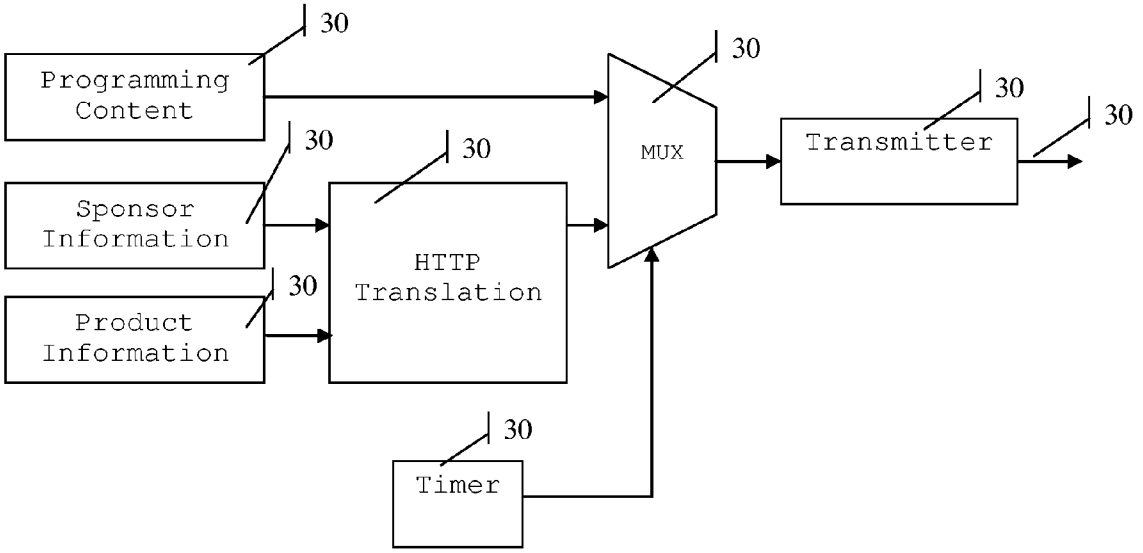



Figure 3

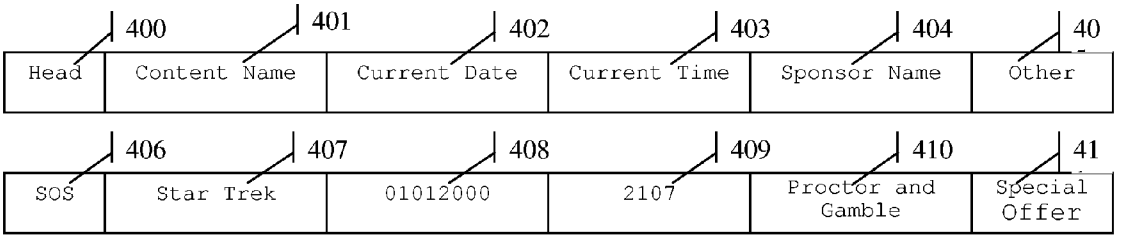



**Figure4**

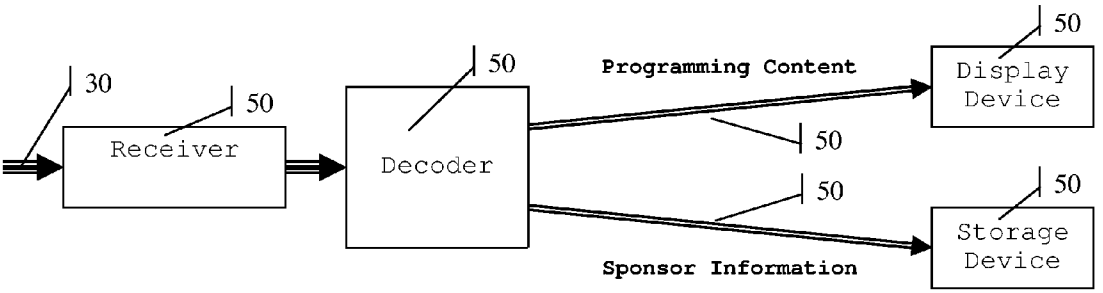



**Figure 5**

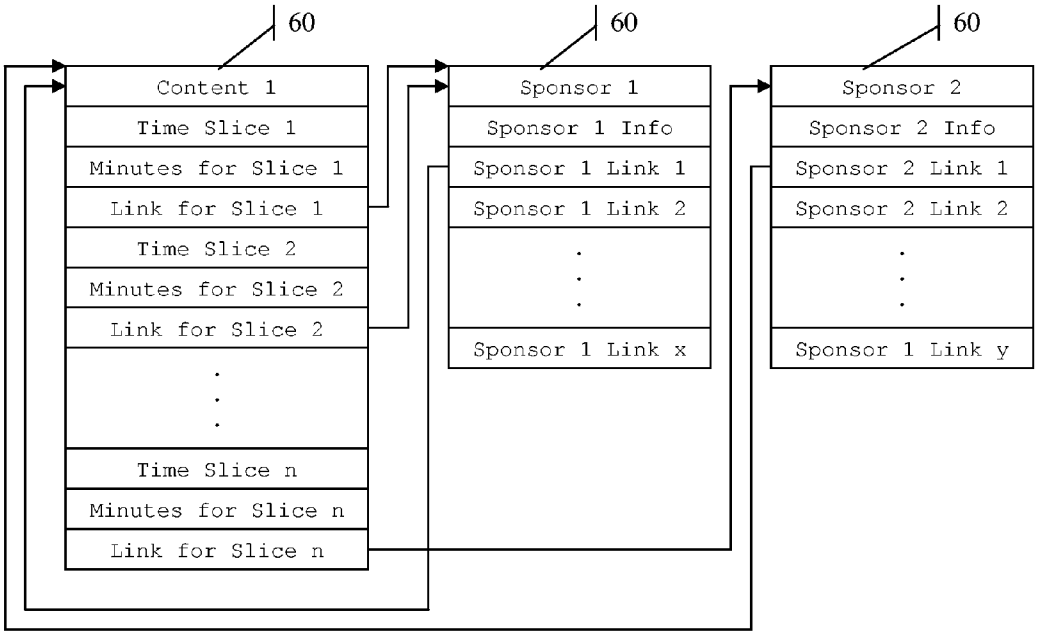



**Figure 6**

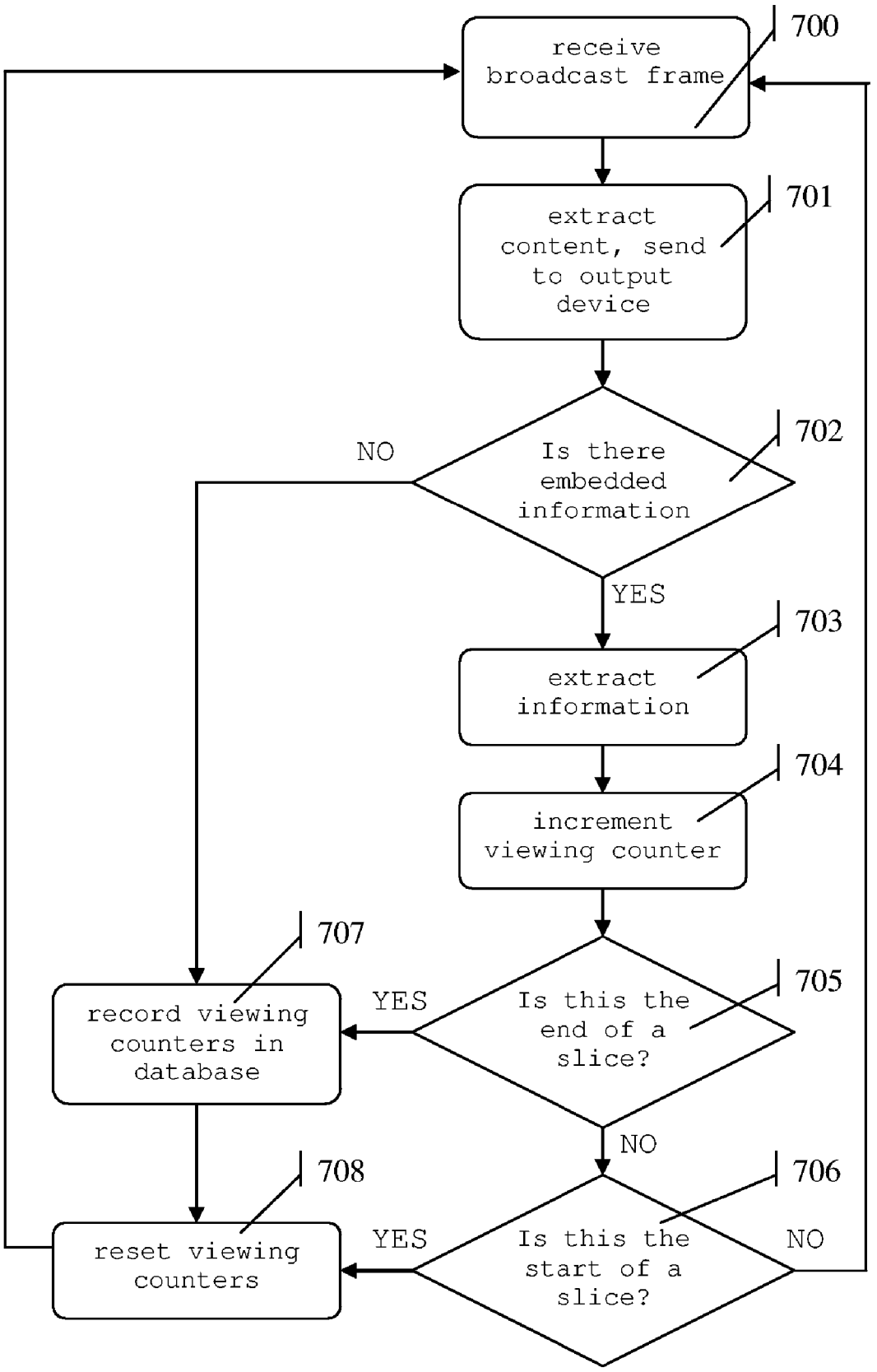

receive broadcast frame
700
extract content, send to output device
701
Is there embedded information
702
NO
YES
extract information
703
increment viewing counter
704
Is this the end of a slice?
705
YES
record viewing counters in database
707
NO
Is this the start of a slice?
706
NO
YES
reset viewing counters
708

**Figure 7**

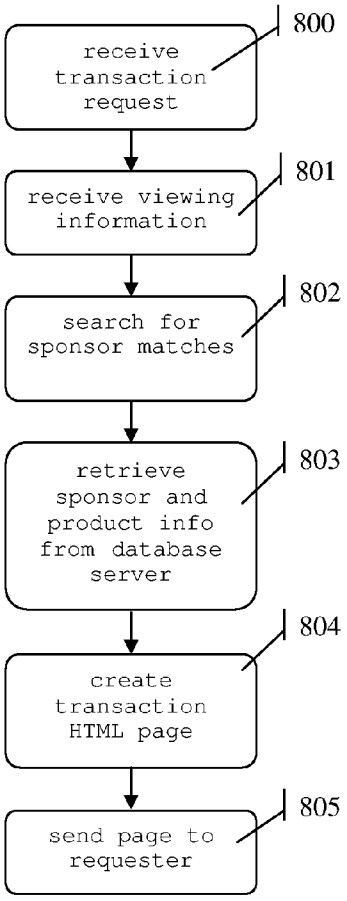



**Figure 8**

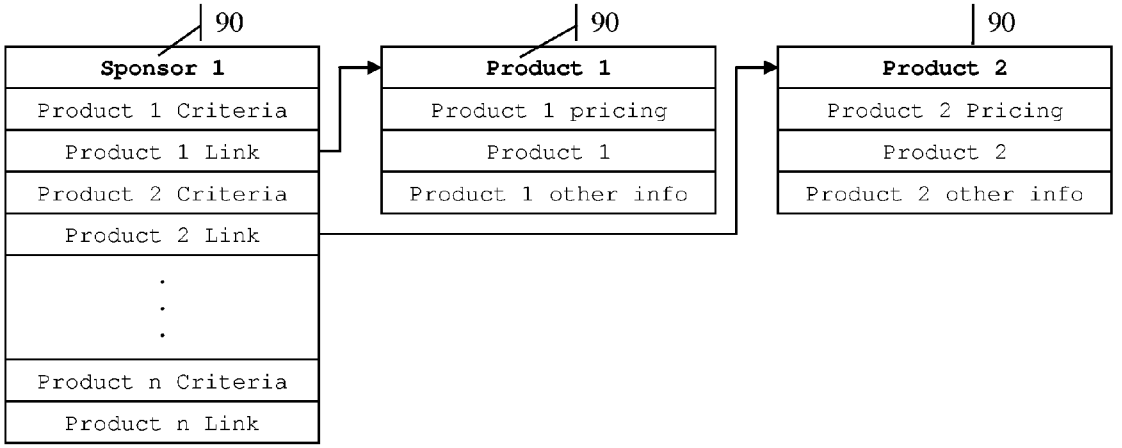



**Figure 9**

# METHOD FOR COMPANIES TO CONDUCT TRANSACTIONS DURING MEDIA BROADCASTS

## CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

[0001] The present application is a continuation-in-part application of copending U.S. patent application, entitled "METHOD FOR ADVERTISERS TO SPONSOR BROADCASTS WITHOUT COMMERCIALS," Ser. No. 09/767,819, filed on Jan. 22, 2001.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Conducting transactions over the Internet has become fairly commonplace. However, more people own televisions than computers and in general people spend more time watching television than surfing the Internet. Television viewers represent a captive audience. However, television tends to be a purely passive experience. Yet consumers, particularly those that are inclined toward impulse buying, would certainly enjoy the ability to immediately purchase products that they see during a broadcast, whether the product is displayed during a commercial advertisement or during the content of the television show or movie.

[0003] Currently there are only a limited number of interactive features available for television viewers. Commercial transactions occur in only one direction—advertisements from the broadcast sponsors to the broadcast viewers. Completing the transaction—payment from the viewer to the sponsor—must occur by other means. This invention addresses the ability to complete the transaction much in the same way that e-commerce allows transactions via the Internet. The transactions described by this invention are not limited to television broadcasts, but are applicable to other types of broadcasts including streaming media on the Internet. This invention can be used to allow commercial transactions via any type of content broadcast.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The present invention allows companies to conduct transactions during a broadcast. One transaction would be a product purchase whereby product information is sent to the viewer, payment and shipping information is sent back to the company selling the product. Other types of transactions are possible. For example, medical diagnoses can be transmitted whereby medical symptoms are sent to a doctor and prescription information is returned to the viewer. In another application, conversations about the content being broadcast can be transmitted between two or more people, for example in a fan club. Other applications of this invention are also possible and these examples are used for illustration purposes and are not intended to limit the invention's applications. For use in this patent, the term "broadcast" encompasses all forms of transmitting media content to an end user, including radio wave broadcasts such as network television and network radio broadcasts, cable broadcasts such as cable television, and streaming media broadcasts such as video and audio over an Internet connection that may be via telephone lines, television cables, radio waves, etc.

[0005] The invention provides a method and apparatus for recording the amount of time spent watching a particular broadcast. The invention also provides a method and apparatus for recording the sponsoring companies or organizations for each broadcast. The invention provides a method and apparatus for the viewer to send information to another location.

[0006] In one embodiment, the user watches an Internet connected television. At various regular intervals, such as the vertical blanking interval of the television signal, HTTP protocol communications from a Web server are sent to the television, which places a cookie or updates an existing cookie on the television hard drive. This cookie contains information including the time of day, the television channel, the name of the television show, and each sponsor of the show. At that time or at a later time of the viewer's choosing, the viewer can use the Internet connected television to connect to a website. This website can belong to the television network or a particular sponsor or a central clearing house for coupons. When connecting to the website, using the standard HTTP protocol, the website examines the cookie and retrieves the information in it. Each sponsor can then offer advertisements, coupons, discounts, and other enticements to purchase goods based on the amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast. Each viewer can respond with an e-commerce transaction that includes credit card information and shipping information in order to initiate a purchase and have the product shipped to the viewer.

[0007] In a second embodiment, the user watches an Internet connected television. At various regular intervals, such as the vertical blanking interval of the television signal, data is sent to a centralized database for the network or the sponsor or a third party reseller. The data contain information including the time of day, the television channel, the name of the television show, and each sponsor of the show. The data also contain a user identifier such as a name, user ID, credit card number and verification information, billing address, or shipping address. At that time, or at a later time, the viewer can use the Internet connected television to connect to a website that has access to the central database. This website can belong to the television network or a particular sponsor or a third party reseller. When connecting to the website, using the standard HTTP protocol, the user identification information is sent to the website which then examines the central database and retrieves the information in it for this particular user. Each sponsor can then offer advertisements, coupons, discounts, and other enticements to purchase goods based on the amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast. Or the sponsor can initiate a product purchase and shipment.

[0008] In a third embodiment, the user watches a streaming media broadcast from a Web server using a computer with an Internet connection. At various regular intervals during the broadcast, HTTP protocol communications from a Web server are sent to the computer, which places a cookie or updates and existing cookie on the computer hard drive. This cookie contains information including the time of day, the website that is the source of the broadcast, the name of the broadcast content, and each sponsor of the broadcast. At that time or at a later time of the viewer's choosing, the viewer can use the computer to connect to a website. This website can belong to the television network or a particular sponsor or a third party reseller. When connecting to the website, using the standard HTTP protocol, the website examines the cookie and retrieves the information in it. Each sponsor can then offer advertisements, coupons, discounts,

and other enticements to purchase goods based on the amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast. Or the sponsor can initiate a product purchase and shipment.

[0009] In a fourth embodiment, the user watches a streaming media broadcast from a Web server using a computer with an Internet connection. At various regular intervals during the broadcast, data is sent to a centralized database for the network or the sponsor or a third party reseller. The data contains information including the time of day, the website that is the source of the broadcast, the name of the broadcast content, and each sponsor of the show. The data also contain a user identifier such as a name, user ID, credit card number, billing address, or shipping address. At any time, the viewer can use the computer to connect to a website that has access to the central database. This website can belong to the television network or a particular sponsor or a central clearing house for coupons. When connecting to the website, using the standard HTTP protocol, the user identifier information is sent to the website which then examines the central database and retrieves the information in it for this particular user. Each sponsor can then offer advertisements, coupons, discounts, and other enticements to purchase goods based on the amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast. Each viewer can respond with an e-commerce transaction that includes credit card information and shipping information in order to initiate a purchase and have the product shipped to the viewer.

[0010] Further features and advantages of various embodiments of the present invention are described in the detailed description below, which is given by way of example only.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] The present invention will be understood more fully from the detailed description given below and from the accompanying drawings of the preferred embodiment of the invention, which, however, should not be taken to limit the invention to the specific embodiment but are for explanation and understanding only.

[0012] (1) **FIG. 1** shows an Internet-enabled television, a network TV broadcast transmitter, a database server, and the Internet, in accordance with the present invention.

[0013] (2) **FIG. 2** shows a computer, a streaming media server, a database server, and the Internet, in accordance with the present invention.

[0014] (3) **FIG. 3** shows a mechanism for combining broadcast information with broadcast content during a broadcast transmission.

[0015] (4) **FIG. 4** shows a general format and a specific format for encoding embedded information in a stream of data.

[0016] (5) **FIG. 5** shows a mechanism for separating broadcast information and broadcast content from a broadcast transmission.

[0017] (6) **FIG. 6** shows a format for storing the embedded information on the client storage device in a database.

[0018] (7) **FIG. 7** shows an algorithm within the decoder that strips out embedded information and creates the database records.

[0019] (8) **FIG. 8** shows an algorithm within the database server that gives transaction information back to the viewer.

[0020] (9) **FIG. 9** shows data that is contained in blocks in the database on the database server.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0021] The present invention will be understood more fully from the detailed description given below and from the accompanying drawings of the preferred embodiment of the invention, which, however, should not be taken to limit the invention to the specific embodiment but are for explanation and understanding only.

[0022] Exemplary configurations according to the present invention are illustrated in **FIG. 1** and **FIG. 2**. **FIG. 1** shows one configuration where an Internet-enabled television **106** with a hard disk **107** receives broadcasts **104** from a network television station via transmitter **101**. The Internet-enabled TV **106** is also connected for two-way communication to a database server **103** via the Internet **102**. In this embodiment, the computer is connected to the Internet via telephone lines **105** using a modem. In this embodiment, the database server is connected to the Internet via a T-1 connection **100**.

[0023] The television **106** receives one-way transmissions **104** from the network broadcast transmitter **101**. Embedded in the transmission are HTTP protocol messages containing information about the show being broadcast, the sponsors of the show, and the current time. Other information can also be embedded and sent to the television **106** such as information about specific products for sale including pricing information. The embedded information is stored on the hard disk **107** in the form of a cookie. At that time or at a later time, the television **106** connects to the database server **103** which is part of a website on the Internet **102**. The database server **103** queries the cookie on the television **106** in order to determine which shows were watched, during which times, which advertisers sponsored those shows or those segments of shows, and which products were being advertised. Based on this information, the database server can search its database for coupons, advertisements, discounts, and other enticements to buy products or services from the advertiser, and deliver these enticements via the Internet **102** to the television **106**. Similarly the database server can search its database product information such as pricing and availability, and the database server can deliver this information via the Internet **102** to the television **106**.

[0024] In another embodiment, the television **106** receives one-way transmissions **104** from the network broadcast transmitter **101**. Embedded in the transmission are HTTP protocol messages containing information about the show being broadcast, the sponsors of the show, and the current time. Other information can also be embedded and sent to the television **106** such as information about specific products for sale including pricing information. The embedded information is stored on the hard disk **107**. During the broadcast or at a later time, the television **106** connects to the database server **103** which is part of a website on the Internet **102**. The television **106** sends the information on the hard disk **107** to the database server **103** via the Internet **102**. The database server **103** stores the information in its database. At that time or at a later time, based on which advertiser sponsored the show or show segments, the amount of time spent watching the show or show segments, and which

products were being advertised, the database server can search the database for coupons, advertisements, discounts, and other enticements to buy products or services from the advertiser, and deliver these enticements via the Internet **102** to the television **106**. Similarly the database server can search its database product information such as pricing and availability, and the database server can deliver this information via the Internet **102** to the television **106**.

[**0025**] **FIG. 2** shows another configuration where a computer **203** receives streaming media broadcasts from a streaming media server **200** via the Internet **102**. The computer **203** is also connected for two-way communication to a database server **103** via the Internet **102**. In this embodiment, the computer is connected to the Internet via telephone lines **202** using a modem. In this embodiment, the database server is connected to the Internet via a T-1 connection **100**. In this embodiment, the streaming media server is connected to the Internet via a T-1 connection **201**.

[**0026**] The computer **203** receives transmissions from the streaming media server **200** via the Internet **102**. Embedded in the transmission are messages containing information about the show being broadcast, the sponsors of the show, and the current time. Other information can also be embedded and sent to the television **106** such as information about specific products for sale including pricing information. The embedded information is stored on the computer's hard disk in the form of a cookie. At that time or at a later time, the computer **203** connects to the database server **103** which is part of a website on the Internet **102**. The database server **103** queries the cookie on the computer **203** in order to determine which shows were watched, during which times, which advertisers sponsored those shows or those segments of shows, and which products were being advertised. Based on this information, the database server can search its database for coupons, advertisements, discounts, and other enticements to buy products or services from the advertiser, and deliver these enticements via the Internet **102** to the computer **203**. Similarly the database server can search its database product information such as pricing and availability, and the database server can deliver this information via the Internet **102** to the television **106**.

[**0027**] In another embodiment, the computer **203** receives transmissions from the streaming media server **200** via the Internet **102**. Embedded in the transmission are messages containing information about the show being broadcast, the sponsors of the show, and the current time. Other information can also be embedded and sent to the television **106** such as information about specific products for sale including pricing information. The embedded information is stored on the computer's hard disk. During the broadcast or at a later time, the computer **203** connects to the database server **103** which is part of a website on the Internet **102**. The computer **203** transmits the information on its hard disk to the database server **103** via the Internet **102**. The database server **103** stores the information in the database. At a later time, based on which advertiser sponsored the show or show segments, the amount of time spent watching the show or show segments, and which products were being advertised, the database server can search its database for coupons, advertisements, discounts, and other enticements to buy products or services from the advertiser, and deliver these enticements via the Internet **102** to the computer **203**. Similarly the database server can search its database product information such as pricing and availability, and the database server can deliver this information via the Internet **102** to the television **106**.

[**0028**] **FIG. 3** shows an embodiment in which content with embedded information is created from normal broadcast content. The method shown can be implemented in hardware or software or combinations of hardware and software. Sponsor information **302** and product information **307** are translated into a format such as HTTP protocol using HTTP translator **303**. The information is then combined with the programming content **301**, such as a television show or streaming video, through multiplexer **305**. The multiplexer inserts the sponsor information at regular periods, or frames, throughout the broadcast by using timer **304**. A frame may be a single television picture scan, or it may be a single frame of streaming video data or it may be an arbitrary amount of data. The sponsor information can be inserted into the data stream at a time or in such a way that it does not destroy data, such as during the vertical blanking time of a television frame scan. The data is then put into the transmitter **306**, which is then transmitted as analog or digital data **300**.

[**0029**] **FIG. 4** shows an embodiment of a general format and a specific format for the embedded sponsor information as a stream of data. A packet is inserted before a frame of content data, which includes the head **400**, content name **401**, the current date **402**, the current time **403**, the sponsor name **404**, and other data **405** as required. The head **400** can be a start-of-slice (SOS) flag or an end-of-slice (EOS) flag, which signal the start or end of a time slice respectively. **FIG. 4** provides an example of specific information: the head is provided as "start-of-slice"**406**, content name is provided as "Star Trek"**407**, the date is provided as "Jan. 1, 2000"**408**, the time is provided as "9:07 PM"**409**, the sponsor is provided as "Proctor and Gamble"**410**, and a special offer **411** is included for the viewer at this time. All of this data would be digitally encoded into electrical pulses representing bits of ones and zeroes.

[**0030**] **FIG. 5** shows an embodiment in which the sponsor information is separated from the broadcast content using hardware or software or a combination of hardware and software. The software portion of the implementation may be a stand-alone media player program or a plug-in to a Web browser. The broadcast stream **300**, which may be a television broadcast, a radio broadcast, an audio stream, or a video stream, is received by a receiver **501** that converts the signal to one that is usable by the decoder **502** that splits the information into programming content **503** and sponsor information **504**. The programming content **503** is sent to a presentation device **505** such as a computer, a screen, or a personal music player such as an Apple iPod. The sponsor information **504** is recorded on a storage device **506** such as a hard disk.

[**0031**] **FIG. 6** shows one embodiment of the format for storing the embedded information on the client storage device **506** in a database. For each television show, audio clip, or video clip there is an entry block **600** containing several records. The first record contains the name of the content. There are sections for each time slice of the content broadcast. These time slices may, for example, be 15-minute intervals so that there are 4 slices in a one-hour broadcast. Sponsors may then sponsor 1 to 4 slices of a one-hour

broadcast. Associated with each time slice in the database are 3 records. One record contains the name of the time slice. Another record contains the number of minutes during that time slice that the viewer was actually watching the broadcast. Another record contains a link to a sponsor block in the database for the sponsor of that time slice. There may be multiple records for links to multiple sponsors of a broadcast time slice.

[0032] A sponsor block, such as **601** or **602**, contains multiple records. One record contains the name of the sponsor. Another record contains information about the sponsor. Other records contain links to content that is sponsored by the sponsor. Having both content blocks and sponsor blocks in the database, with links to each other, allows the database to easily be searched for all content sponsored by a specific sponsor, or all sponsors of particular content.

[0033] **FIG. 7** shows an embodiment of the algorithm within the decoder **502** that strips out embedded information and creates the database records **600**, **601**, **602**. This algorithm may be implemented in software or hardware or a combination of software and hardware. Execution starts at block **700** where a frame of broadcast content is received. The content information is separated out and sent to the output device by executing block **701**. Execution of block **702** searches for embedded sponsor information in the broadcast. If there is no embedded sponsor information, execution is transferred to block **707**. This may be due to the fact that the viewer has switched between a broadcast containing embedded information to some other broadcast not containing embedded information. At block **702**, if there is embedded sponsor information, block **703** is executed, extracting that information. Block **704** is then executed where viewing counters are incremented. These viewing counters keep track of the precise time slices during which the viewer has viewed the content. In block **705**, the embedded information is examined for an end-of-slice marker that signals the end of a time slice. If this marker is found, execution is transferred to block **707**. Otherwise, execution is transferred to block **706** where the embedded information is examined for a start-of-slice marker that signals the start of a time slice. If this marker is found, execution is transferred to block **708**. Otherwise execution is transferred back to block **700** and the process is repeated.

[0034] Block **707** is executed when a time slice has ended or the viewer has switched to another type of broadcast. When this block is executed, the viewing counters are recorded in the database on the client machine. Execution is then transferred to block **708**.

[0035] Block **708** is executed at the start of a new time slice. This block resets the viewing counters and transfers execution to block **700**, starting the entire process over.

[0036] **FIG. 8** shows an embodiment of the algorithm within the database server **103** that performs a transaction with the viewer. Execution starts in block **800** when a request for a transaction is received from the viewer. Execution continues to block **801** where, through a handshaking protocol, the information in the client database stored in storage device **506** on the viewer's computer **203** or Internet connected TV **106** is used to query the database of database server **103**. Execution continues to block **802** where the database server searches its database for matches with the sponsors reported by the viewer. Execution continues to block **803** where links to sponsor Web pages are retrieved from the database server based on the information from the viewer. Execution continues to block **804** where an entire HTML page is created which contains links to all products corresponding to the time slices that the viewer was viewing specific content. Execution continues to block **805** where this Web page is then sent back to the viewer. At this time, the viewer can click on links to obtain coupons, discounts, special offers, etc. or to complete e-commerce type transactions.

[0037] **FIG. 9** shows an embodiment of the data that is contained in tables in the database on the database server **103**. For each sponsor, there is a table **900** that contains multiple records. One record contains the sponsor name. For each product, there are two records. One of these records contains the criteria for the viewer to receive transaction information about a specific product. For example, only if the viewer is watching the broadcast during a specific time slice that a product is being advertised will the product be offered to the viewer for purchase. The other record contains a link to a database table for the particular product. Each product has a table of records such as **901** and **902**. The table includes a record of the product name, and a number of other records that contain information about pricing information, availability information, etc. that should be offered to the viewer.

[0038] Various modifications and adaptations of the operations that are described here would be apparent to those skilled in the art based on the above disclosure. Many variations and modifications within the scope of the invention are therefore possible. The present invention is set forth by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

**1**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving a broadcast with embedded information; b) extracting content from said broadcast, c) presenting said content to the viewer; d) extracting said embedded information from said broadcast; e) storing said embedded information; f) transmitting said embedded information and viewer information to a remote computer; and g) receiving transaction information.

**2**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving a broadcast with information embedded into the broadcast at regular time periods, said information including timestamps; b) extracting content from said broadcast, c) presenting said content to the viewer; d) extracting said embedded information from said broadcast; e) incrementing counters for counting time slices during said time periods; f) storing said embedded information and said counter values; g) transmitting said embedded information and said counter values and viewer information to a remote computer; and h) receiving transaction information.

**3**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) embedding information about a broadcast along with the broadcast content; and b) broadcasting said content with said embedded information to a remote viewer.

**4**. The method of claim further comprising a) receiving information from said viewer about said broadcast; and b) transmitting transaction information to said viewer based on said information received.

**5**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) embedding information about said broadcast along with said broadcast content at regular time periods; and b) broadcasting said content with said embedded information to a remote viewer.

**6**. The method of claim further comprising a) receiving information from said viewer about said broadcast; b) receiving counter values for the number of time slices viewed by said viewer; and c) transmitting transaction information to said viewer based on said information received and said counter values received.

**7**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving information about a broadcast from a remote viewer; and b) transmitting transaction information to the remote viewer based on said information received.

**8**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving information about a broadcast from a remote viewer; b) receiving counter values for the number of time slices viewed by the viewer; and c) transmitting transaction information to the remote viewer based on said information received and said counter values received.

**9**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving information about a broadcast from a remote viewer; b) searching a database for information about sponsors of the content of said broadcast and the product information offered by said sponsors; c) creating a displayable page containing sponsor information and product information based on said database information and said information received from said viewer; and d) transmitting said displayable page back to said viewer.

**10**. A method for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the method comprising a) receiving information about a broadcast from a remote viewer; b) receiving counter values for the number of time slices viewed by said viewer; c) searching a database for information about sponsors of the content and the products offered by said sponsors; d) creating a displayable page containing sponsor information and product information based on said database information and said information received from said viewer; and e) transmitting said displayable page back to said viewer.

**11**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a broadcast medium, a storage device, a presentation device, a communication medium, and a computer whereby a) said computer receives a broadcast with embedded information via said broadcast medium; b) said computer extracts content from said broadcast; c) said computer presents extracted content to the viewer via said presentation device; d) said computer extracts said embedded information from said broadcast; e) said computer stores said embedded information on said storage device; f) said computer transmits said embedded information and viewer information to a remote computer via said communication medium; and g) said computer receives transaction information via said communication medium.

**12**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a broadcast medium, a storage device, a presentation device, a communication medium, and a computer whereby a) said computer receives a broadcast with information embedded into the broadcast at regular time periods, said information including timestamps via said broadcast medium; b) said computer extracts content from said broadcast; c) said computer presents said extracted content to the viewer via said presentation device; d) said computer extracts said embedded information from said broadcast; e) said computer increments counters for counting time slices during said time periods; f) said computer stores said embedded information and said counter values on said storage device; g) said computer transmits said embedded information and said counter values and viewer information to a remote computer via said communication medium; and h) said computer receives transaction information via said communication medium.

**13**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a broadcast medium and a computer whereby a) said computer embeds information about a broadcast along with the broadcast content; and b) said computer broadcasts said content with said embedded information to a remote viewer via said broadcast medium.

**14**. The apparatus of claim further comprising a communication medium whereby a) said computer receives information from said viewer about said broadcast via said communication medium; and b) said computer transmits product information to said viewer via said communication medium.

**15**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a broadcast medium and a computer whereby a) said computer embeds information about said broadcast along with the broadcast content at regular time periods; and b) said computer broadcasts said content with said embedded information to a remote viewer via said broadcast medium.

**16**. The apparatus of claim further comprising a communication medium whereby a) said computer receives information from said viewer about said broadcast via said communication medium; b) said computer receives counter values for the number of time slices viewed by said viewer via said communication medium; and c) said computer transmits product information to said viewer via said communication medium.

**17**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a communication medium and a computer whereby a) said computer receives information about a broadcast from a remote viewer via said communication medium; b) said computer transmits product information to the remote viewer via said communication medium.

**18**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a communication medium and a computer whereby a) said computer receives information about a broadcast from a remote viewer via said communication medium; b) said computer receives counter values for the number of time slices viewed by the viewer via said communication medium; and c) said computer transmits product information to the remote viewer via said communication medium.

**19**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a storage device, a presentation device, a communication medium, and a computer whereby a) said computer receives information about a broadcast from a remote viewer via said communication medium; b) said computer searches a database for information about sponsors of the content of said broadcast and the product information offered by said sponsors; c) said computer creates a displayable page containing sponsor information and product information based on said database information and said information received from said viewer; d) said computer transmits said displayable page back to said viewer via said communication medium.

**20**. An apparatus for allowing companies to conduct transactions during media broadcasts, the apparatus comprising a communication medium and a computer whereby a) said computer receives information about a broadcast from a remote viewer via said communication medium; b) said computer receives counter values for the number of time slices viewed by said viewer via said communication medium; c) said computer searches a database for information about sponsors of the content and the products offered by said sponsors; d) said computer creates a displayable page containing sponsor information and product information based on said database information and said information received from said viewer; and e) said computer transmits said displayable page back to said viewer via said communication medium.

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