Title: MULTIVENDOR GIFT CARD SYSTEM AND METHOD

Abstract: The present invention is a system and method for marketing the goods and services of businesses to desirable consumers. The invention is a life event marketing program, tied to significant proven triggers for consumer spending in the life of a consumer: a marriage, birthday, and the birth of a baby. In each instance, the invention targets primarily female consumers, and provides them with a set of gift cards redeemable at local businesses, tied to a tracking and evaluation system that allows evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the system and method.
— as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(H))
— of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))

Published:
— with international search report (Art. 21(3))
Application for Letters Patent

of

Michael Marchesani and Paul Berman

for

Multivendor Gift Card System and Method

Background of the Invention

Promotional coupons are a fixture of modern marketing. Whether distributed in newspaper inserts, by direct mail, or at the point of marketing or purchase, such coupons offer the consumer a discount or incentive to purchase the associated product or service sponsoring the offer. It is well known that the rate at which distributed promotional coupons are redeemed is usually below 1%. In 2010, according to Valassis, a major coupon company, 332 billion coupons were distributed in the United States for consumer packaged goods. Of these, 3.3 billion coupons were redeemed, at an average face value of $1.46 per coupon. In categories other than consumer packaged goods, such as services, higher priced consumer goods, and fine dining, the redemption rate for coupons is typically much lower than 1%.

By contrast, consumer gift cards, which represent pre-purchased stored value tied to a particular merchant, product, or service, are typically redeemed at rates above 90%. Such cards are viewed as cash by consumers, who thus have a significant incentive to redeem them.

For certain types of merchants and providers of services, an important marketing consideration is the cost to acquire a new customer. Programs that target likely customers who have demonstrated ability to purchase are favored by such businesses, and programs that provide not only cost-effective customer acquisition, but detailed performance reporting and repeat messaging are in high demand.
**Brief Description of the Invention**

The present invention comprises a system and method for marketing the goods and services of businesses to desirable consumers. The system and method is a Life Event / Life Stage Marketing program, tied to significant life events that are proven or likely triggers for consumer spending in the life of a consumer such as a marriage, birthday, or the birth of a baby. In each instance, the system and method targets primarily female consumers, and provides them with a set of gift cards or similar incentive information redeemable at local and/or national/international businesses, tied to a tracking system that allows evaluation of the use and effectiveness of the system and method.

**Brief Description of the Figures**

Fig. 1 is a flow diagram of the communications and information flows of the present invention.

Figs. 2.1 and 2.2 are plan views of the 8-up version of a direct mail marketing flyer of the present invention.

**Detailed Description of the Invention**

The unique communications and information flows of the system and method of the invention are schematically illustrated in Fig. 1. An Initial Consumer Communication 100 is preferably by direct mail, using the marketing flyer of Figs. 2.1 and 2.2. Alternatively, Initial Consumer Communication 100 may be by electronic means, such as email, social media referral or advertising, SMS, or any other appropriate means. Consumers respond in Consumer Opt-In Transaction 110, by giving permission for further communication between the system and the consumer. This takes the form of an "activation" (described below.) Either before Initial Consumer Communication 100, or preferably during Consumer Opt-In Transaction 110, information about the consumer is inserted into or updated in Consumer Database 115. The information stored in Consumer Database 115 comprises consumer identification, opt-in status, and at least one event date, such as a birthday, anniversary, or due date. This information, together with information about the Initial Consumer Communication (date of mailing, identification of offers, demographics, source of consumer data) is stored in Consumer Database 115 or ancillary management databases (not shown) and is used by Tracking and Analysis Engine 10.
and Event Engine 120 to generate both further consumer communications and management statistics and revenue transactions.

Event Engine 120 implements business rules (described herein) for generating a plurality of Consumer Offer Communications 130. Each such Consumer Offer Communication is an advertisement or similar communication transmitted on behalf of one or more merchants. Information about each such Consumer Offer Communication 130 is stored in Consumer Database 115, to allow tracking in detail and analysis of success and failure, through Tracking and Analysis Engine 10.

Each Consumer Offer Communication may result in no redemptions, or one or more redemptions, as consumers take advantage of savings, limited time special offers, preferences, and the like. Information about redemptions is stored in Consumer Database 115, to allow tracking in detail and analysis of success and failure, through Tracking and Analysis Engine 10.

If a consumer opts-in to allow interaction through Social Media Networks 150, then information about each Consumer Offer Communication 130 may be privately or publicly posted through the Social Media Networks 150, such as FaceBook, Twitter, or others. Messages such as "Sarah just got a BirthdayPak gift card for dinner at Joe's. ...why not join her there?" may be posted for the consumer's friends to read. Similarly, information about redemption may also be posted on the consumer's behalf. Messages such as "Sarah, Jane and Susan just enjoyed their BirthdayPak massage at SpaNow" may be posted on the consumer's behalf. In each instance, further information about others who "like" or comment on such postings are harvested and stored in Consumer Database 115, along with referrals from consumers, and such newly discovered consumers are scheduled to receive an Initial Consumer Communication by Event Engine 120.

Mercants and others may receive reports on the metrics tracked by Tracking and Analysis Engine 10 through any convenient communications medium, and in addition, alarms and alerts may be generated based on setpoints.

The GiftPak™ BabyPak™ and BridalPak™ brands are leveraged across multiple life event opportunities as the brand matures through the numerous market opportunities available. Three programs are currently part of the invention:
The BirthdayPak™ brand uses the system and method of the present invention to cooperatively target women with significant and proven spending power during the month of their birth. Through the BirthdayPak, these women receive offers from upscale local, regional and national advertisers. The BirthdayPaks containing these offers are timed to arrive on or near the prospect's birthday, a time in when she is most likely to indulge herself with the products and services represented in the BirthdayPak such as fine dining, day spa services, jewelry, apparel, etc. The unique features of the present invention make for a compelling and exciting experience for the women who receive the package. There is a clear "call to action" that requires the recipient to log onto computers, tablet or mobile device using a pURL (Personalized URL) presented as a "unique activation code" in order to "activate" the gift cards. Alternatively, a standardized URL may be presented, along with a unique activation code or similar unique identifier (which may include, but is not limited to a browser cookie, email response, SMS response or any other means of uniquely identifying the recipient of a previously presented offer or set of offers. The recipients are greeted with a warm, personalized message that takes them through an activation process, which results in the recipient opting in to receive additional offers from GiftPak and the advertisers represented in the package, as well as others. (In the testing by the inventors using actual consumers, the opt-in rate was approximately 90%). At that point, the recipients are enrolled into the proprietary e-marketing platform system of the present invention.

That platform launches a preferred 4-stage email campaign that serves to remind the recipients to use their cards as well to refer friends and family into the program. According to the US Census Bureau, of the approximate 116 million households in the United States, the luxury market, defined here as households with income of more than $100,000, makes up about 16% of that number, or 19 million households. This data makes the use of a birthday as a trigger for consumer spending very attractive.

The BabyPak™ brand uses the unique integrated techniques of the system and method of the present invention to cooperatively target women during a time when their spending is likely to be accelerated...the second trimester of their pregnancy. Through the BabyPak, these women receive timely and valuable offers from local,
regional, national and international advertisers attempting to create brand awareness. There are approximately 4,300,000 births each year in the United States. Of those, nearly half are first time births. Most first-birth families are also two-career families, creating enormous marketing opportunities; working moms and dads with large, disposable incomes and no brand loyalties where child care products are concerned. On average, new mothers spend more than $14,000 on products and services during the first year of their baby’s life. Among car safety seats, maternity and infant clothes and nursery decor, the average American new parent spends $6,000 before the child is born. The BabyPak containing relevant and targeted offers is timed to arrive during the 2nd trimester of a woman’s pregnancy, featuring products and services such as baby clothing, diapers, maternity clothing, strollers and furniture, etc. Like the BirthdayPak, the unique features of the system and method of the present invention make for a compelling experience for the women who receive the package. There is a clear "call to action" functionally similar to that described above for BirthdayPak. The ultimate goal of the activity is turn prospects into customers, customers into repeat customers and repeat customers into brand champions.

The BridalPak™ brand uses the unique integrated technique of the present invention to cooperatively target women during a time when their spending is likely to be accelerated...the preparation stages for their wedding and for their new lifestyle beyond. There are approximately 2.2 million weddings each year in the United States. With an average cost of nearly $22,000, the wedding industry is a $50 billion industry and, therefore creates enormous marketing opportunities. As with BirthdayPak and BabyPak, these women receive offers from upscale local, regional, national and international advertisers. The BridalPak containing these offers is timed to arrive in the early stages of wedding planning featuring products and services such as travel, financial planning, gift registry, etc. The unique engagement features of the present invention make for a compelling experience for the women who receive the package. As with the other programs, the call to action is an activation sequence intended to capture the customer.

The success of the system and method of the invention is largely due to the combination of 6 separate marketing techniques with the tracking and analysis system and method of the present invention. There is no other direct to consumer marketing
system and method that offers these component elements in such a cohesive fashion with the net result being a powerhouse, all encompassing marketing program that levels the playing field for small, independent business owners while allowing international, national and regional advertisers to operate on a "hyper-local" community level.

We buy where we live - A simple enough premise...we tend to buy goods and services from establishments close to our homes, and, in the age of the Internet, those that are convenient to access from our homes and offices. The reasons are simple...convenience and to a lesser degree, civic pride. Talk to any independent restaurant owner and he will tell you that 80% of his revenue comes from within 5 miles of the establishment. Hence, the need for relevant marketing techniques that help the small, independent business owner drive critical first time engagements with the consumer who is most likely to become their best customer...someone who lives in close proximity to their business. Furthermore, this same business owner must also have at his disposal techniques that help in retaining that new client. And lastly, what a small business owner needs most is a turnkey marketing solution that delivers quick, easy, measurable and sustainable results. The system and method of the present invention satisfies all of those needs.

Life event marketing is a deceptively-simple concept. In the course of our lives, there are a series of normal and natural life events and occurrences that make us temporary super-consumers. These life events are powerful triggers for consumer spending. A few examples of these triggers are buying or selling a house, getting married or having a baby. As we navigate our way through these key life events, smart marketing companies are keen to have their message in front of the consumer because they know that the consumer has switched over to "super-consumer" mode and is particularly susceptible and receptive to marketing messaging. The system and method of the present invention successfully leverages, for example, a consumer's birthday as its trigger. Studies show that a consumer, women more so than men, (but also men, as traditional gender roles become blurred in modern societies,) are more likely than not to celebrate their birthday by having at least one fine dining experience, some kind of spa treatment, buy herself a piece of jewelry, clothing or shoes.
The idea of cooperative marketing is not new, with the obvious benefits normally being the sharing or deferring of program execution costs across a group of advertisers. With cooperative programs, typical expectations for results are lower than for solo direct mail efforts. The system and method of the present invention, at its core, is a cooperative marketing program in that a maximum of, for example, 8 advertisers may be featured in any one hyper-local marketing zone. But a phenomenon has occurred with respect to the present invention, because it has been proven in testing that it delivers cooperative advertisers performance levels that surpass what each advertiser could have achieved in a solo effort.

"Integrated Marketing" performed according to the inventive method is effectively achieving the crossover from the tangible direct mail world to the intangible digital world of the Internet. The system and method of the invention is the effective convergence of print and digital media. Direct mail is often viewed as "over" and tired, but in fact the average consumer still looks forward to seeing what's in his or her mailbox. The marketing material of the present invention is the kind of direct mail that gets the average consumer excited. The fact that recipients then respond to the program and take time from their lives to go online and register at high rates supports the fact that smart, relevant direct mail is still valuable and that our the present invention immediately satisfies most consumers’ comfort levels and trust issues.

The present invention serves the goals of both advertisers and the inventors, even though these goals may differ. The typical advertiser hopes to gain new clients and retain existing ones. One of the ways that the present invention accomplishes this is through the "Bundled Electronic Communications Platform" component of the system. This platform provides the advertisers an ongoing branding platform which delivers their message without further discounting to their hyper local zone over the course of the year around other important life events that are important to the advertisers, such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, the Holiday's, etc.

One important goal, however, is to build trust and gain the permission to sustain a dialog with a highly responsive and influential group of consumers. Regression analysis of data gained in testing the system and method of the present invention shows exactly that. Once trust is built and access granted by the consumer,
there are an unlimited number of ways to monetize this community, including, for example, a "Private Sales" model and a program aimed at marketing of travel.

Driving measurable and trackable web traffic back to our advertiser's websites is another added value feature of the system and method of the present invention. Over the course of the year, the system and method currently provides about 11 opportunities for the registered recipients to click hyperlinked logos that link to the advertiser's websites.

The system and method of the present invention may employ a custom made paper stock that has up to 8 gift cards integrated into the stock. This material, shown in Fig. 1 (6 card version) and Fig. 2 (8 card version) provides a relatively lower-cost way of distributing gift cards, which are more typically embossed plastic cards, adhered to paper stock using rubber cement, known in the industry as "fugitive glue". The comparative savings achieved using this stock are a significant driver of economies that permit the present invention to serve smaller zones and smaller populations of consumers.

The system of the present invention measures and reports on 14 key metrics; 2 Global, 7 Zone-Specific, 5 Advertiser-specific.

**Global Metrics:**
- Activations by Day
- Global Campaign Activity

**Zone-Specific Metrics:**
- Campaign Response Rate
- Campaign Activation Rate
- Activations by Day
- Campaign Activity
- Open rates of initial email
- Percentage of Activators that intend to use 2 or more gift cards; 3 or more gift cards
- Percentage of Activators that visited 1 or more websites; 2 or more websites; 3 or more websites

**Advertiser-Specific Metrics**
- Total Clicks to an Advertiser Website
Unique Clicks to an Advertiser Website
Percentage of activators that visited a specific advertiser website
Total number of intended redemptions for a specific advertiser expressed numerically and as a percentage

Zone-Specific Email Open Rates
Each of these metrics is processed through Tracking and Analysis Engine 10, which derives input data from Consumer Database 115, and returns its results to Consumer Database 115. These results may also be reported and disseminated through conventional communications channels (not shown) to managers, merchants, advertising agencies, and other interested parties.

The data that is developed through the above metrics "tells a story" and patterns emerge about the success of the invention. The data show which of the advertisers are preferred over others and which ones will see the best results. Because the invention collects redemption and revenue data from advertisers, the data permits predictions to be made showing expected campaign performance.

Of all of the data collected, the most important information relates to "Intended Usage". This question is presented to a recipient during the activation process. This question allows measurement of intended behavior and because the sample set is usually of a large enough data set, true and realistic patterns emerge which are valuable in predicting real outcomes.

Campaign Response Rates are earlier indicators of success, which the invention can monitor real time through the "Campaign Dashboard". The ultimate measure of success comes from data collected from advertisers relative to the number of redemptions and revenue generated and the invention contains tools to make this reporting even easier for advertisers.

In tests of the present invention, it has been shown to generate a response rate of between 7% and 25%. Using the reporting and analysis tools of the invention has demonstrated that low rates are due to improperly structured zones that lack the proper mix of advertisers.

Business Rules for a Bundled Electronic Communication Campaign
The present invention relies on a set of business rules, implemented in Tracking and Analysis Engine 10, and Event Engine 120, that govern post-registration
activities. For instance, after "activation" by a direct mail package recipient, a sequence of messages is generated: "Thank You for Activating", "15-Day Reminder", "10 Days Until Expiration" and a 45-day reminder message. Based on the permissions granted by the activating consumer, the electronic communications may be electronic mail, SMS messages, FaceBook®, Twitter®, or other social media messages, instant messages, any other electronic addressable communication, or a combination of these.

During every month of the year, all those who have activated will receive an electronic communication on their Birthdays. The Birthday message may be zone specific. This message will include all accumulated data through the end of the month two months prior to the month in question, e.g. January Birthday messages will include birthdays through the November prior, February Birthday messages will include birthdays through the December prior.

During every month of the year, all those who have activated will also receive an electronic communication on their Half-Birthdays. This message may also be zone specific. This message will include all accumulated data through the end of the month two months prior to the month in question, e.g. January Half-Birthday messages will include birthdays through the November prior, February Half-Birthday messages will include birthdays through the December prior.

During every month of the year, a Zone Specific "Premail" or "Premessage" will be deployed announcing the imminent arrival of the next month's BirthdayPak ...this communication is sent toward the end of the month roughly on the same date as the mail date of BirthdayPak. Since the "Premail" or "Premessage" is "Zone-specific", the advertisers from that zone are featured, allowing the recipients to click hyper-linked logos or otherwise respond electronically, taking them the advertiser websites or to receive further advertiser specific messages. The "Premail" or "Premessage" may only be sent to zones in the second year since the recipient of the "Premail" is a consumer who has activated the gift cards from the previous year.

During the month of December (Approx. Dec 18th), a Pre-Holiday communication is deployed. Since the Pre-Holiday message is "Zone-specific", the advertisers from that zone are featured, allowing the recipients to click hyper-linked logos taking them the advertiser websites or otherwise respond electronically, taking
them the advertiser websites or to receive further advertiser specific messages. This message will include all accumulated data through the prior October. (November and December Campaigns will still be live).

During the month of February (Approx. Feb 7th), a Pre-Valentine's communication is deployed. Since the Pre-Valentine's message is "Zone-specific", the advertisers from that zone are featured, allowing the recipients to click hyper-linked logos taking them the advertiser websites or otherwise respond electronically, taking them the advertiser websites or to receive further advertiser specific messages. This message will include all accumulated data through the prior December (January and February Campaigns will still be live)

During the month of May (Approx. May 18th), a Pre-Mother's Day communication is deployed. Since the Pre-Mother's Day message is "Zone-specific", the advertisers from that zone are featured, allowing the recipients to click hyper-linked logos taking them the advertiser websites or otherwise respond electronically, taking them the advertiser websites or to receive further advertiser specific messages. This message will include all accumulated data through the prior March. (April and May Campaigns will still be live).

During the month of June (Approx. June 13th), a Pre-Father's Day communication is deployed. Since the Pre-Father's Day message is "Zone-specific", the advertisers from that zone are featured, allowing the recipients to click hyper-linked logos taking them the advertiser websites or otherwise respond electronically, taking them the advertiser websites or to receive further advertiser specific messages. This message will include all accumulated data through the prior April (May and June Campaigns will still be live).

The performance of the present invention's marketing campaigns depends, in large part, on the proper mix of advertisers and their gift card offers to recipients. For high-income female recipients, the following are considered key categories of advertisers: Jewelers, Day Spas, Fine Dining, Hair Salon, Clothing Boutique, Accessory Boutique, Shoe Store, Confectioners, Bath, Health and Beauty, Cards and Books, Art Gallery, Housewares and Home Furnishings, and Overnight Experiences/Hotels.
For the campaigns keyed to pregnancy and birth, the following are key categories: Baby furniture, Baby clothing, Baby Safety Proofing Equipment, Baby Carriages/Strollers/Car Seats, Baby Formula, High Chairs, Educational Toys, Maternity Clothing, Maternity Spa Treatments, and Birth Announcements.

For the campaigns keyed to engagement and marriage events, the following are key categories: Reception Location, Wedding Consultants, Wedding Rings, Photography/Video, Bridal Gown, Music, Flowers, Bridal attendants' apparel, Rehearsal dinner, Men's formal wear, Invitations, Attendants' gifts, Mother of the bride apparel, Bride's veil, Clergy and ceremony fees, Limousine, Groom's attire, Honeymoon Location, Furniture, and Financial Products.

**Personalized URLs**

Personalized URLs, also known as pURLs, are personalized websites used in conjunction with direct mail and are designed to seamlessly integrate the Internet into the marketing campaign while allowing for the capture of critical information about the person that visits it. Marketing companies find this useful when testing marketing methods and response rates.

Personalized URLs are generally printed on the direct mail piece in the format Consumer Name.domain.com or domain.com/Consumer Name. They recognize the individual who is visiting the site and can welcome them by name. They also have the ability to obtain and disperse detailed and specific information pertaining to the individual looking at the site.

Personalized URLs are assigned to individual recipients based on the direct mail campaign database and are included either as the only variable or as one of several variable fields in the larger variable data printing communication. Other such personal identifiers may include QR codes, conventional bar codes, SMS codes, unique email addresses, Twitter hashtags, FaceBook page addresses, and the like. When recipients of the direct mail piece log onto their pURL, or otherwise identify themselves uniquely to the system, the information from the campaign database is used to tailor the web page or other communications message and medium experience to that specific recipient. They are referenced by name, and the graphics, text, offers, and other information on the page can also be tailored to them personally, based on the information in the marketer's database. Studies have shown that people prefer to
get additional information online, so the use of pURLs presented as "unique activation codes" actually keeps direct mail current with evolving consumer behavior.

By design, BirthdayPak targets a consumer only once per year during their birth month with gift cards that are valid for 90 days. Therefore, in an effort to deepen the engagement with the BirthdayPak customer and provide additional benefits and offers to the consumer year-round, BirthdayPak employes a Loyalty Program that will provide benefits to members and advertisers all year long, while also providing valuable data about consumer behavior relative to BirthdayPak gift card usage. This sharing or "check in" will close the loop and provide the final piece of data allowing the system to truly show the performance at the store level. In the prior art, that data is fragmented and unreliable.

The loyalty program requires an optional second level of opt-in from the member and optionally employs a mobile application ("app") on a smart phone. Because the mobile app is synced to member information, the BirthdayPak app may be populated with the unique gift cards that each member has received. For a smart phone enabled with GPS the app will determine when the BirthdayPak community member is in proximity to one of the retailers from which they have recently received a BirthdayPak gift card. The app alerts the user about proximity to the retailer and may display a picture of the gift card, requesting a "check in" by the user. By checking in through the mobile app, the consumer accumulates chits/points, etc, unlocking additional offers which are pushed to the mobile app, SMS number, mailbox, email inbox or other point of contact. The mobile app is linked to other social media platforms that pushes BirthdayPak community member checkins out to their social media feeds alerting friends and family of their usage of a BirthdayPak gift card, further broadening the reach of our brand and encouraging guest sign up.

The second level of advertiser that has not had access to the desirable BirthdayPak community will include local, national and regional advertisers, as well as access to BirthdayPak "Private Sales", BirthdayPak's unique spin on the "Deal of Day" model. For the consumer who is not inclined to download the BirthdayPak app, the loyalty program into other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Foursquare, Pinterest and others, allowing for "checkin" from apps and platforms that the consumer is already comfortable with using.
The mobile app is optionally linked to other social media platforms that push BirthdayPak community member check-ins out to their social media feeds alerting friends and family of use of a BirthdayPak gift card, further broadening the reach of the brand and encouraging guest sign up.

The mobile app also serves as a platform for members to store birth dates and other important dates of friends, family and colleagues, and to accumulate this information from the member's social network accounts. The app provides access to exclusive shopping deals delivered to the user through any of the communications media for which the user has granted permission, which may be revised or revoked at any time.

For the consumer who is not inclined to download the BirthdayPak app or who does not use a smart phone or tablet, the loyalty program operates other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Foursquare, Pinterest and others, allowing for "check-in" from apps and platforms that the consumer is already comfortable with using.

BirthdayPak provides multiple touch points for the consumer by which to engage with the BirthdayPak brand. Those touch points leverage all available channels by which a free flowing two way dialogue can take place, always delivering value to the consumer in exchange for loyalty to the BirthdayPak Brand.

In order to first use the offers received, the consumer is "required" to activate the BirthdayPak by visiting the BirthdayPak.com website, by scanning a QR code, by sending a text message, by downloading and using the BirthdayPak app, or by giving permission for access to the consumer's social media account(s). During this initial engagement, the system provides a simple engagement experience that encourages the consumer to share critical information and permission in exchange for activation of the BirthdayPak. It's at this point that the system provides the consumer with the opportunity to use social media channels to inform others about BirthdayPak. By selecting a "share" function during activation, information reflecting that the consumer has joined the BirthdayPak community is propagated to all of her social media channels alerting her friends, families and colleagues. The notification also asks if they've signed up to get theirs yet and lets them know that BirthdayPak provides great offers from local, regional and national advertisers. This encourages guest sign up to BirthdayPak, more rapidly building the opt-in community.
For the first time activator, they will be immediately included in a bundled email platform raise that serves to drive redemption of the gift cards in the BirthdayPak, but also serves to deepen trust between the brand and the consumer. These emails contain an ever broadening opportunity for the consumer to engage more deeply with our brand. Additional information is gathered about the consumer that leads to being able to deliver offers from the second tier of advertisers. Information such as anniversary, spouses' birthdays, favorite brands of car, liquor, kitchen appliance, camera, computer, is gathered and stored in the Consumer Database 115 for tracking and analysis. As the knowledge base grows, the opportunity to have the consumer engage more deeply with us grows.

As stated earlier, the result of the deeper engagement is loyalty. Loyalty by this consumer will look differently to the many subsets within the BirthdayPak community.

Loyalty path #1 - "Checking in" with the BirthdayPak Loyalty or "Perks" program. The check in program will encourages the BirthdayPak Community to check-in when using a BirthdayPak gift card by using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare. This open platform allow the consumer to leverage the loyalty program without the download of an app. By checking in with BirthdayPak and notifying us of the use of specific gift cards, points or chits are accumulated. By reaching certain levels of gift card usage, additional offers are unlocked, and these offers are reserved for the most loyal of BirthdayPak community members. These values may be delivered to the consumer either by email, the BirthdayPak mobile app or by the direct mail. The value of the social media check-in is that when a member indicates the use of a particular gift card, that check-in is pushed out to all of her social media feeds, alerting friends, family and colleagues that she's use her "P.F. Chang's gift card compliments of BirthdayPak", and encourages guest sign up to BirthdayPak.

Loyalty path #2 - Downloading of the BirthdayPak app - The app is way to deeply engage the consumer with our brand as the world moves to all things mobile. The app will allow for easy, preferably graphics driven, proximity check-ins. These check-ins through the BirthdayPak app serve as one method to notify the system of the use of specific gift cards (the other being redemption input by the merchant, which
is then matched to the check-in by the system.) By reaching certain levels of gift card usage, additional offers are unlocked reserved for the most loyal of BirthdayPak community members. These values is delivered to the consumer either by email, SMS, social media, the BirthdayPak mobile app or by the direct mail.

The app serves another critical role. Built into the app is a preference driven date reminder and gifting platform, tied to the Consumer Database 115 and Event Engine 120. The consumer can sync with contact list and populate with critical dates, such as the birth dates and anniversary dates of friends, family and colleagues. Not only will the BirthdayPak app remind you of these other note worthy events in the life's of your circle of family and friends, but it will also provide access to gift giving suggestions for these people, depending on your preferences. The gifts are filtered to suggest not only what to be sent, but how to be sent...email, app, SMS or direct mail, and the like. The BirthdayPak network of affiliate programs funnels deals of the day sites like Groupon or Living Social, or BirthdayPak Private Sales, or offers from affiliate programs that may come from Best Buy, Macy's, Ulta and DSW. The goal is to not only provide a reminder system, but also a platform through which to do all gift shopping and giving and to provide value through exclusive discounts only available to loyal BirthdayPak community members.

Loyalty Path #3 - Private Sales - For the loyal BirthdayPak community member who won't engage with us in the form of check-ins, we still have a platform through which they can take advantage of great offers that represent great value to them and great value to our advertisers. The Private Sale is the BirthdayPak version of the "Deal of the Day", the differences being that:

1. The Deals are only available to BirthdayPak community members and their friend and family
2. The deals are true store branded gift cards, not vouchers or coupons
3. The deals are weekly instead of daily
4. There is a limited number of the gift cards to be sold...when they are gone, they're gone. This makes them more exclusive to the consumer and represents a more responsible level of discounting to the advertiser.
5. The deals are marketed hyper-locally, which only the present invention can truly offer due to the amount and intensive analysis of data built through the BirthdayPak system.

As these deals are purchased, social media feeds are enabled alerting friends and family to the purchases and inviting them to participate and to encourage guest sign up to the BirthdayPak Program.

Loyalty Path #4 - Downloadable "Gifting Bar". This is a downloadable toolbar for computers that resides on the desktop or in the browser and activates when the consumer shops at any one of thousands of retailers. The "Gifting Bar" activates and notifies the consumer of deals and sales at any of the sites based on whether or not such sites are part of the affiliate marketing program. This tool bar is also enabled with preference setting that "learns" what the consumer's shopping habits are and can be enabled to alert the consumer to sales and offers at favorite places or on favorite products. The gift bar is also enabled with same contact management capability as the app, which alerts the user to important dates for friends and family and provides gift giving ideas the channel through which to actually purchase those gifts. The tool bar is also enabled with social media feeds so that when a purchase is made, it alerts the consumer's feeds as to what the purchase was and how they to can their "BirthdayPak Gifting Bar"

BirthdayPak takes advantage of technology that allows multiple "Specific Stored Value Offers" onto a single gift card. This would replace the need for 8 gift cards and encourage the consumer to carry 1 single BirthdayPak gift card that feels and works like a real credit card, including encoded magnetic strip for swiping through existing POS equipment, as well as near-field and RFID capabilities. This facilitates instant check in and tracking, as well as creates partnership opportunities with banks and credit card companies. These real gift cards could then carry points and can be reloaded with gift card points. Points can be shared and combined with other family and friends if so desired and appear on the electronic card with any free or special offers they have obtained through loyalty with the retailer or your Pak program.

While the invention has been described in its preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that the words which have been used are words of description rather
than of limitation and that changes may be made within the purview of the appended claims without departing from the true scope and spirit of the invention in its broader aspects. Rather, various modifications may be made in the details within the scope and range of equivalents of the claims and without departing from the spirit of the invention. The inventors further require that the scope accorded their claims be in accordance with the broadest possible construction available under the law as it exists on the date of filing hereof (and of the application from which this application obtains priority, if any) and that no narrowing of the scope of the appended claims be allowed due to subsequent changes in the law, as such a narrowing would constitute an *ex post facto* adjudication, and a taking without due process or just compensation.
Claims:

1. A system for permission-based marketing comprising
   a) a database containing consumer information, the consumer information
      comprising at least a consumer identifier, which may be a physical or
      communications address, and at least one date having significance to
      the identified consumer,
   b) an event engine for generating consumer offers based on dates stored
      in the database,
   c) means for communicating consumer offers to consumers and storing
      information about the offers in the database,
   d) means for verifying redemption of a consumer offer and storing
      information about the redemption in the database, and
   e) a tracking and analysis engine for producing information about one or
      more metrics used to evaluate the performance of consumer offers and
      of the system.

2. The system of Claim 1 wherein the metrics are selected from the group
   comprising:
   Activations by Day;
   Global Campaign Activity;
   Campaign Response Rate;
   Campaign Activation Rate;
   Activations by Day;
   Open rates of initial email;
   Percentage of Activators that intend to use 2 or more gift cards; 3 or more gift
   cards; 4 or more gift cards;
   Percentage of Activators that visited 1 or more websites; 2 or more websites; 3
   or more websites;
   Total Clicks to an Advertiser Website;
   Unique Clicks to an Advertiser Website;
   Percentage of activators that visited a specific advertiser website;
Total number of intended redemptions for a specific advertiser expressed numerically and as a percentage; and Zone-Specific Email Open Rates.

3. The system of Claim 2 wherein the selected metrics are communicated to an offerer or of a consumer offer communicated to one or more consumers by the system.

4. The system of Claim 1 wherein the event engine also generates consumer offers based on calendar events comprising civil holidays, religious holidays, commercial holidays, life events, and commercial offeror events.

5. The system of Claim 1 wherein the communication means comprises one or more media selected from the group of direct physical mail, courier-based messaging, SMS messaging, electronic mail, instant messaging, social media posting, social media messaging, microblogging, and direct device to device messaging.

6. The system of Claim 1 wherein the means for verifying redemption comprises one or more media selected from the group of electronic mail, location-based check-in, social media posting, SMS messaging, electronic mail, instant messaging, social media messaging, microblogging and device to device messaging.

7. The system of Claim 1 wherein the first communication of consumer offers comprises one or more gift cards having discount value, and wherein the gift cards must be activated by the granting of permission for further communication of consumer offers prior to redemption of the gift card.

8. The system of Claim 7 wherein a single gift card represents more than one discount value.

9. A method for permission-based marketing comprising
   a) operating a database containing consumer information, the consumer information comprising at least a consumer identifier, which may be a physical or communications address, and at least one date having significance to the identified consumer,
   b) generating consumer offers based on dates stored in the database,
   c) communicating consumer offers to consumers and storing information about the offers in the database,
   d) verifying redemption of a consumer offer and storing information about the redemption in the database, and
e) producing information about one or more metrics used to evaluate the
performance of consumer offers and of the system.

10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the metrics are selected from the group
comprising:

5  Activations by Day;
    Global Campaign Activity;
    Campaign Response Rate;
    Campaign Activation Rate;
    Activations by Day;

10  Campaign Activity;
    Open rates of initial email;
    Percentage of Activators that intend to use 2 or more gift cards; 3 or more gift
cards; 4 or more gift cards;
    Percentage of Activators that visited 1 or more websites; 2 or more websites; 3
or more websites;
    Total Clicks to an Advertiser Website;
    Unique Clicks to an Advertiser Website;
    Percentage of activators that visited a specific advertiser website;
    Total number of intended redemptions for a

20  specific advertiser expressed numerically and as a percentage; and
    Zone-Specific Email Open Rates.
Activation Code: XXXXXXXXXX

Happy Birthday

BirthdayFish
816 W. Springfield Road
Springfield, PA 19064

<Mailer Name>
<Mailer Address>
<Mailer City, ST, ZIP>

<Activation copy>
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 12/39477

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(8) - G06Q 30/00 (2012.01)
USPC - 705/14.1

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 30/00 (2012.01) 
USPC: 705/14.1

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
IPC(8): G06Q 30/00 (2012.01) 
USPC: 705/14.1; 705/14.2; 705/14.1; 705/50 (keyword limited; terms below)

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
pubWEST(PGPB, USPT, USOC, EPAB, JPAB); Google(Webo); Search terms used: schedule event dates calendar birthday promotion offer gift card coupon advertisement redeem activation tracking metrics campaign response analytics holiday stored value

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>US 2010/0094774 A1 (Jackowitz et al.) 15 April 2010 (15.04.2010), para [0062], [0063], [0075]-[0080], [0086]-[0088], [0133]</td>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>US 2008/0076531 A1 (Baerlocher et al.) 27 March 2008 (27.03.2008), entire document</td>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>US 2011/0106698 A1 (Isaacson et al.) 05 May 2011 (05.05.2011), entire document</td>
<td>1-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 31 July 2012 (31.07.2012)

Date of mailing of the international search report 16 AUG 2012

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: Lee W. Young
PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300
PCT OSP: 571-272-7774

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 2009)