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(71) Applicant: **MASTERCARD INTERNATIONAL INCORPORATED** [US/US]; 2000 Purchase Street, Purchase, NY 10577-2509 (US).(72) Inventors: **DOGIN, Jennifer**; 680 W. Boston Post Road, Apt. 2G, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (US). **MAW, Brian**; 41 Wolfpit Avenue, Unit A3, Norwalk, CT 06851 (US).(74) Agent: **RUGGIERO, Charles, N.J.**; Ohlandt, Greeley, Ruggiero & Perle, LLP, One Landmark Square, 10th Floor, Stamford, CT 06901 (US).

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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: GLOBAL SHOPPING CART

(57) Abstract: A global shopping cart operated in the cloud permits categories to be established for particular purposes or projects with a shopping cart or list of items to be purchased associated with each category. A site may be established for each category. Social media may be linked to the sites so that the owner or an invitee can upload general comments, comments on items selected for purchase for the project, links to web pages, images, audio files and video files. International purchases can be made. The data concerning purchases is preserved for at least the life of the owner of the global shopping cart.

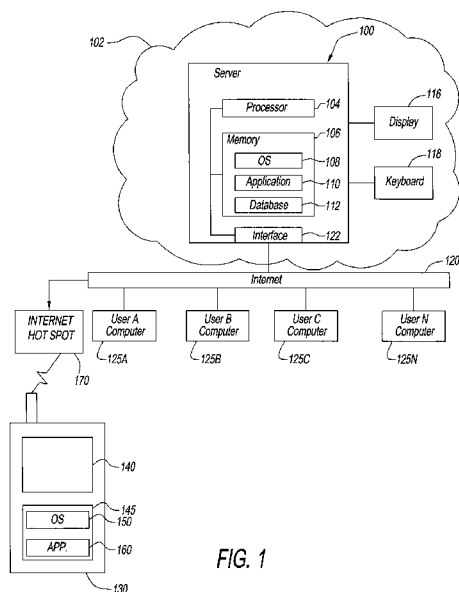


FIG. 1



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GLOBAL SHOPPING CART

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

1. Field of the Disclosure

[0001] The present disclosure relates to electronic shopping. More particularly, it relates to a system and/or a method for allowing any individual to maintain a multipurpose online shopping cart throughout the world.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] The multitude of shopping choices available on-line and at points of sale has made maintaining track of purchases a relatively complex task. It is sometimes very difficult to keep track of and organize all of the data concerning purchases made by an individual or a family over a period of time. Further, some tasks or projects are undertaken that may extend for a year or more. For example, a wedding may be planned or a construction project, such as adding one or more rooms to a house, may be undertaken.

[0003] During the course of these tasks or projects, it is desirable to have an organized way to construct a list of items that must be purchased or services that must be obtained, and to keep track of what has been purchased, and what needs to be purchased. Often, after a project has been completed, it is desirable to have information on the project so that, if necessary, replacement items can be purchased, warranties can be exercised, and additional services of the type utilized, can be obtained. Generally, during the course of several years, the information required to purchase replacement components, exercise warranties, or find the required services may no longer be available due to the loss of paper records and receipts.

[0004] For some projects, such as a wedding, it is desirable that certain aspects be shared with family and friends. For example, a bridal registry should be available on-line. Furnishings for a new addition to a house can be made available for comment and/or ranking by anyone authorized by the owner, who may have excellent ideas for alternative furnishings.

There exists a need for providing an opportunity for anyone authorized by the owner to make such comments.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0005] There is provided a system and/or a method for an individual to establish an online global shopping cart that is usable for the life of the individual and perhaps beyond that individual's life by a designated person.

[0006] There is also provided a system and/or a method for the operation of a global shopping cart that allows purchases to be made from multiple sources, including sources outside the country in which the global shopping cart is established.

[0007] There is further provided that such a system and/or a method can interface with social media, or provide its own user interface, so that selected aspects of the global shopping cart may be made available to family and friends.

[0008] The present disclosure provides a computer readable non-transitory storage medium storing instructions of a computer program that when executed by a computer system results in performance of steps for creating and operating an online global shopping cart.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] FIG. 1 is block diagram of system for implementing an exemplary embodiment of the present disclosure.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a diagram illustrating the components of an exemplary global shopping cart in accordance the present disclosure.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a diagram illustrating the components of an exemplary merchant API that can be used with the global shopping cart of FIG. 2.

[0012] FIG.4 is a flow chart representing the manner in which the system of FIG. 1 is initially used.

[0013] FIG. 5 is a flow chart representing the manner in which the system of FIG. 1 is used after a shopping cart has been created.

[0014] FIG. 6 is a flow chart of the use of the merchant API of FIG. 3.

[0015] FIG. 7 is a diagram illustrating a system logging function for the global shopping cart.

[0016] A component or a feature that is common to more than one figure is indicated with the same reference number in each figure.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0017] The following terms are used herein.

[0018] An entity is the owner of a global shopping cart. Entities may include, but are not limited to, a person, business, consortium of businesses (such as, by way of example, the businesses in a local shopping mall or businesses selling the same lines of products in different locations), school, club, fraternity or sorority, an organization having members in a particular trade or profession, sales representative for particular products, charity, not-for-profit organization, labor union, local government, government agency, or political party.

[0019] A task is something that is done on a one time or repetitive basis. A task may be a continuous endeavor, such as, for example, controlling inventory or office supplies. A task may be a project, such as, for example, planning a wedding, that can take a long period of time, approximately a year or longer, but is nonetheless contemplated to be a single event. A task can include a project, such as, for example, remodeling or redecorating a home or office, that can take several years.

[0020] An operator is an individual or an organization that operates a server that hosts one or more global shopping carts. An operator can be a payment network operator, such as MasterCard Incorporated, another business, or a consortium of businesses. However, it will be understood that there are other possible operators and types of global shopping carts, such as, for example, a mobile telephone company. There can be a mobile, global shopping cart

that is analogous to a so-called m-commerce (mobile commerce) site. The mobile shopping cart is designed to operate with the resources available on a mobile device, such as, for example, a smart phone.

[0021] A user of a global shopping cart can be the entity or owner, or anyone authorized by the owner, to use the global shopping cart. For example, if the owner is an individual, that owner may authorize his or her family members (generally a spouse or an older child) to use the global shopping cart. If the owner is a business, certain employees or other businesses in cooperation with the owner's business can be authorized to use the global shopping cart.

[0022] Referring to the drawings and, in particular, FIG. 1, a web site is operated on a server generally referred to by reference numeral 100. The web site 100 is in the cloud 102. Server 100 is connected to the Internet 120 by an interface 122. Server 100 includes a data processor 104 and a memory 106. Server 100 is connected to a display 116 and a keyboard 118. It will be understood that server 100 may have a number of other peripheral devices customarily found in any computer, such as, for example, a CD or DVD drive (not shown), for placing programs on server 100 or devices associated with or connected to the server for creating physical records of data processed by server 100.

[0023] Memory 106 has a memory portion 108 for an operating system ("OS") for server 100, a memory portion 110 for one or more application programs, including one that is the subject of this disclosure, and a memory portion 112 used as the storage for a database, as described below.

[0024] The data of the database stored in memory portion 112 is stored in any type of memory, including a hard drive, a flash memory, a CD, a RAM, or any other suitable memory, with provisions for suitable backup as known in the art.

[0025] Access computers 125A, 125B, 125C to 125N can access server 100 via a connection to the Internet 120, as described below.

[0026] The entity that operates server 100 may be a payment network operator, such as MasterCard Incorporated. The operator of server 100 may provide rules as to who can establish a global shopping cart. For example, a holder of a credit card issued by an issuing bank of the operator may establish a global shopping cart at no cost. There may be a modest fee for others who authenticate their identity, on a one time, monthly or yearly basis. If there is a minimum amount of purchasing activity initiated via the global shopping cart, the fee can be waived.

[0027] A mobile communication device 130, such as, for example, and not by way of limitation, a telephone, has a display 140 and a memory 145 for storing an operating system 150 and a series of applications or applets therein. The series of applications or applets include an applet or application program (hereinafter an application) 160. Mobile communication device 130 can access server 100 via an Internet connected Wi-Fi hot spot 170 (or by any telephone network, such as a 3G or 4G system, on which mobile communication device 130 communicates) by using application 160. Application 160 may include MasterPass™ capability so that Internet purchases are quickly and easily completed. It is preferable that application 160 be a relatively thin application. Further, application 160 is preferably not particularly complex so that operation on a mobile device, including those devices without great computing resources, is facilitated.

[0028] A cart or global shopping cart 300 in accordance with the disclosed embodiment is accessed by a user using a computer 125A, 125B, 125C to 125N, or a mobile communication device 130. Purchases can be made by a user or consumer using an access computer 125A, 125B, 125C to 125N, or by using mobile communication device 130. However, it will be understood that web site 100 may be accessed from a home or business computer, or a personal digital assistant, a game console, a home appliance such as, for example, a smart refrigerator, any other Internet connected communication device, such as, a tablet or other mobile device (for example, an iPad® or an Ultrabook), or any stationary device, such as, for example, a kiosk.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 2, components of global shopping cart 300 in accordance with the embodiment described herein are illustrated. An application on server 100 provides computer readable instructions for causing processor 104 (FIG. 1) to provide shopping cart services 200. After opening a browser, a log-on screen is displayed on the user's access computer 125A. The user may be required to log on by using a user name and password. Alternatively, application 160 on mobile communication device 130 may provide automatic log on capability when application 160 is activated.

[0030] Before describing the shopping cart services 200, the general characteristics of global shopping cart 300 are described. The global shopping cart 300, once established, remains in effect for the life of the person who established it, and in some instances beyond. The global shopping cart 300, or the information contained therein, can, for example, become an asset of an estate. This may be especially applicable as between partners or spouses who often share at least some other joint assets. The global shopping cart 300 allows purchases to be made internationally. Aspects of global shopping cart 300 can be shared with others, such as family and friends, colleague including a preferred merchant, to allow for their participation in long term projects. Thus, a merchant or a merchant entity has the possibility of access to and serving, not only the creator of the global shopping cart 300, but also family, friends, invitees and anyone else, including a merchant, who is given access to the global shopping cart 300. The merchant entity may be, for example, a personal shopper for the individual who owns the global shopping cart 300. Other entities may be granted access to global shopping cart 300 to perform selected functions, as the owner of the global shopping cart 300 determines. The granted access will be managed by the owner of global shopping cart 300 by controlling the profile of the entity and with due regard for the privacy of the owner's data.

[0031] In one embodiment, the managed services can be performed on the server 100 so that, as noted above, a simple browser or a thin application, on a mobile device accessing server 100 can be used as extensive computational resources on that device are not required. However, if a device with greater computational capability is available, a more complex application can be used to access server 100, and some of the functions performed on server 100 may be performed on that device. In either situation, it is advantageous to provide

shopping tolls, such as, for example, a price comparison tool, to assist the customer in shopping.

[0032] Referring to FIG. 2, shopping cart services 200 include a shopping cart manager 202 that manages the shopping cart services. The managed services include, for example, profiles 204 of shopping behavior, a shopping search function 206, social media 208, language conversion 210, partner connect 212, security 214, shipping 216, and payment 218. Profiles 204 of shopping behavior include, for example, attributes, such as, where shopping is done, whether it is on-line or in person, and amounts spent in various categories. Profiles 204 also include a user profile with the characteristics of the user, such as, for example, age range, income range, gender, and town of residence.

[0033] Shopping search function or manager 206 provides a shopping search function that includes electronic storage for items that have been selected for purchase, and information concerning the vendor, the price, a photograph, a video clip, lead time until shipment and other similar information. The shopping search manager 206 can be used to make the purchases on-line via one or more appropriate web sites, can store the information needed to otherwise make the purchase, such as telephone contact information, or the exact location of a local store or product outlet.

[0034] Social media interface 208 supplies selected and non-confidential information to a selected social media web site that the user of global shopping cart 300 has joined, such as, for example, Facebook®. Alternatively, an interface to a social media web site developed specifically for global shopping cart 300 can be used. In either case, the social media interface will allow others, most preferably friends and family, but possibly a merchant, to participate in a project by offering suggestions, suggesting alternatives, and possibly even buying items, such as gifts, for the owner of global shopping cart 300.

[0035] In one embodiment, icons for one or more social media sites can be provided. Selecting an icon brings up a sign in page. By logging on to the social media site, the user is

also logged on to global shopping cart 300. Icons may be included for Facebook®, Myspace®, Pinterest™, and other such sites.

[0036] Access to global shopping cart 300 can include screening of data. A private area or page may be established, for example, for viewing only by an invitee desired by the owner. The invitee can log on with, for example, a user name, password, and the telephone number of their personal mobile telephone. Security may be enhanced by using any security protocol including security protocols that are currently used, such as, for example, a personal phrase, a security question, an image, an e-mail address, a real time SMS PIN received from the global shopping cart 300, that must be entered to gain access, or any other security device or protocol.

[0037] Language conversion module 210 assists in international shopping activities. The word content of web pages can be converted to the language of choice of the global shopping cart owner.

[0038] Partner connect function 212 is also provided. Partners can be anyone other than the owner of global shopping cart 300, and thus could be a merchant or a merchant's designee, such as, for example, a personal shopper. Typically, a partner is a merchant or contractor who provide goods or services in connection with a category directed to a particular theme or project. Limited access can be granted to that information required to complete a theme or project, or if the contractor is managing that theme or project, all relevant information. A contractor may send a message similar to a friend request. In response to that message, in some cases, or at the beginning of a relationship, read-only rights to the global shopping cart 300 may be provided. Later, the contractor may be given the right to provide comments. If the contractor is hired, full rights, including the right to make purchases to complete a project can be provided. This may be done by providing a screen, or portion of a screen, where appropriate boxes may be checked to provide different rights, or check marks removed to withdraw those rights. If there is any change in the category, an alert may be provided to the user of global shopping cart 300.

[0039] Security module 214 provides varying levels of security for global shopping cart 300. Security module 214 can include both secure and non-secure areas for various themes. A completely secure area is only accessible by the owner of shopping cart 300. Other areas or non-secure areas can be defined for joint access. Still other areas may be defined for shared or communal access. Each area can have a different level of security to which invitees may be granted access. For example, a secure area may include a wedding or home remodeling theme. An unsecured area may be one that is open for donations, such as, for example, for a local school event or a favorite charity.

[0040] An invitee to a portion of global shopping cart 300 must register to gain access to the cart. Also, a registration is preferably required to assist in controlling unauthorized access by spammers and/or those seeking to commit fraud. Once registered, an invitee can review items in the area or areas of the carts to which the invitee has been granted access. In accordance with the privileges granted, the invitee may be able to view one or more items, add items, change items, remove items, and add or view links or pictures, and such other analogous additions, deletions or changes. The access of an invitee may be terminated by the owner of global shopping cart 300 at any time.

[0041] In general, the cart owner will control all aspects of security over the entire life of the owner or the entire life of the global shopping cart 300. Major life changes for an individual, such as marriage, divorce, cohabitation, moving to another country, or death of a spouse or significant other, could potentially have a great impact on the configuration of the cart and the access rights to various areas. Analogous concerns may apply to an owner that is a business or other organization.

[0042] The registration process for global shopping cart 300 will include a name and address validation check, authentication of an e-mail address or cell phone number, credit card or bank account validation and a response to a visual access challenge such as that provided by Captcha or similar services. Multiple layers of validation checks are necessary to ensure authentication of the person to be granted access. It is contemplated that other approaches and/or protocols will become available.

[0043] One or more global shopping carts 300 can be established by the various entities defined above. For example, a non-profit entity may wish to establish a shared or communal cart that any person can access to add a generic donation item and then enable payment for that item to be made. An entity could also post a wish list of items needed to accomplish its goals with the hope that others will provide the item, based on items already on hand, or based on a link to the item that is added to the cart so that it can be purchased for charity. An alert function can be provided so that a global shopping cart owner can opt-in to receive alerts for charities they have identified.

[0044] Global shopping cart owners may establish a pre-configured donation area in their cart that reflects a summary of donations that they have made to other carts and within their own cart. This information can be summarized for budgeting and tax purposes.

[0045] An entire cart or parts of a cart may be moved or copied from one global shopping cart 300 to another global shopping cart. This may be appropriate where global shopping carts 300 are established by entities, such as two or more businesses and a merger there between occurs. Where a home is being remodeled, access to that portion of the cart can be granted to the owner of another cart to use as a template. One advantage to the recipient carts is that access could be granted to the invitee list for that portion of the cart, which may include professional contacts, such as remodeling companies, city or county permit contacts, or other contacts pertinent to accomplishing the task for which that portion of the cart was created.

[0046] A shared space or communal area of global shopping cart 300 can be configured to be open to anyone. A cart owner may create an area for purchase of a used automobile and within that area provide some criteria for the item to be purchased, such as make, model, accessories, mileage requirements, pictures illustrating the desired color, and any special features. A price range for the item that states how much the cart owner is willing to pay can also be specified. Anyone accessing the shared space can search the network of carts having a shared or communal area for the listed item, and offer a response or provide a link, pictures

or contact details to propose an item for purchase by the cart owner. The cart owner may accept or decline such proposals. As used herein, purchase means some reciprocation in value whether it be an equal value or agreed upon value. Thus, purchase can be in the form that includes, but is not limited to, money, barter, gift certificate and point program.

[0047] Shipping module 216 manages and keeps track of items that have been ordered and their location in the shipping network, as advised by the various carriers. Item tracking numbers are followed. Alerts provided by the shippers can be forwarded to the owner of the cart by various “push technologies” including, but not limited to, e-mail, voicemail, and instant messenger. Alternatively, the owner of the cart, or a person who has been granted access to the cart, can access the cart and bring up a page or an API on the accessing device, and check current status. The shipping module may also be used to compute or keep track of shipping costs, which for purchases from distant vendors, may make a difference as to whether a particular purchase is made, or whether it is made from that vendor.

[0048] Payment module 218 provides for payment for any items purchased in global shopping cart 300. Payment module 218 may have the characteristics of a digital wallet, and may allow access to a plurality of accounts or funding sources. When purchases are made, acknowledgements of or receipts for the purchases may be managed by payment module 218. In the case of international purchases, currency computations, as described below, and shipping costs, as described above, may also be managed.

[0049] Data required for the operation of global shopping cart 300 is stored in shopping cart stores 220. While any suitable database management program can be used, due to the lifetime nature of global shopping cart 300, it is important that the data be stored in a format that makes it available for or translatable to other database technologies that may be developed in the future. This is of particular importance since the amount of data that must be retained and managed will be very large over the lifetime of global shopping cart 300. There are various forms and formats for storing the data in shopping cart stores 220. A preferred format can be an open source format. However, the various storage modules for the different kinds of data that are stored, are described below.

[0050] There are various forms and formats for storing the data in shopping cart stores 220. A preferred format can be an open source format. However, the various storage modules for the different kinds of data that are stored, are described below.

[0051] Profile or profile store 222 stores the data for the profile or profiles created at 204. As noted above, a user profile with the characteristics of the user, such as, for example, age range, income range, gender, and town of residence, can be stored. If global shopping cart 300 is shared, the profiles of more than one person can be stored, such as that of family members authorized to use global shopping cart 300. A dollar limit on the spending of a minor child may also be stored as part of a profile. Shopping behavior, such as where shopping is done, whether it is on-line or in person, and amounts spent in various categories, can also be components of a user profile.

[0052] Shopping history store 224 includes data or information on the items that have actually been purchased. Such data includes, but is not limited to, SKU number, price paid, where purchased, when purchased, method of purchase, source of funds, and type of purchase. This data may be used to as part of the formulation of profile 204 stored in profile store 222.

[0053] Social information store 226 includes information used by social media interface 208. Social media interface 208 interfaces with social media platforms, and information derived from social media web sites. This information may be used to access existing social media, or a social media site specifically intended to and designed for interaction with global shopping cart 300.

[0054] Currency store 228 has a database of currency exchange rates, as well as currency exchange fees charged by the various sources of funds used by payment module 218. These rates and fees can be updated on a daily basis by accessing various pertinent web sites and by downloading the information contained therein. These rates and fees, as well as shipping costs, are of material assistance to anyone using global shopping cart 300 in evaluating the

actual cost of an item, and in making a decision whether the item should be purchased from a particular source or, perhaps, whether it should be purchased.

[0055] Categories store 230 is used to store the items purchased by kind or type. This storage can be based in part on SKU numbers, or can be stored in categories as created by the owner of the cart. In one embodiment, the creation of categories by the owner can be based on the themes established, such as remodeling of a home or a wedding. The storage by categories or themes enables the owner to track the allocation of funds for various purposes.

[0056] Invitees store 232 stores the security data mentioned that is obtained when invitees register for access to a portion of global shopping cart 300. In particular, the information required to establish the various levels of security is stored.

[0057] Text detail store 234 is used to store textual information. Textual information includes, but is not limited to notes, one or more pictures, photographs, and links to web sites, audio and video files relating to items selected for inclusion in global shopping cart 300, and items suggested for inclusion by invitees. If the space required for the linked items is included, text detail store 234 can be quite large in terms of the storage resources required for all information.

[0058] Security measures may be put in place to assure that material that is uploaded to global shopping cart 300 is not being uploaded for illegal, immoral or other prohibited purposes. For example, filters can be used to block material that is pornographic, directed to illegal substances, or to other selected illegal activity, such as, for example, money laundering, terrorism, smuggling and making purchases with stolen credit card numbers. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways, including prohibiting transfer of data from certain web sites, or from web sites in countries where fraud is more likely, scanning content before it is posted, and checking for unusual activity, in a manner similar to that used for fraud alerts on credit cards. Analytics triggers can be used that would indicate suspicious shopping cart activity. Such an analytic trigger may be based on, for example, the number of people who have wide access to one or more sections of an individual person's cart. For

example, if the purpose of a task is to plan a wedding, then twenty or perhaps no more than thirty people should be involved. If there are too many invitees, it is almost a certainty that proper security has not been maintained. Other indications that something improper may be happening include, but are not limited to, spending that does not fit the nature of the task or that is outside the usual spending patterns of the owner of the global shopping cart. Other examples of suspicious activity include transactions by the same individual originating in multiple geographic regions, and multiple sequential transactions with one merchant. Other problematic situations, while not illegal, include the posting of spam. This situation may prove distracting to invitees or cause them to be fearful of possible fraud, and discourage use of the global shopping cart. Anti-spam software, available from major software providers, can be used in conjunction with the global shopping cart to block access by known sources of spam. If there is inappropriate activity, or an obvious security breach, shopping cart activity can be suspended until the issue has been resolved.

[0059] Promotions store 236 stores data relating to various sales promotions or discounts provided by vendors of goods in global shopping cart 300. The existence and nature of these items may be periodically updated by accessing the web sites of vendors of items in global shopping cart 300(whether or not a purchase has been made) by interfacing to the shopping cart owner's e-mail to look for promotions or discounts, or by manually entering data at an appropriate screen based on information received elsewhere, such as by mail.

Advantageously, the dates of expiration of these promotions or discounts can also be stored so that an alert can be sent to the owner of global shopping cart 300, any desired time, such as a day or week prior to expiration. This alert gives the owner an opportunity to decide whether to make the purchase at a time that takes advantage of the promotion or discount, or to wait anticipating a better promotion or discount may later be available.

[0060] Referring to FIG. 3, a merchant API 240 interacts with shopping cart services 200 of FIG. 2. Specifically, merchant API 240 interacts with an online global shopping cart in which tasks, categories or themes for projects for which purchases are to be made, have been established. Further, merchant API 240 interacts with an online global shopping cart 300 to

provide goods and services from multiple sources, including sources outside the country in which the global shopping cart is established.

[0061] Merchant API 240 can be more complex than an application on a mobile device since it is expected that the merchant will have access to a device with greater computational resources. The merchant can use merchant API 240 for internal management purposes, including the management of inventory. Merchant API 240 will, in general, be on one of access computers 125A to 125N of FIG. 1 that may be desk top computers.

[0062] Merchant API 240 includes an SKU store 242 that includes a list of all items that have been and currently are in inventory. A shipping manager 244 is used to manage the shipment of items that have been ordered, including the manner of shipment, the carrier being used, and the costs to the purchaser. An inventory control module 246 automatically keeps track of inventory that has been sold and/or shipped so that the merchant can place orders for additional inventory, as desired. Inventory control module 246 requires input on the kind and quantity of new items added to inventory. Provisions can be made for accounting for minimum and maximum quantities that should be on hand and order lead times, so that the merchant has adequate inventory to meet customer demands for that item.

[0063] A rewards management module 248 can track rewards for a particular customer, such as those rewards generated by repeat business or purchases greater than some predetermined value. Also, the rewards can be based on one or more factors, including but not limited to, frequency of purchase, group discounts that are specific to a group or to the members of an organization, a social network group of friends, purchases based on an event, and proximity in time and location to the event, such as a natural disaster. Rewards can also be made available to an person or entity, including but not limited to, a relative, a friend, a charity that is voluntarily joined, any third party, including an organization or group that may accept donations if, for example, there is a natural or other disaster request for financial assistance. Coupon and promotional codes can be authenticated and processed. Rewards management module 248 can also send alerts to owners of global shopping cart 300 of a new promotion, as

it becomes available. If a business relationship already exists, or permission is provided, the data associated with a particular promotion, including the effective date and expiration date, can be automatically uploaded to global shopping cart 300.

[0064] VAT and taxes module 252 automatically adds the required value added and other taxes in computing the price that the owner of global shopping cart 300 must pay for the purchased item or items. A table of required taxes can be maintained, and the amount charged to the customer based on the location to which the item or items are being shipped, and the local tax rate on that type of item. A computation can be made as to the amount owed to each taxing authority to facilitate required payments.

[0065] Payments module 254 calculates the precise amount that must be paid for the ordered item or items. The price of the item, the proper taxes from VAT and taxes module 252, and shipping costs in shipping module 244, are summed. The value of rewards or promotions is subtracted from the sum to compute the final price owed. When the customer offers payment, a determination is made as to whether the mode of payment is satisfactory to the merchant. If the mode of payment is satisfactory, the payment is deemed accepted, and shipment can be made.

[0066] A currency module 256, with data similar to that in currency store 228, has a database of currency exchange rates and currency exchange fees charged by the various currency exchanges. These rates and fees can be updated in various ways described above for currency store 228, as for example, by accessing various pertinent web sites and by downloading the information contained therein. This updating assists the merchant to decide if a particular currency that is offered for an item by a user of global shopping cart 300 should be accepted.

[0067] Certain features of the merchant API 240 may have applicability for use in circumstances not connected to global shopping cart 300 described herein.

[0068] FIG. 4 illustrates the steps in the creation and initial utilization of global shopping cart 300. At 1000, the owner or someone authorized by the owner to use global shopping cart 300 (hereinafter collectively or separately referred to as a user) creates local shopping cart 300 by connecting to server 100 of FIG. 1. This operation may be accomplished by a mobile device or computer connection.

[0069] At 1005, the customer creates category sections in global shopping cart 300. As an alternative, a set of default categories or themes may be made available for selection by the owner of global shopping cart 300.

[0070] At 1010, the customer defines security and access levels for each shopping category or theme. Access rights for others for each shopping category or theme are also defined. A message is sent to others inviting them to participate in each category or theme via e-mail, or via social media interface 208 of FIG. 2.

[0071] At 1020, the user of global shopping cart 300 can add items to be purchased either in the country from which the cart was created or from sources outside of that country. These items can be purchased individually, or can be added under a theme that was created. At 1025, the user can receive feedback from the invitees. This feedback may be accomplished at 1030 by the invitees adding social media links and sending comments, images, links, etc. via social media interface 208. The invitees may conveniently add an item, such as, for example, one in a store, by using a mobile telephone to acquire an image of a bar code on that item, and uploading that image to the theme area of global shopping cart 300.

[0072] At 1035, the user can select the final set of items to be purchased for a particular theme. At 1040, a confirmation of the items to be purchased is made by the user. At 1045, shipping and processing costs, including currency exchange rates and fees, and taxes are verified. At 1050, the user selects a payment method or methods, including, but not limited to, credit card, debit card, an electronic draft on a checking or other account, or social media credits. Different items may be paid for by different funding sources, or an item may be paid for by a combination of funding sources. At 1055, authorization requests are submitted for

the various sources. At 1060, the transaction or transactions are complete, and various acknowledgement receipts, including electronic receipts for the purchases are received. This completes the shopping session. The user ends the session at 1065 by logging out or closing the application being used.

[0073] Referring to FIG. 5, the user has previously created, at 2000, a global shopping cart 300. The user has previously defined access levels and invited others 2005. A shopping cart category or theme, such as the remodeling of a house, has been defined. Items to be purchased in the country of origin and abroad have been added to the category or theme 2010.

[0074] At 2020, global shopping cart 300 notifies one or more invitees of the availability for visit of the house remodeling category as a web page in global shopping cart 300. At 2025, the invitee creates a profile with secure log in capability. At 2030, the invitee can review items in the category or theme, such as the house remodeling project, and add comments. At 2035, the invitee can add items to the house remodeling project or pay for items that have been marked ready to be purchased. At 2040, the invitee can add images and links from social media sites. At 2045, the user is notified by global shopping cart 300 of any activity of the invitee, or of selected activities designated by the user. However, as a default, the user is always notified of purchases made by each invitee so that appropriate acknowledgements and a thank you note can be sent.

[0075] In addition to adding comments or uploading content, the invitee may be given an opportunity to rank one or more items in a task, category or theme, as requested by the owner of shopping cart 300. For example, three different sofas can be ranked as best to worst, so that the owner of shopping cart 300 could see that the yellow sofa was ranked number one, and the owner of shopping cart 300 could chose to buy that sofa. Ranking is important if the cart owner wishes to obtain the opinion of a larger group of people (such as a large family or large bridal party) because combing through fifteen or twenty or more comments takes a rather long period of time.

[0076] There are many possible criteria for ranking. Such criteria can include color, style, value as defined by what is being sold and the price requested. There can be other criteria. For example, from a decorating point of view, comments can be requested on what matches best with a given décor, what best fills a space on a wall or what is the best color paint for a room. This ranking can be more than just what the person commenting regards as the best choice. Instead, it relates to which choice best fits or satisfies a particular scheme. It can be a vote on a first choice, or it can rank all choices in order of preference.

[0077] At 2050, the user accepts for purchase updated items, as suggested by the invitee. At 2055, the user can add images or comments to the theme or category. A purchase can be completed by the user as described above with reference to FIG. 4. At 2060, the transaction for the shopping session is completed. The user ends the session at 2065 by logging out or closing the application being used.

[0078] FIG. 6 is a flow chart of the use of merchant API 240 of FIG. 3. At 3000, an invitation is sent to a merchant is a possible source of an item listed in a category in global shopping cart 300. At 3005, the merchant registers in the same manner as any invitee as discussed above. When the owner of global shopping cart 300 makes a purchase of one of the items, at 3010 an order is received by the merchant. At 3015, the merchant checks inventory. In the event the item is not in inventory and will not be available in some reasonable amount of time, the merchant may access global shopping cart 300 to leave a message to that effect and to ascertain whether the delay in shipment is acceptable. If inventory is available, or the delay in shipment is acceptable, the order is processed at 3020. At 3025, payment from the owner of global shopping cart 300 is accepted. At 3030, the order is shipped. At a later time, if for some reason the shipment was not accepted by the customer and the item that was ordered is returned, the return is processed at 3035.

[0079] There are several advantages to providing a merchant with access to the category established in global shopping cart 300. The merchant will be aware of the general nature of the project and can make suggestions for its successful completion, including but not limited to comments on the quality or suitability of listed goods, suggestions for alternative items,

leaving a message to advise of the dates of availability of a promotion or reward, and recommendations for contractors to assist in the completion of the project. These suggestions can include any of the items that any invitee may contribute, and in addition to being in text format can be a link to a web page, an image, an audio file, and a video file. Thus, trusted merchants or contractors may be active participants in the project.

[0080] Merchants can be vetted to be sure that they are legitimate businesses. For example, merchants may be asked to provide a tax identification number that can be validated by, for example, the acquiring bank with which the merchant conducts business. Policies can be provided when a merchant logs on to the global shopping cart 300 by, for example, screens that state that no proxies for illegal businesses can use the global shopping cart 300, and to remind the merchant of use policies for specific payment services, such as for digital wallets.

[0081] The merchant can also use merchant API 240 for various internal management functions. For example, in accordance with a multilevel access approach, certain personnel may be permitted only read only access, others to conduct customer transactions, and still others to order inventory, in value up to a specified purchase price, when inventory records indicate that inventory must be replenished.

[0082] Global shopping cart 300 can be configured to provide access logs and various reports to the cart owner, such as, for example, a list of items purchased for a remodel, which may be of tax significance at a later time as adding to the tax basis of the house or may be of significance when an item must be repaired or replaced. In a small business, an office manager or a tax accountant may run reports. This may be of tax significance at a later time, such as, adding to the tax basis of the house, or may be of significance when an item must be repaired or replaced. Some items can be designated as tax deductible for the current tax year and, thus, for inclusion with annual tax filings. A report of invitee activity can be generated. The report can be reviewed as desired to determine which invitee made significant contributions, whether by way of suggestions that were adopted or by way of purchasing items for the cart owner as gifts. Reports summarizing daily, weekly, monthly and yearly spending may be generated. These reports can be sorted by merchant category, product

category or SKU type, method of payment, currency used, country of purchase, date of purchase, amount spent per purchase, gift recipient, or in almost any other manner for which data has been supplied. The running of a report is an event that is logged with a record kept of the person who ordered or ran the report. Such reports are periodically given or immediately copied to the owner of the global shopping cart.

[0083] Referring to FIG. 7, significant overview of global shopping cart 300 is provided by system logging function 4000. A logging manager 4002 logs the occurrence all significant events and stores data representative of the event for future reference, including the generation of reports. While the logging data that is stored need not be as complete as that stored in cart stores 220, at a minimum, the time and date of each event will be stored, and reference to the storage of time and date will not be repeated in the description below, although it will be understood that it is stored for every event that is logged. The data is preferably in the form of a summary of each significant event. In some cases, the data is referenced to data stored in one of cart stores 220. For the purposes of logging, what is of importance is having a record that the event occurred.

[0084] At 4004, a record representative of establishing a profile or changing a profile is stored. At 4006, a record representative of establishing or changing security validation data is stored. At 4008, a record of access to or from social media is stored. At 4010, the selection of a language for the global shopping cart 300 is stored. A code for the language selected is also stored. At 4012, the identity of any partner who accessed global shopping cart 300 is stored. At 4014, the identity of any merchant who accessed global shopping cart 300 is stored. At 4016, the currency account from which the payment originated and the recipient of any payment made from global shopping cart 300 are stored. At 4018, the addition, deletion or modification of any information in text detail store 234 of FIG. 2, is stored. At 4020, any change in the currency exchange rate or currency exchange fee in data store 228 is stored. At 4022, any change in shipping status for any item being shipped as a result of using global shopping cart 300 is stored. At 4024, any change in a financial detail associated with global shopping cart 300 is stored. These changes may include, for example, the addition or deletion of one or more accounts that can be used to make purchases using

global shopping cart 300, the amount of credit available for each account, and whether there are overdraft privileges for each account. At 4026, the shopping history including the fact of each purchase is stored. At 4028, social activity information other than that representative of access to or from social media is stored. This social activity information may include, but is not limited to, the exchange of e-mails or text messages relating to one or more tasks, categories or themes. At 4030, general cart activity, such as logging on to and logging off, of global shopping cart 300 is stored. At 4032, the creation of, and activity relating to a task, category or theme, is stored. At 4034, invitee activity is stored. At 4036, the addition, deletion or modification of promotional data in promotions store 236 of FIG. 2 is stored.

[0085] The list of items that are stored, as described in FIG. 7, is exemplary. It will be understood that data representative of other events not mentioned above can be stored for logging purposes.

[0086] In view of global shopping cart 300 being accessible by an application on most, if not all, smart telephones, image, video, audio and other data present on the smart phone can be uploaded to the appropriate category or theme of global shopping cart 300 in real time. Some images, videos or sounds may be of special significance to the owner of global shopping cart 300 and will be available for a lifetime and, perhaps, beyond, to serve as reminders of particular significant events, such as vacations or social gatherings. Access can be granted to select family members and friends so that they can experience the sights and sounds of a joyous occasion or an adventure. For an item purchased with global shopping cart 300, images, videos or sounds can be included with the item at the time of purchase or at a later time. For example, if a grandparent purchases a pet from a merchant, the grandchild can upload a special thank you video to be shared with those who have access to global shopping cart 300. Later generated items, such as a video of the child playing with the pet, can be uploaded.

[0087] For an item purchased with global shopping cart 300, images, videos or sounds can be included with the item at the time of purchase or at a later time. For example, if a grandparent purchases a pet for a child, the grandchild can upload a special thank you video

to be shared with the grandparent who has access to global shopping cart 300. Later generated items, such as a video of the child playing with the pet, can be uploaded.

[0088] When global shopping cart 300 is accessed by a mobile device that has a GPS receiver, the location of the mobile device can become a basis for selecting the manner in which some of the functions described above operate. For example, a default currency, shipping methods and carriers, and browsing for items to be added for purchase, can be directed based on the current location of the mobile device.

[0089] One or more web sites may be established by shopping cart 300 for each task, category or theme established. Generic templates for a web page or a portion of a web page as well as customization tools can be provided. The global shopping cart 300 may have a standard or universal home page. A suite of tools(possibly accessible from a drop down menu), including a set of very simple and easy to use tools, as well as more complex tools that may require knowledge of how to write code in a language such as, for example, HTML, can be provided. The owner can use the tools most appropriate to his or her skill level to establish and maintain the page or pages on the web site. Options may include various widgets, which can be pulled from a menu and dropped at screen locations satisfactory to the user.

[0090] A dashboard display can be used to manage various functions and categories. A list of all categories can be displayed on the dashboard. A blog area or page may be established, with a forum section. A social area may be used to make friends and to invite them to join and access a category. Alerts received from various sources can be linked to icons on the dashboard so that the user of global shopping cart 300 is made aware of the alert, by for example, flashing of the icon or a change in its color. An alert also can be provided by the use of audio, including playing a particular sound, tone or music, or the sounding of particular words. An alert can still also be provided in video form, including the playing of a portion of a movie or other video clip. An alert also can be provided by the use of audio, including playing a particular sound, tone or music, or the sounding of particular words. An alert can

still also be provided in video form, including the playing of a portion of a movie or other video clip.

[0091] An opt-in function for alerts can be provided by global shopping cart 300 for various categories or themes. For example, cat enthusiasts may be interested in receiving alerts relating to cats, such as cat food, cat grooming, and cat health products and services. A list of forums or relevant sites may be provided, and a box checked or unchecked for each site to determine whether alerts are received when some new activity occurs on a site. This may apply to a product or a group of products. The owner or user of global shopping cart 300 will thus know when special promotions or advantageous sales terms are available.

[0092] It will be understood that the present disclosure may be embodied in a computer readable non-transitory storage medium storing instructions of a computer program that when executed by a computer system results in performance of steps of the method described herein. Such storage media may include any of those mentioned in the description above.

[0093] The terms "comprises" or "comprising" are to be interpreted as specifying the presence of the stated features, integers, steps or components, but not precluding the presence of one or more other features, integers, steps or components or groups thereof.

[0094] It should be understood that various alternatives, combinations and modifications could be devised by those skilled in the art. For example, steps associated with the processes described herein can be performed in any order, unless otherwise specified or dictated by the steps themselves. The present disclosure is intended to embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variances that fall within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for establishing a global shopping cart, comprising:
a storage medium having thereon computer instructions for implementing one or more functions of the global shopping cart; and
a processor for executing the computer instructions;
wherein the computer instructions have a portion thereof that provide for establishing one or more tasks, and wherein each task has a shopping cart portion for the storage of data relating to at least one item to be purchased that relates to the task.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for the establishment of a web site representative of the task.
3. The system of claim 2, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for establishing registration of an invitee to the web site with various levels of security.
4. The system of claim 3, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for permitting an invitee to upload at least one item selected from the group consisting of: comment on the task, comment on an item selected for purchase for the task, a link to a web page, an image, an audio file, and a video file.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for:
establishing registration of an invitee; and
permitting the invitee to rank various items to be purchased.
6. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions provide for a user interface that permits an owner of the global shopping cart to establish one or more of the tasks.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for permitting an owner of the global shopping cart to upload at least one item selected from the group consisting of: comment on the task, comment on an item selected for purchase for the task, a link to a web page, an image, an audio file, and a video file.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising provisions for the data on the storage medium to be preserved for at least the lifetime of an owner of the global shopping cart.

9. The system of claim 1, further comprising computer instructions for interfacing selected tasks to at least one social media web site.

10. The system of claim 1, wherein data relating to currency exchange rates and fees is stored on the storage medium, and wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for facilitating an international purchase of an item associated with a task to be purchased.

11. The system of claim 1, wherein the storage medium and the processor are components of a computer that functions as a server operating in the cloud.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions interact with additional computer instructions and data received from a device operated by an owner of the global shopping cart or from a device operated by an invitee to a web site that is representative of a task.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein the computer instructions further comprise instructions for logging of events relating to activity of the global shopping cart.

14. A method for providing a global shopping cart, comprising:
storing computer instructions for implementing a plurality of functions of the global shopping cart on a storage medium; and
causing a processor to execute the computer instructions;

wherein the computer instructions have a portion thereof that establish one or more tasks, wherein each task has a shopping cart portion for the storage of data relating to at least one item to be purchased that relates to the task.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising executing further computer instructions to register an invitee to the web site with various levels of security.

16. The method of claim 14, further comprising executing other computer instructions that permit either or both an invitee or an owner of the global shopping cart to upload at least one item selected from the group consisting of: comment on the task, comment on an item selected for purchase for the task, a link to a web page, an image, an audio file, and a video file.

17. The method of claim 14, further comprising executing computer instructions that provide a user interface that permits an owner of the global shopping cart to establish one or more of the tasks.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising providing for the data on the storage medium to be preserved for at least the lifetime of an owner of the global shopping cart.

19. The method of claim 14, further comprising interfacing a selected task to at least one social media web site.

20. The method of claim 14, further comprising storing on the storage medium currency exchange rates and fees, and executing computer instructions that facilitate an international purchase of an item associated with a task to be purchased.

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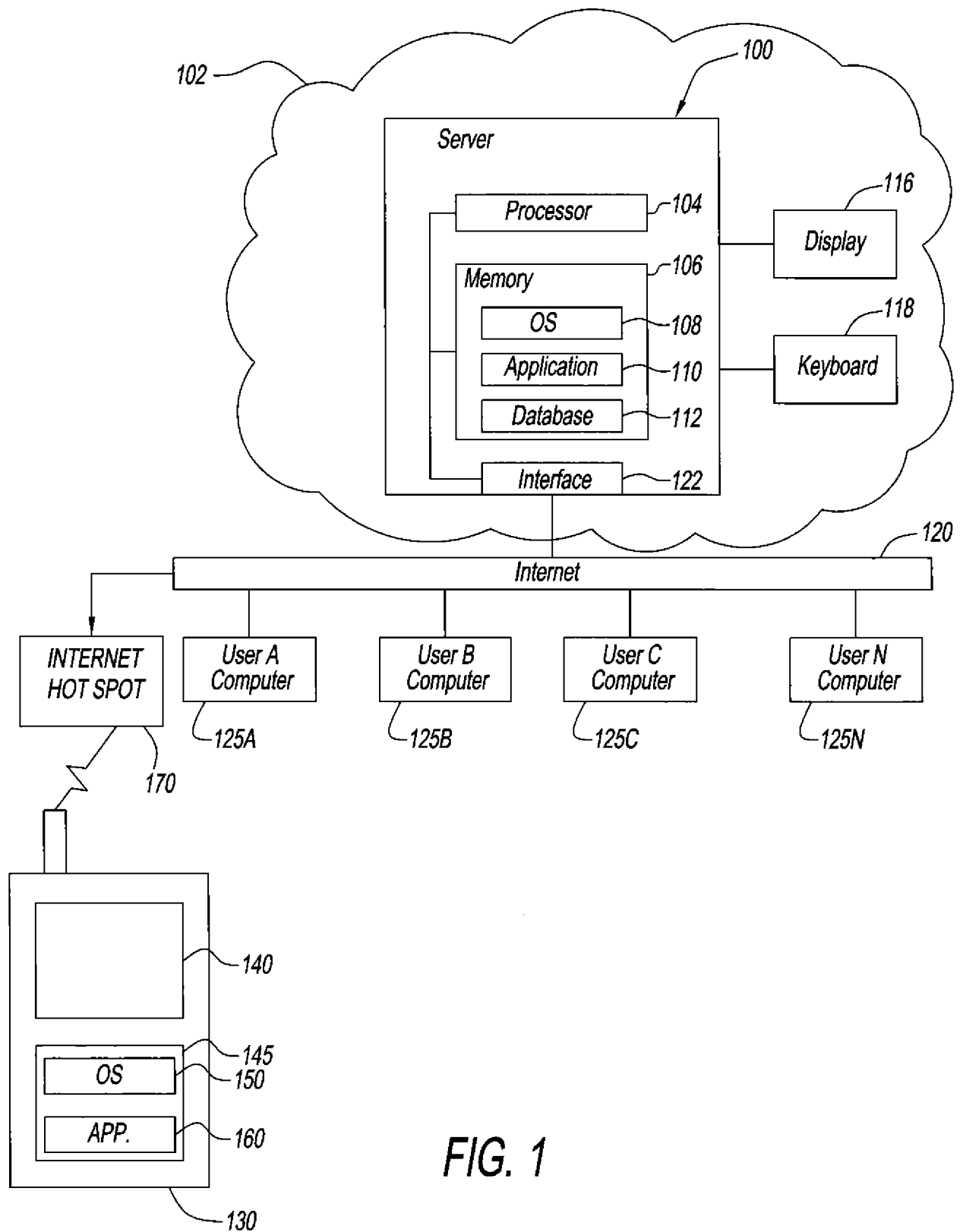


FIG. 1

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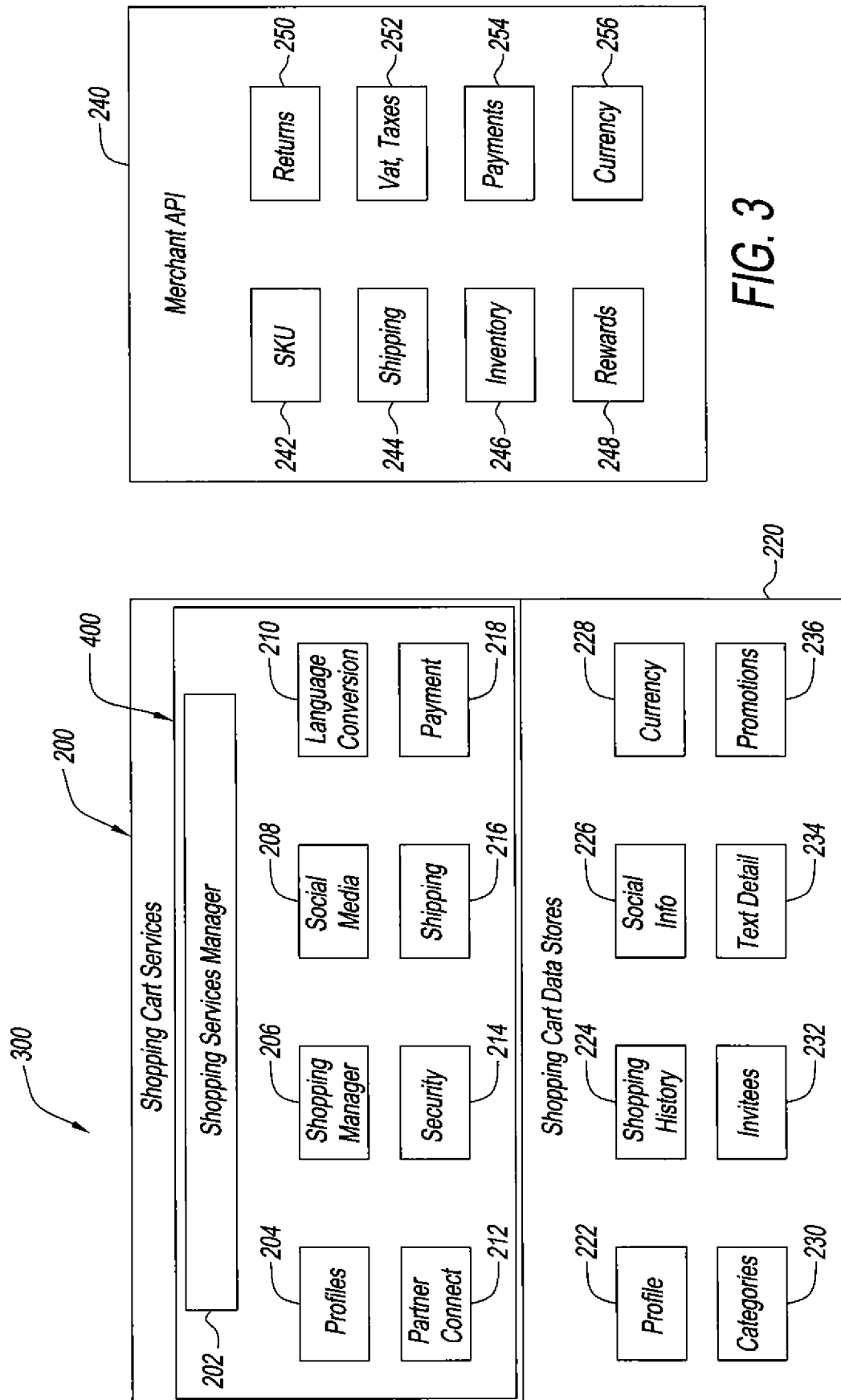


FIG. 3

FIG. 2

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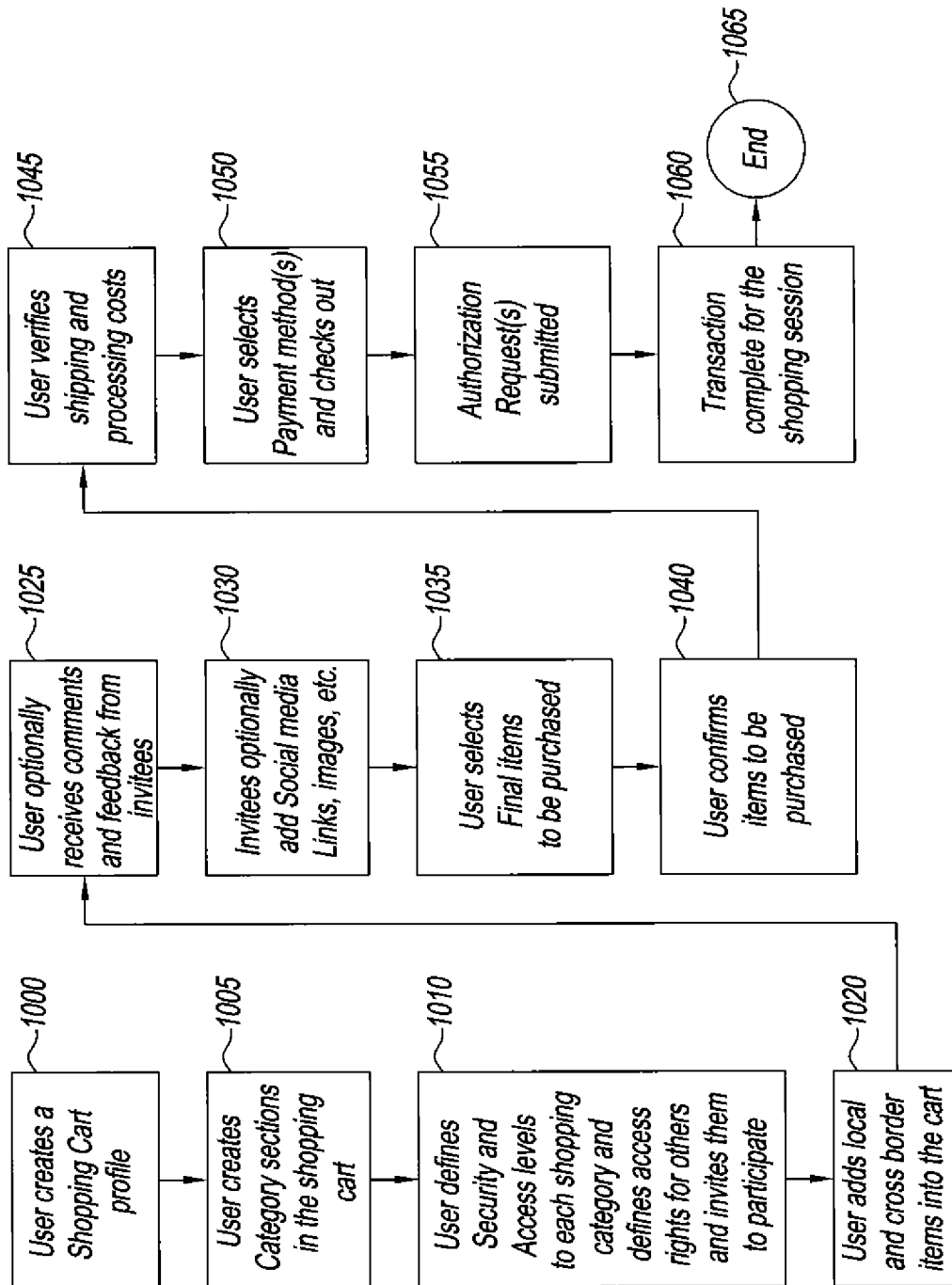


FIG. 4

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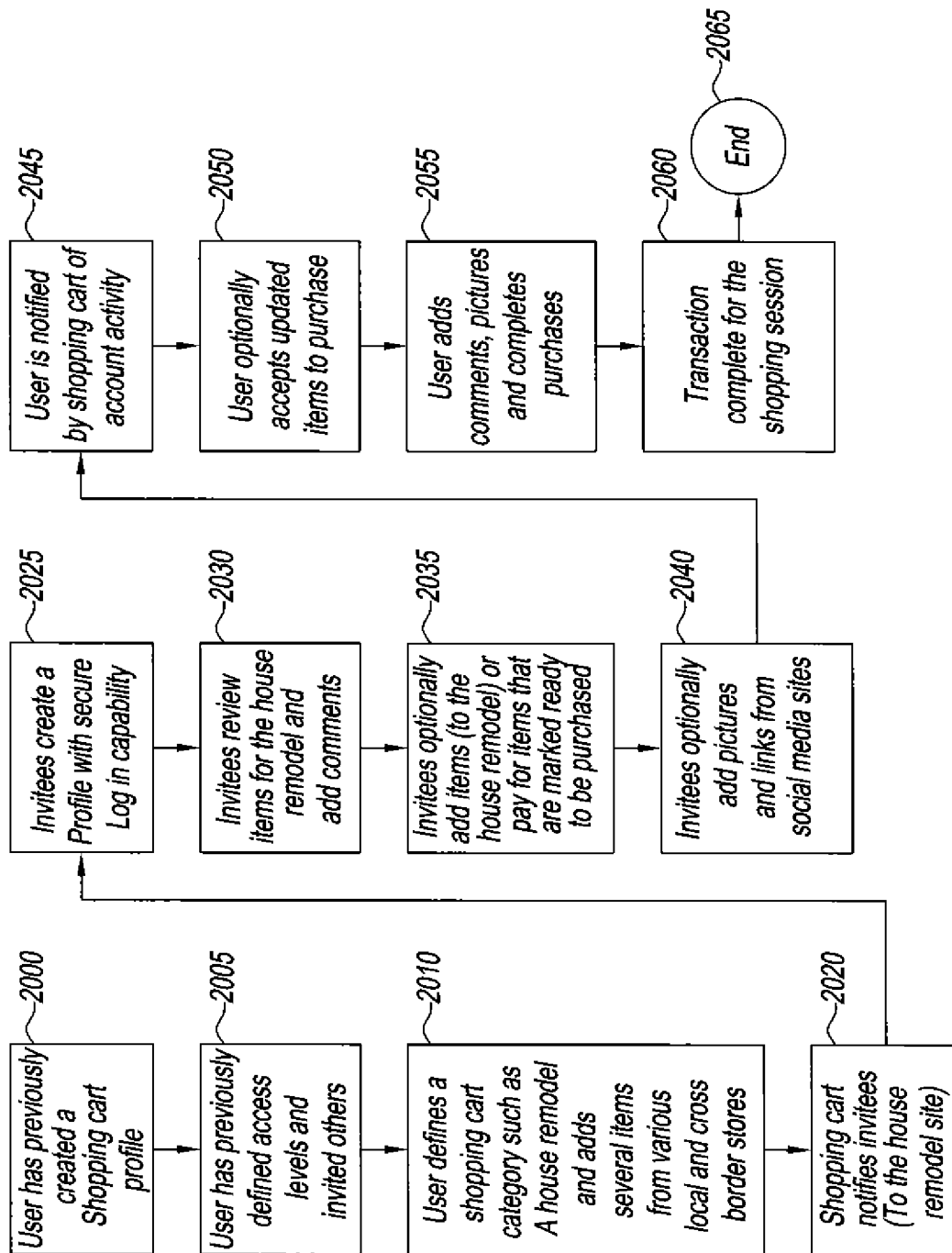


FIG. 5

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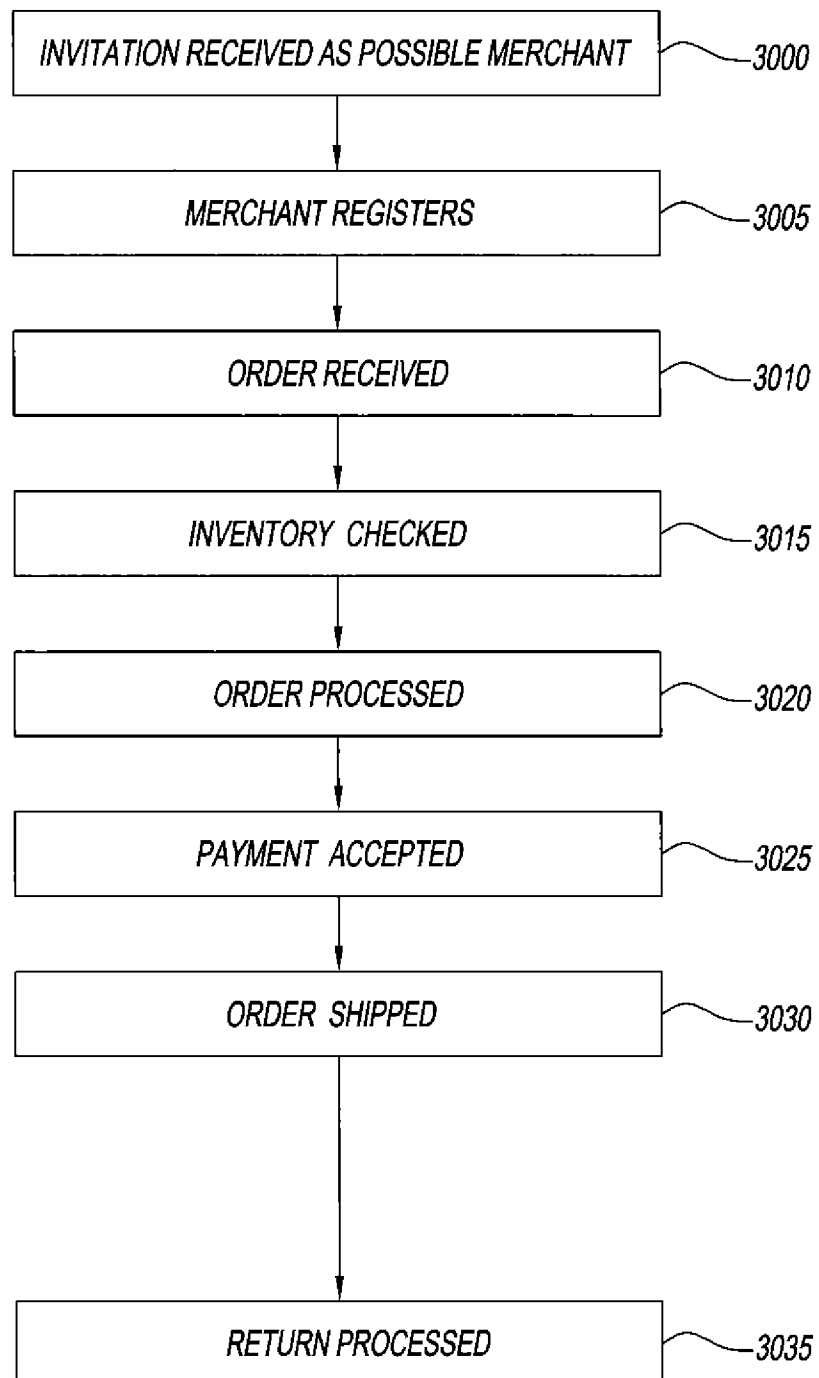


FIG. 6

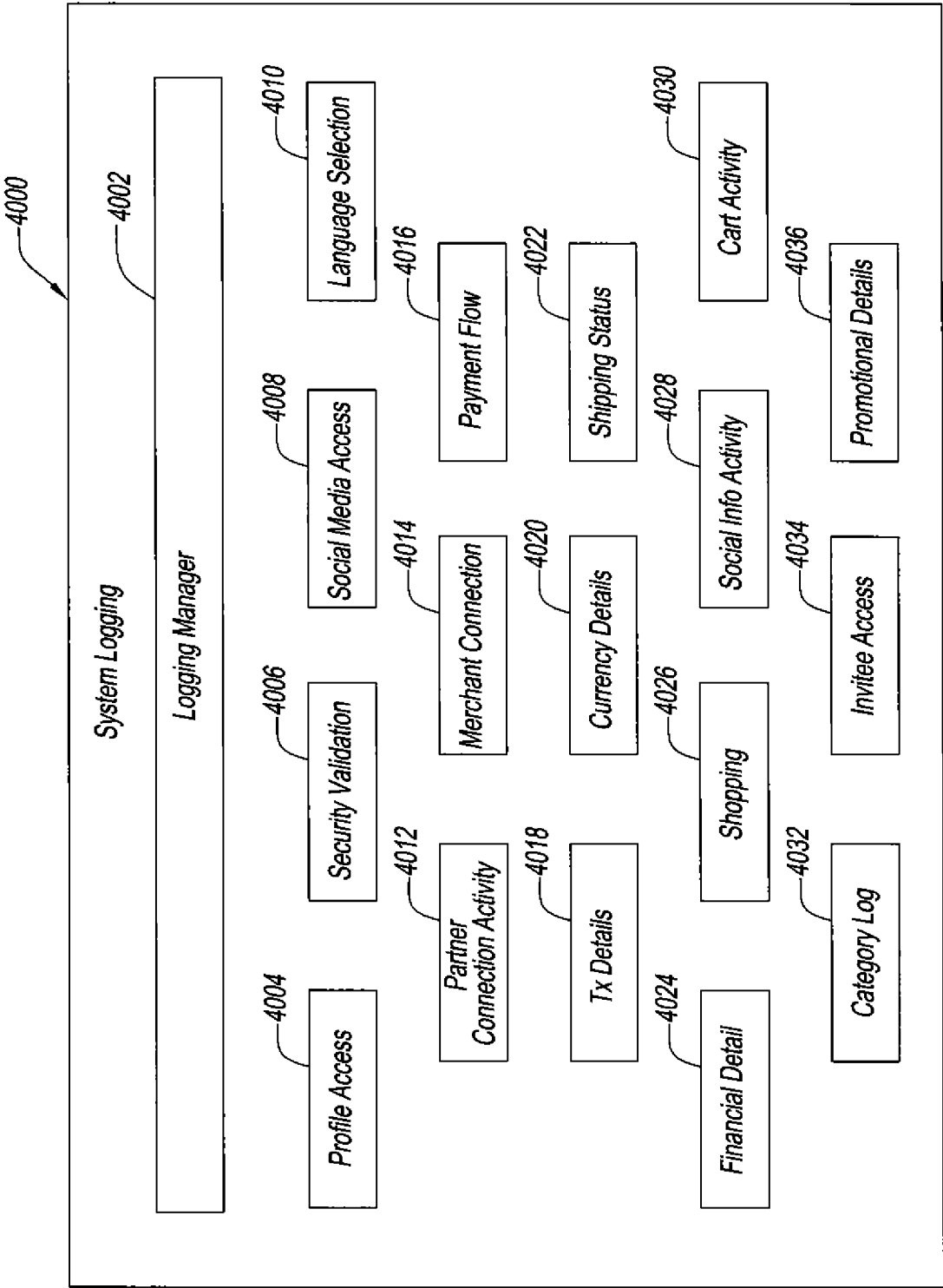


FIG. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2013/075086

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - G06Q 30/06 (2014.01)

USPC - 705/27.1

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC(8) - G06Q 30/06 (2014.01)

USPC - 705/26.1, 27.1, 319

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
CPC - G06Q 30/0601, 30/0641 (2013.01)

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

PatBase, Google Patents, Google

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X		1-9,11-19
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Y	US 2011/0093361 A1 (MORALES) 21 April 2011 (21.04.2011) entire document	10,20
Y	US 6,101,482 A (DIANGELO et al) 08 August 2000 (08.08.2000) entire document	10,20
A	US 2009/0281927 A1 (ALIABADI et al) 12 November 2009 (12.11.2009) entire document	1-20
A	US 2012/0030065 A1 (TARVYDAS et al) 02 February 2012 (02.02.2012) entire document	1-20
A	US 2008/0046331 A1 (RAND) 21 February 2008 (21.02.2008) entire document	1-20
A	US 2004/0205006 A1 (KANAI) 14 October 2004 (14.10.2004) entire document	1-20

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

02 March 2014

Date of mailing of the international search report

18 MAR 2014

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US

Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Facsimile No. 571-273-3201

Authorized officer:

Blaine R. Copenheaver

PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300

PCT OSP: 571-272-7774