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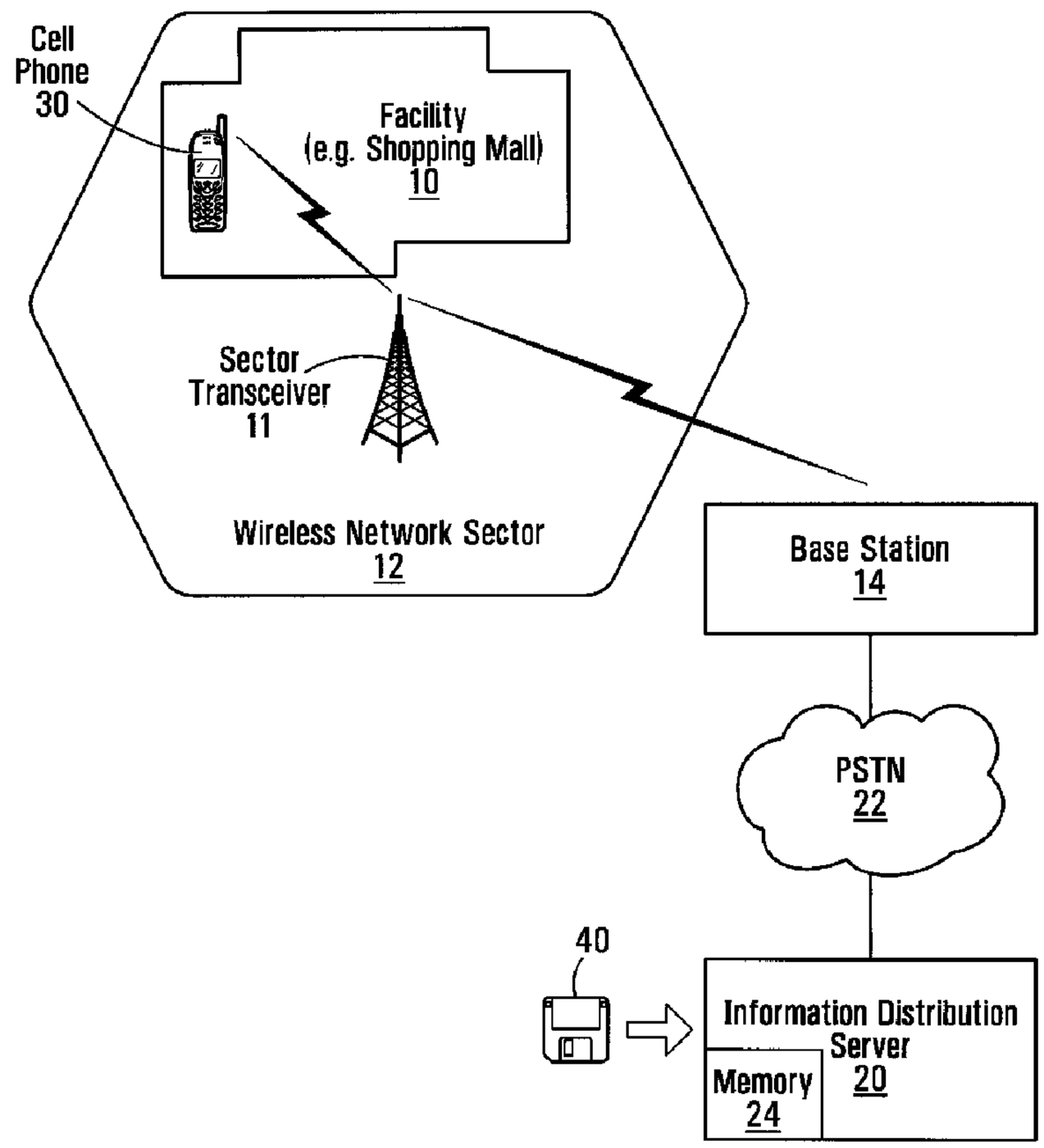
(54) Title: MARKETING METHOD



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A server implements a marketing method. The server may receive a wireless call or message and return choices particular to a facility. On receiving a selected choice, the server may return information particular to a part of said given facility. The information may be a marketing incentive, marketing information, or a promotion.

ABSTRACT

A server implements a marketing method. The server may receive a wireless call or message and return choices particular to a facility. On receiving a selected choice, the server may return information particular to a part of said given facility. The information may be a marketing incentive, marketing information, or a promotion.

MARKETING METHOD

BACKGROUND

[0001] This invention relates to a marketing approach.

[0002] Retailers are always looking for new ways to attract customers to their establishment. Traditional methods are becoming less effective as the consumer is becoming increasingly stressed for time, is less tolerant of crowds, and has more demands placed on his or her free time. The mall environment is one environment which places additional stress on a retailer to differentiate itself amongst the numerous retailers offering similar products and deals.

[0003] Accordingly, there is a need for a new method of advertising.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0004] A server implements a marketing method. The server may receive a wireless call or message and return choices particular to a facility. On receiving a selected choice, the server may return information particular to a part of said given facility. The information may be a marketing incentive, marketing information, or a promotion or information related to an available service.

[0005] According to the invention, there is provided a method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising: receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number; determining a movie theatre of interest; returning movie choices at said theatre of interest; wirelessly receiving a movie choice; returning play times of said movie choice.

[0006] According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising: receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number; returning a message to cause display of a menu of current movie choices at a plurality of

theatres; wirelessly receiving a movie choice; returning a message to cause display of theatre locations and play times of said movie choice.

[0007] According to a further aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising: receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number; determining a shopping mall of interest; returning store information at said shopping mall of interest; wirelessly receiving a store or store sector choice; returning promotional information for said store or store sector choice.

[0008] According to a yet further aspect of the invention, there is provided a marketing method comprising, at a server: receiving a wireless call or message originating at a given facility; returning a menu of choices particular to that facility; on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning one or more messages with information particular to a part of said given facility.

[0009] According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a marketing method comprising, at a server: receiving an indication of a cell phone being geographically in a given facility; returning to said cell phone a menu of choices particular to that facility; on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning a message with information particular to a part of said given facility.

[0010] According to a further aspect of the invention, there is provided a computer readable medium containing computer executable instructions which, when executed by a processor of a server cause said server to: on receiving a wireless call or message originating at a given facility, returning a menu of choices particular to that facility; on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning one or more messages with information particular to a part of said given facility.

[0011] Other features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description in conjunction with the drawing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] In the figures which illustrate example embodiments of the invention,

[0013] **FIG. 1** is a schematic diagram of a system configured in accordance with an embodiment of the invention, and

[0014] **FIGS. 2A** to **2D** are screen shots from a mobile phone when operating in accordance with an embodiment of this invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] A consumer who wishes information pertinent to a facility (e.g., a shopping mall or a movie theatre), or who wishes information on a service common to a number of like facilities (e.g., movie theatres), may wirelessly call or message an information distribution server via a mobile phone. The server returns information, possibly resulting in further exchanges as the consumer drills down to the information she wants.

[0016] In a first embodiment, a marketing service is provided for a shopping mall or like facility. The shopping mall or other facility may advertise (e.g., through signage) a wireless access number for use in obtaining sales, promotions, information, etc. pertinent to the facility. The access number may be, for example, a standard 7 or 10 digit telephone number, a short code, such as USHOP (derived from the letters associated with the numbers 87467 on a cell phone keypad) or a star number, such as *49. The access number may be peculiar to a given facility or it may be common to several or many facilities. In the latter instances, the access number may be valid over an area, such as across an entire country.

[0017] The access number may terminate at an information distribution server. For reasons which will become apparent, in this first embodiment, this server may also be referred to as a promotions server. If the access number is only valid for a certain type of wireless access, such as a regular telephone call, a simple messaging system (SMS) message, or a multi-media messaging system (MMS) message, or there are limitations on the types of access which can be handled by

the server, the signage may invite a user to utilise a suitable manner of access. Typically, however, the server will be able to handle any of these types of access and the same access number may be used for each of these types of access.

[0018] By way of explanation, short message service (SMS) is a service available on digital wireless networks based on a number of different standards for mobile communication: Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM); code division multiple access (CDMA); and time division multiple access (TDMA). A general feature of SMS is that a mobile can receive or submit a short message at any time, independently of whether a voice or data call is in progress. (This is achieved in GSM systems by using the SS7 signalling channel to transmit SMS messages.) Since SMS is a description of a service provided by wireless carriers rather than a description of a method of delivery, methods of delivery differ.

[0019] An SMS message is typically structured to include a source address, a destination address, instructions to a short messaging service center (SMSC) (where the message is stored for forwarding when the destination is available), instructions to the mobile, and a message body. An SMS message may be addressed with a phone number or with a carrier-specific short code. To allow inter-carrier operation (at least where methods of delivery are compatible between the carriers), SMS brokers negotiate deals with carriers and provide an interface.

[0020] Whereas an SMS message may utilise the network's signalling channel, an MMS message has a dedicated channel. An MMS message allows the transfer of a much greater amount of data than does an SMS message.

[0021] Each access number may point to one facility and the server may store a list of access numbers that it terminates and associated facilities. Alternatively, an access number may be common to more than one facility. In this instance, several non-location-based approaches are possible in order to ascertain the facility of interest to the user. Firstly, the signage may invite the user to send a (SMS or MMS) message with a text message which uniquely identifies one of the facilities. Alternatively, the server may respond to a call or message with a message (such as

an SMS or MMS message) providing a menu listing all of the facilities to which the common number is applicable. The user may then press a key to select a facility from the menu, which selection is relayed back to the server in a further message. In this regard, as will be understood by those skilled in the art, if SMS and MMS messages are used, may include code which configures the mobile phone such that, on a key press (indicating a menu choice), the mobile phone returns a message indicating the key press.

[0022] Certain location-based approaches are also possible to ascertain the appropriate facility. In this regard, it is firstly assumed that the user is calling or messaging from their mobile phone while proximate the shopping mall of interest. Then, it is noted that a wireless call or message may include an identification of the cell sector from which the call originated. The server can parse the cell sector indicator from an incoming call or message and compare this indicator with a stored list of indicators, each stored cell sector indicator being associated with one or more facilities. If there is only one facility in any given cell sector --which can be guaranteed if a cell sector is specially set up for each facility – the server may assume this is the appropriate facility. If cell sectors are not specially set up for facilities and, per chance, more than one facility shared a cell sector, then the server may return a list so that the user can choose a facility from amongst those that share the cell sector. In another approach, if the cell phone has a global positioning system (GPS) locator, the call could be augmented with position information which could be used by the server to select the appropriate facility. A possibility exists that the assumption the caller is proximate the facility of interest is incorrect. In view of this possibility, the caller may be given the possibility of communicating this to the server in order to cause the server to provide a menu of other facilities.

[0023] After the appropriate facility is ascertained, the information distribution (promotions) server returns a menu of choices in a message. Where the facility is a mall, these choices may, for example, represent different retail verticals (i.e., different types of stores in the mall) and/or different specific stores. The menu may be dynamic. A number may be associated with each menu choice. If the user

chooses one of these menu choices, a message indicating the choice is directed to the promotions server and the server returns one or more messages from given stores in the mall. For example, if a menu choice were "Men's Wear", a message may be returned from each participating Men's Wear store in the mall providing their latest offerings, sales, and/or promotions to entice the user into their store. The message may be an oral message, a video message or in some other form, but is preferably a text-based message, such as an SMS message.

[0024] Participating stores may send the content of these messages to the promotion server so that they will be included in messages sent to a user requesting promotions for that type of store in the mall. New promotional messages may be sent by the promotional server only for a configurable period of time. The length of this time may be selected by the store requesting the promotional message, or may be pre-set. Thus, these messages can be repeated, updated, changed, or removed in a time sensitive manner. Depending upon the agreed upon program, the retailer may be able to modify their message and its delivery as granularly as each half hour. A fee may be charged back to the store for the privilege of having these messages carried by the promotional server.

[0025] A message could include, for example, a promotional code which allows for a discount (and may be time-sensitive) and an indicator of the location of the store in the mall.

[0026] After a menu selection is made by a user and a set of one or more messages is returned, for a configurable period of time any new messages received by the promotions server related to the menu choice may be pushed to the user.

[0027] The value to the shopper is tremendous: it is a sales aid reminding them of specific sales programs now underway, alerting them to promotions that may not be advertised outside the mall, it conveys time sensitive information, such as 'Happy Hour' Specials in restaurants and bars.

[0028] The value to the retailer is even greater as the merchant now has the ability to more actively, in real time, drive extremely qualified traffic to their store. The shopper is in the mall; at that moment and wants to see what you have to offer (this is a permission based solution, so they have asked to receive your information).

[0029] **Fig. 1** is a schematic of an exemplary system for providing poll-based marketing. Turning to **Fig. 1**, facility **10** is shown to fall within a cell sector **12**. The sector transceiver **11** wirelessly communicates with a base station **14**. The base station is connected to a information distribution (promotions) server **20** through a public switched telephone network (PSTN) **22**. The information distribution server has a memory **22**. After a user notes a call-in wireless access number associated with the facility, the user may use a cell phone **30** to originate a call or message (e.g., a regular telephone call, an SMS message, or an MMS message, as appropriate) to the access number which is terminated at information distribution server **20**. On receiving the call, which may include an indication of the originating cell sector **12**, the information distribution server may return a message with information providing for the display of a menu of choices related to the facility with the cell sector. Where the facility is a mall, the choices are dependent on the mall type and the types of the stores in the mall. A typical menu could be as follows:

1 Men's Wear & Activities
2 Women's Wear & Activities
3 Children's Wear & Activities
4 Teen's Wear & Activities
5 Restaurants
6 Home & Garden
7 The XYZ Department Store

[0030] On the user making a selection through cell phone **30** from the menu, the promotions server may return appropriate messages. For example, where the user selects a retail vertical (i.e., one of selections 1 to 6), messages from stores of the selected type are returned. And where a specific store is available for selection and is selected, either one or more messages from the store may be returned or a

sub-menu may be served up, listing as selections different departments in the store. Selection of a department would then result in a message from that department of the store. The server may be configured to operate as described by computer executable instructions stored on computer readable medium **40** which may be, for example, a non-volatile memory, a file downloaded from a remote source, or a computer disk.

[0031] There are several different ways to charge, for example:

1. a straight fee per 'transaction' may be charged; thus, where a customer requests "Women's Wear & Activities", all participating retailers are charge a transaction fee;
2. a fee per 'transaction' is charged as above and, in addition, the retailer may be charged a further fee if the shopper 'drills' down into its advertisement;
3. the merchant may pay a monthly fee dependent upon the number of advertisements over a given period (e.g., per day) and, possibly, the required response time to change these advertisements.

[0032] If the access is by way of an SMS message addressed to the advertised number (e.g., short code), the message is passed by the SMSC to the promotions server which responds with the menu of choices. In this regard, the portion of an SMS message which includes instructions to the mobile can be used to create the menu of options such that, when a user selects an option, an SMS reply message is sent incorporating the chosen message option, or with a destination address which is dependent upon the chosen menu option. Accordingly, on receiving a reply message, the promotions server may respond with a message providing promotions pertinent to the selected menu choice.

[0033] In another embodiment, rather than requiring that a cell phone user to access a wireless access number to receive a menu of choices, the menu of choices may be pushed to the user's cell phone whenever the cell phone is detected to be in the facility (e.g., a shopping mall). Thus, the menu may be pushed to the cell phone when the cell phone is brought into the facility, provided

the cell phone is on. Where only one facility is in a given cell sector, the push may be triggered by the cell phone registering with the sector. More specifically, the sector base station transceiver of the cell sector established for the facility may be configured so that when a cell phone registers with it, the transceiver calls, or sends a message to, the promotions server with the cell phone number of the registering cell phone. The promotions server is thereby prompted to send a message to the registering cell phone and deliver the menu of choices. The cell phone will enunciate the incoming message in the manner in which it enunciates any other incoming message so that the cell phone user may become aware of the incoming message. Operation then proceeds as aforedescribed, with the user receiving further information if he/she selects one of the menu choices (by dialling the phone number associated with the menu choice or sending an SMS message associated with a menu choice, as the case may be).

[0034] In a second embodiment, a marketing service is provided for a facility which is a movie theatre. In this instance, a movie theatre chain may advertise a wireless access number, such as the short code MOVIE (i.e., 66843). As before, the access number may be valid for one or more types of wireless access. The access number may be peculiar to a single theatre, or common to some or all of the theatres in a chain. In the latter instance, any of the previously described non-location based approaches may be used to determine the movie theatre of interest (i.e., have the user to send a text message uniquely identifying the theatre or provide a menu of choices to the user). Alternatively, a location-based approach is possible, as follows. It may be assumed that the caller is calling from a location within a certain radius (e.g., five miles) of the movie theatre of interest. Then, either information in the call/message indicating the cell sector in which the mobile phone is located, or information in the call/message indicating a GPS location, may be used to establish a geographical area of interest. If there is only one theatre in this area, it is assumed to be the choice. If there is more than one theatre, a menu may be presented to the user to allow selection of a theatre from the menu.

[0035] Once the theatre of interest has been established, the information distribution server may forward to the user a listing of movies at the chosen theatre.

When the server registers the user's selection, it may return times for the selected movie and, optionally, other marketing or promotional information.

[0036] Optionally, where the access number is common to a number of theatres, the user may first be given the option of selecting a theatre location or a movie. If the selection is of a theatre location, the sequence of events proceeds as described above. If the selection is for a movie, a list of all movies playing at all of the theatres common to the access number is returned. On a user selection of a movie, the server then returns play times for the selected movie.

[0037] The system of **FIG. 1** may also be used where the facility is a theatre, however, in this instance it is not expected that the call or message will originate when the cell phone is in the facility.

[0038] **FIGS. 2A** to **2D** illustrate example screen shots at a mobile phone when using a system to obtain movie information operating in accordance with an embodiment of this invention. Once a user calls or messages the advertised wireless access number for a chain (or sub-chain, or other grouping) of theatres, the information distribution server may return a message causing the mobile phone to display screen **50** of **FIG. 2A**. As shown, screen **50** displays a menu having two choices: "1. MOVIES" or "2. LOCATIONS". If the user selects the second option, the server returns a message resulting in the display of a menu of movie theatre locations for the theatre chain, as shown by screen **60** of **FIG. 2B**. If the user selects the fourth choice in the menu, the server returns a message causing the display of movies currently showing at this location, as shown in screen **70** of **FIG. 2C**. If the menu is too long to be displayed on a single screen, as illustrated at **62**, the cell phone may have a page down option to continue the listing on a separate screen. Upon the user selecting a movie, the server returns information resulting in the display of current playing times for the selected movie, as shown by screen **80** in **FIG. 2D**. Any of the screens, and especially screen **80**, may include relevant marketing or promotional information. For example, as shown in **FIG. 2D**, screen **80** has a special menu with a menu choice **82** allowing a user to initiate a wireless purchase of tickets to the movie of interest and a menu choice **84** to learn about a

special promotion. Further, screen **80** has an information panel **86** providing further information on this movie.

[0039] Other modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art and, therefore, the invention is defined in the claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising:
receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number;
determining a movie theatre of interest;
returning movie choices at said theatre of interest;
wirelessly receiving a movie choice;
returning play times of said movie choice.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said returning movie choices comprises returning a message to cause display of said movie choices.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said returning play times comprises returning a message to cause display of a menu of play times.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said determining comprises comparing said wireless access number with a wireless access number list, each entry in said wireless access number list associated with an associated movie theatre and, on a match, considering said associated theatre as said theatre of interest.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said determining comprises parsing a cell sector indicator from said wireless call or message and comparing said cell sector indicator with a cell sector list, each entry in said cell sector list associated with an associated movie theatre and, on a match, considering said associated theatre as said theatre of interest.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein some entries in said list are associated with more than one associated movie theatre and, on a match, returning a menu indicating each of said more than one associated theatre; wirelessly receiving a theatre choice; and considering said theatre choice as said theatre of interest.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said wireless call or message is a request for theatre location information and wherein said determining comprises serving up a

menu of theatres; wirelessly receiving a theatre choice; and considering said theatre choice as said theatre of interest.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said determining comprises parsing a global positioning system (GPS) indicator from said wireless call or message and comparing said GPS indicator with a GPS list, each entry in said GPS list associated with an associated movie theatre and, on a match, returning said associated theatre as said theatre of interest.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein said receiving a call or message is receiving an initiating message and wherein said determining comprises parsing an indication of a theatre of interest from said initiating message.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising wirelessly returning a promotion related to said theatre of interest.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein each said returning comprises returning with a wireless message.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein each said returning comprises returning with a wireless simple messaging system (SMS) message or with a multi-media messaging system (MMS) message.

13. A method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising:

receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number;

returning a message to cause display of a menu of current movie choices at a plurality of theatres;

wirelessly receiving a movie choice;

returning a message to cause display of theatre locations and play times of said movie choice.

14. A method of operating a server connected to a wireless network, comprising:

receiving a wireless call or message from a wireless access number;

determining a shopping mall of interest;

returning store information at said shopping mall of interest;

wirelessly receiving a store or store sector choice;

returning promotional information for said store or store sector choice.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein said returning store information comprises returning a message to cause display of a menu of store or store sector selections.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein said returning promotional information comprises returning one or more messages with promotional content.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising, subsequent to said returning said one or more messages, receiving updated message content for at least one of said one or more messages.

18. The method of claim 17 further comprising storing at least one updated message based on said updated message content.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said updated message replaces one of said one or more messages.

20. The method of claim 17 further comprising returning said at least one updated message.

21. The method of claim 17 further comprising returning said at least one updated message if a time between said receiving a choice selected from said menu and said receiving updated message content is less than a pre-determined time.

22. The method of claim 14 wherein said promotional content is a promotional code.

23. The method of claim 14 wherein said determining comprises comparing said wireless access number with a wireless access number list, each entry in said wireless access number list associated with an associated shopping mall and, on a match, considering said associated shopping mall as said shopping mall of interest.

24. The method of claim 14 wherein said determining comprises parsing a cell sector indicator from said wireless call or message and comparing said cell sector indicator with a cell sector list, each entry in said cell sector list associated with an associated shopping mall and, on a match, considering said associated shopping mall as said shopping mall of interest.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein some entries in said list are associated with more than one associated shopping mall and, on a match, returning a menu indicating each of said more than one associated shopping mall; wirelessly receiving a shopping mall choice; and considering said shopping mall choice as said shopping mall of interest.

26. The method of claim 14 wherein said determining comprises parsing a global positioning system (GPS) indicator from said wireless call or message and comparing said GPS indicator with a GPS list, each entry in said GPS list associated with an associated shopping mall and, on a match, returning said associated shopping mall as said shopping mall of interest.

27. The method of claim 14 wherein each said returning comprises returning with a wireless message.

28. A marketing method comprising, at a server:

receiving a wireless call or message originating at a given facility;

returning a menu of choices particular to that facility;

on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning one or more messages with information particular to a part of said given facility.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein said information is a marketing incentive, marketing information, or a promotion.

30. The method of claim 28 wherein said information is a promotional code.

31. The method of claim 29 wherein said receiving a wireless call or message originating at a given facility comprises receiving said call or message with an associated geographic indication.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein said geographic indication is a GPS location indicator.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein said geographic indication is a cell sector identifier.

34. The method of claim 29 wherein said facility is shopping facility and said information is a marketing incentive from at least one store in said shopping facility.

35. The method of claim 29 further comprising, subsequent to said returning said one or more messages, receiving updated message content for at least one of said one or more messages.

36. The method of claim 35 further comprising storing at least one updated message based on said message content.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein said updated message replaces one of said one or more messages.

38. The method of claim 35 further comprising returning said at least one updated message.

39. The method of claim 35 further comprising returning said at least one updated message if a time between said receiving a choice selected from said

menu and said receiving updated message content is less than a pre-determined time.

40. The method of claim 29 wherein said receiving a wireless call or message comprises receiving a short messaging service message.

41. The method of claim 29 wherein said receiving a wireless call or message comprises receiving a wireless cellular telephone call.

42. The method of claim 41 wherein said wireless cellular telephone call is made to a destination number terminated at said server and wherein said server terminates a plurality of destination numbers and wherein said facility is identified by said destination number.

43. The method of claim 34 wherein said menu of choices comprises a list of retail verticals.

44. The method of claim 30 wherein said promotional code is time limited.

45. A marketing method comprising, at a server:

receiving an indication of a cell phone being geographically in a given facility;

returning to said cell phone a menu of choices particular to that facility;

on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning a message with information particular to a part of said given facility.

46. A computer readable medium containing computer executable instructions which, when executed by a processor of a server cause said server to:

on receiving a wireless call or message originating at a given facility, returning a menu of choices particular to that facility;

on receiving a choice selected from said menu, returning one or more messages with information particular to a part of said given facility.

47. The computer readable medium of claim 46 wherein said information is a marketing incentive, marketing information, or a promotion.

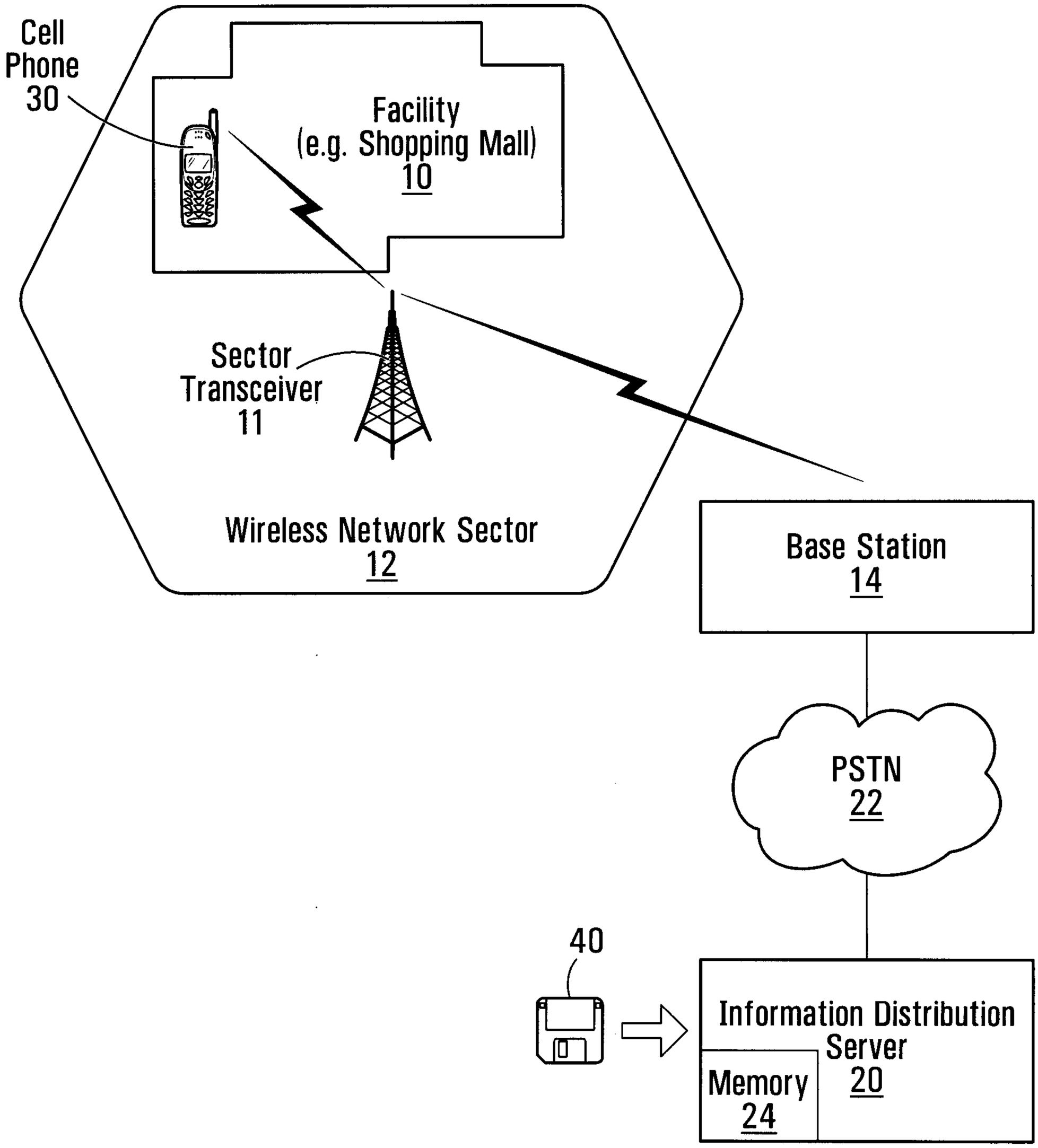

Cell Phone 30
Facility (e.g. Shopping Mall) 10
Sector Transceiver 11
Wireless Network Sector 12
Base Station 14
PSTN 22
40
Information Distribution Server 20
Memory 24

FIG. 1

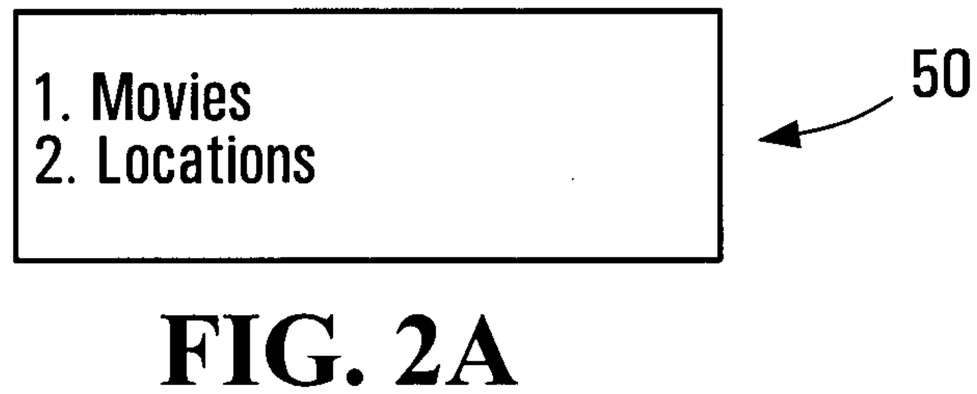


FIG. 2A

FIG. 2B

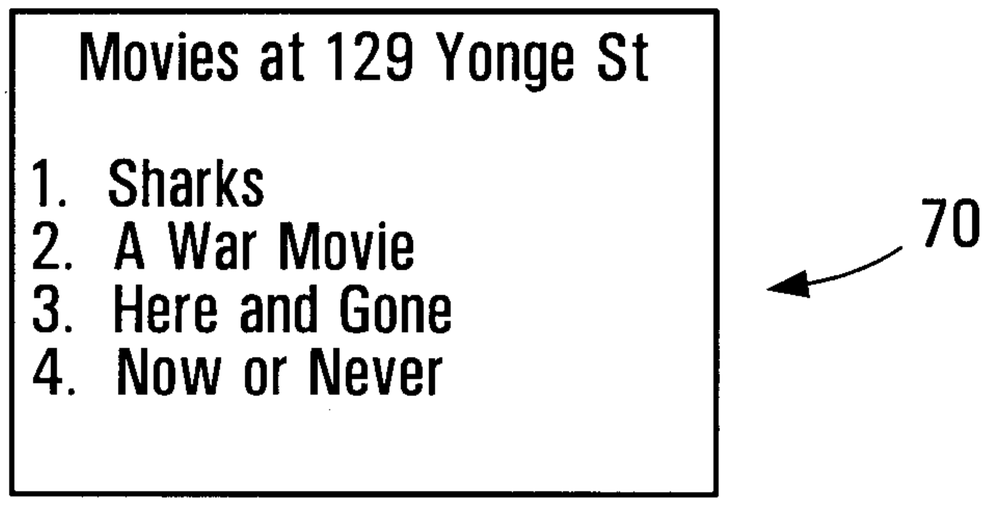


FIG. 2C

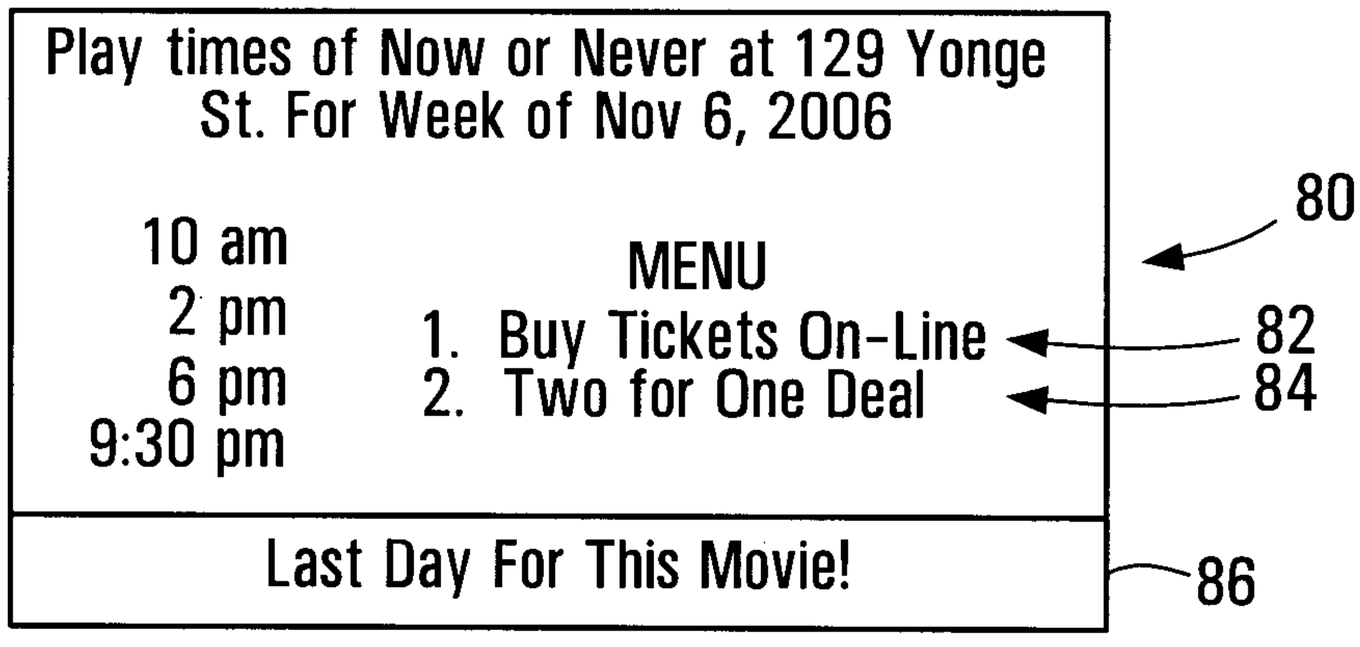
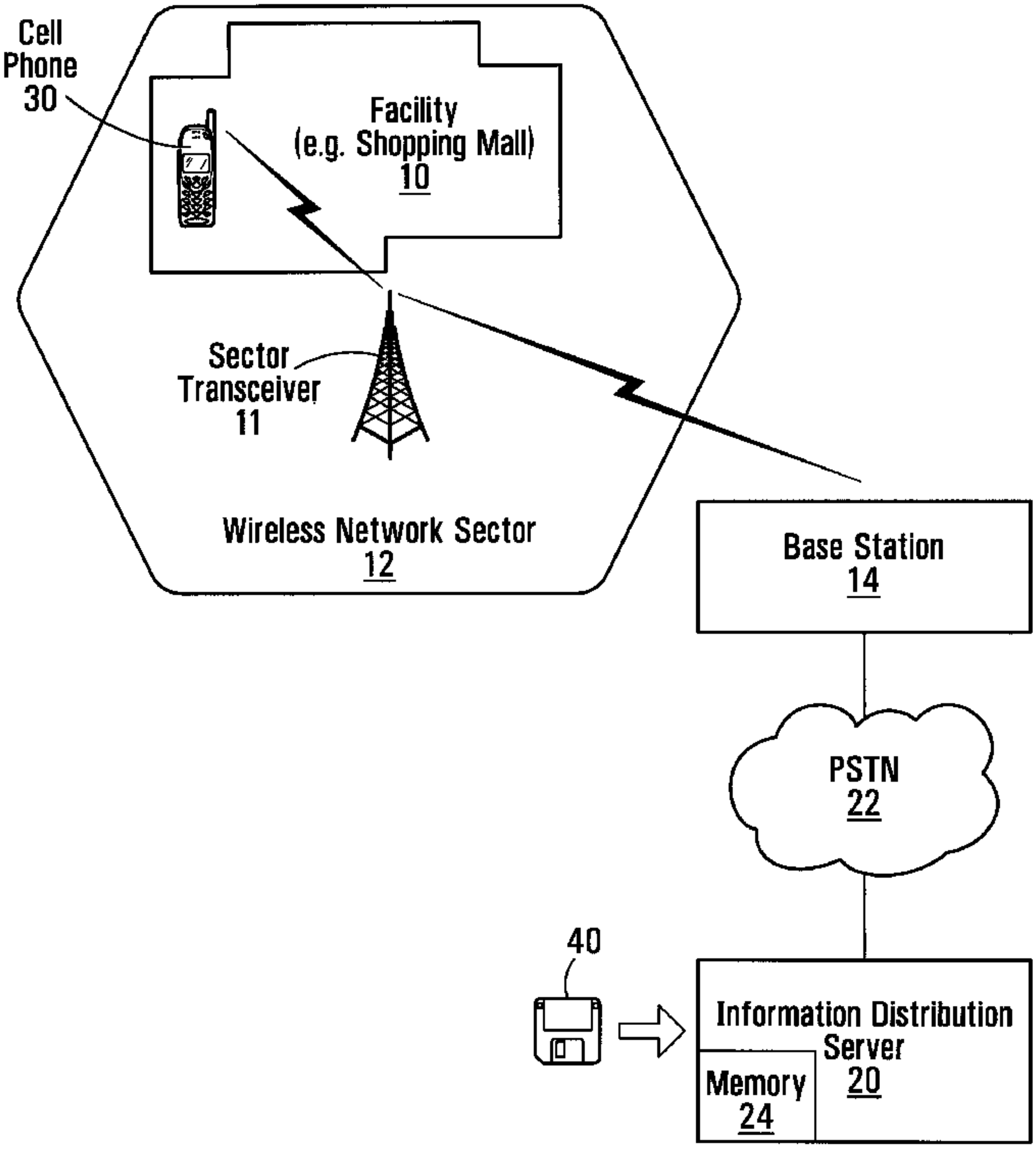


FIG. 2D

Patent Agents
Smart & Biggar


Cell
Phone
30
Facility
(e.g. Shopping Mall)
10
Sector
Transceiver
11
Wireless Network Sector
12
Base Station
14
PSTN
22
40
Information Distribution
Server
20
Memory
24