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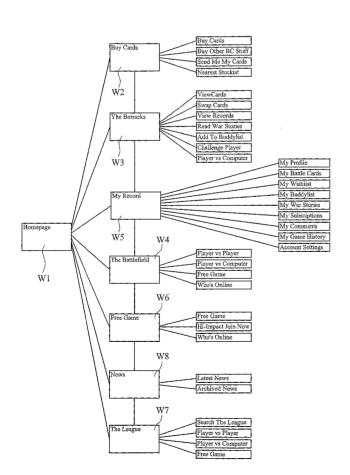
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD OF COLLECTING AND SELLING ITEMS



(57) Abstract: A method of collecting and selling items, particularly collectable cards, is disclosed. The method includes the steps of obtaining, via a computer network, a virtual gaming card having associated parameters, the card existing only in the computer network. Playing a game with the card, against an opponent that is either a computer or another card owner. The result of the game typically being either loss of the virtual card or winning of one or more other virtual cards from the opponent. The virtual card or cards can then be converted into real cards by sending, via the computer network, instructions to convert. The card is printed or selected from preprinted card and sent.



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### METHOD OF COLLECTING AND SELLING ITEMS

The present invention relates to a method of collecting items and also to a method of selling such items. The invention relates particularly, but not exclusively, to a method of collecting and selling collectable cards.

The hobby of collecting printed cards is well known. Typically collections of such cards have a theme, either real or fictional, with all of the cards in the collection being printed with information about an individual subject taken from that theme, for example, a footballer who is playing in a specific tournament.

One type of these cards, known as "Battle Cards", also include additional statistical information relating to the subject on the card. This additional information can be used as part of a game in which two or more players compete one card against another with the statistical information determining the winner.

In a card collection, it is typical for the total number of each card printed to not be uniform throughout the whole collection in order to make some card more rare than others. As a result, in order to complete a collection, a collector is forced to buy significantly more cards than would statistically be necessary were the distribution more evenly spread. Even if a collector uses techniques such as swapping or competing one card against another with the winner retaining his own card and his opponents card, it is still typically the case that a collector will have a significantly larger number of cards than they need to complete their collection with the excess cards generally going to waste. This waste is not only in the paper and printing materials used to make the card, but also the

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distribution of cards from printer to wholesaler and to retailer.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention seek to overcome the above disadvantages of the prior art.

According to an aspect of a present invention there is provided a method of collecting items, comprising the steps of:-

obtaining, via a computer network, at least one first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

engaging in at least one activity via said network, the or each activity using at least one said first item; and

sending, via said network, instructions to convert at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item.

By obtaining an item such as a card which are initially held only as one or more parameters representing that card (i.e. a virtual card) on a computer network and then allowing users to swap or play these virtual cards as part of a game and finally allowing the cards to be converted from virtual cards to real cards before being sent to a user, significantly reduces the number of real cards which a user must have before completing a collection. It is then possible for a user to collect all of the cards in the series by only printing the cards which he does not have and swapping or playing any duplicate cards on the computer network. This significantly reduces the waste of excess more commonly occurring cards which is built into the card distribution proportions. Furthermore,

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for the card producer this increases the profitability of the cards by eliminating distribution costs as well as the mark-up made by wholesalers and retailers for the virtual cards. By engaging in an activity via the network the advantages provided that this encourages the user to interact with the network which in turn encourages their continued collection of the cards.

The method may further comprise purchasing at least one second item from a retail outlet.

By also selling the cards by retail outlets this has the advantage that this is the normal distribution route for such cards and provides non-online advertising for the virtual cards.

The activity may relate to at least one said first parameter.

In a preferred embodiment obtaining includes at least one of buying, winning and swapping.

The first item may be represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.

In another preferred embodiment said activity comprises swapping at least one first item for at least one other first item.

In a further preferred embodiment said activity comprises playing a game using said item, the outcome of the game being at least partially dependent on at least one said first parameter.

The second item may comprises a card or a model.

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In a preferred embodiment said physical attribute is a parameter printed on said item.

In another preferred embodiment said physical attribute is a dimension of at least one said item.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of offering collectable items, comprising the steps of:-

offering to a user, via a computer network, at least one first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

offering said user an opportunity to engage in at least one activity via said network, the or each activity using said first item and relating to at least one said first parameter;

converting at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item; and

transferring said second item to said user.

By providing a means for collecting cards as parameters representing a card, also termed virtual cards, the advantage is provided that a collector can buy, trade and play cards via a computer network such as the Internet without having to handle the real cards until such time as he wishes to. This therefore significantly reduces the waste of paper and other printing materials which the collector ends up with in their possession. Further environmental benefits are provided by the reduced distribution of real cards from printer to wholesaler and retailer. Furthermore, for the card producer this

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increases the profitability of the cards by eliminating distribution costs as well as the mark-up made by wholesalers and retailers for the virtual cards.

The method may further comprise offering at least one second item for sale from a retail outlet.

In a preferred embodiment said activity relates to at least one said first parameter.

In another preferred embodiment offering includes at least one of offering for sale, providing a game with an opportunity to win and providing an opportunity for swapping.

The method may further comprise sending data via said network so as to allow said first item is represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.

In a preferred embodiment said activity comprises providing an opportunity swapping at least one first item for at least one other first item.

In another preferred embodiment said activity comprises providing an opportunity for playing a game using said item, the outcome of the game being at least partially dependent on at least one said first parameter.

The second item may comprise a card or a model.

The method may further comprise printing said physical attribute as a parameter printed on said item.

The method may also further comprise forming said item such that said physical attribute is a dimension of said item.

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According to a further aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of collecting items, comprising the steps of:-

obtaining, via a computer network, at least one first item randomly selected from a plurality of first items, the or each first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network; and

sending, via said network, instructions to convert at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of offering collectable items, comprising the steps of:-

offering to a user, via a computer network, at least one first item randomly selected from a plurality of first items, the or each first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

converting at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item; and

transferring said second item to said user.

According to an aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of selling items, comprising the steps:-

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a retailer at a retail outlet selling at least one product containing at least one first item to a purchaser, the or each product including information relating to an internet site and a first code identifying the retailer;

providing the purchaser with an incentive to enter said first code into the website; and

providing the retailer with a proportion of a revenue generated from the purchaser visiting the internet site.

By selling items through a retailer and encouraging a purchaser of such items to access an internet site and enter a code relating to the retailer, the advantage is provided that where sales are subsequently made online, and therefore not via the retailer, the retailer is still provided with a financial benefit. This has the advantage that the retailer may not be unhappy with the competition of online sales since they will receive financial benefit from such sales without having to maintain stock or retain staff to make such sales.

The revenue may be generated by the purchase of at least one further first item or may be generated by the purchase of at least one second item defined by at least one parameter held on a computer device associated with said internet site.

The method may further comprise providing the purchaser with a second code identifying that purchaser and creating a link between said first and second codes and thereby allowing the purchaser to identify themselves to the internet site if they return to that site.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, and not in any limitative sense, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

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Figure 1 is a front view of a card used as part of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of elements used as part of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic representation of the steps of a method of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a table showing an example of the proportions of each card that are sold in the present invention; and

Figure 5 is a schematic representation of an Internet site used as part of the present invention.

A method of collecting items, such as cards 10, includes the steps of purchasing a packet 12 of cards 10, the packet 12 typically containing seven such cards and the packet of cards 12 being purchased from a shop 14 (step S1). As well as containing cards 10, the packet 12 includes a further card 16 which advertises a website which can be accessed using a computer 18 via the Internet 20 (step S2). The advertising card 16 offers the purchaser an opportunity to win further cards and includes an incentive to enter an identifying code which is unique to the shop from which the original packet of cards was purchased. This identifying code is typically applied to the outside of the packet of cards using a sticker. The incentive is, for example, that in the event of winning the purchaser will receive an additional card on top of those which they would have won (step S3).

The cards which can be won are different from the real cards 10 purchased from shop 14 in that they are virtual cards. That is, the cards are displayed on a display device 22 of computer 18 and are stored using one or more identifying

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parameters on one or more servers 24 which are linked to computer 18 via the Internet 20.

The virtual cards are typically displayed as on screen representations of an equivalent real card 10. The extra card 16 contains a competition code which, when entered into the computer 18 and sent via Internet 20 to servers 24, determines whether the purchaser wins a pack of virtual cards. If the purchaser wins a pack of virtual cards, at step S4, the random card pack generator is used to randomly create a pack of virtual cards either containing the standard number of cards or an additional card if the shop ID had been entered at step S3. Details of the random card pack generator, step S5, are explained in more detail below. Virtual cards that have been won via the competition must be entered into a game, at step S6 either playing a game against a computer, that is using servers 24, or against another purchaser who also has one or more virtual cards, this game being played via the Internet 20.

The game played uses one or more of the parameters P1 to P6 (see Fig 1) to determine a winner. Games of this type are well known and utilise rules bearing some similarity to the game known as Top Trumps®. The cards typically contain further parameters such as a card number or card identifier (P7) and a card name (P8).

The purchaser is also offered the opportunity to buy further virtual cards at step S7. If the purchaser does buy further cards the original retailer, if identified at step S3, will receive a proportion of the purchase price of the virtual cards, at step S8 as a reward to introducing the purchaser to buying the virtual cards.

The virtual cards are purchased as a pack of seven cards and the contents of that virtual pack are determined using the

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random card pack generator at step S5. It is well known for producers of collectable cards to print different numbers of This encourages increased sales, the various cards. collectors have to buy more packs of cards in order to get all of the rarer cards. The likelihood of receiving any given card can therefore be defined statistically. These odds can be utilised to create a virtual pack of cards, which contains a similar or the same distribution of cards as would be found in a real pack. It is also known to ensure an even distribution of rarer and more common place cards by, for instance, ensuring that a pack of seven cards contains four common cards, two less common cards and one rare card. As will be explained in more detail below, a purchaser is able to convert their virtual cards into real cards. As a result, when a print run of real cards is complete a proportion of each type of real card are distributed to retailers with the remainder being retained for later distribution to purchasers on conversion of their virtual cards to real cards.

The proportion of real cards that are distributed to those that are retained will be different for more common place cards than for the more rare cards with a greater proportion of the more common place cards being distributed for purchase. It is therefore possible that the number of each type of card that are retained will be the same irrespective of their rarity. For the rarer cards at least, although this could apply to all cards, it is then necessary to maintain a stock database ensuring that the total number of cards of a particular type, that being the total number of real cards plus the total number of virtual cards for that card type does not exceed the total number printed. This checking is not absolutely necessary for more common place cards as it is unlikely that a purchaser will request that a common place virtual card is converted into a real card equivalent since they are likely to have already

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obtained a real version of this card since it is by definition common place.

An example of a table of card distributions is shown in Figure 4. In this example, where the number of cards has been reduced from a typical case for ease of understanding, there are twenty different types of cards each having an individual card ID number indicated in the first column of the table. Each card also has an individual name, unlike the examples shown in the second column, this would typically be the name relating to something shown on the card. The card ID number and card name are respectively indicated at P7 and P8 on Figure The table shown in Figure 4 also includes a rarity column which indicates the relative rarity of each type of card relative to the others. This is determined by the total number printed. For example, for the very rare cards only fifty of these cards are printed out of a total print run for all twenty cards of 11950. In the fifth and sixth columns the number of cards which are distributed to retailers and those that are retained so that virtual cards can be converted into real cards are shown.

It can therefore be seen that for the rare and very rare cards it can be the case that equal numbers of cards are distributed via retailers and are retained for conversion from virtual cards to real cards, whereas for the more common place cards the majority of these cards are distributed via retailers and only a relatively small number are retained for converting from virtual to real cards. As a result, since a total of 10700 of the 11950 cards are distributed to retailers the probability of the rare card 01 being in a packet is 50:10700 (or 1:214), whereas if all of the printed cards were distributed via retailers the probability of card 01 being in a packet of cards would be 100:11950 (or 1:119.5). It is the first of these ratios (1:214) that is also used to determine

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the likelihood of the rare card 01 being in a virtual packet of virtual cards when purchased online. In comparison the chances of a common place card being selected for a pack (ignoring that 4 common cards are selected per pack) is 900:10700 or about 1:12. It can be seen that a significant number of more common cards will also be purchased in a virtual form and since these cards are already commonplace as real cards, a collector is likely to already have then and is unlikely to select a commonplace virtual cards to be made real (step S9).

It can therefore be seen that the steps taken within the random card pack generator are to randomly select the required number of common place cards, then select the required number of less common cards and finally to select the required number of rare cards and to, where appropriate, check the stock database for availability of these cards. If a card has been randomly selected but is indicated as unavailable from the stock database a replacement card will be randomly selected and checked for availability.

When a pack of cards has been purchased at step S7 or cards that have been won at step S4 have been played at step S8, the purchaser has the option of making one or more of these cards from a virtual card into a real card at step S9. As previously mentioned not all of the cards are distributed to retailers and the retained cards can therefore be sent to purchasers when they decide to make a virtual card real. On receipt of an instruction to make a card real the card is selected from a depository 26 and despatched, by post 28 or other similar means, to the purchaser at step S10.

If a purchaser decides not to make their virtual cards real they have a number of further options for their virtual cards (S11). For example, they can continue to play the game using their virtual cards against the computer or against

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another purchaser. If playing against another purchaser this game can be played either online in so-called real time via the Internet or can be played using email. Purchasers can also swap their virtual cards with the virtual cards of other users where the virtual card represents a duplicate of a real card or a virtual card that they already have. Purchasers can also swap their virtual cards for other virtual cards with the computer. This will enable the user to swap a large number of common place cards with the computer for a rarer card. relative value of one card to another is determined by the total number of real and virtual cards that are available. virtual cards can be retained on the servers 24 and can be re-accessed by the purchaser on a return visit. As part of an initial entering the website process a purchaser is given a log-in address and password so as to enable them to re-access their stored virtual cards at a later date. A user is therefore able to logout and finish a session at step S12 without losing their virtual cards.

In order to ensure the maximum possible number of real cards are purchased through retailers some of the cards will not be available online and will only be available by purchase from shops. This is indicated in the final column of the table shown in Figure 4.

Referring to Figure 5, this Figure sets out an outline of a website which might be used to advertise and sell cards, as well as providing a forum for playing games and swapping cards. The home page W1 allows easy access for a potential purchaser to buy cards via a "buy cards" page W2. A so called "barracks", page W3, allows a user to see which other users are also online and allows the user to challenge other users or play a game against the computer. Such games are conducted via page W4, termed the "Battle Field". Also accessible via a page called "My Records", W5 is information about the user including

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a list of their virtual cards and a list of cards they are hoping to collect. To encourage new users to buy cards and play games a free game is available at W6. The free game allows a user to play without fear of losing any cards but also without the opportunity to win any virtual cards which could be converted to real cards. A league of players showing the best players is available at W7 and news information relating to the cards and the website is available on W8.

It will be appreciated by person skilled in the art that the above embodiment has been described by way of example only and not in any limitative sense and that various alterations and modifications are possible without departure from the scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims. For example, the items being collected need not be cards and could be models with the virtual representations of the models being photographs of a real model. The games could therefore result from physical attributes of the model or could use one or more parameters similar to the parameter of P1 to P6 used on card 10. In a further alternative, the conversion from virtual cards to real cards could be conducted by printing the cards at a centralised distribution point on request before despatching them to the purchaser.

Claims

1. A method of collecting items, comprising the steps of:-

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obtaining, via a computer network, at least one first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

engaging in at least one activity via said network, the or each activity using at least one said first item; and

sending, via said network, instructions to convert at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item.

- 2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising purchasing at least one second item from a retail outlet.
- 3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said activity relates to at least one said first parameter.
- 4. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein obtaining includes at least one of buying, winning and swapping.
- 5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said first item is represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.
- 6. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said activity comprises swapping at least one first item for at least one other first item.

- 7. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said activity comprises playing a game using said item, the outcome of the game being at least partially dependent on at least one said first parameter.
- 8. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said second item comprises a card.
- 9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein said second item comprises a model.
- 10. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, said physical attribute is a parameter printed on said item.
- 11. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, and said physical attribute is a dimension of at least one said item.
- 12. A method of collecting items substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
- 13. A method of offering collectable items, comprising the steps of:-

offering to a user, via a computer network, at least one first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

offering said user an opportunity to engage in at least one activity via said network, the or each activity using said first item and relating to at least one said first parameter;

converting at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one

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second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item; and

transferring said second item to said user.

- 14. A method according to claim 13, further comprising offering at least one second item for sale from a retail outlet.
- 15. A method according to claim 13 or 14, wherein said activity relates to at least one said first parameter.
- 16. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 15, wherein offering includes at least one of offering for sale, providing a game with an opportunity to win and providing an opportunity for swapping.
- 17. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 16, further comprising sending data via said network so as to allow said first item is represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.
- 18. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 17, wherein said activity comprises providing an opportunity swapping at least one first item for at least one other first item.
- 19. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 18, wherein said activity comprises providing an opportunity for playing a game using said item, the outcome of the game being at least partially dependent on at least one said first parameter.
- 20. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 19, wherein said second item comprises a card.

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- 21. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 19, wherein said second item comprises a model.
- 22. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 21, further comprising printing said physical attribute as a parameter printed on said item.
- 23. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 22, further comprising forming said item such that said physical attribute is a dimension of said item.
- 24. A method of collecting items substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
- 25. A method of collecting items, comprising the steps of:-

obtaining, via a computer network, at least one first item randomly selected from a plurality of first items, the or each first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network; and

sending, via said network, instructions to convert at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item.

- 26. A method according to claim 25, further comprising purchasing at least one second item from a retail outlet.
- 27. A method according to claim 25 or 26, wherein obtaining includes at least one of buying, winning and swapping.

- 28. A method according to any one of claims 25 to 27, wherein said first item is represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.
- 29. A method according to any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein said second item comprises a card.
- 30. A method according to any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein said second item comprises a model.
- 31. A method according to any one of claims 25 to 30, said physical attribute is a parameter printed on said item.
- 32. A method according to any one of claims 25 to 31, and said physical attribute is a dimension of at least one said item.
- 33. A method of offering collectable items, comprising the steps of:-

offering to a user, via a computer network, at least one first item randomly selected from a plurality of first items, the or each first item defined by at least one first parameter stored on said network;

converting at least one said first item into at least one respective second item, said second item having at least one second parameter derived from said first parameter and defining a physical attribute of said second item; and

transferring said second item to said user.

34. A method according to claim 33, further comprising offering at least one second item for sale from a retail outlet.

- 35. A method according to claim 33 or 34, wherein offering includes at least one of offering for sale, providing a game with an opportunity to win and providing an opportunity for swapping.
- 36. A method according to any one of claims 33 to 35, further comprising sending data via said network so as to allow said first item is represented on a display device as a visual representation of the second item.
- 37. A method according to any one of claims 33 to 36, wherein said second item comprises a card.
- 38. A method according to any one of claims 33 to 36, wherein said second item comprises a model.
- 39. A method according to any one of claims 33 to 38, further comprising printing said physical attribute as a parameter printed on said item.
- 40. A method according to any one of claims 33 to 39, further comprising forming said item such that said physical attribute is a dimension of said item.
- 41. A method of selling items, comprising the steps:-

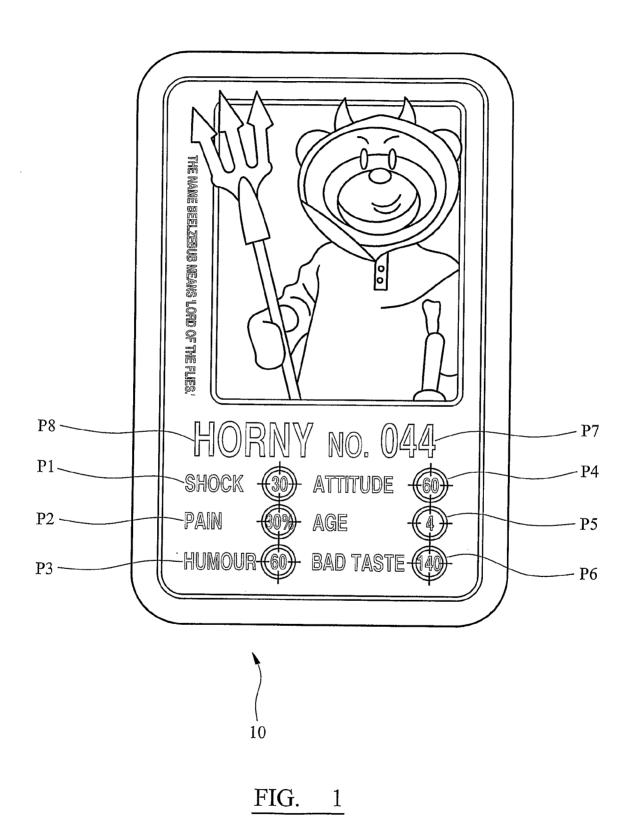
a retailer at a retail outlet selling at least one product containing at least one first item to a purchaser, the or each product including information relating to an internet site and a first code identifying the retailer;

providing the purchaser with an incentive to enter said first code into the website; and

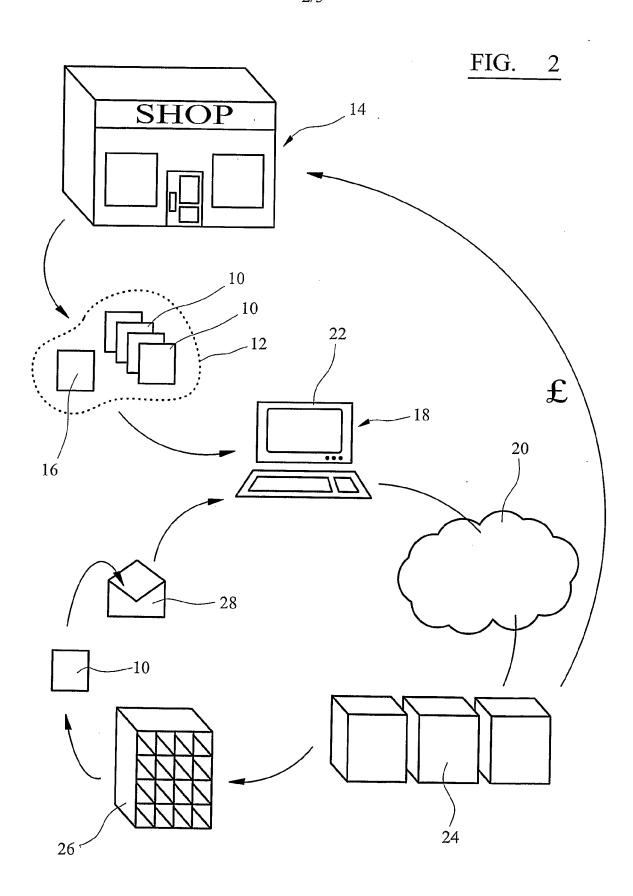
providing the retailer with a proportion of a revenue generated from the purchaser visiting the internet site.

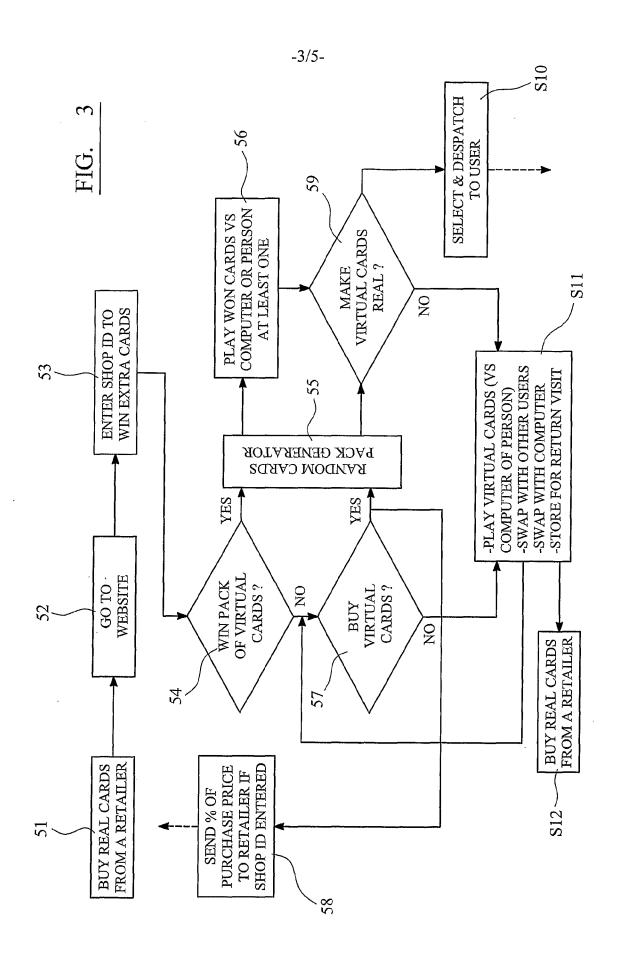
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- 42. A method according to claim 41, wherein said revenue is generated by the purchase of at least one further first item.
- 43. A method according to claim 41 or 42 wherein said revenue is generated by the purchase of at least one second item defined by at least one parameter held on a computer device associated with said internet site.
- 44. A method according to any one of claims 41 to 43, further comprising providing the purchaser with a second code identifying that purchaser and creating a link between said first and second codes and thereby allowing the purchaser to identify themselves to the internet site if they return to that site.
- 45. A method of selling items substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.



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-4/5Table of Card Distribution

Card ID Number	Card Name	Rarity	Total printed	Distrbuted to retailers	Retained	Retail only
01	Rarel	Rare	100	50	50	No
02	Rare2	Rare	100	50	50	No
03	Rare3	Rare	100	100	0	Yes
04	VRare1	Very Rare	50	25	25	No
05	VRare2	Very Rare	50	50	0	Yes
06	VRare3	Very Rare	50	25	25	No
07	Common1	Common	1000	900	100	No
08	Common2	Common	1000	1000	0	Yes
09	Common3	Common	1000	900	100	No
10	Common4	Common	1000	900	100	No
11	Common5	Common	1000	900	100	No
12	Common6	Common	1000	900	100	No
13	Common7	Common	1000	900	100	No
14	Common8	Common	1000	1000	0	Yes
15	Common9	Common	1000	900	100	No
16	Uncommon1	Uncommon	500	400	100	No
17	Uncommon2	Uncommon	500	500	0	Yes
18	Uncommon3	Uncommon	500	400	100	No
19	Uncommon4	Uncommon	500	400	100	No
20	Uncommon5	Uncommon	500	400	100	No
Totals			11950	10700	1250	

FIG. 4



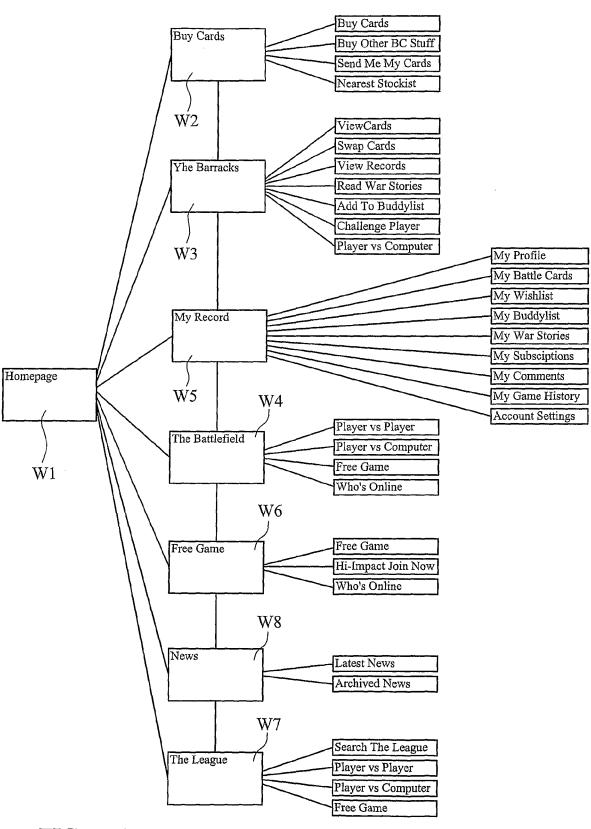


FIG. 5

### INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/GB2007/003317 A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER INV. G06Q30/00 A63F1 A63F13/00 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) G06Q A63F Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal, WPI Data, INSPEC, IBM-TDB, COMPENDEX C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT Category\* Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages Relevant to claim No. χ US 2005/079912 A1 (HANAFUSA MOTOHIRO [JP]) 1 - 4514 April 2005 (2005-04-14) abstract page 1, paragraphs 3,9,10 page 3, paragraphs 50,52,53 figure 1 χ WO 02/054643 A (NOKIA CORP [FI]) 1 - 4511 July 2002 (2002-07-11) abstract page 2, line 31 - page 3, line 10 page 4, line 16 - line 20 page 8, line 11 - line 13 page 9, line 17 - page 10, line 10 page 17, line 5 - line 25 page 18, line 28 - page 19, line 5 -/--Χl Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex. Special categories of cited documents: "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 "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance invention earlier document but published on or after the international "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to 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) 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 out. "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 "&" document member of the same patent family Date of the actual completion of the international search Date of mailing of the international search report 8 November 2007 20/11/2007 Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Authorized officer European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31–70) 340–2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31–70) 340–3016

Rossier, Thomas

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International application No
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