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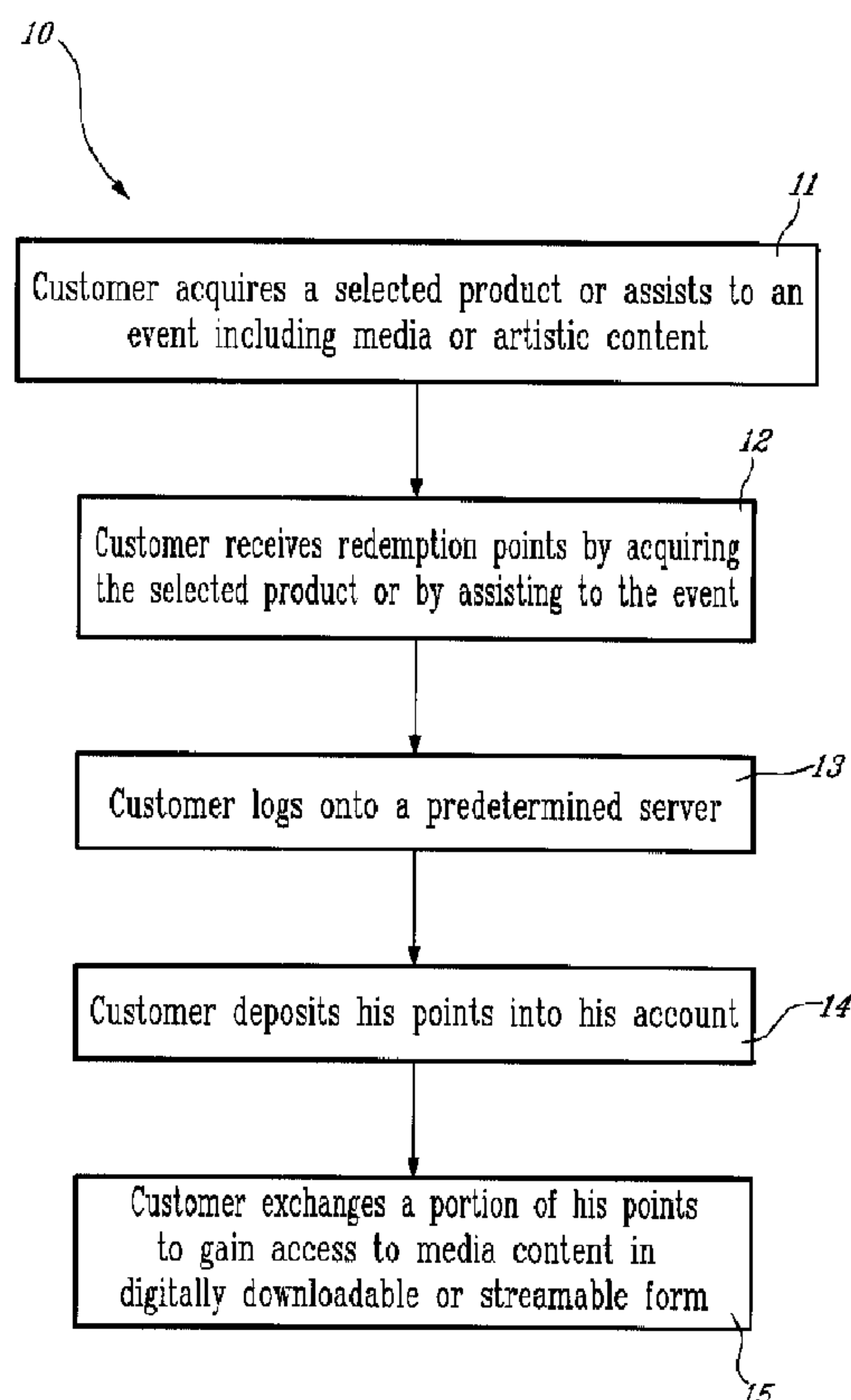
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(71) Demandeur/Applicant:
FOURNIER, CLAUDE, CA

(72) Inventeur/Inventor:
FOURNIER, CLAUDE, CA

(54) Titre : METHODE ET SYSTEME POUR LA PROMOTION ET LA DISTRIBUTION DU CONTENU DE MEDIAS
NUMERIQUES

(54) Title: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROMOTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A system and method for promoting and distributing media content in digital form on a network comprises information providing means for offering redemption points in exchange to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events, a server connected to the network including media content in digital form, means connected to the server including media content to validate the redemption points, and means to allow access to the customer to at least part of the media content in digital form upon validation of the redemption points.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A system and method for promoting and distributing media content in digital form on a network comprises information providing
5 means for offering redemption points in exchange to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events, a server connected to the network including media content in digital form, means connected to the server including media content to validate the redemption points, and means to allow access to the customer to at least
10 part of the media content in digital form upon validation of the redemption points.

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TITLE OF THE INVENTION

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROMOTION AND
DISTRIBUTION OF DIGITAL MEDIA CONTENT

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to media content, such a music
literature, movie, painting, television show, and more. More specifically,
10 the present invention is concerned a method for promotion and distribution
of media content in digital form.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

15 The popularity of personal computing among the general
population continues to increase. Along with office automation applications
and games, the Internet is largely responsible for the still-increasing
popularity of personal computing. It is an understatement that the Internet
has democratized access to information.

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In a sense, Internet has always been about sharing: friends
and relatives sharing words and moments using e-mails and instant
messaging, information holders sharing their knowledge with others via
Web sites, companies sharing product information with potential clients
25 and partners, etc. At first, the media was in the form of Bulletin Board
System (BBS) and then it was in the form of Internet and Intranet
networks. Today, even a computer game can be shared over the Internet.
It is therefore not surprising that among the most commonly used Internet

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applications are the so-called file-sharing applications. These applications allow a plurality of users to easily share computer files.

5 The increasing popularity of personal computing is also partially due to the democratization of the computer means for copying digital media files, including music and video files. This has caused headaches to owners of copyrighted media content that are seeing their profits from the sell of copyrighted material decreasing or at least peeking, since more and more people are equipped to copy copyrighted material
10 owned by friends and relatives or obtained over the Internet.

Encryption techniques have been used since the beginning of the personal computer history to limit the copying of computer files. However, it seems that computer pirates, i.e. people getting unauthorized
15 access to encrypted files, most of the time seem to succeed in overruling the encryption techniques.

Of course, there is always the opportunity for the owner of copyrighted material to use legal means to prevent people from infringing
20 their rights. However, the popularity of peer-to-peer networks, which allow many users to share computer files without requiring a central server, has made the determination of possible infringers more difficult. In any case, it is often unpractical to sue end-users.

25 While more and more so-called "Internet stores" have seen the light of day recently, they are mainly popular among a limited group of people that may be referred to as technophile and has yet to reach the general population that are used to go to more conventional stores.

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Moreover, since customers, media content owners and distributors habits may need some times to change, a digital media content distribution method allowing a smooth transition from the digital media content distribution method from the prior art is thus desirable.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is therefore to provide improved digital media content distribution and promotion method and system.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

More specifically, in accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for distributing media content in digital form on a network, the method comprising:

providing at least one redemption point to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events, each of the selected products and of identified events being characterized by including first media content;

providing second media content in digital form on a server through the network; and

allowing access to the customers to the second media content in digital form on the server through the computer network in exchange for a predetermined amount of redemption points.

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According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a system for distributing media content in digital form on a network, the system comprising:

information providing means for offering redemption points in exchange to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events;

a server connected to the network including media content in digital form;

means connected to the server including media content to validate the redemption points; and

means to allow access to the customer to at least part of the media content in digital form upon validation of the redemption points.

Other objects, advantages and features of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following non restrictive description of preferred embodiments thereof, given by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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Figure 1 is a flowchart of a digital media content distribution method according to an illustrative embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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A digital media content distribution system from the present invention includes one or more servers including media files, for example, songs, movies, literature, or pictures, in electronic form suitable to be

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played on one or a plurality of media players, such as, but not limited to, a computer, a Personal Data Assistant (PDA), a portable phone, a portable media player, a Compact Disc (CD) player, a musical or movie Digital Video Disc (DVD) player, etc. The media file can be in any suitable format, such as, but not limited to MP3, MPEG, JPEG, WAV, etc.

The media files are stored in one or more databases so coupled to the one or more servers so as to be accessible therefrom.

10 A redemption point value, which is also stored in a database coupled to the server so as to accessible therefrom, is associated to each media file or to a selected group thereof. The value of the redemption point is determined so as to represent the amount of points a user has to give in order to acquire the associated media file, as will be explained
15 hereinbelow in more detail. It is to be noted that the redemption point values associated to each media file and said media file can be stored on the same or on different databases.

The system further includes tabs, cards, any other written
20 support, or information providing means, including electronic support, each including a code representing a redemption point value, for distribution with a media support, including a music Compact Disc (CD), a musical or movie Digital Video Disc (DVD), a book, an e-book, or any other physical or electronic supports or distribution means including media content or a
25 media event including a movie projection, a theatrical play or any artistic event.

A digital media content distribution method 10 according to

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an illustrative embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in Figure 1.

According to a digital media content distribution method from
5 the present invention, a customer acquiring media content or assisting to
an event including artistic or media content receives at least one
redemption point (or redemption point values) that can be exchanged for
media files on the server or by any media content distribution means
configured to recognize and manage media content redemption points
10 from the present invention.

Alternatively, or additionally, the redemption points (or value)
may be given to a customer acquiring a pre-determined number of media
files on a distribution device, including a web site on Internet.

15

A customer may log on to one of selected web sites to
exchange acquired redemption points for the authorization to freely
download or stream media files whenever the total of redemption points
owned by the customer at least amount to the redemption point value
20 associated to such files he wants to download.

The web site, and the server hosting such web site, may be
configured so as to allow a customer to trade redemption points obtained
by acquiring media content from different sources for media files. For
25 example, the customer may be offered the possibility to register to a
service available and/or manageable through a web site and to save his
redemption points for later exchange.

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The step of associating to a customer account the code corresponding to redemption points acquired by purchasing media content will be referred to herein as the validation step. In the validation step, verification is further done by the system, and more specifically at the
5 server level, as to whether the code representing the redemption points, as provided by the customer, is valid. This can be achieved, for example, by comparing the redemption point value code to valid code listed in a database. Alternatively, this can be achieved by requiring the customer to enter a validation code, also provided with the redemption point value
10 code, and by comparing the two codes with codes listed in the database.

The web site and corresponding server may be configured so as to increase the redemption point value of a registered customer depending on predetermined rules. For example, a customer validating
15 redemption points at a predetermined minimum frequency may collect redemption points "interests" in his account, therefore encouraging the customers to buy media content frequently. Of course, other redemption points increasing rules may alternatively, or additionally, be provided without departing from the spirit and nature of the present invention.

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Of course, the web site may be configured to allow recognizing redemption points from other sources media content. For example, redemption points may be issued by a soft drink company to customer buying its product. Of course, to be recognizable by the web
25 site, those redemption points are first issued by the redemption point manager to the company that wants to use such points as a promotion tool.

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Many security means can be use to prevent, or at least limit unauthorized and fraudulent use of redemption points. Such means include, for example, associating to all redemption point a redemption point validation code. Alternatively, a customer wanting to trade
5 redemption points for media file may be asked to provide the source of those points, such as the seller of the product that included redemption points, the author of the media content, etc. or a combination of such information.

10 According to a more specific embodiment of the present invention, the amount of points given to a customer that buys media content, and/or the minimum amount of points required to freely download media files, are determined according to the popularity of the media content as purchased by the customer.

15 For example, the number of redemption points associated to songs form a best selling artist may be set relatively high, so that a customer buying media content from such an artist is given a relatively large amount of points, and so that it may be required a relatively large
20 amount of points to freely download such media content. Similarly, a customer buying media content from an underground artist may be given a small number of redemption points, if any, while a small amount of points may be required for trading media files from such obscure artist.

25 Such a redemption point allowing scheme would allow to promote legally acquiring media content from artists that are more likely to be pirated on the Internet since they are popular, in addition to promote easy access to freely downloading media content from less popular artists.

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Since the popularity of an artist may vary with time, or for other reasons, it can be advantageous to encode the redemption point value given to customer so that such redemption value is kept unknown to the customer until trade off, allowing to dynamically modify the redemption point value over time, or according to certain criteria.

Also, redemption points associated to selected artists, authors, editors, or sellers, etc., may increase in value at a certain time or following certain events (Oscar nights, new release, award show, etc.), and for a limited time for example.

The method for the promotion of media content according to the present invention allows for dynamically management of media content distribution by allowing for promotion from many types and natures. For example, trading redemption points acquired by buying media content from two or more selected artists for a predetermined period of time, may allow to increase the corresponding redemption point values and therefore allowing for more free downloads.

20

The method from the present invention also allows for cross-media promotion. Indeed, trading points associated for example to two of a certain movie DVD, a corresponding music score CD, and to the book version of the movie, would allow free download of the other of the three media content. Another example would be obtaining redemption points on a movie ticket, which may increase in value or are only valid, when the customer purchases the musical score from the movie.

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According to another aspect of the present invention, redemption points are obtained and validated only when two redemption point validation codes are entered. An example of an application would be issuing of redemption points to a customer only in the case where the
5 customer enters on the web site a first validation code obtained when buying a ticket for a movie X and a second validation code obtained when buying the musical score from that same movie X in CD format.

The present invention is not limited to media files that can be
10 downloaded from a computer, but also includes any type of media files and downloading device.

A method and system for the promotion of media content according to the present invention allows to ease the transition from the
15 current media content distribution scheme to the next inevitable media content distribution scheme, which includes downloading media files to be played or read on the new generation media devices, by allowing the customer and the media companies to change their respective habitude.

20 A method and system for the promotion of media content according to the present invention provides new opportunities for media content providers to negotiate copyright agreements with artists and authors including clauses based on the trading of redemption points and/or downloads of media files in exchange for redemption points.

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A method and system for the promotion of media content according to the present invention provides new ways for distributing and managing media content regionally or based on discriminating criteria by

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varying the amount of points allotted for a purchase by a customer based on any one of the nature of the media content support, the store, the distributor, the artist, the customer, etc.

5 Of course, the means for offering the redemption points to a customer may vary. The media content promotion method and system according to the present invention provides for the registration of the user and the recordation of a card such as a credit card to be recognized during the purchase of the media content in any form, and the automatic credit of
10 the number of redemption points associated to the media content at the time of the purchase in a redemption point account of the customer.

 Alternatively, a dedicated redemption points debit card can be provided to associate redemption points to a specific customer.

15

Even though a method and system for promotion of digital media content from the present invention has been described with reference to redemption points or redemption point values, other types of currency, having legal tender quality or not may also be used.

20

Although the present invention has been described hereinabove by way of preferred embodiments thereof, it can be modified without departing from the spirit and nature of the subject invention, as defined in the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for distributing media content in digital form on a network, the method comprising:
 - 5 providing at least one redemption point to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events, each of said one of selected products and said one of identified events being characterized by including first media content;
 - providing second media content in digital form on a
 - 10 server through the network; and
 - allowing access to said customers to said second media content in digital form on said server through the computer network in exchange for a predetermined amount of redemption points.
- 15 2. A system for distributing media content in digital form on a network, the system comprising:
 - information providing means for offering redemption points in exchange to a customer acquiring one of selected products or assisting to one of identified events;
 - 20 a server connected to the network including media content in digital form;
 - means connected to said server including media content to validate said redemption points; and
 - means to allow access to said customer to at least
 - 25 part of said media content in digital form upon validation of said redemption points.

