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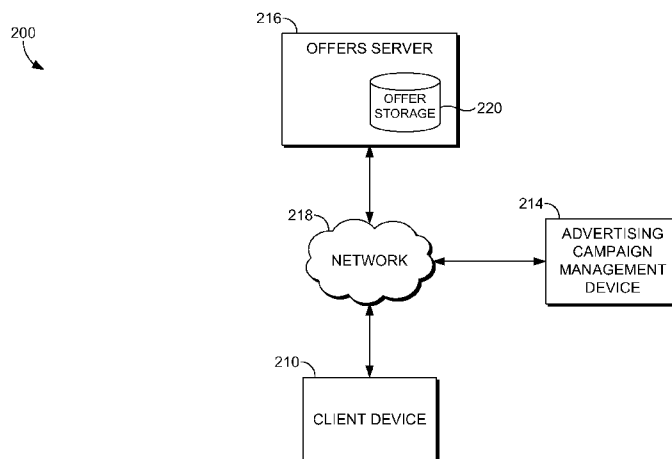


FIG. 2

(57) Abstract: Methods are provided for utilizing the achievement or the success a gamer has during online game play to unlock offers or coupons sponsored by an advertiser. The value of an offer or coupon may increase based upon the game-play-based achievement attained. By having the variable value, the gamer is incited to play more, which provides additional opportunities for the in-game advertising campaign to be presented. Alternatively, the value of the offer or coupon may remain consistent and the gamer may be permitted to compile multiple offers. Either way, the advertiser is not only permitted the opportunity to showcase its advertisement campaign more but is also provided an avenue for tracking the effectiveness of the advertising campaign by tracking the issuance and redemption of game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons.

FACILITATING SPONSORSHIP OF GAME-PLAY-BASED ACHIEVEMENTS

BACKGROUND

[0001] Advertising inside a video game has the difficult challenge of showcasing the effectiveness of the advertising campaign. Usually advertisements are integrated within a game and although it can be determined if a gamer has viewed the advertisement by understanding the angle and focus of an in-game camera, it is difficult for an advertiser to determine whether an in-game advertising campaign is effective; that is, it is difficult for an advertiser to determine if viewing the advertisement had any material impact on its business.

SUMMARY

[0002] This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used as an aid in determining the scope of the claimed subject matter.

[0003] Embodiments of the present invention relate to utilizing the achievement or the success a gamer has during online game play to unlock offers or coupons sponsored by an advertiser. In embodiments, the value of an offer or coupon increases based upon the game-play-based achievement attained. By having the variable value, the gamer is incented to play more, which provides additional opportunities for the in-game advertising campaign to be presented. In another embodiment, the value of the offer or coupon remains consistent and the gamer compiles multiple coupons. In either embodiment, or any combination thereof, the advertiser is not only permitted the opportunity to showcase its advertisement campaign more but is also provided an avenue for tracking the effectiveness of the advertising campaign by tracking the issuance and redemption of game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons.

[0004] Game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons may be accessed by a number of computing devices associated with a gamer including, but not limited to, mobile devices such as mobile telephones. By tying a mobile telephone number to the gamer's username, an offer or coupon may be delivered to the gamer's mobile phone, where it can be redeemed at a retail location associated with the advertiser using traditional point of sale technology. Information can be tracked on the number of redemptions and reported back to the advertiser, therefore showcasing the direct effectiveness of the in-game advertising campaign itself.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The present invention is described in detail below with reference to the attached drawing figures, wherein:

5 [0006] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an exemplary computing environment suitable for use in implementing embodiments of the present invention;

[0007] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an exemplary computing system in which embodiments of the invention may be employed;

10 [0008] FIG. 3 is a flow diagram showing an exemplary method for facilitating sponsorship of game-play-based achievements, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0009] FIG. 4 is a flow diagram showing an exemplary method for awarding game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

15 [0010] FIG. 5 is a flow diagram showing another exemplary method for awarding game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0011] The subject matter of the present invention is described with specificity herein to meet statutory requirements. However, the description itself is not intended to
20 limit the scope of this patent. Rather, the inventors have contemplated that the claimed subject matter might also be embodied in other ways, to include different steps or combinations of steps similar to the ones described in this document, in conjunction with other present or future technologies. Moreover, although the terms “step” and/or “block” may be used herein to connote different elements of methods employed, the terms should
25 not be interpreted as implying any particular order among or between various steps herein disclosed unless and except when the order of individual steps is explicitly described.

[0012] Embodiments of the present invention are generally directed to utilizing the achievement or the success a gamer has during online game play to unlock offers or coupons sponsored by an advertiser. In embodiments, the value of an offer or coupon
30 increases based upon the game-play-based achievement attained. By having the variable value, the gamer is incented to play more, which provides additional opportunities for the in-game advertising campaign to be presented. In another embodiment, the value of the offer or coupon remains consistent and the gamer compiles multiple coupons. In either embodiment, or any combination thereof, the advertiser is not only permitted the

opportunity to showcase its advertisement campaign more but is also provided an avenue for tracking the effectiveness of the advertising campaign by tracking the issuance and redemption of game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons. In embodiments, an advertiser offering a more valuable offer or coupon may elect to sponsor more difficult game-play-based achievements than other advertisers that offer less valuable incentives.

[0013] Accordingly, in one aspect, an embodiment of the present invention is directed to one or more computer-readable media storing computer-useable instructions that, when used by one or more computing devices, causes the one or more computing devices to perform a method for facilitating sponsorship of game-play-based achievements. The method includes receiving a game-play-based achievement identity indicating a particular game play achievement, receiving offer information indicating an offer or coupon to be awarded upon a user attaining the particular game-play-based achievement, and causing the offer or coupon to be presented to the user upon receiving an indication that the user has attained the particular game-play-based achievement.

[0014] In another embodiment, an aspect of the invention is directed to a method performed by one or more computing devices for awarding game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons. The method includes receiving an advertisement to be presented during play of a game, the advertisement being associated with an advertiser. The method further includes receiving at least one game-play-achievement-based condition and receiving an indication that a user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during play of the game. Still further, the method includes generating a game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon, wherein the game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon is sponsored by the advertiser.

[0015] A further embodiment of the present invention is directed to one or more computer-readable media storing computer-useable instructions that, when used by one or more computing devices, causes the one or more computing devices to perform a method for awarding game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons. The method includes receiving an advertisement associated with an advertiser, receiving at least one game-play-achievement-based condition sponsored by the advertiser, causing the advertisement to be presented to a user during game play, receiving an indication that the user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during game play, causing an award indicator indicating that the user has earned a game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon associated with the advertiser to be presented to the user, and storing the game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon such that it is accessible by one or more user

computing devices upon receiving user acceptance of the presented award indicator. In embodiments, the method may further include receiving a user request to view stored game-play-achievement-based coupons or offers, verifying an identity of a user from whom the user request is received, and presenting the game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon to the user.

[0016] Having briefly described an overview of embodiments of the present invention, an exemplary operating environment in which embodiments of the present invention may be implemented is described below in order to provide a general context for various aspects of the present invention. Referring initially to FIG. 1 in particular, an exemplary operating environment for implementing embodiments of the present invention is shown and designated generally as computing device 100. Computing device 100 is but one example of a suitable computing environment and is not intended to suggest any limitation as to the scope of use or functionality of the invention. Neither should the computing device 100 be interpreted as having any dependency or requirement relating to any one or combination of components illustrated.

[0017] The invention may be described in the general context of computer code or machine-useable instructions, including computer-executable instructions such as program modules, being executed by a computer or other machine, such as a personal data assistant or other handheld device. Generally, program modules including routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc., refer to code that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. The invention may be practiced in a variety of system configurations, including hand-held devices, consumer electronics, general-purpose computers, more specialty computing devices, and the like. The invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by remote-processing devices that are linked through a communications network.

[0018] With reference to FIG. 1, computing device 100 includes a bus 110 that directly or indirectly couples the following devices: memory 112, one or more processors 114, one or more presentation components 116, input/output ports 118, input/output components 120, and an illustrative power supply 122. The bus 110 represents what may be one or more busses (such as an address bus, data bus, or combination thereof). Although the various blocks of FIG. 1 are shown with lines for the sake of clarity, in reality, these blocks represent logical, not necessarily actual, components. For example, one may consider a presentation component such as a display device to be an I/O component. Also, processors have memory. We recognize that such is the nature of the

art, and reiterate that the diagram of FIG. 1 is merely illustrative of an exemplary computing device that can be used in connection with one or more embodiments of the present invention. Distinction is not made between such categories as “workstation,” “server,” “laptop,” “hand-held device,” and the like, as all are contemplated within the scope of FIG. 1 and reference to “computing device.”

[0019] The computing device 100 typically includes a variety of computer-readable media. Computer-readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by computing device 100 and includes both volatile and nonvolatile media, removable and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information such as computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules or other data. Computer-readable media includes, but is not limited to, RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical disk storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by computing device 100. Combinations of any of the above are also included within the scope of computer-readable media.

[0020] The memory 112 includes computer-storage media in the form of volatile and/or nonvolatile memory. The memory may be removable, nonremovable, or a combination thereof. Exemplary hardware devices include solid-state memory, hard drives, optical-disc drives, etc. The computing device 100 includes one or more processors that read data from various entities such as the memory 112 or the I/O components 120. The presentation component(s) 116 present data indications to a user or other device. Exemplary presentation components include a display device, speaker, printing component, vibrating component, etc.

[0021] The I/O ports 118 allow the computing device 100 to be logically coupled to other devices including the I/O components 120, some of which may be built in. Illustrative components include a microphone, joystick, game pad, satellite dish, scanner, printer, wireless device, and the like.

[0022] As indicated previously, embodiments of the present invention are directed to utilizing the achievement or the success a user has during online game play to unlock offers or coupons sponsored by an advertiser. As will be described in further detail below, in embodiments, the value of an offer or coupon increases based upon the game-play-based achievement attained. By having the variable value, the user is incented to play

more, which provides additional opportunities for the in-game advertising campaign to be presented. In another embodiment, the value of the offer or coupon remains consistent and the user is permitted to compile a plurality of offers or coupons. In either embodiment, or any combination thereof, the advertiser is not only permitted the opportunity to showcase its advertising campaign with higher frequency, but is also provided an avenue for tracking the effectiveness of the advertising campaign by tracking the issuance and redemption of game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons.

[0023] Previously stored game-play-achievement-based offers or coupons may be accessed by a number of computing devices associated with a user including, but not limited to, mobile devices such as mobile telephones. By tying a mobile telephone number to a gamer's username, an offer or coupon may be delivered to the user's mobile telephone, where it can be redeemed at a retail location associated with the advertiser using traditional point of sale technology. Information can be tracked on the number of redemptions and reported back to the advertiser, therefore showcasing the direct effectiveness of the in-game advertising campaign itself. It should be noted that redemption is a voluntary activity initiated by a user. That is, presentation of a coupon as a reward does not require the user to accept the presented offer. If the user does accept, however, he or she may not only redeem the offer if interested but may also trade with other gamers for coupons that may be more appealing.

[0024] Referring now to FIG. 2, a block diagram is provided illustrating an exemplary computing system 200 in which embodiments of the present invention may be employed. It should be understood that this and other arrangements described herein are set forth only as examples. Other arrangements and elements (*e.g.*, machines, interfaces, functions, orders, and groupings of functions, and the like) can be used in addition to or instead of those shown, and some elements may be omitted altogether. Further, many of the elements described herein are functional entities that may be implemented as discrete or distributed components or in conjunction with other components, and in any suitable combination and location. Various functions described herein as being performed by one or more entities may be carried out by hardware, firmware, and/or software. For instance, various functions may be carried out by a processor executing instructions stored in memory.

[0025] Among other components not shown, the system 200 generally includes a client device 210, an advertising campaign management device 214, and an offers server 216. Each of the client device 210, advertising campaign management device 214 and

offers server 216 may include any type of computing device, such as computing device 100 described with reference to FIG. 1, for example. The components of the system 200 may communicate with each other via a network 218, which may include, without limitation, one or more local area networks (LANs) and/or wide area networks (WANs).

5 Such networking environments are commonplace in offices, enterprise-wide computer networks, intranets, and the Internet. It should be understood that any number of client devices, campaign management devices, and offers servers may be employed within the system 200 within the scope of embodiments of the present invention. Each may comprise a single device or multiple devices cooperating in a distributed environment. For instance,
10 the offers server 216 may comprise multiple devices arranged in a distributed environment that collectively provide the functionality of the offers server described herein. Additionally, other components not shown may also be included within the system 200.

[0026] The client device 210 is configured to manage client interactions with electronic offers/coupons. Thus, the client device is configured to, for instance, locally
15 store electronic coupons and offers, present locally-stored offers and coupons, sync the state of locally-stored electronic offers and coupons with a central or remote user coupon store, perform a ‘redeem’ action on locally-stored electronic coupons or offers, remove electronic offers or coupons from the local store, and delete electronic coupons or offers from a remote/central user coupon store (*e.g.*, offer storage 220).

20 **[0027]** The client device 210 is further configured to present electronic offers to the user. In addition to the full offer, such presentation may be by way of a teaser associated with a requested electronic offer or coupon and/or a preview. As utilized herein, a “teaser” is an advertisement (image or text) that references an associated offer with fewer specific offer details than the offer itself includes. In embodiments, teasers
25 may be visually smaller than the corresponding offer that includes the full offer details. A preview is a content and/or content-image advertisement containing relevant offer details. In embodiments, previews are formatted in a larger standard size thus having more content and/or content images than a corresponding teaser.

[0028] The client device is further configured to support ‘save,’ ‘redeem,’ or
30 ‘close’ requests with respect to a presented offer. In this regard, the client device 210 is configured to receive ‘save’ requests based upon presented offers and forward such requests to the offers server 216 such that such offers/coupons are stored in association with offer storage 244. If no network access is available at the time a ‘save’ request is received, it may be queued for later retry.

[0029] Still further, the client device 210 is configured to receive ‘redeem’ requests for presented offers or coupons and forward such requests to the offers server 216. The response to this request will either be a failure code or a success code with the body of the reply generally being a generated image or Uniform Resource Locator (URL).

5 The client device 210 is also configured to present the asset on success. In embodiments, the failure code indicates the nature of the failure, *e.g.*, that a distribution rule has been exceeded. Upon receipt of a ‘close’ request, the client device 210 is configured to remove the teaser and return the gaming application to its state prior to presentation of the teaser.

[0030] The advertising campaign management device 214 permits advertising
10 entities to set up the details of offers-focused advertising campaigns within gaming applications. The campaign management component 214 is configured to receive input of creatives associated with an offers-focused advertising campaign. Creatives may include, without limitation, base advertisements, teasers, previews and coupons. As used herein, a “base advertisement” is an advertisement associated with the advertising entity that does
15 not reference any particular offer. Base advertisements may be displayed as a product reminder when, for instance, both save and redemption limits have been met by the device requesting presentation of an offer.

[0031] As previously set forth, a “teaser” refers to an advertisement (image or text) that references an associated offer value but contains fewer specific offer details than the
20 offer itself. In embodiments, teasers may be smaller than the corresponding advertisements that include the full offer details. A preview is a content and/or content-image advertisement containing relevant offer details. In embodiments, previews are formatted in a larger standard size thus having more content and/or content images than a corresponding teaser. A coupon is a content or content-image advertisement containing
25 relevant offer details and a redemption code unique to a particular individual or device. Coupons are “minted” by the offers server 216 upon receipt of a ‘redeem’ or ‘save’ event. Minting describes the process of creating all the metadata for a unique coupon. The metadata contains information about the user and the advertising campaign (and the source of an offer, as appropriate) and may be used to generate a unique offer image. Minting is
30 more fully described below. In embodiments, coupons are formatted in a larger standard size thus having more content and/or content images than corresponding teasers and/or previews.

[0032] The advertising campaign management device 214 is additionally configured to receive input of campaign values, including offer details and consumer

targeting parameters, associated with an electronic advertising campaign. Offer details may include, without limitation, redemption capping values, distribution capping values and frequency capping values. As used herein, “capping” is a limitation assigned by the advertising entity to an advertising campaign for presentation and/or redemption of an electronic offer. Redemption capping values limit how many coupons or offers can be redeemed or saved by the same device or individual. Distribution capping values limit how many of a given offer can be collectively distributed to all devices or individuals. Frequency capping values limit the viewing of an offer or coupon by the same device or individual.

[0033] Additional offer details may include, without limitation, offer/coupon value by distance range, time usage, expiry and promotion codes, in addition to standard campaign management content. Offer/coupon value by distance range details specify the value of an offer or coupon based upon the distance of the requesting individual or device relative to the advertising entity at the time the request is received. For instance, a coupon may be valued at 50% off an item if the request is received from an individual or device located between three and five miles from the advertising entity, 25% off the item if the request is received from an individual or device located between one and two miles from the advertising entity and no coupon but merely an advertisement may be presented if the request is received from an individual or device located less than one mile or greater than five miles from the advertising entity. Offer details related to time usage may specify, for instance, that a coupon may only be used during certain hours of the day or on certain days of the week. Offer details related to expiry may specify, by way of example only, that the associated offer expires at a particular time or on a particular date. In embodiments, the lower limit may be set to any reasonable length of time, for instance, not less than one hour from receipt of the request. Offer details related to promotion codes may include, by way of example only, consonant strings or numbers to be included in an associated offer’s unique identifier. Generally, the position of a promotion value will be within the minted value.

[0034] Distribution capping is rules driven. Those rules can be determined by the advertising entity at the time of advertisement campaign initialization or anytime during the flight of the advertising campaign itself. Rules may be as simple as a stated number for total distribution. In embodiments, the rules may be more complex and include elements such as location (*e.g.*, distribution percentages for a given geographic location), distance of the requesting individual or device from the advertising entity at the time the

request is received (as described above), staged distribution rate step-down (*e.g.*, algorithmically slow the rate of distribution when distribution is within a certain percentage of the distribution cap value) and staged step-down value (*e.g.*, change the value of the offer when distribution is within a certain percentage of the distribution cap value). All such offer details, and any combination thereof, are included within the scope of embodiments of the present invention.

[0035] Elements of an advertising campaign that are entered as part of advertisement campaign management must be “printed” onto the offer image at the time of delivery. Thus, the advertising entity, as part of the offer details, may include space in a well-known and/or standard location on the advertisement type surface to allow for this real-time overlay. Alternatively, the coupon itself may be dynamically built from asset elements rather than as a single image.

[0036] Advertising campaigns may also include consumer targeting parameters. Such parameters may be targeted to an audience (demographic and behavioral targeting). In addition, offers or coupons may be targeted to specific geographic locations, applications (*e.g.*, search-based applications), times of day (*e.g.*, during lunch hours), and the like.

[0037] The offers server 216 is configured to receive requests for offers, parse offer requests, select offers and/or advertisements satisfying requests, test distribution rules, mint offers, and serve appropriate advertisements and offers to requesting devices (*e.g.*, client device 210).

[0038] As can be seen, the system 200 generally illustrates an environment in which an in-game advertising campaign is combined with the delivery of a sponsored offer or coupon associated with a particular game-play-based achievement such that the offer or coupon is unlocked upon a user attaining the particular game-play-based achievement. The offer or coupon is presented in association with one or more computing devices associated with the gamer’s username (*e.g.*, set forth in the gamer’s profile) and, accordingly, may be redeemed at a point-of-sale using existing point-of-sale technology known to those of ordinary skill in the art. Additionally, information can be tracked and reported back to the sponsoring advertiser showing the direct monetary impact the in-game advertising campaign has on its investment. Gamers unlock real value by playing advertising-enabled games and are incited to continue to do so, and to play games that offer the game-play-based achievement reward functionality.

[0039] Turning now to FIG. 3, a flow diagram is provided that illustrates a method 300 for facilitating sponsorship of game-play-based achievements, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As indicated at block 310, an identity of a game-play-based achievement indicating a particular game-play-based achievement is received.

5 Such a game-play-based achievement may include, by way of example and not limitation, completion of a particular game level, attaining a particular game score, performing a particular game task or trick, and the like. In embodiments, the game-play-based achievement identity is input by an advertiser utilizing the campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2. In one aspect, the advertiser may sponsor the particular game-play-based achievement as part of an advertising campaign. That is, one or more advertisements associated with the advertiser may be presented to the user during play of the game. In embodiments, such advertisements are presented to the user during game play prior to the user attaining the sponsored game-play-based achievement.

[0040] Offer information indicating an offer or coupon to be awarded upon a user
15 attaining the particular game-play-based achievement associated with the game-play-based achievement identity is also received, as indicated at block 312. In embodiments, the value of an offer or coupon may increase based upon the game-play-based achievement attained. For instance, a coupon for \$0.15 off an item may be awarded upon a user attaining a score of 10,000 points, the value of the coupon increasing to \$0.25 off the same
20 item upon the user attaining a score of 20,000 points. By having the variable value, the user is incented to play more, which provides additional opportunities for the in-game advertising campaign to be presented. In another embodiment, the value of the offer or coupon may remain constant and the user may be permitted to compile a plurality of offers or coupons for the same item. For instance, utilizing the above example, a coupon for
25 \$0.15 off an item may be awarded upon a user attaining a score of 10,000 points and upon the user attaining a score of 20,000 points, a second coupon for \$0.15 off the item may be awarded, making a combined offer value of \$0.30 off the item. In another embodiment, the value of an offer or coupon may be higher for certain individuals, for instance, individuals achieving higher levels of game-play or logging higher game-play time. In
30 still further embodiments, gamer preferences may be utilized to select from multiple offers or coupons to be awarded and/or dynamic offer presentation (*e.g.*, through advertiser bidding) may be utilized. Each of these alternatives, and any combination thereof, is contemplated to be within the scope of embodiments of the present invention.

[0041] In embodiments, the offer information indicating an offer or coupon to be awarded upon a user attaining a particular game-play-based achievement is input by an advertiser utilizing the campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2.

[0042] Upon receiving an indication that a user has attained the particular game-play-based achievement (for instance, received by offers server 216 of FIG. 2), as indicated at block 314, the offer or coupon is caused to be presented, for instance, displayed on a display screen associated with client device 210 of FIG. 2. This is indicated at block 316. Upon receiving an indication that the user to whom the offer or coupon is presented accepts the offer or coupon, information pertaining to the coupon or offer may be delivered to one or more computing devices associated with the user. For instance, if the user's mobile telephone is associated with his or her user profile, upon acceptance of an offer or coupon, the offer or coupon may be delivered to the user's mobile telephone, *e.g.*, via MMS/SMS or through a phone-based application. In embodiments, the user may then be presented with an onscreen notification that the offer or coupon has been sent.

[0043] In other embodiments, upon receiving an indication that the user to whom the offer or coupon is presented accepts the offer or coupon, information pertaining to the coupon or offer may be stored in an offer storage location associated with user that is accessible by one or more computing devices, mobile or otherwise, associated with the user. For instance, the accepted offer or coupon may be stored in an offer storage location 220 associated with the offers server 216 of FIG. 2. When the user desires to view or redeem the stored offer or coupon, a request is received from a computing device associated with the user, the user's identity is verified and the stored offer or coupon is presented in association with the requesting computing device.

[0044] With reference to FIG. 4, a flow diagram is provided that illustrates a method 400 performed by one or more computing devices for awarding game-play-achievement-based coupons or offers, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As indicated at block 410, an advertisement to be presented during play of a game is received, the advertisement being associated with an advertiser. The advertisement may be received, for instance, utilizing campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2. Also received, *e.g.*, utilizing campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2, is at least one game-play-achievement-based condition that is to be fulfilled in order for a user to attain an offer or coupon that is associated with the advertisement and/or the advertiser. A game-play-achievement-based condition may be any condition to

be fulfilled during game play including, but not limited to, a user attaining a particular score, completing a particular level of play, playing for a particular period of time, or the like. Embodiments of the present invention are not limited by the type of game-play-achievement-based condition specified by an advertiser or otherwise received.

5 **[0045]** Upon receiving an indication that a user has fulfilled the particular game-play-achievement-based condition during game play, as indicated at block 414 (for instance, received by offers server 216 of FIG. 2), the offer or coupon is generated, for instance, utilizing offers server 216 of FIG. 2. This is indicated at block 416. In embodiments, the offer or coupon may be presented, stored, or both presented and stored.

10 Additionally, in embodiments, an award indicator indicating that the user has earned a particular game-play-achievement-based coupon or offer may be presented. Such presentation may occur during game play close in time to the user fulfilling the particular game-play-based achievement and/or once play has terminated, for instance, in association with a results summary display or the like. All such variations, and any combination

15 thereof, are contemplated to be within the scope of embodiments of the present invention.

[0046] Upon receiving an indication that the user to whom the offer or coupon is presented accepts the offer or coupon, information pertaining to the coupon or offer may be delivered to one or more computing devices associated with the user. For instance, if the user's mobile telephone is associated with his or her user profile, upon acceptance of

20 an offer or coupon, the offer or coupon may be delivered to the user's mobile telephone, *e.g.*, via MMS/SMS or through a phone-based application. In embodiments, the user may then be presented with an onscreen notification that the offer or coupon has been sent.

[0047] In other embodiments, upon receiving an indication that the user to whom the offer or coupon is presented accepts the offer or coupon, information pertaining to the coupon or offer may be stored in an offer storage location associated with user that is

25 accessible by one or more computing devices, mobile or otherwise, associated with the user. For instance, the accepted offer or coupon may be stored in an offer storage location 220 associated with the offers server 216 of FIG. 2. When the user desires to view or redeem the stored offer or coupon, a request is received from a computing device

30 associated with the user, the user's identity is verified and the stored offer or coupon is presented in association with the requesting computing device.

[0048] Turning to FIG. 5, a flow diagram is provided that illustrates a method 500 for awarding game-play-achievement-based coupons or offers, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. As indicated at block 510, an advertisement is

received that is associated with an advertiser. In embodiments, the advertisement is received, for instance, from an advertiser utilizing campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2. Also received, *e.g.*, utilizing campaign management component 214 of FIG. 2, is at least one game-play-achievement-based condition that is sponsored by the advertiser and that is to be fulfilled in order for a user to attain a particular offer or coupon. This is indicated at block 512. As indicated at block 514, the advertisement is presented to a user during game play, for instance, in association with client device 210 of FIG. 2.

[0049] As indicated at block 516, an indication that a user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during game play is received, for instance, by offers server 216 of FIG. 2. As a result, an award indicator is presented indicating that the user has earned a game-play-achievement-based offer or coupon associated with the advertiser. This is indicated at block 518. Upon receiving user acceptance of the presented award indicator, the game-play-achievement-based coupon or offer is stored such that it is accessible by one or more computing devices. This is indicated at block 520. In embodiments, information pertaining to the coupon or offer may be stored in an offer storage location associated with user that is accessible by one or more computing devices, mobile or otherwise, associated with the user. For instance, the accepted offer or coupon may be stored in an offer storage location 220 associated with the offers server 216 of FIG. 2. When the user desires to view or redeem the stored offer or coupon, a request is received from a computing device associated with the user, the user's identity is verified and the stored offer or coupon is presented in association with the requesting computing device.

[0050] By way of example, suppose that John Doe is an online gamer. John logs into an online gaming service with his username and initiates play of an auto racing game that is advertising enabled. John Doe has many things associated with his gaming username, including gaming statistics, achievements and profile information. Suppose that his profile information includes a mobile telephone number.

[0051] While John Doe is racing through the streets during game play, he notices billboards throughout the city advertising a particular fast food chain restaurant and/or illuminated signs indicating the virtual presence of the restaurant. When John completes his race, he is shown a race summary screen where John's place in the race and his lap times are presented to him. Also presented is a reward for placing third in the race. It is a game-play-achievement-based coupon from the fast food chain restaurant that reads: "Free hamburger with the purchase of a hamburger. Press (A) to redeem." John presses (A) on

his game controller to accept the coupon which is delivered to his mobile telephone, *e.g.*, via MMS/SMS or through a phone-based application. He then is presented with an onscreen notification that the coupon has been sent.

[0052] The next day, John visits the fast food chain restaurant and orders two hamburgers. Using his mobile telephone, he accesses the coupon. The restaurant employee inputs the coupon code (or scans the barcode if barcode scanning equipment is present) and John gets credit for his free hamburger – thus only paying for one hamburger. The redemption of the coupon is incremented and reported back to the advertiser (that is, the fast food chain) thereby showcasing the direct effectiveness of the in-game advertising campaign.

[0053] As can be understood, embodiments of the present invention provide an environment in which an in-game advertising campaign is combined with the delivery of a sponsored offer or coupon associated with a particular game-play-based achievement such that the offer or coupon is unlocked upon a user attaining the particular game-play-based achievement. The present invention has been described in relation to particular embodiments, which are intended in all respects to be illustrative rather than restrictive. Alternative embodiments will become apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art to which the present invention pertains without departing from its scope.

[0054] From the foregoing, it will be seen that this invention is one well adapted to attain all the ends and objects set forth above, together with other advantages which are obvious and inherent to the system and method. It will be understood that certain features and subcombinations are of utility and may be employed without reference to other features and subcombinations. This is contemplated by and is within the scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. One or more computer-readable media storing computer-useable instructions that, when used by one or more computing devices, causes the one or more
5 computing devices to perform a method for facilitating sponsorship of game-play-based achievements, the method comprising:

receiving a game-play-based achievement identity indicating a particular game play achievement;

10 receiving coupon information indicating a coupon to be awarded upon a user attaining the particular game-play-based achievement; and

causing the coupon to be presented to the user upon receiving an indication that the user has attained the particular game-play-based achievement.

2. The one or more computer-readable media of claim 1, wherein receiving a game-play-based achievement identity comprises receiving a plurality of
15 game-play-based achievement identities each indicating a different game play achievement, at least two of the different game-play-based achievements being related to one another such that achievement of a second of the at least two of the different game-play-based achievements is dependent upon the user first achieving the first of the at least two of the different game-play-based achievements.

20 3. The one or more computer-readable media of claim 2, wherein receiving coupon information indicating a coupon to be awarded upon the user attaining the particular game-play-based achievement comprises receiving first coupon information indicating a first coupon to be awarded upon the user attaining the first of the at least two of the different game-play-based achievements and second coupon information indicating
25 a second coupon to be awarded upon the user attaining the second of the at least two of the different game-play-based achievements, and wherein the second coupon has a higher value than the first coupon.

4. The one or more computer-readable media of claim 1, wherein the presented coupon is associated with an advertiser, and wherein at least one advertisement
30 that is associated with the advertiser is presented to the user during game play.

5. A method performed by one or more computing devices for awarding game-play-achievement-based coupons, the method comprising:

receiving an advertisement to be presented during play of a game, the advertisement being associated with an advertiser;

receiving at least one game-play-achievement-based condition;
receiving an indication that a user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during play of the game; and
generating a game-play-achievement-based coupon, wherein the
5 game-play-achievement-based coupon is sponsored by the advertiser.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising presenting, during play of the game and after the indication that the user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition has been received, an award indicator indicating that the user has earned the game-play-achievement-based coupon.

10 7. The method of claim 5, further comprising presenting, after termination of game play and after the indication that the user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition has been received, an award indicator indicating that the user has earned the game-play-achievement-based coupon.

8. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
15 presenting an award indicator indicating that the user has earned the game-play-achievement-based coupon;
receiving user acceptance of the presented coupon; and
storing the game-play-achievement-based coupon such that it is accessible by one or more user computing devices.

20 9. The method of claim 8, wherein storing the game-play-achievement-based coupon such that it is accessible by one or more user computing devices comprises storing the game-play-achievement-based coupon such that it is accessible one or more mobile computing devices.

25 10. The method of claim 5, further comprising presenting the advertisement to the user in association with a plurality of game-play screens during play of the game.

11. The method of claim 5, wherein receiving at least one game-play-achievement-based condition comprises receiving a plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions, at least two of the plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions being related to one another such that achievement of a second of the at least two of the
30 plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions is dependent upon the user first achieving the first of the at least two of the plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein receiving an indication that user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during play of the game comprises receiving a first indication indicating that the user has fulfilled the first of the plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions and a second indication indicating that the user has fulfilled the second of the plurality of game-play-achievement-based conditions.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein generating a game-play-achievement-based coupon comprises generating a first game-play-achievement-based coupon after receiving the first indication and generating a second game-play-achievement-based coupon after receiving the second indication.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the second game-play-achievement-based coupon has a higher value than the first game-play-achievement-based coupon.

15. One or more computer-readable media storing computer-useable instructions that, when used by one or more computing devices, causes the one or more computing devices to perform a method for awarding game-play-achievement-based coupons, the method comprising:

receiving an advertisement associated with an advertiser;
receiving at least one game-play-achievement-based condition sponsored by the advertiser;
causing the advertisement to be presented to a user during game play;
receiving an indication that the user has fulfilled the game-play-achievement-based condition during game play;
causing an award indicator indicating that the user has earned a game-play-achievement-based coupon associated with the advertiser to be presented to the user; and
storing the game-play-achievement-based coupon such that it is accessible by one or more user computing devices upon receiving user acceptance of the presented award indicator.

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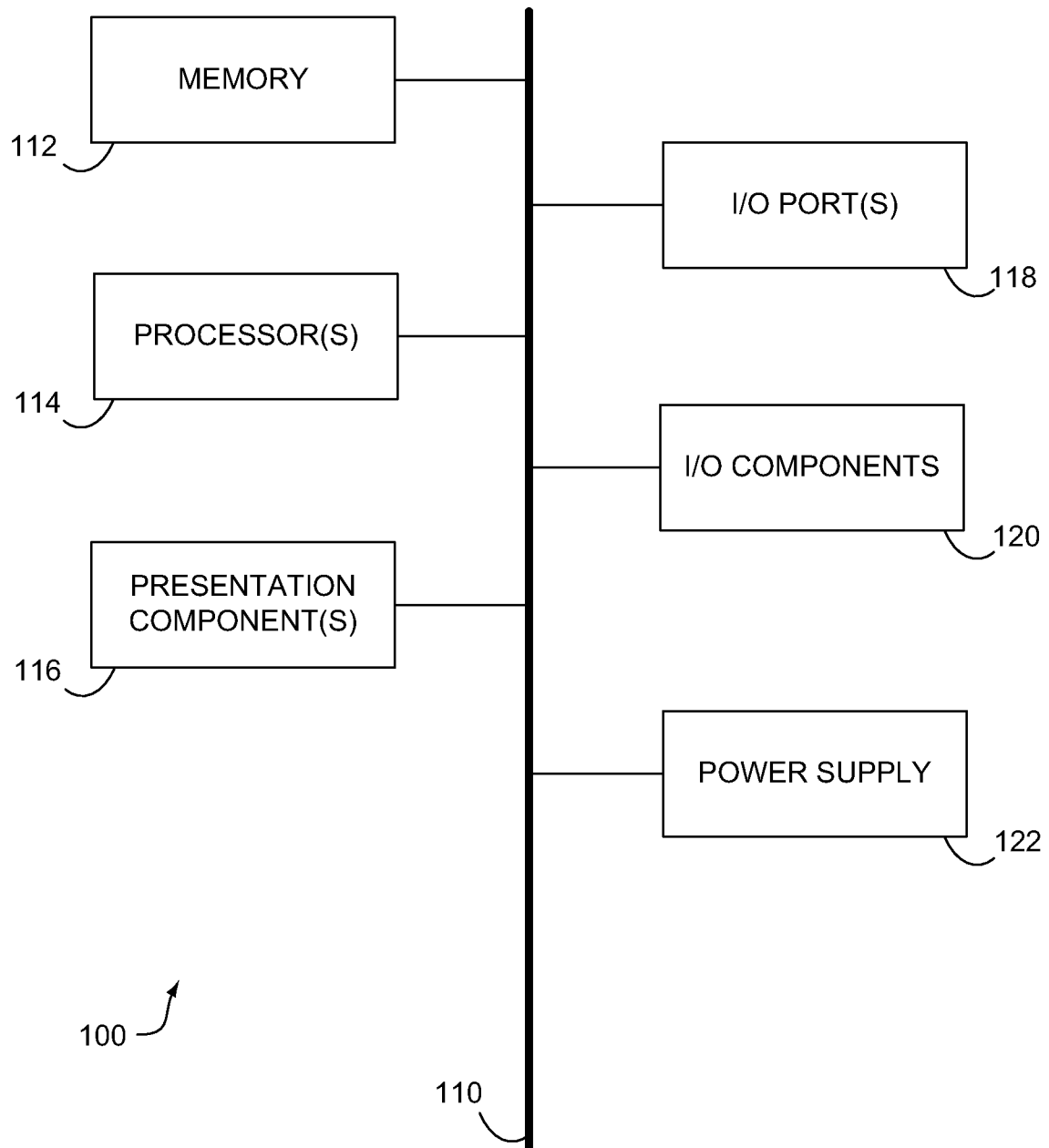


FIG. 1

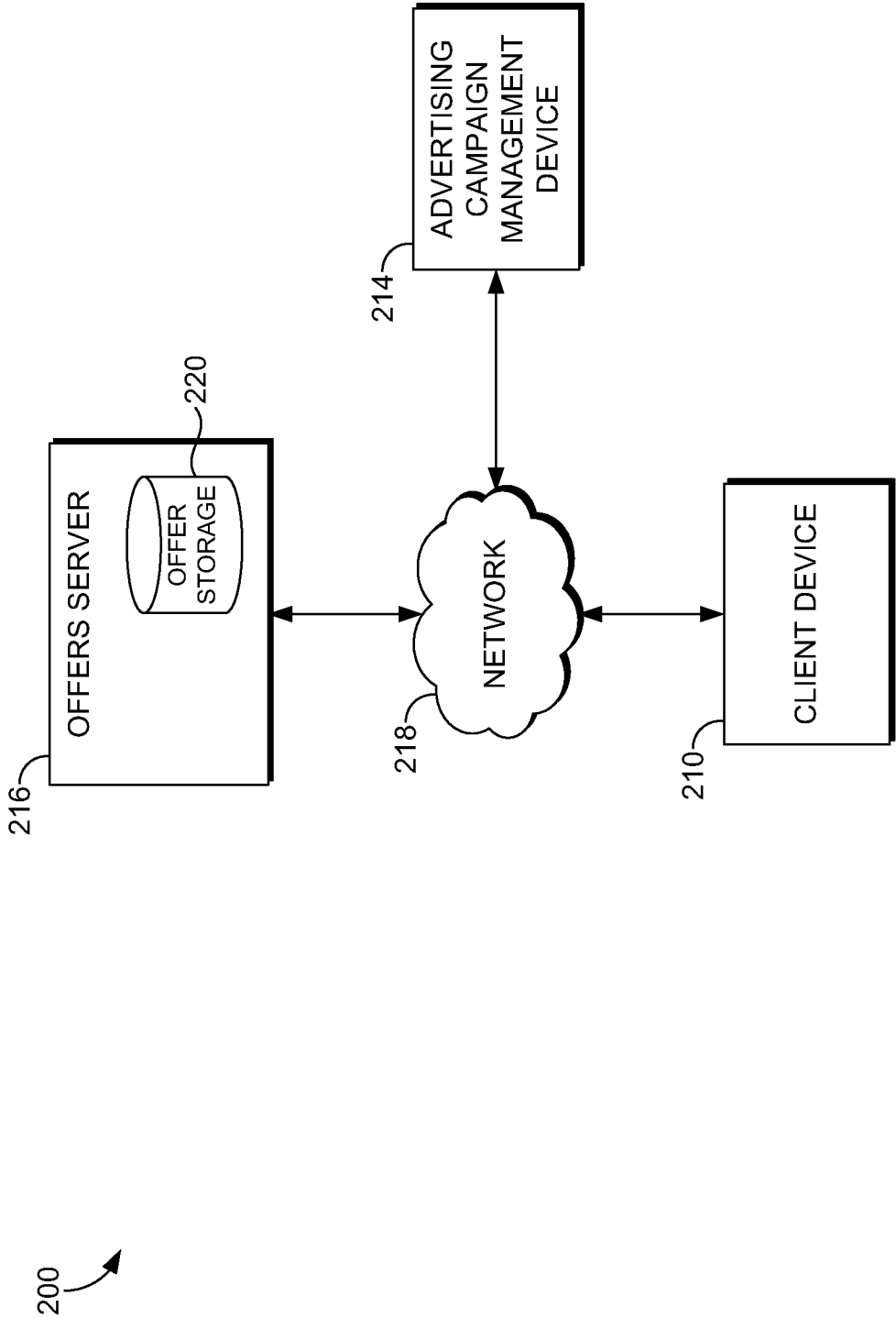


FIG. 2

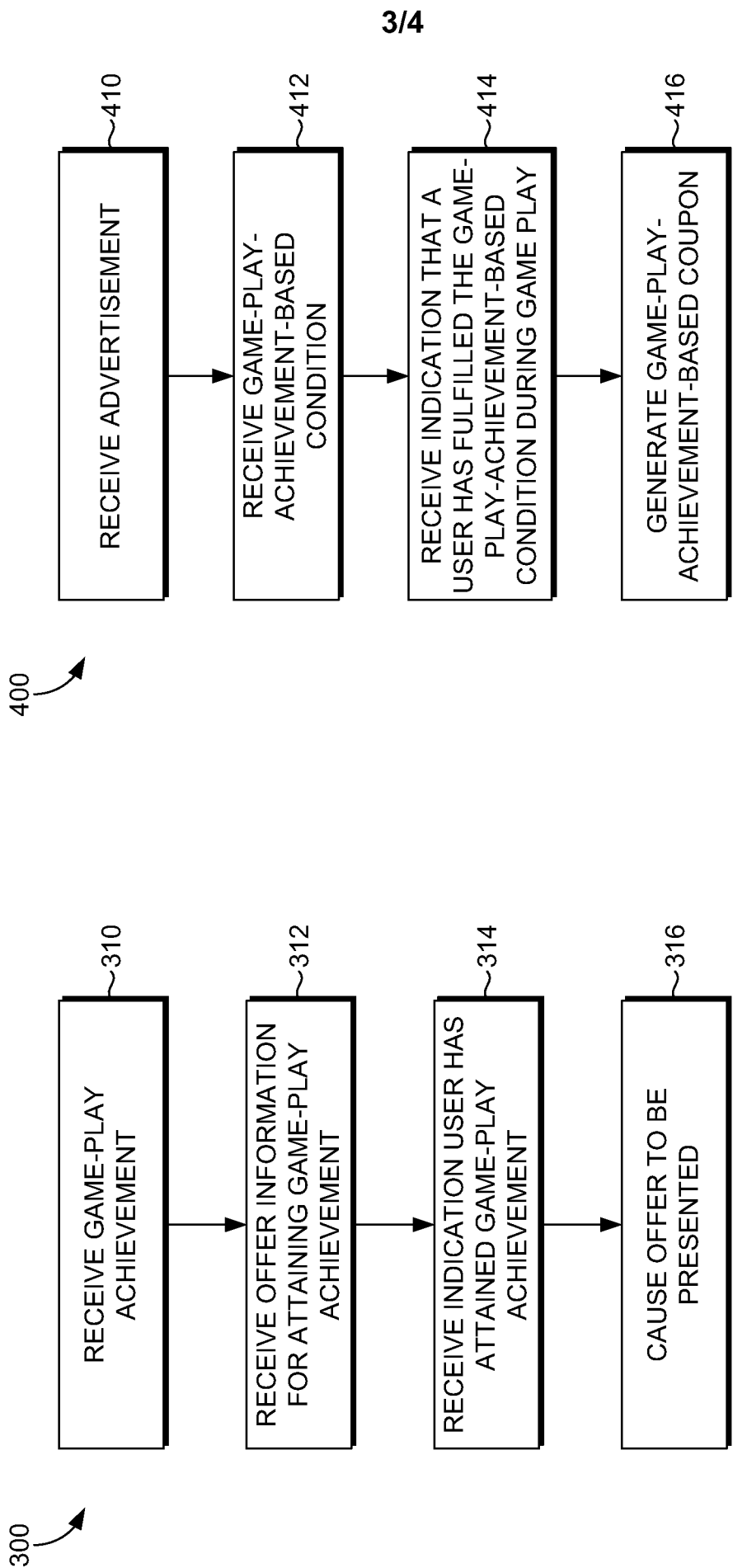


FIG. 4

FIG. 3

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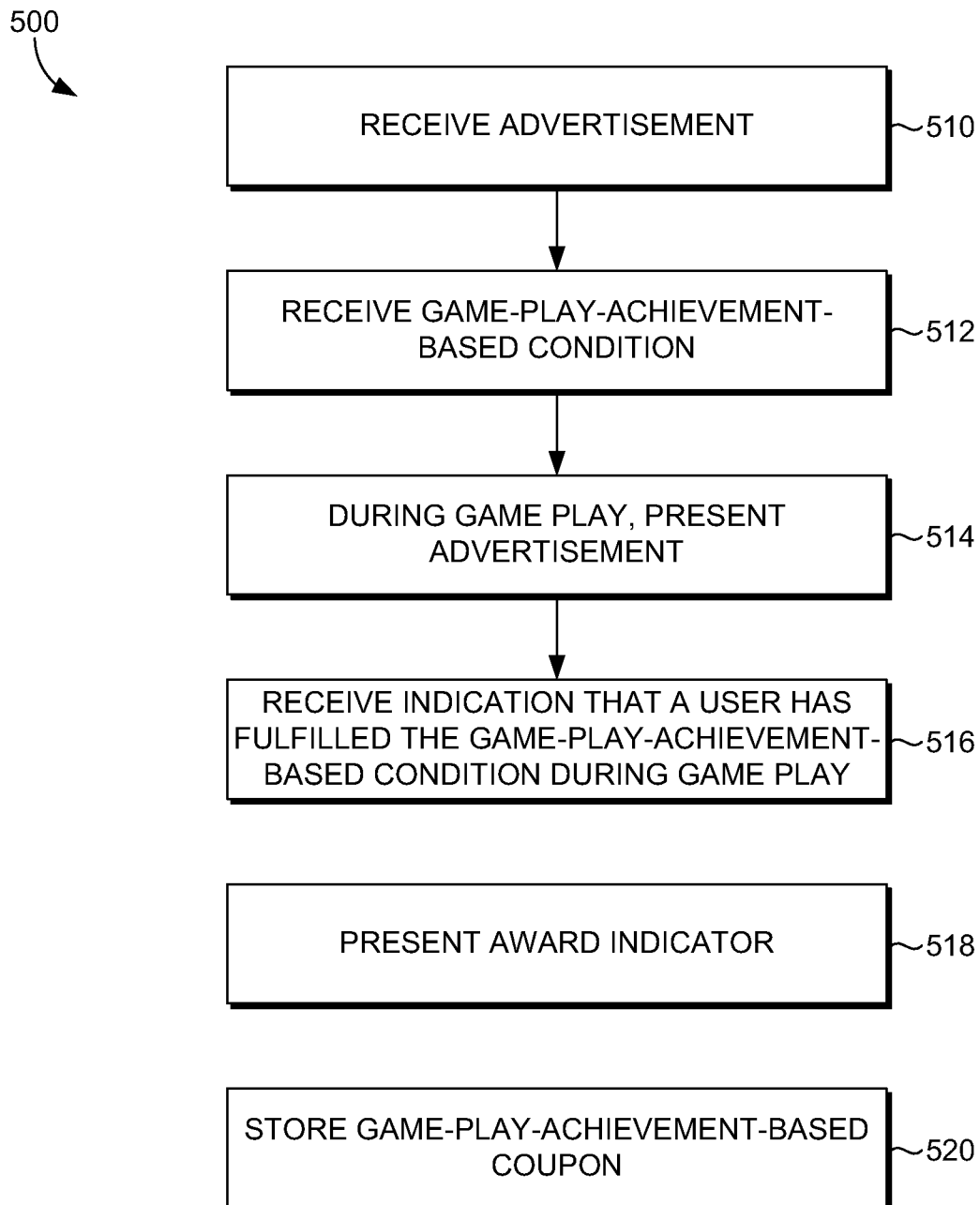


FIG. 5