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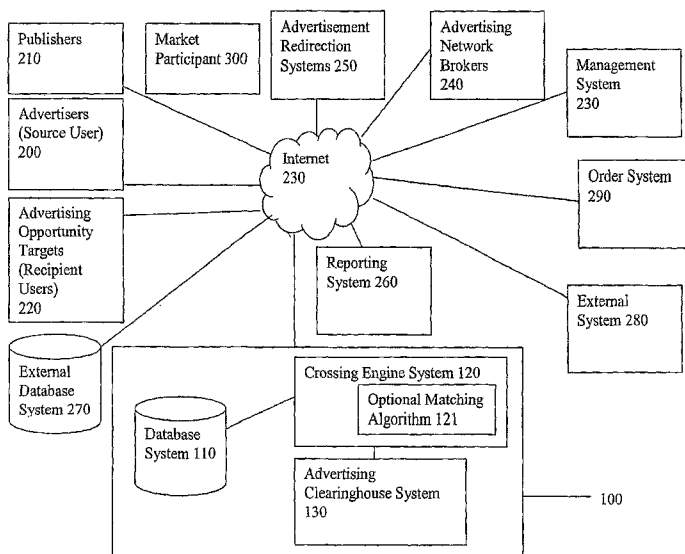
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(54) Title: ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY EXCHANGE SYSTEM AND METHOD



(57) Abstract: A method and system for enabling source users to gain access to means for communicating messages to selected recipient users, comprising: using first sets of data characterizing means for communicating a message in potential conditions of use; second set of data relating to a number of qualities to be met by source users to gain access to the means of the first sets of data; third sets of data relating to qualities met by source users willing to gain access to communication means in desired conditions of use; identifying three-way matches between qualities to be met by source users to gain access to communication means in potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of the means and qualities met by source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and prioritizing matches according to predetermined rules.

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*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

## Advertising Opportunity Exchange System and Method

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### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority from U.S. application 11/490,792 filed on July 20, 2006, entitled "Advertising Opportunity Exchange".

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#### Field of Invention

[0002] Invention relates to advertising, specifically to exchange related operations for advertising opportunities and their derivatives, and in particular to systems and methods for enabling source users to gain access to means for communicating messages to selected recipient users.

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#### Background of Invention

[0003] Online advertising has rapidly become an important source of income for many online entities and a useful medium for advertisers to reach target audiences. For example, an online newspaper may sell the opportunity to deliver advertising in conjunction with the delivery of the online newspaper content. Typically, online entities or their brokers sell the advertising opportunities in bulk. Advertising opportunities may be sold in large blocks based on visitors to the online newspaper website; for example, a bundle of ten thousand advertising opportunities may be available for delivery to visitors of a particular website. However, in other cases, the advertising opportunities may be sold as characterized blocks; for example, the advertising opportunities may be characterized by keywords in an article so that visitors to the online newspaper reading a travel article with the key words "Florida Keys" could be targeted by an advertiser. Other examples of advertising opportunity characterizations include, but are not limited to, time

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of day, geographic location of the visitor and specific web pages within a website (such as the sports page of an online newspaper).

[0004] However, current online advertising sales paradigms present several substantial limitations that negatively impact the ability of the advertiser to carefully focus on a target audience. For example, current online advertising sales paradigms often require the advertiser to purchase a large block of poorly characterized advertising impression opportunities. In some cases, only a subset of the block may be of interest to the advertiser; for example, in some cases, only a subset of the block may match a desired target audience. In some cases, it may be possible to resell a subset of the purchased block to other advertisers; however, due to the sometimes poor characterization of the advertising opportunities, it may be difficult to identify the advertising impression opportunities of interest until the advertising opportunity actually becomes available. This inhibits the ability to effectively sell, re-sell and/or broker advertising opportunities and limits the advertising opportunity seller's ability to establish meaningful control and/or maximize their return for their involvement in online advertising. Furthermore, a functioning options market based on characterized, advertising impression opportunities may be difficult to implement based on the currently available mechanisms for buying and/or selling advertising impression opportunities.

[0005] Furthermore, current online advertising sales paradigms may not encourage dynamic pricing competition between the advertising impression opportunity sellers and/or enable advertising impression opportunity sellers to make conditional offers.

[0006] At least in view of the above, there exists a need for tools that enable source users to gain access to a desired advertising impression opportunity or means for communicating messages to desired recipient users.

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#### Summary of Invention

[0007] In one embodiment of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange enables the use of a pre-specified conditional offer in transactions such as the sale, purchase and/or exchange of advertising impression opportunities. In some cases, the transactions may be performed on a per advertising impression opportunity basis wherein

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each advertising impression opportunity is associated with an individual exposure; however, in other cases, an advertising opportunity exchange may support transactions involving bundles of advertising impression opportunities. In some cases, advertising opportunities may be purchased, sold and/or exchanged once they become available.

5 Some embodiments of the current invention may enable the creation of a spot market and/or a futures market for advertising impression opportunities.

[0008] According to an embodiment of the current invention, pre-specified conditional offers are specified in advance of the availability of the advertising impression opportunities and represent offers made by or on behalf of the owner or controller of the  
10 advertising audience derivative. A pre-specified conditional offer comprises an offer to sell, option, barter or exchange one or more advertising impression opportunities. Pre-specified conditional offers may be parameterized or characterized by pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values.

[0009] In one embodiment according to the current invention, bids to purchase, option,  
15 trade or barter one or more advertising opportunities are characterized by one or more properties. In some cases, bids are characterized by bid parameters and related bid parameter values such as, but not limited to, an initial bid price, a bid increment, bid premium and a maximum bid price.

[0010] Three-way matches between available advertising impression opportunities, bids  
20 and pre-specified conditional offers may be established and /or prioritized based on one or more criteria. In some embodiments of the current invention, exact and/or inexact matching may be supported such as, but not limited to, matching based on goodness of fit thresholds. In some cases, multiple matches may be identified. Various embodiments of the current invention may prioritize the multiple matches based on a variety of methods  
25 such as, but not limited to: single, multi-dimensional, linear or non-linear prioritization methods.

[0011] In an embodiment of the current invention may be used in conjunction with parameterized advertising opportunities. In some cases, the parameterized advertising opportunities may be characterized before and/or after the advertising impression  
30 opportunity becomes available. Opportunity parameters and related opportunity

parameter values may characterize various aspects of the advertising impression opportunity such as, but not limited to, the target recipient of the advertising impression opportunity.

5 [0012] In an embodiment of the current invention comprises a crossing engine system for establishing three-way matches between bids, an advertising impression opportunity and pre-specified conditional offers. In some cases, the crossing engine comprises or accesses one or more database systems for storing bids and pre-specified conditional offers. Optionally, the system may further comprise an advertising clearinghouse system for managing the financial transactions associated with matches and for enabling a winning  
10 bidder to take possession of and utilize audience derivatives. A variety of different matching algorithms may be implemented in conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention for identifying and/or prioritizing matches. In some cases, matching algorithms may be designed to optimize various conditions and/or may access input from a variety of sources.

15 [0013] In an embodiment of the current invention may further comprise one or more of the following optional systems: an ordering system for enabling bidders and/or offerers to view, configure, reconfigure, submit and/or cancel bids and/or offers, an optional management system for configuring, reconfiguring, maintaining, securing and/or backing up some or part of an advertising opportunity exchange system, and an optional reporting  
20 system.

[0014] In one embodiment of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange may be used in conjunction with a variety of paradigms such as, but not limited to: auctions, reverse-auctions, Dutch auctions, English auctions, sealed auctions, procurement auctions and/or proxy auctions.

25 [0015] In an embodiment of the current invention, a media buy assignment system may enable transactions between media buy accounts.

[0016] Advantageously, some embodiments of the current invention may be used in conjunction with networked, online, asynchronous and/or wireless delivery of advertising content. Examples of advertising content include, but are not limited to: advertisements  
30 embedded in web pages and/or games, content feeds, television, electronic games, online

games, networked games, voice mail messages, e-mail messages, faxes, telephone calls and/or video communications.

[0017] Advantageously, some embodiments of the current invention support operation in conjunction with targets which are previously unknown or unidentified by the publisher.

5 For example, a target may not be required to pre-register according to some embodiments of the current invention. Similarly, potential targets which are not profiled customers of a publisher's website may be addressed according to some embodiments of the current invention.

[0018] Embodiments of the invention relates to a method and system for enabling source  
10 users to gain access to means for communicating messages to selected recipient users, comprising: using first sets of data characterizing means for communicating a message in potential conditions of use; second set of data relating to a number of qualities to be met by source users to gain access to the means of the first sets of data; third sets of data relating to qualities met by source users willing to gain access to communication means  
15 in desired conditions of use; identifying three-way matches between qualities to be met by source users to gain access to communication means in potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of the means and qualities met by source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and prioritizing matches according to predetermined rules.

20 [0019] According to an embodiment of the current invention, an impression opportunity is embodied by a possibility to communicate a message to a recipient user through a communication means such as, but not limited to, a browser in a computer connected to the Internet. In other embodiments, messages such as, but not limited to: a text advertisement, a search result listing, web advertorial, integrated content, a placement in a  
25 search result listing, a placement in a hot list, an interstitial ad, an instant message, a SMS (Simple Message Service) message, a pop-up advertisement, a floating ad, a mouse over ad, animation, an applet, a pop-under advertisement, a banner advertisement, and advertisement embedded in a content stream, an advertisement embedded in a television program, an advertisement interspersed between television programs, an advertisement  
30 embedded in music, an advertisement embedded in a web page, an advertisement

embedded in a computer game, an advertisement embedded in an online game, an advertisement embedded in a networked game, an audio advertisement, a video advertisement, a multimedia advertisement, video communications and an e-mail advertisement, may be transmitted via a wired or wireless network to a variety of devices.

5 In an embodiment of the current invention, the potential conditions of use may comprise, but are not limited to, taken alone or in combination, characteristics associated with the recipient, the recipient's hardware, the recipient's soft ware, the recipient's configuration, the recipient's browsing activities and/or the recipient's history; the conditions of use comprise the conditions of the use of the communications means and may or may not  
10 characterize the recipient user, the physical environment associated with the recipient user, the current or past activities of the recipient user, data associated with the hardware, software, firmware and/or networking configuration associated with the communication means and/or data related to the current or past usage of the communications means.

[0020] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least some of the qualities  
15 represented by the second set of data may be characterized and/or set by the owners, proxies and/or controllers of the means for communicating messages to selected recipient users. For example, in some cases, the owners, proxies and/or controllers may be market participants and/or publishers such as, but not limited to, website publishers.

[0021] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least some of the qualities  
20 represented by the third set of data reflect characteristics and/or information related to source users. For example, in some cases, source users may be advertisers or their proxies seeking characterized venues for their message(s).

[0022] According to an embodiment, the current invention enables source users to gain  
25 access to means for communicating messages to selected recipient users. In this embodiment, at least a first set of data is established wherein the first set of data characterizes at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use; the conditions of use comprise data about a recipient user of the means. In this embodiment, at least one second set of data is established wherein the second set of data relates to a number of qualities to be met by at  
30 least one of a group of source users in order to gain access to at least one of the plurality



of means of the at least first set of data. In this embodiment, at least one third set of data relating is established wherein the third set of data relates to a number of qualities met by at least one source user willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use. According to this embodiment of the current invention, data associated with the actual conditions of use of at least one of the plurality of means once the at least one of a plurality of means becomes used is accessed, at least one of the second set of data is accessed. at least one of the third set of data is accessed, and three-way matches are identified; in this example, the three-way matches are identified between a number of qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means in potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of at least one of a plurality of means and a number of qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use. According to this embodiment of the current invention, matches are prioritized according to predetermined rules to determine if at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use match at least one of a plurality of means in conditions of use desired by at least one of a group of source users, and if the at least one of a group of source users match the qualities to gain access to the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

[0023] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one condition of use of at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message allows communicating a message individually to a recipient user. For example, this enables matches and subsequent transactions associated with as few as one message targeted at as few as one recipient user.

[0024] In an embodiment of the current invention, the second set of data is associated with a bundle of two or more means for communicating a message in a potential condition of use that each allow communicating a message individually to recipient users. For example, this enables matches and subsequent transactions associated with sets of messages.

[0025] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message and the conditions of use of said means may be characterized

with opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values. In some cases, examples of a quality to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to the at least one of the plurality of means may comprise, but are not limited to: accepting to pay at least an offer price; said offer price being a function of one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

5 [0026] In an embodiment of the current invention, an example of the qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means may comprise accepting an options contract related to the optional future payment for gaining access to at least one of the plurality of means in potential conditions of use.

10 [0027] In an embodiment of the current invention, examples of a condition of use of at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message to a recipient user may comprise an inferred or known demographic profile of the recipient user.

15 [0028] In an embodiment of the current invention, the qualities met by at least one of the group of source users to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use may comprise bid data characterized by one or more bid parameters and one or more related bid parameter values. In this case, examples of bid parameters may include, but are not limited to: maximum bid value, initial bid value, bid algorithm, bid increment, bid currency, minimum lot size for bid, maximum lot size for bid, bid activation date, bid expiration date, bid premium and bidder identification, taken alone or

20 in combination.

[0029] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one first set of data characterizing at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use includes a futures contract comprising a contractual agreement related to the required future purchase at a specified price of the access to at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one

25 of a plurality of potential condition of uses; the means and the conditions of use meeting one or more criteria. In this case, the contractual agreement may or may not comprise a futures contracts with requirements such as, but limited to: a requirement for the future purchase of inventory comprising a plurality of accesses to at least one of a plurality of

30 means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions

of use meeting one or more criteria and, an expiration timestamp for identifying when obligation occurs for the specified price for any portion of the inventory associated with the contractual agreement which remains unused when the expiration timestamp expires.

5 [0030] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use may be characterized with at least one pre-specified conditional offer parameter and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter value.

10 [0031] In an embodiment of the current invention, the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data is a function of at least one pre-specified conditional offer parameter and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter value.

[0032] In an embodiment of the current invention, a match may be characterized by a goodness-of-fit value. In some cases, the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data may be a function of the goodness-of-fit value.

15 [0033] In an embodiment of the current invention, the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data is evaluated once the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message becomes used. In this case, an example of using a means of communication may comprise, but is not limited to, requesting to view a website.

20 [0034] In an embodiment of the current invention, one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity values are associated with the individual target recipient user using the parameterized at least one of a plurality of means, and at least one of the opportunity values may be identified once the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message becomes used. Examples of opportunity parameters may include, but are not limited to: Internet Protocol (IP) address, domain name, proxy usage,  
25 keywords, search keywords, keyword phrases, target geographic location, target country, target city, target longitude coordinate, target latitude coordinate, target time zone, target organization, target date, target time, target browser language, target operating system, target internet browser program, toolbars installed on target access system, target visit depth, target page view time, target connection speed, target screen resolution, target  
30 browsing history, target breadth of sites visited, target online frequency, target screen

coordinates of a click, target click pattern data, target current or projected weather conditions, target current, recent or projected events or holidays associated with a geographic region, target credit rating, target credit report, target demographic profile, target gender, target education level target household income range, target personal  
5 income range, target ethnicity, target's categorization according to third party measures, target information stored in a cookie, target history, target court records, target directorships, target bankruptcies, target public records, target property records, target judgments, target tax liens, target's business type, target's business size, target's job title, target's seniority and target's job category, taken alone or in combination.

10 [0035] In an embodiment of the current invention, one or more opportunity parameter may be inferred, estimated or calculated.

[0036] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message comprises a user interface provided for handling one of: a text advertisement, a search result listing, web advertorial, integrated content, a placement in a  
15 search result listing, a placement in a hot list, an interstitial ad, an instant message, a SMS (Simple Message Service) message, a pop-up advertisement, a floating ad, a mouse over ad, content feed, animation, an applet, a pop-under advertisement, a banner advertisement, an advertisement embedded in a web page, an advertisement embedded in a computer game, an advertisement embedded in an online game, an advertisement  
20 embedded in a content stream, an advertisement embedded in music, an advertisement embedded in a networked game, an audio advertisement, a video advertisement, a multimedia advertisement, video communications and an e-mail advertisement.

[0037] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message enables the delivery of advertising content to an individual  
25 advertising impression opportunity target over the Internet and/or over a network using Internet Protocol (IP).

[0038] In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message may provide a television ad and/or an advertisement embedded in a television program.

[0039] In an embodiment of the current invention, the qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means characterized in the at least first set of data may comprise, but are not limited to, one or more of: accepting a minimum offer price; not being part of a set of unacceptable  
5 advertisers; being part of a set of acceptable advertisers; accepting a set of ad unit types; accepting a set of ad unit sizes; accepting a minimum sale volume; complying with predetermined parameters; complying with a predetermined advertiser type; complying with a predetermined advertisement rating.

[0040] In an embodiment of the current invention, gaining access to at least one of a  
10 plurality of means for communicating a message may comprise: buying, selling, trading or bartering a right to communicate a message to the target recipient user using the means for communicating a message.

[0041] According to an embodiment, the current invention, relates to a system comprising a database system and a crossing engine. In this example, the database stores:  
15 at least one first set of data characterizing at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use, wherein the conditions of use comprise data about a recipient user of the means; at least one second set of data relating to a number of qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users in order to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means of  
20 the at least first set of data and; and at least one third set of data relating to a number of qualities met by at least one source user willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use. In this embodiment, the crossing engine is coupled to the database system. In this embodiment, the crossing engine provides for: accessing data associated with the actual conditions of use of at least one of the plurality of means  
25 once the at least one of a plurality of means becomes used; accessing at least one of the second set of data; accessing at least one of the third set of data; identifying three-way matches between a number of qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means in potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of at least one of a plurality of means and a number of  
30 qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing to gain access to at least

one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and, prioritizing matches according to predetermined rules to determine if at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use match at least one of a plurality of means in conditions of use desired by at least one of a group of source users, and if the  
5 at least one of a group of source users match the qualities to gain access to the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

**[0042]** In an embodiment of the current invention, a system may further comprise: an advertising clearinghouse system coupled to the database system. The clearinghouse system may manage financial transactions associated with a matches and enable a  
10 selected source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use to communicate a message with the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use. The clearinghouse system may also manage financial transactions associated with a matches and enable a selected source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a  
15 plurality of means in its actual conditions of use to dispose of the right of communicating a message with the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use.

**[0043]** In an embodiment of the current invention, the system further comprises an advertising clearinghouse. In some cases, the advertising clearing house may provide an  
20 advertising redirection service, thereby enabling a selected source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use to communicate a message with the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use.

**[0044]** In an embodiment of the current invention, at least one of a plurality of means for  
25 communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use may be parameterized and characterized by opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

**[0045]** In an embodiment of the current invention, the qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in

desired conditions of use comprise providing bid data characterized by one or more bid parameters and one or more related bid parameter values.

[0046] In an embodiment of the current invention, the crossing engine may utilize one or more algorithms for selecting a source user matching the qualities to access the at least  
5 one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

[0047] According to another embodiment, the current invention, enables transactions with audience derivatives associated with advertising impression opportunities. An audience derivative comprises a contractual agreement related to the future purchase of an advertising impression opportunity. According to an embodiment of the current  
10 invention, properties associated with an advertising impression opportunity are accessed once the advertising impression opportunity becomes available. A pre-specified conditional offer may be characterized by one or more pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values. According to an  
15 embodiment of the current invention, one or more pre-specified conditional offers associated with one or more audience derivatives are accessed; properties associated with one or more bids to purchase one or more audience derivatives are accessed. According to an embodiment of the current invention, three-way matches are identified between the advertising impression opportunity, the bids and the pre-specified conditional offers, based at least in part on identifying three-way matches between one or more pre-specified  
20 conditional offer parameters with related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values, properties associated with an available advertising impression opportunity and properties associated with one or more bids. According to an embodiment of the current invention, matches are subsequently prioritized.

[0048] According to an embodiment of the current invention, an advertising impression  
25 opportunity may be an individual advertising impression opportunity with an individual exposure. In some cases, the audience derivative is associated with a bundle of two or more advertising impression opportunities wherein each advertising impression opportunity in the bundle comprises an individual advertising impression opportunity with an individual exposure.

[0049] In one embodiment of the current invention, the advertising impression opportunity is a parameterized advertising impression opportunity wherein at least some of the properties of a parameterized advertising impression opportunity are characterized by opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values. In some  
5 embodiments of the current invention, a pre-specified conditional offer comprises an offer price for the audience derivative and wherein the offer price is a function of one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

[0050] In some embodiments of the current invention, an audience derivative comprises an options contract related to the optional future purchase of an advertising impression  
10 opportunity.

[0051] In some embodiments of the current invention, the properties associated with an advertising impression opportunity may comprise an inferred and/or known demographic profile.

[0052] In some embodiments of the current invention, the properties associated with a bid  
15 may be characterized by one or more bid parameters and one or more related bid parameter values. Embodiments of bid parameters may comprise, but are not limited to: maximum bid value, initial bid value, bid algorithm, bid increment, bid currency, minimum lot size for bid, maximum lot size for bid, bid activation date, bid expiration date, bid premium and bidder identification.

[0053] In some embodiments of the current invention, an audience derivative is a futures  
20 contract comprising a contractual agreement related to the required future purchase at a specified price of an advertising impression opportunity meeting one or more criteria. For example, in some embodiments of the current invention, the contractual agreement may comprise a requirement for the future purchase of inventory comprising multiple  
25 advertising impression opportunities meeting one or more criteria and an expiration timestamp for identifying when obligation occurs for the specified price for any portion of the inventory associated with the contractual agreement which remains unused when the expiration timestamp expires.

[0054] In some embodiments of the current invention, the price associated with the  
30 contractual agreement of the audience derivative may be a function of at least one pre-



specified conditional offer parameter and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter value.

[0055] In some embodiments of the current invention, a match may be characterized by a goodness-of-fit value. In some embodiments of the current invention, the price associated with the contractual agreement of the audience derivative is a function of the goodness-of-fit value.

[0056] In some embodiments of the current invention, the price associated with the contractual agreement of the audience derivative is evaluated once the advertising impression opportunity becomes available.

[0057] In some embodiments of the current invention one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity values are associated with the individual target of the parameterized advertising impression opportunity and wherein at least one of the advertising opportunity values may be identified once the parameterized advertising impression opportunity becomes available. For some embodiments of the current invention, embodiments of opportunity parameters may include, but are not limited to: Internet Protocol (IP) address, domain name, proxy usage, keywords, search keywords, keyword phrases, target geographic location, target country, target city, target longitude coordinate, target latitude coordinate, target time zone, target organization, target date, target time, target browser language, target operating system, target internet browser program, toolbars installed on target access system, target visit depth, target page view time, target connection speed, target screen resolution, target browsing history, target breadth of sites visited, target online frequency, target screen coordinates of a click, target click pattern data, target current or projected weather conditions, target current, recent or projected events or holidays associated with a geographic region, target credit rating, target credit report, target demographic profile, target gender, target education level target household income range, target personal income range, target ethnicity, target's categorization according to third party measures, target information stored in a cookie, target history, target court records, target directorships, target bankruptcies, target public records, target property records, target judgments, target tax liens, target's business type, target's business size, target's job title, target's seniority and target's job category. In

some embodiments of the current invention one or more opportunity parameter values may be inferred, calculated or estimated.

5 [0058] In some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity comprises an offer to provide one or more exposures selected from the set of:  
a text advertisement, a search result listing, web advertorial, integrated content, a  
placement in a search result listing, a placement in a hot list, an interstitial ad, an instant  
message, a SMS (Simple Message Service) message, a pop-up advertisement, a floating  
ad, a mouse over ad, content feed, animation, an applet, a pop-under advertisement, a  
banner advertisement, an advertisement embedded in a web page, an advertisement  
10 embedded in a computer game, an advertisement embedded in an online game, an  
advertisement embedded in a content stream, an advertisement embedded in music, an  
advertisement embedded in a networked game, an audio advertisement, a video  
advertisement, a multimedia advertisement, video communications and an e-mail  
advertisement.

15 [0059] In some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity comprises an offer to enable the delivery of advertising content to an individual advertising impression opportunity target over the Internet. In some  
embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity comprises  
an offer to enable the delivery of advertising content to an individual advertising  
20 impression opportunity target over a network using Internet Protocol (IP). In some  
embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity comprises  
an offer to provide a television ad and/ or an advertisement embedded in a television  
program.

25 [0060] In some embodiments of the current invention, examples of a pre-specified conditional offer parameter may include, but are not limited to: a minimum acceptable offer price, a set of unacceptable advertisers, a set of acceptable advertisers, a set of acceptable ad unit types, a set of acceptable ad unit sizes, a minimum acceptable sale volume, opportunity parameters, an advertiser type and an advertisement rating.

30 [0061] In some embodiments of the current invention, examples of transactions may include, are not limited to: buying, selling, trading and bartering.

[0062] In an embodiment of the current invention, a system comprises a database system for accessing bids and pre-specified conditional offers associated with audience derivatives and a crossing engine system for establishing and prioritizing three-way matches between bids, an available advertising impression opportunity and pre-specified conditional offers wherein the step of establishing matches is based at least partially on properties of the advertising impression opportunity once the advertising impression opportunity becomes available, thereby enabling the identification of a winning bidder for a pre-specified conditional offer, wherein the crossing engine system is coupled to the database system. In this embodiment, a pre-specified conditional offer is characterized by pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values. Advantageously, in this embodiment, the system enables transactions associated with audience derivatives associated with advertising impression opportunities wherein an audience derivative comprises a contractual agreement related to the future purchase of an advertising impression opportunity.

[0063] In an embodiment of the current invention, a system may further comprise an advertising clearinghouse system for managing the financial transactions associated with a matches and for enabling a winning bidder to take possession of audience derivatives and wherein the advertising clearinghouse system is coupled to the crossing engine system. In some cases, the advertising clearinghouse may further provide an advertising redirection service, thereby enabling a winning bidder to consume an advertising impression opportunity.

[0064] In an embodiment of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity may comprise a parameterized advertising impression opportunity wherein a parameterized advertising impression opportunity may be characterized by opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

[0065] In an embodiment of the current invention, a bid may be a parameterized bid.

[0066] In an embodiment of the current invention, the crossing engine may utilize one or more algorithms for selecting a winning bidder.

### Brief Description of Drawings

[0067] Figure 1 illustrates an example of an advertising impression opportunity exchange according to an embodiment of the current invention.

[0068] Figure 2 is a flow chart illustrating an example of an advertising opportunity exchange method according to an embodiment of the current invention.

[0069] Figure 3 illustrates an example of a media buy assignment system according to an embodiment of the current invention.

[0070] Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating an example of a media buy assignment method according to.

[0071] Table 1 of Figure 5 describes a possible set of pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values which may be defined in conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention.

[0072] Table 2 of Figure 6 describes a possible set of bid parameters and related bid parameter values which may be defined in conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention.

[0073] Table 3 of Figure 7 describes a possible set of opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values which may be defined in conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention.

### Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiments

[0074] Figure 1 illustrates an example of an advertising impression opportunity exchange system 100 according to an embodiment of the current invention. In this example, an advertising impression opportunity exchange system 100 enables the use of data forming a pre-specified conditional offer in transactions such as the sale, purchase and/or exchange of advertising audience derivatives associated with an advertising impression opportunity. In an embodiment, the audience derivatives comprise offers to access a number of impression opportunities, or offers to use a number of communication means in some determined conditions of use. In an embodiment, the audience derivatives comprise first sets of data characterizing means for communicating a message in potential conditions of use, wherein the conditions of use comprise data about recipient users of the

means. The pre-specified conditional offer is made by or on behalf of the owner or controller of the advertising audience derivative and comprises an offer to sell, option, barter or exchange one or more advertising impression opportunities. In an embodiment, the pre-specified conditional offer comprise data such as a price, a list of preferred/disliked buyers, etc..., wherein a willingness to accept the price, or the belonging to a list, etc... are generally described as "qualities" to be met by a source user. In an embodiment, the pre-specified conditional offers comprise second sets of data relating to the qualities to be met by source users in order to gain access to means in the first set of data of the audience derivatives. Pre-specified conditional offers are made in advance of the availability of the related actual advertising impression opportunities. According to an embodiment, an advertising audience derivative is a contractual offer of agreement related to the future purchase, optional purchase, use or consumption of an advertising impression opportunity. For example, according to some embodiments of the current invention, a contract related to the sale, purchase, optional purchase or exchange of an advertising impression opportunity could be offered for sale, purchase, and/or exchange on the advertising opportunity exchange as an advertising audience derivative. A contract related to the option of purchasing an advertising impression opportunity is an example of an advertising audience derivative. For example, according to some embodiments of the current invention, an option to purchase an advertising impression opportunity from a particular website or set of websites may be offered for sale, purchase and/or exchange. In some embodiments of the current invention, a futures market for advertising impression opportunities may be established. In some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange may support transactions on a per advertising impression opportunity basis associated with an individual exposure and/or transactions involving bundles of advertising impression opportunities.

[0075] In some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity may or may not comprise a parameterized advertising opportunity. A parameterized advertising impression opportunity is characterized by one or more opportunity parameters and one or more opportunity parameter values. In this case, some or all of the criteria established in the audience derivative's contractual agreement may be

based on the opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values. For example, an opportunity to serve a pop-up advertisement to a user browsing an article on a travel website containing the keywords "Florida Keys" in March when the end-user is a male, aged 18-25 browsing from a location in New York City may have opportunity parameters such as "advertisement type", "publisher type", "content keywords", "browsing date", "gender", "age range" and "browsing location" whereas the corresponding opportunity parameter values may be "pop-up advertisement", "travel website", "Florida Keys", "March", "male", "18-25" and "New York". In some cases, financial transactions related to the purchase of an advertising audience derivative may or may not be executed at the same time as the purchase, use or consumption of the advertising audience derivative. In some cases, the properties of an advertising audience derivative may be defined, identified, estimated, inferred, cross-referenced, calculated or characterized by one or more entities such as, but not limited to, the owner or controller of the advertising audience derivative, one or more elements of the advertising opportunity exchange and/or one or more entities accessed by the advertising opportunity exchange.

[0076] Opportunity parameters may be associated with the target recipient (or advertising impression opportunity target) of the advertising impression opportunity. For example, the target time zone in the subsequent list of examples refers to the time zone associated with the target recipient of the advertising impression opportunity. Examples of opportunity parameters include, but are not limited to: Internet Protocol (IP) address, domain name, proxy usage, keywords, search keywords, keyword phrases, target geographic location, target country, target city, target longitude coordinate, target latitude coordinate, target time zone, target organization, target date, target time, target browser language, target operating system, target internet browser program, toolbars installed on target access system, target visit depth, target page view time, target connection speed, target screen resolution, target breadth of sites visited, target online frequency, target screen coordinates of a click, target click pattern data, target current or projected weather conditions, target current, recent or projected events or holidays associated with a geographic region, target credit rating, target credit report, target demographic profile,

target gender, target education level, target household income range, target personal income range, target ethnicity, target's categorization according to third party measures such as psychographics, target information stored in a cookie, target history, target court records, target directorships, target bankruptcies, target public records, target property records, target judgments, target tax liens, target's business type, target's business size, target's job title, and target's seniority and target's job category, taken alone or in combination.

[0077] Examples of advertising impression opportunities include, but are not limited to: a text advertisement, a search result listing, web advertorial, integrated content, a placement in a search result listing, a placement in a hot list, an interstitial ad, an instant message, a SMS (Simple Message Service) message, a pop-up advertisement, a floating ad, a mouse over ad, animation, an applet, a pop-under advertisement, a banner advertisement, and advertisement embedded in a content stream, an advertisement embedded in a television program, an advertisement interspersed between television programs, an advertisement embedded in music, an advertisement embedded in a web page, an advertisement embedded in a computer game, an advertisement embedded in an online game, an advertisement embedded in a networked game, an audio advertisement, a video advertisement, a multimedia advertisement, video communications and an e-mail advertisement.

[0078] In some cases, one or more of the opportunity parameter values associated with an actual advertising impression opportunities may not be determined until the advertising impression opportunity becomes available. Some embodiments of the current invention may enable a spot market for advertising impression opportunities through the use of parameterized advertising impression opportunities. In some cases, an opportunity parameter value may be determined, inferred, estimated, cross-referenced and/or calculated based on one or more resources such as, but not limited to, external databases, packet header content, cookies, profiles and/or historical data. In some cases, the opportunity parameters and associated opportunity parameter values may characterize the target of the advertising impression. Examples of parameters include, but are not limited to: IP address, domain name, proxy usage, keywords, search keywords, keyword phrases,

target geographic location, target country, target city, target longitude coordinate, target latitude coordinate, target time zone, target organization, target date, target time, target browser language, target operating system, target internet browser program, toolbars installed on target access system, target visit depth, target page view time, target  
5 connection speed, target screen resolution, target breadth of sites visited, target online frequency, target screen coordinates of a click, target click pattern data, target current or projected weather conditions, target current, recent or projected events or holidays associated with a geographic region, target credit rating, target credit report, target demographic profile, target gender, target education level, target income range (both  
10 household and personal), target ethnicity, target's categorization according to third party measures such as psychographics, target information stored in a cookie, target history, target court records, target directorships, target bankruptcies, target public records, target property records, target judgments and target tax liens.

[0079] Bids to purchase control of an audience derivative are characterized by one or  
15 more properties. For example, bids to purchase control of an audience derivative may be dependent on properties associated with the related advertising opportunity's target. According to an embodiment, the bids to purchase audience derivatives comprise a collection of "qualities" of prospective buyers, or source users, to be matched with the "qualities" requested in the offers. According to an embodiment, the bids to purchase one  
20 or more audience derivatives comprise third sets of data relating to the qualities met by the source user willing to gain access to the communication means in desired conditions of use. In some cases, bids are characterized by bid parameters and related bid parameter values. Examples of bid parameters comprise, but are not limited to, maximum bid value, initial bid value, bid algorithm, bid increment, bid currency, minimum lot size for bid,  
25 maximum lot size for bid, bid activation date, bid expiration date, bid premiums and bidder identification. In some cases, prices associated with bids may be characterized in units of currency, such as, but not limited to United States Dollars or Euros. In some cases, prices associated with bids may be characterized in terms of scrip or credits. In some embodiments of the current invention, prices associated with bids may be  
30 characterized by a defined amount of currency, scrip or credits; for example, two dollars



(S2) may be bid for the future purchase of a particular advertising impression opportunity. In some cases, the prices associated with a bid may be established in terms of a range; for example, a price of “up to two dollars” may be bid for the future purchase of a particular advertising impression opportunity, with the expectation that it may be matched with any offer up to, but not exceeding two dollars. However, in some embodiments of the current invention, an indefinite or parameterized bid price may be supported. For example, the value of a bid may be determined according to a bid algorithm and may be dependent on one or more criteria such as, but not limited to, the actual parameter values of the advertising impression opportunity which may or may not be available until the actual advertising impression opportunity becomes available. For example, an advertiser may establish a bid offering to buy advertising opportunities at a price that is proportional to the advertising opportunity target’s cross-referenced credit rating. In some cases, complex functions may govern the bid price. In some cases, bid prices may be based on characteristics associated with the advertising impression opportunity and/or target which may be represented by or related to a score, a goodness of fit value, a statistical value or a level of certainty with respect to one or more opportunity parameters, opportunity parameter values and/or other information.

[0080] According to an embodiment of the current invention, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement on an advertising audience derivative may be based at least in part on a price associated with a winning bid associated with the future purchase of an advertising impression opportunity. However, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement and the bid price are not necessarily identical. For example, depending on the operation of the exchange, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement may or may not incorporate additional charges, fees and/or credits. Furthermore, the amount paid by the purchaser may or may not be equal to the bid price, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement.

[0081] In some embodiments of the current invention, audience derivatives may be re-sold. For example, in some cases, option reselling may be supported. In some cases, the option owner may choose to re-sell the option, even after the advertising impression

opportunity has become available. For example, an option owner may own an option to purchase an advertising impression opportunity characterized by a first set of opportunity parameters and associated opportunity parameter values or ranges. An option may enable an advertiser to preview an advertising impression opportunity once it becomes available but not require the advertiser to purchase the advertising impression opportunity, thereby providing the advertiser with the right of refusal. Depending on the embodiment of the current invention, the option owner may then have one or more choices. In some embodiments of the current invention, choices available to an option owner may comprise:

- 1) consuming or using the advertising impression opportunity;
- 2) selling, trading or bartering the option, thereby enabling another entity to purchase a "second" right of refusal;
- 3) selling, trading or bartering the advertising impression opportunity; and/or
- 4) letting the option expire.

In some cases, when the advertising impression opportunity matching that first set of opportunity parameters and associated opportunity parameter values or ranges becomes available, the option owner may be presented with additional information related to the available advertising impression opportunity. In some cases, advertising opportunity exchanges may place some limitations on the re-sale of options associated with available advertising impression opportunities; for example, in one embodiment of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange may limit the amount of time an option may stay on the market once the advertising impression opportunity becomes available in an attempt to minimize delays between the time the advertising impression opportunity becomes available and the time an advertising impression is served or delivered to the target.

[0082] In some cases, a standardized set of opportunity parameters and associated opportunity parameter values and/or ranges may be established for use in conjunction with the advertising exchange. This may improve the accuracy and efficiency of some advertising exchange operations. For example, in some cases, by providing a standardized way of characterizing advertising opportunities, the process of matching

advertising opportunities, offers and bids may be improved. In some cases, a system utilizing a standardized set of opportunity parameters and associated opportunity parameter values and/or ranges may support the sale and/or re-sale of options and provide option-holders with additional information regarding the available advertising impression opportunities as they become available. In some cases, some or all of the additional information may comprise non-standard parameters and/or non-standard parameter values or ranges, thereby supporting the ability of an advertiser to select advertising impression opportunities based, at least in part, on non-standard parameters and non-standard parameter values or ranges. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, the additional information regarding the available advertising impression opportunities as they become available may comprise standard parameters, standard parameter values and/or a descriptive text field.

**[0083]** In one embodiment of the current invention, advertisers and/or advertising content may be vetted in advance. For example, in some cases, a publisher may be able to assert some degree of editorial control over the source and/or content of advertisements delivered to their targets. In some cases, a publisher may approve or reject advertisements based on one or more criteria such as, but not limited to, the advertiser, keywords in the advertisement and/or the types of products and/or services provided and/or specific advertising creative and/or messages.

**[0084]** In Figure 1, an embodiment of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange 100, comprises a database system 110 for storing and/or accessing bids and pre-specified conditional offers associated with audience derivatives of an advertising impression opportunity and a crossing engine system 120 for establishing matches between audience derivatives, bids and pre-specified conditional offers, thereby enabling the identification of a winning bidder. In this example, the crossing engine system supports the prioritization of multiple matches. However, in some cases, the crossing engine system may support the prioritization of multiple matches alone or in conjunction with input and/or systems external to the crossing engine system 120 and/or external to the opportunity exchange 100. For example, in some embodiments of the current invention, prioritization of multiple matches may be supported wholly or in part by an

optional prioritization system which may reside wholly or partially internal to the crossing engine 120, external to the crossing engine 120 but internal to the opportunity exchange 100 and/or external to the crossing engine 120 and external to the opportunity exchange 100. In this example, an optional advertising clearinghouse system 130  
5 manages the financial transactions associated with matches and enables the winning bidder to take possession of the audience derivative. In some cases, the optional advertising clearinghouse system may enable a winning bidder to consume an advertising impression opportunity. For example, in some cases, an advertising clearinghouse may provide redirection services, enabling an advertiser to provide an advertisement to an end  
10 user, thereby consuming an advertising impression opportunity. In some cases the clearinghouse may provide advertisement delivery and servicing services.

[0085] A pre-specified conditional offer is characterized by one or more pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values or parameter ranges; a pre-specified conditional offer comprises and offer to provide an  
15 advertising impression opportunity or an audience derivative based on an advertising impression opportunity in advance of the availability of the advertising impression opportunity. Examples of conditional offer parameters may include, but are not limited to: minimum acceptable price, set of unacceptable advertisers, set of acceptable advertisers, minimum acceptable sale volume, set of acceptable ad unit types, set of  
20 acceptable ad unit sizes, opportunity parameters, advertiser type, and advertisement rating. In some cases, the database system 110 may be a local, remote or distributed system. According to some embodiments of the current invention, the database system 110 is coupled to the crossing engine system 120 and provides the crossing engine system 120 with access to pre-specified conditional offers. In some cases, the database system  
25 110 may interact with other external database systems and/or systems such as external database system 270; for example, in some cases, database system 110 may support cross-exchange and/or trade-through transactions by interacting with remote databases and/or systems. In some cases, the database system 110 may store both the bids and the pre-specified conditional offers. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, the  
30 pre-specified conditional offers may be received by the crossing engine system 120 from

another local or remote resource such as, but not limited to, another local or remote database, program or system such as external system 280.

[0086] According to an embodiment of the current invention, crossing engine system 120 is coupled to database system 110 and advertising clearinghouse system 130. Crossing engine system 120 accesses or receives data associated with audience derivatives, bids and pre-specified conditional offers associated with audience derivatives and identifies three-way matches between audience derivatives, pre-specified conditional offers and bids according to a matching algorithm. In Figure 1, an optional matching algorithm 121 is illustrated inside the crossing engine system 120. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, a matching algorithm may be distributed across two or more systems. In some cases, a matching algorithm may be supported wholly or in part on an external or remote system. Depending on the configuration of the embodiment of the current invention, data may be received and/or accessed from a variety of internal resources, such as, but not limited to database system 110 and/or external resources such as, but not limited to, external databases, programs and/or external systems. According to an embodiment of the current invention, pre-specified crossing engines support the identification of multiple matches per pre-specified conditional offer. A variety of different matching algorithms may be used in conjunction with various embodiments of the current invention. For example, in some cases, the order in which the crossing engine system 120 identifies matches may be used to prioritize matches; in some cases, the first match identified by the crossing engine system 120 may be used to complete an exchange transaction. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, multiple matches may be identified and then prioritized according to a variety of criteria. For example, in some cases, bids and/or offers may be prioritized based on the time stamp associated with the initiation of the bids and/or offers; in some cases, priority may be determined, at least in part, based on the number of outstanding bids and/or offers associated with an entity on the exchange such as, but not limited to, an advertiser, market participant or publisher. In some cases, additional information such as, but not limited to publisher profiles, market participant profiles and advertiser profiles may be used to determine priority. Note that in

some cases, when multiple matches may be identified and prioritized, some embodiments of the current invention may or may not necessarily evaluate all possible bids and offers.

[0087] According to embodiments of the current invention, various examples of matching algorithms may be configured to optimize various conditions. For example, in some cases, a matching algorithm may be configured to maximize revenue for one or more entities such as, but not limited to, publishers and/or the advertising opportunity exchange operator. In another example, an advertiser may have multiple concurrent advertising campaigns and register multiple bids related to the various advertising campaigns. In this case, it may be possible that multiple matches are established between a single bidder and a pre-specified conditional offer associated with an audience derivative; in this case, the matching algorithm may be configured to optimize for some parameter related to and/or configured by the advertiser. Examples of parameters that may be considered in this case include, but are not limited to: target's degree of prior exposure to each advertising campaign (i.e. the number of times that the target has been exposed to a set of advertising content), the expiration date associated with the bid, the estimated number of future advertising opportunities associated with a particular target per advertising campaign, the estimated number of future advertising opportunities associated with other new targets per advertising campaign, the estimated number of future advertising opportunities associated with other known targets per advertising campaign and campaign account balances.

[0088] According to embodiments of the current invention, a matching algorithm may be used to prioritize matches. For example, in some embodiments of the current invention, the crossing engine uses and/or accesses a matching algorithm to identify and/or prioritize three-way matches. In order to maintain responsiveness in the system, the process of matching should be automated and rapid. However, in some embodiments of the current invention, various entities may want to establish limits and/or monitors on various processes to ensure that a particular configuration does not lead to unwanted results. In some cases, this may be accomplished using a reporting module by running various reports, analyzing them and then adjusting configuration parameters such as, but not limited to, the configuration of the matching algorithm, publisher profiles, advertiser

profiles, exchange operator profiles and/or market participant profiles. In another case, a market participant may choose to adjust their conditional bids and/or pre-specified conditional offers. In some cases, optional automated monitors may be used to instrument the system and/or to detect, report and/or respond to various conditions. For example, an advertiser may want to insure that bids associated with a one month advertising campaign result in the purchase of advertising opportunities which are spread out over the month. In this case, a monitor may be configured to detect when a daily quota is met. In some cases, once the daily quota condition is met, an automated system may then notify the advertiser, establish a very low priority for the campaign's bids and/or deactivate the campaign related bids until the following day.

[0089] According to some embodiments of the current invention, an optional advertising clearinghouse system 130 is coupled to crossing engine system 120. Optional advertising clearinghouse system 130 resolves financial transactions associated with matches, thereby enabling winning bidders to take possession of an audience derivative. For example, in some cases, the optional advertising clearinghouse system 130 may enable an advertiser to consume an advertising impression opportunity, resulting in an exposure. In some cases, exposures may be delivered over the Internet using a version of Internet Protocol (IP) such as, but not limited to, IP version 4 and IP version 6. For example, the advertising clearinghouse system 130 may transfer instructions for accessing a purchased advertising impression opportunity from a publisher to an advertiser. In some cases, an advertising clearinghouse system 130 may receive data regarding the match such as, but not limited to, the specified price associated with a match or the price associated with a contractual agreement associated with a match and initiate the appropriate transfer of funds, credits or resources from the winning bidder to the entity offering the parameterized advertising impression opportunity or opportunities.

[0090] Note that in some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising impression opportunity and/or related audience derivative may be sold and re-sold; as a result, an entity offering a parameterized advertising impression opportunity may or may not be the publisher associated with the opportunity. For example, it is common for publishers to price and/or sell advertising opportunities in terms of "cost per thousand",

also known as "CPM". In this paradigm, a publisher may sell large blocks of one thousands opportunities or more. In some cases, these opportunities are poorly characterized; for example, an online newspaper may sell a large block of advertising opportunities related to the Sports page of their online publications associated with a particular timeframe, such as the month of May. Another entity such as a market participant may purchase this large block and subdivide it for re-sale or option. As the advertising opportunities become available, they may be characterized according to parameters and related parameter values and offered for sale and/or option. For example, in this case, a market participant who has purchased the large block of advertising opportunities may be able to access, estimate or infer parameter values associated with various parameters based on a variety of resources such as, but not limited to, cookies, user agents and hypertext transfer protocol (http) requests received when the advertising opportunity becomes available. In other cases, optional elements internal and/or external to various embodiments of the current invention may participate in and/or manage the step of identifying parameters and related parameter values to partially characterized or uncharacterized advertising opportunities; similarly, optional elements internal and/or external to various embodiments the current invention may participate in or manage the step of deleting, adding and/or altering parameters and/or parameter values associated with parameterized advertising opportunities and/or audience derivatives. In this paradigm, advertising opportunities and/or advertising opportunity futures associated with a publisher may be exchanged on the advertising exchange (an embodiment of the current invention) without requiring the publisher to change their business processes or technology platforms.

[0091] An embodiment according to the current invention may support operation in conjunction with previously unknown or unidentified targets. For example, an unregistered and previously unknown or uncharacterized end user may visit a publisher's website using an internet browser. In an embodiment of the current invention, transactions involving advertising impression opportunities associated with exposures to that end user may be executed without requiring a priori knowledge of the end user, an advertising impression opportunity target. In this example, no pre-registration is required,



thereby enabling some embodiments of the current invention to operate with impromptu website visitors.

[0092] In some cases, a variety of systems may be coupled to an embodiment of the current invention. In Figure 1, several example systems are coupled to an example of the current invention through Internet 230. However, note that systems may be coupled to an embodiment of the current invention through other mechanisms such as, but not limited to: intranets, local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WAN), optical networks, synchronous connections, asynchronous connections, local cabling, phone lines and/or server backplanes.

[0093] An ordering system may be coupled to some embodiments of the current invention. For example, in Figure 1, optional ordering system 290 is coupled to advertising exchange 100 through the internet 230. In this example, the ordering system is responsible for receiving audience derivative related orders such as bids and/or offers and registering them with the advertising exchange 100 so that the relevant tables may be updated in database system 110 and/or other related systems. In some cases, user interfaces may be available to entities such as, but not limited to, advertisers 200, publishers 210 and market participants 300 thereby enabling these entities to configure and submit bids and/or offers. In some cases, entities may be enabled to review, monitor, alter and/or delete bids and/or offers through an ordering system. In some cases the ordering system may enable options owners to exercise their options. In some cases, entities such as, but not limited to, advertisers 200, publishers 210 and market participants 300 may be able to establish profiles and/or business rules which may be used in conjunction with some embodiments of the current invention.

[0094] According to some embodiments of the current invention, an optional management system may be coupled to the advertising exchange. In Figure 1, optional management system 230 is coupled to advertising exchange 100 through the internet 230. However, in other some embodiments of the current invention, some or all of a management system may be locally coupled to the advertising exchange, remote to the advertising exchange and/or distributed across multiple locations. In some cases, a management system may comprise a variety of modules such as, but not limited to: a

configuration module for configuring and/or reconfiguring one or more elements of the advertising exchange, a security module for preventing illegal access and/or fraud, a maintenance module for proactive management of the advertising exchange, a monitoring module for identifying hardware, networking and/or software problems, and/or a back-up, roll-over or redundancy module.

[0095] An optional reporting system may be coupled to some embodiments of the current invention. In Figure 1, optional reporting system 260 is coupled to advertising exchange 100 through the internet 230. In some embodiments of the current invention, the reporting system may enable the generation of reports such as, but not limited to, transaction status reports per entity such as, but not limited to, publisher, advertiser, market participant and/or advertising opportunity target. In some cases, the content and/or availability of the reports may reflect the configuration of other entities such as, but not limited to, in part, a security module and/or a profile. In some cases, system wide reports may be generated. In some cases, reports may reflect data associated with multiple entities. For example, in some cases, a report may document completed exchange transactions sorted by the price paid by the advertiser, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement.

[0096] According to some embodiments of the current invention, the operator of the exchange may profit from its operation. For example, an advertising opportunity exchange may charge fees according to a variety of paradigms such as, but not limited to, charging entities according to a percentage of the price paid by the advertiser, the specified price or the price associated with the contractual agreement, a flat fee per completed transaction, a flat fee to submit a bid and/or offer, a time based subscription. Depending on the implementation, entities registering bids and/or offers may or may not know the actual cost and/or value of a winning bid. For example, in one paradigm, a bidder may bid one dollar fifty cents (\$1.50) for a parameterized advertising opportunity; the crossing engine may match that bidder with an offer available for one dollar (\$1), enabling the exchange operator to satisfy both entities and keep a profit of fifty cents (\$0.50). In this paradigm, the exchange operator may or may not reveal the actual values associated with the transactions.

[0097] In some embodiments of the current invention, the exchange may or may not assume various risks. For example, in some cases, the exchange may establish matches between entities; however some embodiments of the current invention may not support the purchase or sale of audience derivatives on their own behalf. In this case, the exchange does not absorb the risk associated with owning an inventory of audience derivatives. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, the exchange may support the purchase and/or sale of audience derivatives on its own behalf. For example, in this case, an exchange may purchase an audience derivative with the intention of selling, trading or bartering the audience derivative with another entity; depending on the ability of the exchange to dispose of the audience derivative inventory and the terms of the subsequent transactions, the exchange may or may not benefit from the ability to maintain an inventory. For example, in some cases, a trade between a bidder and an offerer may be executed as a single transaction between the two entities with the exchange enabling the transaction. However, in other embodiments of the current invention, a trade between a bidder and an offerer may be executed as two one-sided transactions with the exchange: for example, the exchange may first purchase an audience derivative from a publisher and then later re-sell it to an advertiser. If the purchase price associated with the audience derivative is different from the selling price, the exchange may or may not benefit from assuming this risk. Furthermore, some audience derivatives are time sensitive and may expire. For example, in some cases, an audience derivative such as, but not limited to, a futures option may comprise an expiration timestamp for identifying when the owner incurs an obligation for purchasing any portion of unused inventory. If the exchange maintains an inventory, it may incur losses due to expired audience derivatives.

[0098] According to some embodiments of the current invention, an advertising opportunity exchange may be used in conjunction with a variety of paradigms such as, but not limited to: auctions, reverse-auctions, Dutch auctions, English auctions, sealed auctions, procurement auctions and/or proxy auctions.

[0099] Figure 2 is a flow chart illustrating an example of an advertising opportunity exchange method according to an embodiment of the current invention. The method

begins when an advertising opportunity exchange accesses properties associated with an advertising impression opportunity (Step 250). Some or all of the properties may be accessed once the advertising impression opportunity is available. In some cases, one or more properties may have been accessed or available in advance of the availability of the advertising impression opportunity. The advertising impression opportunity may be partially or fully characterized; in some cases, the advertising impression opportunity may be characterized with opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values. Characterization of an advertising impression opportunity may be based, in part, on the target and/or conditions of the of the advertising impression opportunity and may or may not be inferred, estimated, calculated and/or cross-referenced. The advertising opportunity exchange may access properties associated with an advertising impression opportunities in a variety of ways and/or from a variety of sources. For example, in some cases, the data may be retrieved from and/or received from one or more local and/or remote databases and/or systems.

[0100] The method continues when an advertising opportunity exchange accesses a pre-specified conditional offer associated with an audience derivative (Step 255). The audience derivative comprises a contractual agreement related to the future purchase of an advertising impression opportunity. In some cases, the contractual agreement may specify the future sale, barter, exchange and/or purchase of one or more advertising impression opportunities and/or options related to one or more advertising impression opportunities. A pre-specified conditional offer comprises an offer to sell, option, barter or exchange one or more advertising impression opportunities. The pre-specified conditional offer has been specified or characterized, at least in part, in advance of the availability of the advertising impression opportunity. The pre-specified conditional offer is characterized, at least in part, based on pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values. In some cases, pricing related pre-specified conditional offer parameters such as, but not limited to, the offer price, the initial offer price and/or the minimum offer price may be indeterminate and/or parameterized. In some cases, pricing related pre-specified conditional offer parameter

values may be partially or fully evaluated based on a variety of variables such as, but not limited to opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

[0101] The method continues when an advertising opportunity exchange accesses properties associated with one or more bids to purchase one or more audience derivatives  
5 (Step 260).

[0102] The method continues when the crossing engine identifies three-way matches between an advertising impression opportunity, a bid and a pre-specified conditional offer (Step 265). In some cases, matching may be based in part or wholly on opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values and/or pre-specified conditional  
10 offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values. In some examples, the crossing engine may be configured with and/or make use of a matching algorithm to identify and/or prioritize matches.

[0103] The method continues when the matches are prioritized (Step 270). In some cases, the step of prioritization may be supported partially or wholly by the crossing  
15 engine. However, in other cases, the step of prioritization may be supported partially or wholly by entities external to the crossing engine and/or the advertising opportunity exchange. A variety of algorithms may be used in the step of prioritization.

[0104] Optionally, the method continues when an advertising clearinghouse manages the financial transactions associated with matches and enables a winning bidder to take  
20 possession of audience derivatives (Step 275). In some cases, the advertising clearinghouse may provide advertisement redirection services, enabling a winning bidder to consume an advertising impression opportunity.

#### **Advertising Opportunity Exchange Example**

[0105] For the purposes of illustration, the following paragraph discusses one example of  
25 a transaction supported by an advertising opportunity exchange, an embodiment of the current invention. Consider a first advertiser willing to pay high fees for internet advertising opportunities specifically targeting ice hockey fans in the San Jose, California area. Consider a second advertiser, generally interested in targeting American sports fans,  
30 who has already purchased a large volume of advertising opportunities for a specific

timeframe associated with the website of an online sports website typically featuring articles covering a variety of sports events in a variety of American sports venues. The second advertiser paid one American dollar (\$1) per advertising opportunity and now owns a large inventory of partially characterized advertising opportunities. The second advertiser is willing to sell some portion of that inventory, but only if the resale price is more than twice the purchase price, or two dollars (\$2) per advertising opportunity. In conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention, the second advertiser may define a pre-specified conditional offer with pre-specified conditional offer parameters and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter values as described in Table 1 of Figure 5. In conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention, the first advertiser may define a bid to purchase audience derivatives as described in Table 2 of Figure 6. When an advertising opportunity owned by the second advertiser becomes available, the online sports magazine may provide that opportunity to the second advertiser who may choose to offer the opportunity as identified in the pre-specified conditional offer through an example of an advertising opportunity exchange according to an embodiment of the current invention. In some cases, some of the properties associated with the advertising opportunity may be passed along by the publisher such as, but not limited to, the advertisement type, the date stamp, a viewer's IP address, and cookie information. According to some embodiments of the current invention, opportunity parameters and related opportunity values may be accessed, inferred, cross-referenced, calculated and/or estimated based wholly or in part on the available properties. In some cases, this relieves the publisher and/or the second advertiser from the burden of characterizing the advertising opportunity, possibly easing integration of existing technologies, operating paradigms and/or workflows with various embodiments of the current invention. Table 3 of Figure 7 describes a possible set of opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values which may describe an available advertising impression opportunity in conjunction with an embodiment of the current invention. In some cases, some of the opportunity parameters may not be available until after the advertising impression opportunity becomes available. For example, in this case, a Booster Club Database may contain a listing of members of a booster club associated with the San Jose based hockey

team which may be cross-referenced with a cookie or viewer ID associated with a target recipient of an advertising impression opportunity. For example, the results of a viewer ID Cross-Reference to Booster Club Database may not be available until after the advertising impression opportunity becomes available and a target cookie or target viewer ID is made available to help further characterize the advertising impression opportunity. In one example, an embodiment of the current invention may identify pre-specified conditional offer(s) related to the available advertising opportunity and access the properties associated with one or more bids. In this example, the crossing engine identifies and prioritizes three-way matches between the available advertising opportunity, the related pre-specified conditional offer and one or more bids. In this example, the advertising opportunity exchange works in conjunction with an automated auction paradigm, and the step of identifying matches incorporates managing the automated auction between bidders based on the initial bids, bid increments and maximum bids defined by the bidders.

#### **Media Buy Assignment Example**

[0106] Figure 3 illustrates an example of a media buy assignment system 310 according to one embodiment of the current invention. A media buy assignment system is a limited example of an advertising opportunity exchange. According to an embodiment of the current invention, a media buy assignment system 310 enables transactions between media buy accounts such as enabling an available advertising impression opportunity to be traded, purchased or exchanged between two media buy accounts. According to an embodiment of the current invention, a media buy account comprises a set of advertising impression opportunities purchased in advance of their availability wherein the media buy account is owned by one or more assignees. In the example illustrated in Figure 3, media buy assignment system 310 comprises a database system 311, a media buy assignment crossing engine 312 coupled to the database system 311 and an optional media buy assignment clearinghouse system 313 coupled to the media buy assignment crossing engine 312.

[0107] According to an embodiment of the current invention, database system 311 stores data and/or relationships related to media buy accounts such as, but not limited to, media buy assignees, media buy assets, media buy account balances and/or media buy account profiles. Media buy assignment crossing engine 312 receives information regarding available advertising impression opportunities associated with media buy accounts and identifies matches between the available advertising impression opportunities and media buy accounts for potential re-assignment. Optional media buy assignment clearinghouse system 313 manages financial and credit transactions related to re-assignment operations.

[0108] In one embodiment of the current invention, media buy assignees authorize a media buy management system to optimize their advertising campaigns through transactions such as, but not limited to, sales, purchases and/or exchanges of advertising opportunities between different media buy accounts. In some cases, these exchanges may be subject to certain limitations. For example, in some cases, only transactions between accounts owned or co-owned by the same assignees may be authorized. In other embodiments of the current invention, only transactions of advertising opportunities associated with the same publisher, publication, web site and/or web page may be authorized. In some cases, certain transactions may be disallowed such as transactions between certain sets of assignees identified as competitors.

[0109] According to one embodiment of the current invention, a media buy management system receives information regarding an available advertising opportunity associated with a first media buy account and assesses the available advertising opportunity to determine if it should be re-assigned to a second media buy account. Optionally, the system may execute a re-assignment and enable an assignee associated with a second media buy to consume the advertising opportunity.

[0110] In one embodiment of the current invention, the media buy system may manage financial accounting related to advertising opportunity re-assignment. For example, in some cases, an advertising opportunity may be characterized by value and the media buy system may manage credits and debits based on that value related to re-assignment. In some cases, the value of an advertising impression opportunity may be expressed in terms of credits and/or currency. Asynchronous exchanges of advertising impression



opportunities between media buy accounts may be enabled by enabling account balances to fluctuate based on both advertising impression opportunity trade and advertising impression opportunity consumption. In some cases, a media buy assignment system may track multiple balances per media buy account. For example, in one embodiment of the current invention, a media buy assignment system may track one or more of the following balances on a per media buy account basis: the total number of advertising impression opportunities purchased, the total number of advertising impression opportunities consumed, the total number of advertising impression opportunities re-assigned out of the account, the total number of advertising impression opportunities re-assigned into the account, the total value of advertising impression opportunities purchased, the total value of advertising impression opportunities consumed, the individual value of each consumed advertising impression opportunity, the total value of advertising impression opportunities re-assigned out of the account, the individual value of each advertising impression opportunity re-assigned out of the account, the total value of advertising impression opportunities re-assigned into the account and/or the individual value of each advertising impression opportunity re-assigned into the account. A simple embodiment of the current invention may support media buy accounts wherein each media buy account maintains a balance of advertising impression opportunities and transactions may be executed in terms of advertising impression opportunities. For example, the re-assignment of an advertising impression opportunity from a first media buy account to a second media buy account may result in the decrement of a single advertising impression opportunity from the balance of the second media buy account. In some cases, more complex transactions may be enabled.

[0111] In some embodiments of the current invention, the balances of various media buy accounts may be monitored and the status of the accounts may be used, in part, to assess advertising opportunities for re-assignment and/or to prioritize potential re-assignments. In some cases, it may be desirable to prevent too many advertising impression opportunities from being re-assigned out of a particular account. For example, if a particular advertising campaign has an expiration date, re-assigning too many advertising impression opportunities out of an account near its expiration date may result in an

account with a large balance of advertising opportunities at the time of its expiration. This could result in missing the goals of an advertising campaign. Similarly, re-assigning too many advertising impression opportunities into an account early in the lifecycle of an advertising campaign may result in the early depletion of advertising impression opportunities, possibly missing an advertising campaign goal of providing exposure over time. In some cases, this may be addressed through a variety of mechanisms such as, configuration of the media buy assignment crossing engine, configuration of a selection algorithm associated with the media buy assignment crossing engine and/or profiles and/or parameters established by media buy assignees.

**[0112]** In some embodiments of the current invention, the step of assessing the available advertising opportunity may comprise characterizing the available advertising opportunity. For example, the available advertising opportunity may be characterized with opportunity parameters and related opportunity values and/or accessing characterizations of the available advertising opportunity. For example, in some cases, opportunity parameter values may be determined, accessed and/or estimated internal or external to an embodiment of the current invention. In some cases, the characterization may describe the target of the available advertising opportunity.

**[0113]** In some embodiments of the current invention, assignees of media buys may establish focus parameters and related focus parameter values which may be used to identify particularly desirable advertising opportunities. Focus parameters and related focus parameter values may characterize elements such as, but not limited to, an ideal target audience, an ideal publisher, advertising campaign and/or ideal conditions for the delivery of their advertisement and may or may not be established on a per media buy account basis. In some cases, focus parameters and related focus parameter values may be used to assess elements such as, but not limited to the target audience, an individual target and/or a publisher with respect to their history or projected future. For example, a particular advertiser may wish to assess the desirability of an advertising opportunity based on the prior exposure to an advertisement per individual target or the estimated level of future opportunities to serve an advertisement to an individual target.

[0114] In some embodiments of the current invention, the media buy assignment crossing engine 312 may assess an available advertising opportunity and may identify, prioritize and/or validate potential re-assignment matches. In some cases, more than one potential re-assignment match may be identified; in some cases, when multiple re-assignment matches are identified, an embodiment of the current invention may prioritize the potential re-assignment matches. In some cases, the step of identifying and/or selecting potential re-assignment matches may be done based, at least in part, on a selection algorithm. In some cases, the step of identifying and/or selecting potential re-assignment may take into account a variety of considerations such as, but not limited to, media buy assignee preferences and/or media buy assignment system manager preferences. For example, in some cases, the media buy assignment system may put caps and/or limits on media buy assignee accounts and/or take into consideration the expiration date associated with media buys and/or campaigns.

[0115] In some embodiments of the current invention, valid exchanges between media buy accounts may be limited. For example, it is envisioned that in one embodiment of the current invention, exchanges of media buys may be limited to exchanges between media buy accounts which are owned or co-owned by a single assignee. In this embodiment of the current invention, a single assignee may own or co-own multiple media buy accounts. In this example, an embodiment of the current invention may assist in optimizing the usage of an individual assignee's media buy assets across multiple media buy accounts. In other embodiments of the current invention, media buy exchanges may be limited to exchanges between sets of trusted assignees. Another embodiment of the current invention may limit re-assignment transactions to re-assignments of media buys between assignees owning advertising impression opportunities associated with the same publisher. For example, in this case, an incoming advertising impression opportunity for a particular publisher, web site and/or web page may be traded between media buy accounts comprising advertising impression opportunities associated with the same particular publisher, web site and/or web page.

[0116] Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating an example of a media buy assignment method according to an embodiment of the current invention. The method begins when a media

buy assignment system receives information about an available advertising impression opportunity related to a media buy account (Step 350). The media buy assignment system assesses the available advertising impression opportunity for re-assignment to another media buy account (Step 352). Optionally, the media buy assignment system changes the media buy account associated with the available advertising impression opportunity according to the results of Step 352 (Step 354). Optionally, the media buy assignment system manages financial transactions associated with changing media buy accounts, thereby enabling the new media buy account assignee to consume the available advertising impression opportunity (Step 356).

[0117] The order of the steps in the foregoing described methods of the invention are not intended to limit the invention; the steps may be rearranged.

[0118] Foregoing described embodiments of the invention are provided as illustrations and descriptions. They are not intended to limit the invention to precise form described. In particular, it is contemplated that functional implementation of invention described herein may be implemented equivalently in hardware, software, firmware, and/or other available functional components or building blocks, and that networks may be wired, wireless, or a combination of wired and wireless. Other variations and embodiments are possible in light of above teachings, and it is thus intended that the scope of invention not be limited by this Detailed Description, but rather by Claims following.

Claims

We claim:

1. A method for enabling source users to gain access to means for communicating  
5 messages to selected recipient users, the method comprising:
  - establishing at least one first set of data characterizing at least one of a plurality of  
means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions  
of use, wherein the conditions of use comprise data about a recipient user of the means;
  - establishing at least one second set of data relating to a number of qualities to be  
10 met by at least one of a group of source users in order to gain access to at least one of the  
plurality of means of the at least first set of data;
  - establishing at least one third set of data relating to a number of qualities met by at  
least one source user willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in  
desired conditions of use; accessing data associated with the actual conditions of use of at  
15 least one of the plurality of means once the at least one of a plurality of means becomes  
used;
  - accessing at least one of the second set of data;
  - accessing at least one of the third set of data; and
  - identifying three-way matches between a number of qualities to be met by at least  
20 one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means in  
potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of at least one of a plurality of  
means and a number of qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing  
to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and,
  - prioritizing matches according to predetermined rules to determine if at least one  
25 of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use match  
at least one of a plurality of means in conditions of use desired by at least one of a group  
of source users, and if the at least one of a group of source users match the qualities to  
gain access to the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one condition of use of at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message allows communicating a message individually to a recipient user.

5 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the second set of data is associated with a bundle of two or more means for communicating a message in a potential condition of use that each allow communicating a message individually to recipient users.

10 4. The method of claim 1, comprising characterizing the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message and the conditions of use of said means with opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

15 5. The method of claim 4 wherein one quality to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to the at least one of the plurality of means comprises accepting to pay at least an offer price; said offer price being a function of one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

20 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means comprise accepting an options contract related to the optional future payment for gaining access to at least one of the plurality of means in potential conditions of use.

25 7. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one condition of use of at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message to a recipient user comprises an inferred demographic profile of the recipient user.

30 8. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one condition of use of at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message to a recipient user comprises a known demographic profile of the recipient user.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the qualities met by at least one of the group of source users to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use comprise bid data characterized by one or more bid parameters and one or more related bid parameter values.

5

10. The method of claim 9 wherein one or more bid parameters are selected from the list of: maximum bid value, initial bid value, bid algorithm, bid increment, bid currency, minimum lot size for bid, maximum lot size for bid, bid activation date, bid expiration date, bid premium and bidder identification.

10

11. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one first set of data characterizing at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use includes a futures contract comprising a contractual agreement related to the required future purchase at a specified price of the access to at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential condition of uses; the means and the conditions of use meeting one or more criteria.

15

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the contractual agreement comprises:

a requirement for the future purchase of inventory comprising a plurality of accesses to at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use meeting one or more criteria; and,

an expiration timestamp for identifying when obligation occurs for the specified price for any portion of the inventory associated with the contractual agreement which remains unused when the expiration timestamp expires.

20

25

13. The method of claim 1, comprising characterizing at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use with at least one pre-specified conditional offer parameter and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter value.

30

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data is a function of at least one pre-specified conditional offer parameter and related pre-specified conditional offer parameter value.

5

15. The method of claim 1, wherein a match may be characterized by a goodness-of-fit value.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data is a function of the goodness-of-fit value.

10

17. The method of claim 1 wherein the price associated with the contractual agreement of the first set of data is evaluated once the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message becomes used.

15

18. The method of claim 4 wherein one or more opportunity parameters and related opportunity values are associated with the individual target recipient user using the parameterized at least one of a plurality of means, and wherein at least one of the opportunity values may be identified once the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message becomes used.

20

19. The method of claim 18 wherein one or more opportunity parameters are selected from the list of: Internet Protocol (IP) address, domain name, proxy usage, keywords, search keywords, keyword phrases, target geographic location, target country, target city, target longitude coordinate, target latitude coordinate, target time zone, target organization, target date, target time, target browser language, target operating system, target internet browser program, toolbars installed on target access system, target visit depth, target page view time, target connection speed, target screen resolution, target browsing history, target breadth of sites visited, target online frequency, target screen coordinates of a click, target click pattern data, target current or projected weather

25

30



conditions, target current, recent or projected events or holidays associated with a geographic region, target credit rating, target credit report, target demographic profile, target gender, target education level target household income range, target personal income range, target ethnicity, target's categorization according to third party measures ,  
5 target information stored in a cookie, target history, target court records, target directorships, target bankruptcies, target public records, target property records, target judgments, target tax liens, target's business type, target's business size, target's job title, target's seniority and target's job category.

10 20. The method of claim 4 wherein one or more opportunity parameter values are inferred or estimated or calculated.

15 21. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message comprises a user interface provided for handling one of: a text advertisement, a search result listing, web advertorial, integrated content, a placement in a search result listing, a placement in a hot list, an interstitial ad, an instant message, a SMS (Simple Message Service) message, a pop-up advertisement, a floating ad, a mouse over ad, content feed, animation, an applet, a pop-under advertisement, a banner advertisement, an advertisement embedded in a web page, an advertisement embedded in  
20 a computer game, an advertisement embedded in an online game, an advertisement embedded in a content stream, an advertisement embedded in music, an advertisement embedded in a networked game, an audio advertisement, a video advertisement, a multimedia advertisement, video communications and an e-mail advertisement.

25 22. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message enables the delivery of advertising content to an individual advertising impression opportunity target over the Internet.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message enables the delivery of advertising content to an individual target recipient user over a network using Internet Protocol (IP).

5 24. The method of claim 1, at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message provides one or more elements selected from the set of: a television ad and an advertisement embedded in a television program.

10 25. The method of claim 1 wherein the qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means characterized in the at least first set of data comprise one or more of:

15 accepting a minimum offer price; not being part of a set of unacceptable advertisers; being part of a set of acceptable advertisers; accepting a set of ad unit types; accepting a set of ad unit sizes; accepting a minimum sale volume; complying with predetermined parameters; complying with a predetermined advertiser type; complying with a predetermined advertisement rating.

20 26. The method of claim 1 wherein gaining access to at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message comprises: buying, selling, trading or bartering a right to communicate a message to the target recipient user using the means for communicating a message.

25 27. A system for enabling source users to gain access to means for communicating messages to selected recipient users by implementing a method according to any of claims 1 to 26.

28. A system according to claim 27, comprising:  
a database system for storing:

at least one first set of data characterizing at least one of a plurality of means

for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use, wherein the conditions of use comprise data about a recipient user of the means;

at least one second set of data relating to a number of qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users in order to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means of the at least first set of data; and

at least one third set of data relating to a number of qualities met by at least one source user willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and

a crossing engine coupled to the database system and provided for:

accessing data associated with the actual conditions of use of at least one of the plurality of means once the at least one of a plurality of means becomes used;

accessing at least one of the second set of data;

accessing at least one of the third set of data;

identifying three-way matches between a number of qualities to be met by at least one of a group of source users to gain access to at least one of the plurality of means in potential conditions of use, the actual conditions of use of at least one of a plurality of means and a number of qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use; and,

prioritizing matches according to predetermined rules to determine if at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use match at least one of a plurality of means in conditions of use desired by at least one of a group of source users, and if the at least one of a group of source users match the qualities to gain access to the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

29. The system of claim 28 further comprising:

an advertising clearinghouse system for managing a financial transactions associated with a matches and for enabling a selected source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use to communicate a message with the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use; or dispose of the right of communicating a

message with said means; wherein the advertising clearinghouse system is coupled to the crossing engine system.

5 30. The system of claim 28 wherein at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in at least one of a plurality of potential conditions of use is parameterized and is characterized by opportunity parameters and related opportunity parameter values.

10 31. The system of claim 28 wherein the qualities met by at least one of the group of source users willing to gain access to at least one of a plurality of means in desired conditions of use comprise providing bid data characterized by one or more bid parameters and one or more related bid parameter values.

15 32. The system of claim 28 wherein the advertising clearinghouse provides an advertising redirection service, thereby enabling a selected source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use to communicate a message with the at least one of a plurality of means for communicating a message in its actual conditions of use;

20 33. The system of claim 28 wherein the crossing engine utilizes one or more algorithms for selecting a source user matching the qualities to access the at least one of a plurality of means in its actual conditions of use.

25

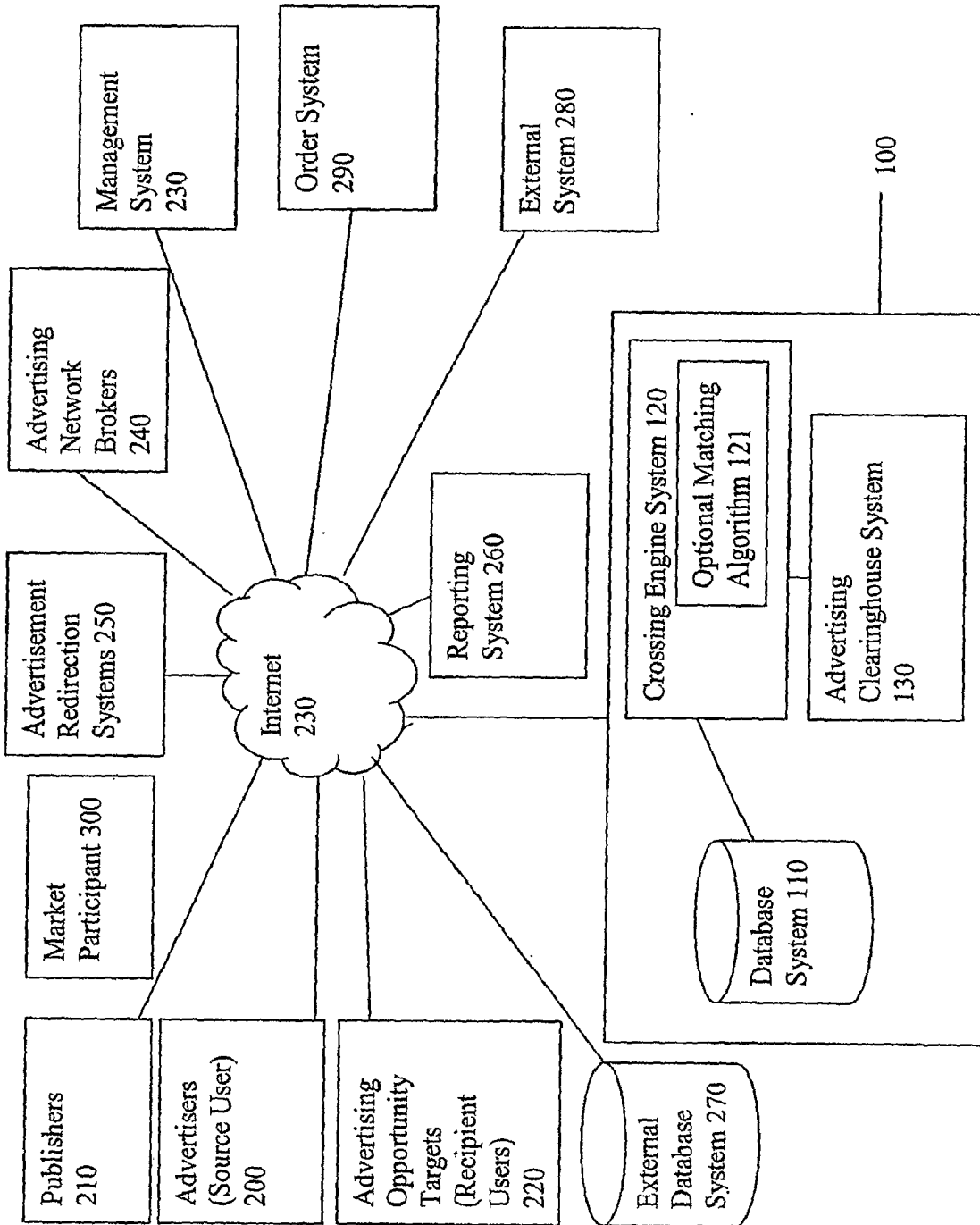


Figure 1

An advertising opportunity exchange accesses properties associated with an advertising impression opportunity (Step 250).

An advertising opportunity exchange accesses a conditional offer associated with an audience derivative (Step 255).

An advertising opportunity exchange accesses properties associated with one or more bids to purchase one or more audience derivatives (Step 260).

The crossing engine identifies three-way matches between an advertising impression opportunity, a bid and a conditional offer (Step 265).

The matches are prioritized (Step 270).

Optionally, the method continues when an advertising clearinghouse manages the financial transactions associated with matches and enables a winning bidder to take possession of audience derivative(s) (Step 275).

Figure 2

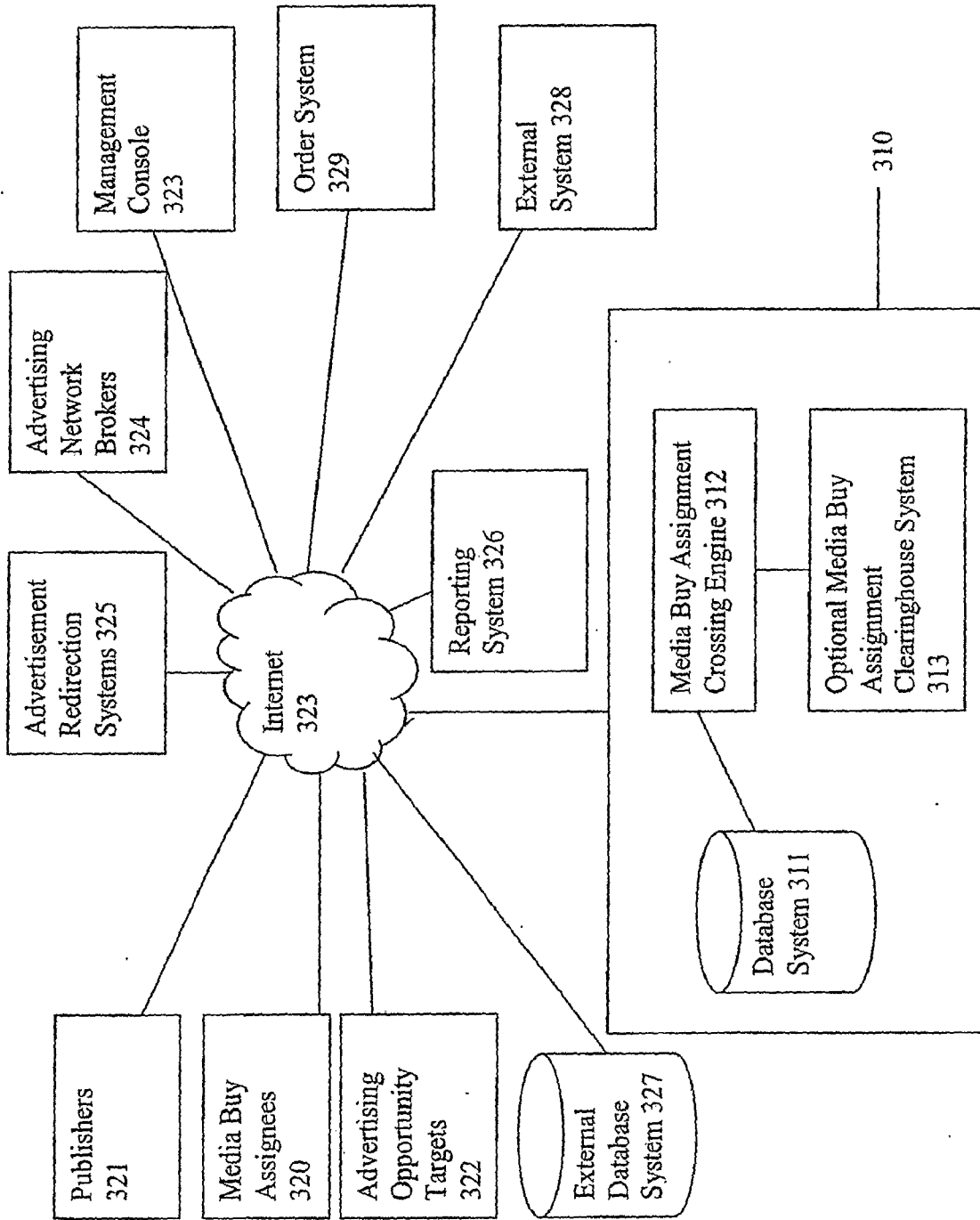


Figure 3

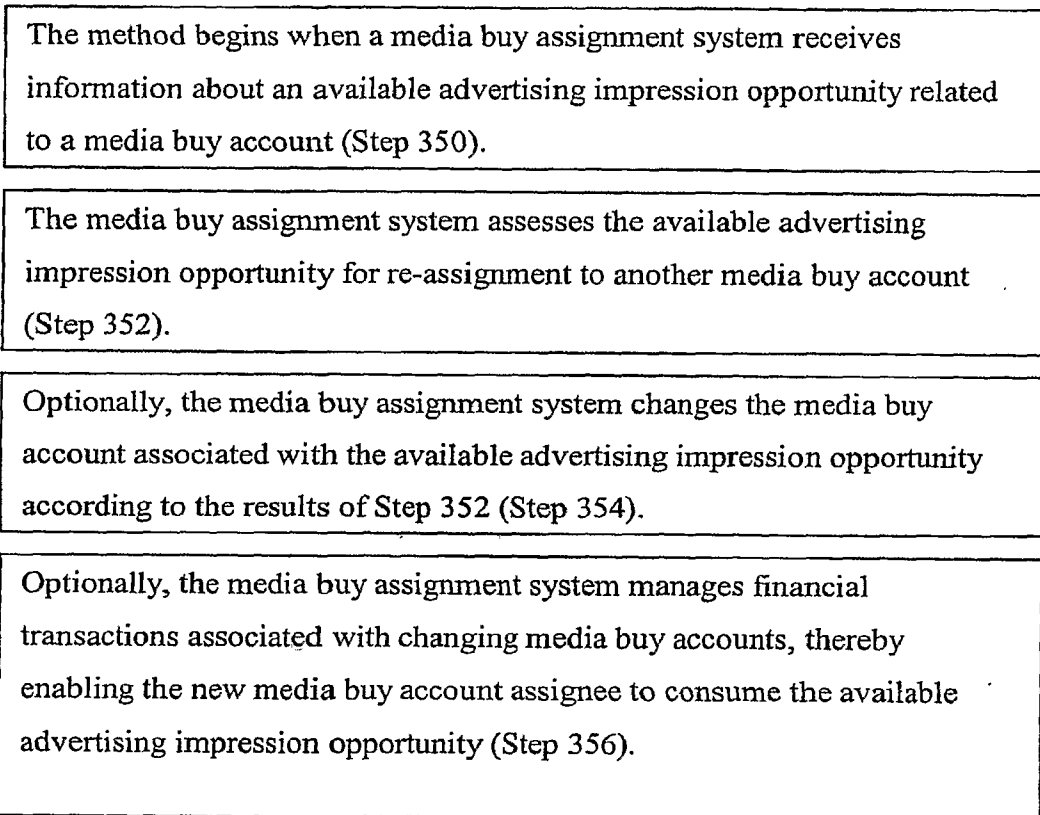


Figure 4



Pre-specified Conditional Offer Parameters	Pre-specified Conditional Offer Parameter Values
Minimum advertising opportunity offer price	Two Dollars (\$2)
List of Unacceptable purchasers	ABC Industries, Competition Incorporated
Advertising Opportunities covered under this Offer	Any advertising opportunity from purchased block of advertising opportunities on Online Sports Magazine in February 2006.

Table 1 Figure 5

Bid Parameters	Bid Parameter Values
Initial bid price	One Dollar and Fifty Cents (\$1.50)
Bid Increments	Ten Cents (\$0.10)
Maximum bid price	Two Dollars (\$2)
Valid date range for bid	February 1, 2006 through February 28, 2006
List of required opportunity parameters and opportunity parameter values	Advertising opportunity type = banner ad Advertising venue = Sports Website Required Keyword on webpage = "ice hockey" Location of banner viewer = San Jose, California
Premium for optional opportunity parameters and opportunity parameter values	If Optional keyword on webpage = "San Jose Sharks", increment maximum bid price by fifty cents (\$0.50);  If banner viewer is a member of the "Hammerhead Booster Club", increment maximum bid price by fifty cents (\$0.50).

Table 2 Figure 6

Opportunity Parameters	Opportunity Parameter Values
Active Website	San Jose Sports Today
Active Website Type	Online Sports Magazine
Website Viewer's Physical location	San Jose Metropolitan Area
Website Viewer ID from cookie	12389BJK12903812
Date Stamp	February 15, 2006
Advertisement Type	Banner Ad
Keyword query results	keywords on webpage = "ice hockey"
Results of viewer ID Cross-Reference to Booster Club database	Website Viewer is a member of the "Hammerhead Booster Club"

Table 3 Figure 7