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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF RANKING A PLURALITY OF CREDIT CARD OFFERS**

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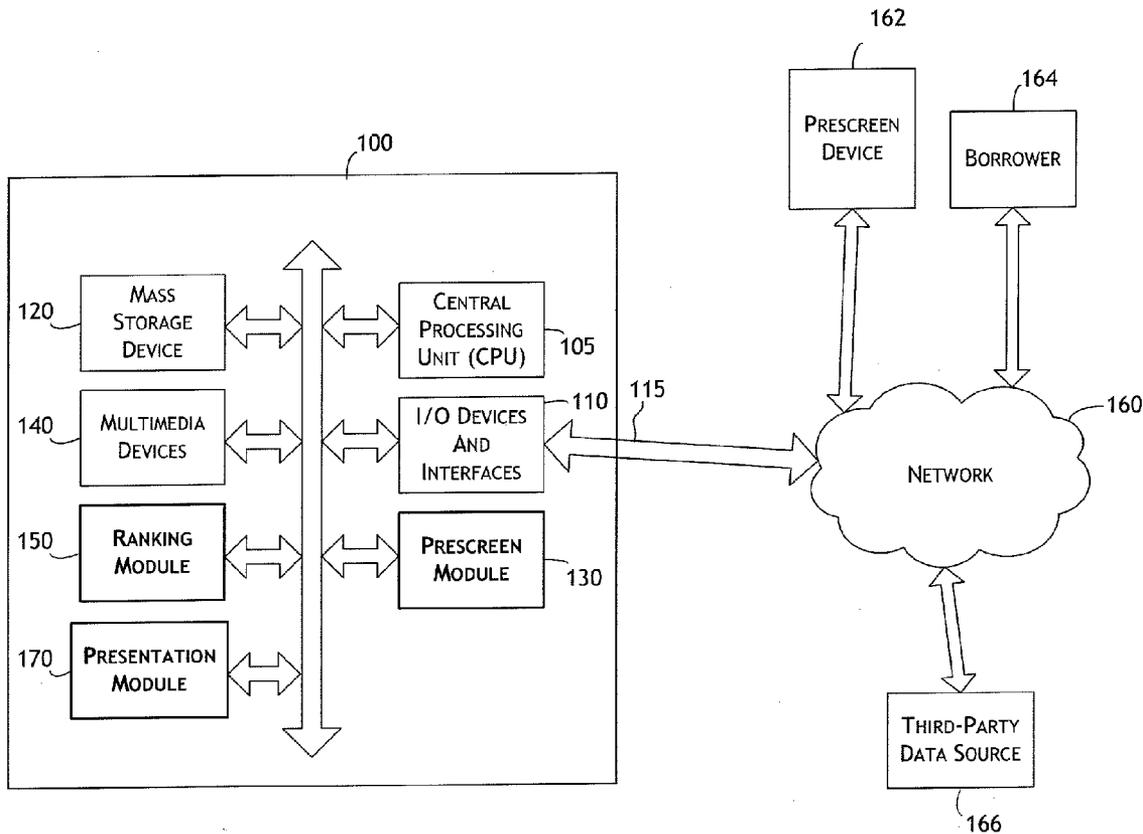
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Prescreened credit card offers, such as offers for credit cards that a particular potential borrower is likely to be granted upon completion of a full application, are ranked based on expected values of respective prescreened offers. The expected value of a prescreened credit card offer may represent an expected monetary value to one or more referrers involved in providing the prescreened offer to the borrower. Thus, the referrer may present a highest ranked credit card offer to a potential borrower first in order to increase the likelihood that borrower applies for the credit card offer with the highest expected value to the referrer. Depending on the embodiment, the expected value of a credit card offer may be based on a combination of a bounty associated with the offer, a click-through-rate for the offer, and/or a conversion rate for the offer, for example.



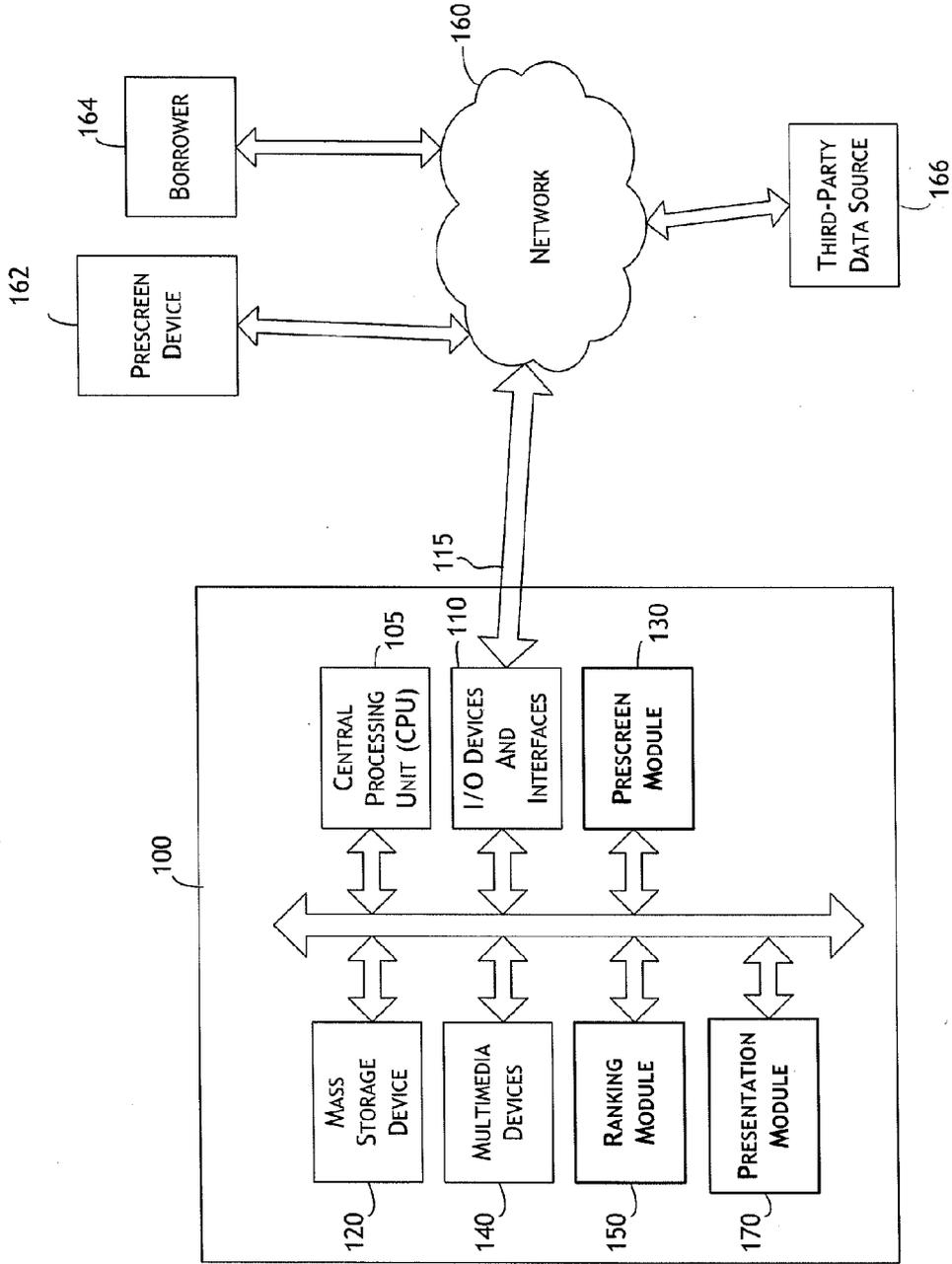


FIGURE 1

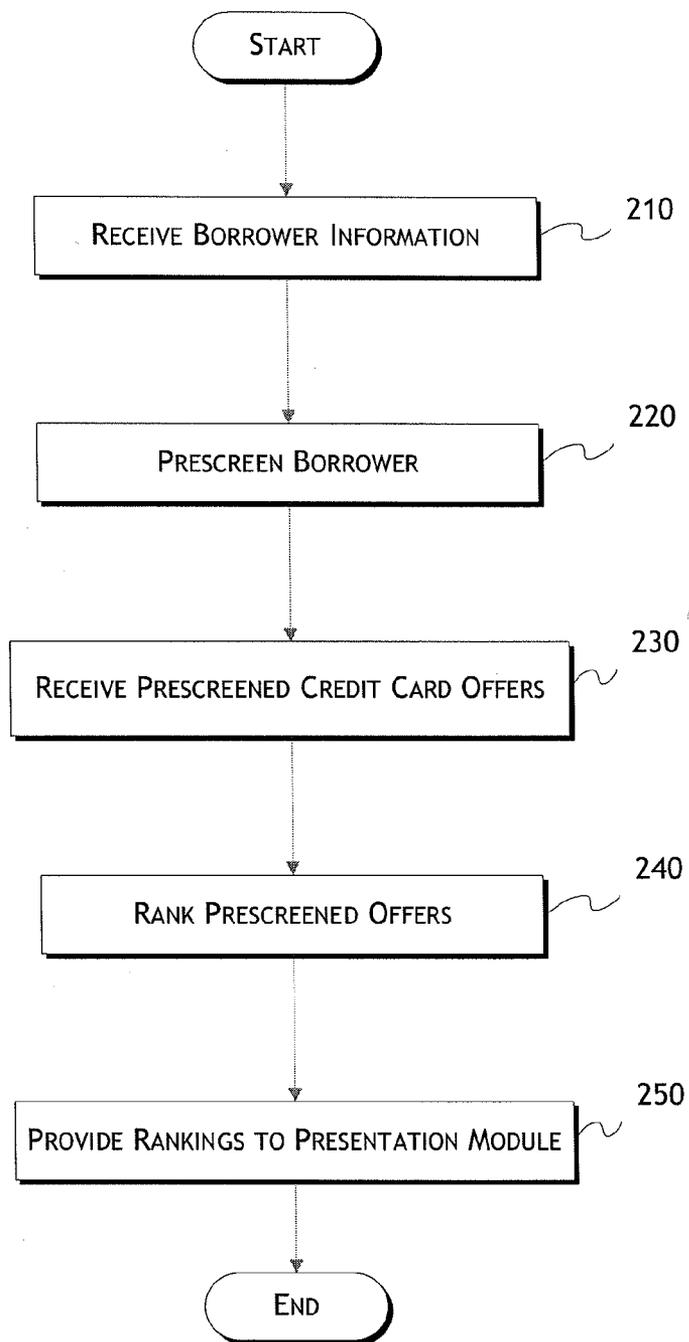


FIGURE 2

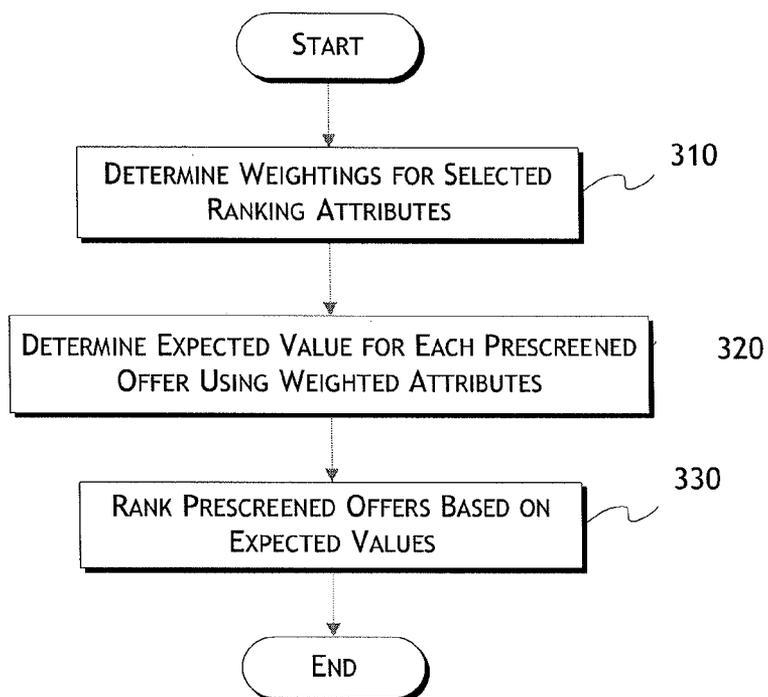


FIGURE 3

400

We match the card to your life

Complete a profile and we'll find the perfect credit card for you.

First Name: Last Name:

Home Address:

State: Zip Code:

By clicking above you agree to our terms of use and privacy policy

The diagram shows a registration form labeled 400. It contains a heading, a sub-heading, a paragraph of text, and several input fields. The input fields are for 'First Name' (410), 'Last Name' (420), 'Home Address' (430), 'State' (440), and 'Zip Code' (450). There is a button labeled 'Click Here To Start' (460) with a right-pointing arrow. Below the button is a line of text: 'By clicking above you agree to our terms of use and privacy policy'. A reference numeral 400 is located at the top left of the form area with a curved arrow pointing to the form's border.

FIG. 4

500

Congratulations! We found your match Steps: 1 2 3 4

Based on your profile you are pre-approved for 4 credit cards

Match 1 of 4:

You're Pre-Approved

Platinum Card

Interest Rate	Intro Rate	Grace Period	Credit Limit	Annual Fee
9.24%	0%	20 Days	No Limit	\$0

Our Overview
 0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months.
 NO Balance Transfer fee, NO annual fee. Plus, access to Identify Theft Solutions, \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases and Secure, free online account management.

Click Here To Get Your Card Now

No thanks, pass this offer and show me the next credit card I'm pre-approved for.

CARD IMAGE

Credit line up to \$100,000 with Platinum Card

- Introductory 0% Annual Percentage Rate (APR)** for cash advance checks and balance transfers through your first twelve billing cycles*
- Zero Liability for unauthorized card use****
- Earn reward points** to redeem airline and car rental benefits as well as gift certificate/cards redeemable at top retailer and restaurants.

536

534

530

532

510

520

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FIG. 5

600

636

Congratulations! We found your match

Based on your profile you are pre-approved for 4 credit cards

Steps: 1 2 3 4

Match 2 of 4:

You're Pre-Approved!

Gold Card

Interest Rate	Intro Rate	Grace Period	Credit Limit	Annual Fee
10.15%	0%	20 Days	\$5,000	\$10

630

632

610

620

Our Overview

- 0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months.
- NO Balance Transfer fee, \$10 annual fee. Plus, access to Identity Theft Solutions, \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases and Secure, free online account management.

634

- Credit line up to \$100,000 with Gold Card
- Introductory 0% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for cash advance checks and balance transfers through your first twelve billing cycles*
- Zero Liability for unauthorized card use**
- Earn reward points to redeem airline and car rental benefits as well as gift certificate/cards redeemable at top retailer and restaurants.

▶ Click Here To Get Your Card Now

No thanks, pass this offer and show me the next credit card I'm pre-approved for.

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FIG. 6

700

Thank you for your order!!
You have been pre-approved for the following credit card,
which may be used to pay for your order!

You're Pre-Approved!

Platinum Card

Interest Rate	Intro Rate	Grace Period	Credit Limit	Annual Fee
9.24%	0%	20 Days	No Limit	\$0

Our Overview
 0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months.
 NO Balance Transfer fee, NO annual fee. Plus, access
 to Identity Theft Solutions, \$0 Liability on unauthorized
 purchases and Secure, free online account

[Click Here To Get Your Card Now](#)

- ▶ Show me additional pre-approved offers
- ▶ No thanks, I'll pay with another payment source

•Credit line up to \$100,000 with Platinum Card

•Introductory 0% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) for cash advance checks and balance transfers, through your first twelve billing cycles*

•Zero Liability for unauthorized card use**

•Earn reward points to redeem airline and car rental benefits as well as gift certificate/cards redeemable at top retailer and restaurants.

710

720

730

FIG. 7

800

810

820

830

812

814

816

Congratulations! We found your match

You're Pre-Approved!

Based on your profile you are pre-approved for these 3 credit cards.

Card Name	Platinum Card	Drivers Card	Student Card
	Click to Apply	Click to Apply	Click to Apply
Interest Rate	9.24%	10.24%	9.24%
Intro Rate	0%	0%	0%
Grace Period	20 Days	20 Days	20 Days
Credit Limit	No Limit	No Limit	No Limit
Annual Fee	None	None	None
Our Overview	0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months. NO Balance Transfer fee. NO annual fee. Plus, access to Identify Theft Solutions. \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases and Secure, free online account management.	0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months. NO Balance Transfer fee. NO annual fee. Plus, access to Identify Theft Solutions. \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases and Secure, free online account management.	0% on Balance Transfers & Purchases For 12 months. NO Balance Transfer fee. NO annual fee. Plus, access to Identify Theft Solutions. \$0 Liability on unauthorized purchases and Secure, free online account management.

No thanks, pass on these offers and show me other credit cards I might be interested in.

Home | Rewards Calculator | Credit Report Overview | Mortgage Overview | FAQs | About Us | Contact Us

FIG. 8

SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF RANKING A PLURALITY OF CREDIT CARD OFFERS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/451,137, titled “SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF RANKING A PLURALITY OF CREDIT CARD OFFERS,” filed Aug. 4, 2014, which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/848,138, titled “SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF RANKING A PLURALITY OF CREDIT CARD OFFERS,” filed Aug. 30, 2007, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/824,252, filed Aug. 31, 2006. All of the above-referenced items are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entireties for all purposes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] This invention relates to systems and methods of ranking prescreened credit offers.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Lending institutions provide credit accounts such as mortgages, automobile loans, credit card accounts, and the like, to consumers. Prior to providing an account to a potential borrower, however, many of these institutions review credit related data, demographic data, and/or other data related to the potential borrower in order to determine whether the borrower should be issued the applied-for credit account. In the case of credit cards, for example, credit card issuers typically obtain a credit report for the potential borrower in order to aid in determining whether the borrower should be offered a credit card and, if so, what rates and terms should be offered to the borrower. Thus, for any particular credit card, a first group of borrowers will be accepted for the credit card and a second group of borrowers will not be accepted for the credit card, where the size of the accepted group typically increases as the desirability of the credit card decreases.

[0006] Certain lenders, such as credit card issuers, for example, offer a “finder’s fee,” also referred to herein as a “bounty,” to an entity that refers a potential borrower to apply for a particular credit card, should the borrower eventually be issued the particular credit card. Thus, some businesses present invitations to apply for credit cards to their customers, hoping that some customers will click on the invitation to apply, fill out an application for the credit card, and eventually be issued a credit card.

SUMMARY

[0007] In one embodiment, a computerized system for presenting prescreened credit card offers to a borrower comprises a prescreen module configured to receive an indication of one or more prescreened credit card offers for a borrower, wherein the borrower has at least about a 90% likelihood of being granted a credit card associated with each of the prescreened credit card offers after completing a corresponding full credit card application, a ranking module configured to assign a unique rank to at least some of the prescreened credit card offers, wherein determination of respective ranks for the prescreened credit card offers is based on at least a bounty and a click-thru-rate associated with respective prescreened credit card offers, and a presentation module configured to

generate a data structure comprising information regarding at least a highest ranked credit card offer.

[0008] In one embodiment, a method of determining prescreened credit card offers comprises receiving information regarding a borrower from a referring website, determining two or more prescreened credit card offers associated with the borrower, determining ranking criteria associated with the referring website, the ranking criteria comprising an indication of attributes associated with one or more of the borrower and respective prescreened credit card offers, calculating an expected value of the two or more prescreened credit card offers based at least on the attributes indicated in the ranking criteria, and transmitting a data file to the referring website, the data file comprising an identifier of one of the prescreened credit card offers having an expected value higher than the expected values of the other prescreened credit card offers.

[0009] In one embodiment, a method of ranking a plurality of credit card offers that have been prescreened for presentation to a potential borrower comprises receiving information regarding each of a plurality of credit card offers, determining an expected value of each of the prescreened credit card offers, wherein the expected value for a particular credit card offer is based on at least (1) a money amount payable to a referrer if the potential borrower is issued a particular credit card associated with the particular credit card offer; (2) an expected ratio of potential borrowers that will apply for the particular credit card offer in response to being presented with the particular credit card offer, and (3) an expected ratio of potential borrowers that will be issued the particular credit card associated with the particular credit card offer, and ranking the plurality of credit card offers based on the expected values for the respective credit card offers.

[0010] In one embodiment, a method of determining an expected value for each of a plurality of credit card offers comprises receiving an indication of a plurality of prescreened credit card offers associated with an individual, receiving an indication of a plurality of attributes associated with each of the prescreened credit card offers, and calculating an expected value for each of the prescreened credit card offers using at least two of the plurality of attributes for each respective prescreened credit card offer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of one embodiment of a computing device configured to rank prescreened credit card offers.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating one embodiment of a process that may be performed by the computing device of FIG. 1 in order to receive prescreened offers and rank those prescreened offers.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a flowchart illustrating one embodiment of a process of ranking prescreened offers.

[0014] FIG. 4 is one embodiment of a user interface that allows a potential borrower to enter information for submission to a prescreen provider.

[0015] FIG. 5 is one embodiment of a user interface presenting a highest ranked prescreened credit card offer to a particular borrower.

[0016] FIG. 6 is one embodiment of a user interface presenting a second highest ranked prescreened credit card offer to the particular borrower.

[0017] FIG. 7 is one embodiment of a user interface that may be presented to a visitor of a third party website, such as a website that offers goods and/or services to visitors, pro-

viding the visitor with an opportunity to apply for a highest ranked prescreened credit card offer.

[0018] FIG. 8 is one embodiment of a user interface for presenting multiple ranked, prescreened credit card offers to a borrower, along with respective links associated with the offers that may be selected in order to apply for one or more of the prescreened credit cards.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF CERTAIN EMBODIMENTS

[0019] Embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying Figures, wherein like numerals refer to like elements throughout. The terminology used in the description presented herein is not intended to be interpreted in any limited or restrictive manner, simply because it is being utilized in conjunction with a detailed description of certain specific embodiments of the invention. Furthermore, embodiments of the invention may include several novel features, no single one of which is solely responsible for its desirable attributes or which is essential to practicing the inventions described herein.

[0020] The systems and methods described herein perform a prescreening process on a potential borrower to determine which available credit cards the borrower will likely be issued after completing a full application with the issuer. The term “potential borrower,” or simply “borrower,” includes one or more of a single individual, a group of people, such as a couple or a family, or a business. The term “prescreened credit card offers,” “prescreened offers,” or “matching offers,” refers to zero or more credit card offers for which a potential borrower will likely be approved by the issuer, where the prescreening process may be based on credit data associated with the borrower, as well as approval rules for a particular credit card and/or credit card issuer, and any other related characteristics. In one embodiment, a particular credit card offer is included in prescreened credit card offers for a particular borrower if the likelihood that the borrower will be granted the particular credit card offer, after completion of a full application, is greater than a predetermined threshold, such as 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, or 95%, for example.

[0021] In one embodiment, the prescreened offers are ranked, such as by assigning a 1–N ranking to each of N prescreened offers for a particular borrower, where N is the total number of prescreened offers for a particular borrower. In one embodiment, the rankings are generally based upon a bounty paid to the referrer. In another embodiment, the rankings are based on an expected value of each prescreened offer, which generally represents an expected monetary value to one or more referrers involved in providing the prescreened offer to the borrower. In one embodiment, the expected value of a credit card offer is based on a bounty associated with the offer, a click-through-rate for the offer, and/or a conversion rate for the offer. In another embodiment, the expected value for a credit card offer may be based on fewer or more attributes. Exemplary systems and methods for determining expected values and corresponding rankings for prescreened credit card offers are described below.

[0022] FIG. 1 is block diagram of a prescreened credit card offer ranking device 100, or simply a “ranking device 100,” configured to rank prescreened credit card offers. The exemplary ranking device 100 is in communication with a network 160 and various devices and data sources are also in communication with the network 160. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, a prescreen device 162 and a borrower device 164, such as a

computing device executing a web browser, and a third party data source 166 are each in communication with the network 160. The ranking device 100 may be used to implement certain systems and methods described herein. For example, in one embodiment the ranking device 100 may be configured to prescreen potential borrowers in order to receive a list of prescreened credit card offers and rank the prescreened offers for presentation to the borrower. In certain embodiments, the ranking device 100 also performs portions of the prescreening process that results in a list of unranked prescreened offers, prior to ranking the prescreened offers. In other embodiments, the ranking device 100 receives prescreened offers from a networked device. The functionality provided for in the components and modules of the ranking device 100 may be combined into fewer components and modules or further separated into additional components and modules.

[0023] In general, the word module, as used herein, refers to logic embodied in hardware or firmware, or to a collection of software instructions, possibly having entry and exit points, written in a programming language, such as, for example, C or C++. A software module may be compiled and linked into an executable program, installed in a dynamic link library, or may be written in an interpreted programming language such as, for example, BASIC, Perl, or Python. It will be appreciated that software modules may be callable from other modules or from themselves, and/or may be invoked in response to detected events or interrupts. Software instructions may be embedded in firmware, such as an EPROM. It will be further appreciated that hardware modules may be comprised of connected logic units, such as gates and flip-flops, and/or may be comprised of programmable units, such as programmable gate arrays or processors. The modules described herein are preferably implemented as software modules, but may be represented in hardware or firmware. Generally, the modules described herein refer to logical modules that may be combined with other modules or divided into sub-modules despite their physical organization or storage.

[0024] In one embodiment, the ranking device 100 includes, for example, a server or a personal computer that is IBM, Macintosh, or Linux/Unix compatible. In another embodiment, the ranking device 100 comprises a laptop computer, cellphone, personal digital assistant, kiosk, or audio player, for example. In one embodiment, the exemplary ranking device 100 includes a central processing unit (“CPU”) 105, which may include a conventional microprocessor. The ranking device 100 further includes a memory 130, such as random access memory (“RAM”) for temporary storage of information and a read only memory (“ROM”) for permanent storage of information, and a mass storage device 120, such as a hard drive, diskette, or optical media storage device. Typically, the modules of the ranking device 100 are connected to the computer using a standards based bus system. In different embodiments, the standards based bus system could be Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI), Microchannel, SCSI, Industrial Standard Architecture (ISA) and Extended ISA (EISA) architectures, for example.

[0025] The ranking device 100 is generally controlled and coordinated by operating system software, such as the Windows 95, 98, NT, 2000, XP, Linux, SunOS, Solaris, PaImOS, BlackBerry OS, or other compatible operating systems. In Macintosh systems, the operating system may be any available operating system, such as MAC OS X. In other embodiments, the ranking device 100 may be controlled by a proprietary operating system. Conventional operating systems

control and schedule computer processes for execution, perform memory management, provide file system, networking, and I/O services, and provide a user interface, such as a graphical user interface (“GUI”), among other things.

[0026] The exemplary ranking device **100** includes one or more commonly available input/output (I/O) devices and interfaces **110**, such as a keyboard, mouse, touchpad, and printer. In one embodiment, the I/O devices and interfaces **110** include one or more display device, such as a monitor, that allows the visual presentation of data to a user. More particularly, a display device provides for the presentation of GUIs, application software data, and multimedia presentations, for example. The ranking device **100** may also include one or more multimedia devices **140**, such as speakers, video cards, graphics accelerators, and microphones, for example.

[0027] In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the I/O devices and interfaces **110** provide a communication interface to various external devices. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the ranking device **100** is in communication with a network **160**, such as any combination of one or more LANs, WANs, or the Internet, for example, via a wired, wireless, or combination of wired and wireless, via the communication link **115**. The network **160** communicates with various computing devices and/or other electronic devices via wired or wireless communication links. In the exemplary embodiment of FIG. 1, the network **160** is in communication with the prescreen device **162**, which may comprise a computing device and/or a prescreen data store operated by a credit bureau, bank, or other entity. For example, in one embodiment the prescreen device **162** comprises a prescreen data store comprising credit related data for a plurality of individuals. In one embodiment, the prescreen device **162** also comprises a computing device that determines one or more prescreened offers for borrowers and provides the prescreened offers directly to the borrower or to the ranking device **100**, for example.

[0028] The borrower **164**, also in communication with the network, may send information to the ranking device **100** via the network **160** via a website that interfaces with the ranking device **100**. Depending on the embodiment, information regarding a borrower may be provided to the ranking device **100** from a website that is controlled by the operator of the ranking device **100** (referred to generally as the “ranking provider”) or from a third party website, such as a commercial website that sells goods and/or services to visitors. The third party data source **166** may comprise any number of data sources, including web sites and customer databases of third party websites, storing information regarding potential borrowers. As described in further detail below, the ranking device **100** receives information regarding a potential borrower directly from the borrower **164** via a website controlled by the ranking provider, from the third party data source **166**, and/or from the prescreen device **162**. Depending on the embodiment, the ranking device **100** either initiates a prescreen process, performs a prescreen process, or simply receives prescreened offers for a borrower from the prescreen device **162**, for example, prior to ranking the prescreened offers.

[0029] In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the ranking device **100** also includes three application modules that may be executed by the CPU **105**. More particularly, the application modules include a prescreen module **130**, a ranking module **150**, and a presentation module **170**, which are discussed in further detail below. Each of these application modules may include, by way of example, components, such as software compo-

nents, object-oriented software components, class components and task components, processes, functions, attributes, procedures, subroutines, segments of program code, drivers, firmware, microcode, circuitry, data, databases, data structures, tables, arrays, and variables.

[0030] FIG. 2 is a flowchart illustrating an exemplary process that may be performed by the ranking device **100** (FIG. 1) or other suitable computing device in order to rank prescreened offers for borrowers. Depending on the embodiment, certain of the blocks described below may be removed, others may be added, and the sequence of the blocks may be altered. For example, in one embodiment the process may begin with block **230** where the ranking device **100** receives prescreened offers for a borrower from a prescreen device **162** without being previously involved in the prescreening process.

[0031] Beginning in block **210**, the prescreen module **130** (FIG. 1) of the ranking device **100** receives, or otherwise accesses, information regarding a potential borrower. For example, the prescreen module **130** may receive information, such as a name and address of the borrower **164**, that has been entered into a website that is dedicated to matching consumers to prescreened credit card offers. In one embodiment, the borrower **164** operates a computing device comprising a browser that is configured to render a web interface provided by the ranking entity or an affiliate of the ranking entity, such as an entity that performs the prescreening of borrowers. In this embodiment, the borrower may enter data into the user interface specifically for the purpose of being presented with one or more prescreened offers. In another embodiment, the borrower information may be received from another borrower data source **162**, such as a commercial website that wants to provide customers with one or more prescreened credit card offers. For example, a third party website that sells products and/or services to customers may send borrower data to the ranking device **100** in order to receive prescreened offers that may be presented to their customers. As noted above, in one embodiment the referrer of a borrower to apply for a credit card may receive a bounty upon issuance of an applied-for credit card to the customer. Thus, if the borrower information is received from the borrower device **164** via a website operated by the ranking entity, the bounty may be paid to the ranking entity. Likewise, if borrower information is provided by a third party, such as from the third party data source **166**, a portion or all of the bounty may be paid to the third party. In other embodiments, the bounty could be shared between one or more third parties, the ranking entity, the prescreen entity, and/or others involved in the prescreening and ranking processes. In some embodiments, certain or all of the prescreened offers are not associated with a bounty.

[0032] Moving to block **220**, the prescreen module **130** (FIG. 1) then performs the prescreen process, requests that a third party, such as the prescreen device **162**, performs the prescreen process, or simply receives prescreened credit card offers from the prescreen device **162**, for example. In one embodiment, the prescreen process accesses credit related data regarding the borrower and/or lender criteria associated with each of a plurality of credit card offers in order to determine one or more credit card offers that the borrower would likely be eligible for. Co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/537,330, titled “Online Credit Card Prescreen Systems And Methods,” filed on Sep. 29, 2006, which is hereby incorporated by references in its entirety, describes

various methods of determining prescreened credit card offers for a potential borrower.

[0033] Continuing to block 230, the prescreened offers are received by the prescreen module 130, such as from the prescreen device 162. Alternatively, in an embodiment where the prescreen module 130 performs the prescreen process, in block 230 the prescreen module 130 completes the prescreen process and makes the prescreened offers available to other modules of the ranking device 100.

[0034] Moving to block 240, information regarding the prescreened offers is accessed by the ranking module 150. As described in further detail below with reference to FIG. 3, for example, the ranking module 150 ranks the prescreened offers according to one or more attributes. The attributes may be borrower attributes, attributes associated with particular prescreened offers, credit card issuer attributes, and/or other relevant attributes. In one embodiment, the attributes used by the ranking module 150, and the relative weightings assigned to each of the used attributes, are determined by the ranking entity and/or by a third party referrer that presents the ranked prescreened offers to the borrower.

[0035] Next, in block 250, the ranked prescreened offers are accessed by the presentation module 170 (FIG. 1), which is configured to make the prescreened offers available to the borrower, such as via a website operated by the prescreen provider, the ranking provider, and/or a third party. In one embodiment, for example, the presentation module 170 generates a presentation interface, such as one or more HTML pages, for example, that includes indications of one or more of the ranked credit card offers. Depending on the embodiment, the presentation interface may be rendered in a web browser, a portable document file viewer, or any other suitable file viewer. In one embodiment, the presentation interface comprises an embedded viewer so that the prescreened offers may be viewed without the need for a host viewing application on the borrower's computing device. Additionally, the presentation interface may comprise software code configured for rendering in a portable device browser, such as a cell phone or PDA browser, or other application on a portable device.

[0036] In one embodiment, the presentation interface comprises information regarding only the highest ranked prescreened offer. In other embodiments, the presentation interface comprises information regarding multiple, or all, of the prescreened offers and an indication of the respective offer rankings. Depending on the embodiment, the presentation interface may comprise software code that depicts one or more of the ranked credit card offers on individual pages in sequence, in a vertical list on a single page, and/or in a flipbook type flash-based viewer, for example. In other embodiments, the presentation interface comprises any other suitable software code for displaying the ranked credit card offers to the borrower or raw data that is usable for generating a user interface for presentation to the borrower. FIG. 2 illustrates only one embodiment of a method that may be used to rank prescreened offers.

[0037] FIG. 3 is a flowchart illustrating one embodiment of a process of ranking prescreened offers, such as may be performed in block 240 of FIG. 2. In an advantageous embodiment, multiple credit card offers that are returned from (or received by) the prescreen module 130, possibly from multiple credit card issuers, are presented to the borrower. In this embodiment, the ranking module 150 may rank the prescreened offers according to one or more attributes of

the particular prescreened offers, credit card issuer criteria, and/or borrower characteristics, for example.

[0038] Beginning in block 310, the ranking module 150 determines the attributes to be considered in the ranking process. Additionally, the ranking module 150 may determine weightings that should be assigned to attributes, if any. In one embodiment, attribute weightings are determined based on ranking criteria from the referring entity, such as a third party transmitting borrower data from the third party data source 166, ranking criteria from the prescreen device 162, and/or ranking criteria established by the ranking entity. For example, a first third party website may be associated with a first set of ranking criteria, where the ranking criteria indicate attributes, and possibly weightings for certain of the attributes, that should be applied to prescreened offers in determining prescreened offer rankings for visitors of the first third party website. Likewise, a second third party website may have a partially or completely different set of ranking criteria (where the ranking criteria comprises one or more attributes, and possibly different weightings for certain attributes), that should be applied to prescreened offers in determining prescreened offers for visitors of the second third party website. In one embodiment, if no ranking criteria are provided by the entity requesting the prescreened offer rankings, no ranking of the prescreened offers is performed or, alternatively, a default set of ranking criteria may be used to rank the prescreened offers.

[0039] For example, borrower data received from a third party data source 162 may indicate that bounty is the only attribute to be considered in ranking prescreened offers. Thus, if three prescreened offers are returned from the prescreen module 130 for a particular borrower, and each offer has a different bounty, the offer with the largest bounty will be ranked highest and, thus, displayed to the borrower first.

[0040] Other attributes that may be considered in the prescreen process may include, for example, historical click-through-rate for an offer, historical conversion rate for an offer, geographic location of the borrower, special interests of the borrower, modeled overall click propensity for the borrower, the time of day and/or day of week that the prescreening is requested, and promised or desired display rates for an offer. Each of these terms is defined below:

[0041] "Click-through-rate" or "CTR" means the ratio of an expected number of times a particular credit card offer will be pursued by borrowers to a number of times the credit card offer will be displayed to borrowers. Thus, if a credit card offer is expected to be pursued by borrowers 30 times out of each 60 times the offer is presented, the CTR for that offer is 50%. The CTR may be determined from historical rates of selection for presented credit card offers.

[0042] "Conversion Rate" or "CR" means the expected percentage of borrowers that will be accepted for a particular credit card upon application for the credit card. In one embodiment, each credit card offer has an associated conversion rate. The CR may be determined from historical rates of borrowers that are accepted for respective credit card offers.

[0043] "Geographic location of the borrower" may comprise one or multiple levels of geographic identifiers associated with a borrower. For example, the geographic location of the borrower may indicate the residential location of the borrower and/or a business location of the borrower. The geographic location of the borrower may further indicate a portion of a municipality, a municipality, a county, a region, a state, or a country in which the borrower resides.

[0044] “Click Propensity” means the particular borrower’s propensity to select links that are presented to the borrower. In one embodiment, click propensity may be limited to certain types of links, such as finance related links. In one embodiment, click propensity may be determined based on historical information regarding the borrower’s browsing habits and/or demographic analysis of the borrower. In one embodiment, each borrower is associated with a unique click propensity, while in other embodiments groups of borrowers, such as borrowers in a common geographic region or using a particular ISP, may have a common click propensity.

[0045] “Time of day and/or day of week that the prescreening is requested” means the time of day and/or day of week that a prescreening request is received by a prescreen provider, a ranking provider, or by a third party website.

[0046] “Promised or desired display rates for the offer” may include periodic display quotas for a particular credit card offer, such as may be agreed upon by a prescreen provider and the credit card issuer, for example.

[0047] “Special interests” of the borrower include any indications of propensities and/or interests of the borrower. Special interests may be determined from information received from the borrower, from a third party through which the prescreened offers are being presented to the borrower, and/or from a third party data source. A third party data source may comprise a data source that may charge a fee for providing data regarding borrowers, such as interests, purchase habits, and/or life-stages of the borrower, for example. The special interest data may indicate, for example, whether the borrower is interested in outdoor activities, travel, investing, automobiles, gardening, collecting, sports, shopping, mail-order shopping, and/or any number of additional items. In one embodiment, special interests of the borrower are provided by Experian’s Insource data source.

[0048] In one embodiment, the ranking process may also comprise determining an expected value of certain prescreened offers using one or more of the above attributes and then performing a long term projection that considers offer display limits and schedules imposed by issuers, for example, as well as expected traffic patterns, in order to rank the credit card offers.

[0049] Thus, prescreened offers may be ranked using ranking criteria comprising any combination of the above-listed characteristics, and with various weightings assigned to the attributes. For example, in one embodiment the ranking module 150 may use ranking criteria that ranks prescreened offers based on each of the above-cited attributes that are weighted in the order listed above, such that the bounty is the most important (highly weighted) attribute, click-through-rate is the second most important attribute, and the promised or desired display rates for the offer is the least important (lowest weighted) attribute. In other embodiments, any combination of one or more of the above discussed attributes may be included in ranking criteria.

[0050] Moving to block 320, an expected value to the referrer of showing each prescreened offer to the borrower is determined based upon the determined weighted attributes. Finally, in block 330, the prescreened offers assigned ranks based on their respective expected values. In one embodiment, block 330 is bypassed and the expected values for credit card offers represent the ranking.

[0051] Described below are exemplary methods of ranking prescreened offers, such as may be performed in blocks 320, 330 of FIG. 3. The examples below are provided as examples

of how ranking may be performed and are not intended to limit the scope of the systems and methods described herein. Accordingly, it will be appreciated that other methods of ranking prescreened offers using the above-listed attributes, in addition to any other available attributes, in various other combinations and with different weightings than discussed herein, are expressly contemplated

[0052] In one embodiment, rankings may be based on bounty alone. For example, the table below illustrates four prescreened offers that are ranked according to bounty.

TABLE 1

Offer Number	Bounty(\$)	Rank
1	0.40	3
2	0.30	4
3	1.20	1
4	0.75	2

Thus, if the ranking is based only on bounty, the referrer would likely display Offer 3 first, as it has the highest bounty, Offer 4 next, followed by Offer 1, and then Offer 2. In another embodiment, the referrer may display only a single credit card offer to the borrower or a subset of the offers to the borrower. In this embodiment, the borrower would likely display the highest ranked offer.

[0053] In another embodiment, the ranking criteria may include one or more of a combination of bounty, click-through-rate, and conversion rate for each prescreened offer. Considering the same four offers listed in Table 1, when the click-through-rate and conversion rate are also considered, the rankings could change significantly. In one embodiment, the bounty is simply multiplied by the click-through-rate and conversion rate in order to determine an expected value for each offer, where the highest expected value would be ranked highest. The table below illustrates the four exemplary prescreened offers illustrated in Table 1, but with rankings that are based on the click-through-rate and conversion rate, as well as the bounty, for each offer.

TABLE 2

Offer Number	Bounty	Click-through-rate (percent)	Conversion rate (percent)	Expected Value (Bounty * CTR * CR)	Rank [Rank in Table 1]
1	0.40	4	0.3	0.48	4[3]
2	0.30	2.5	1.1	0.82	2[4]
3	1.20	1	0.6	0.72	3[1]
4	0.75	3	1.4	3.15	1[2]

The last column of the above table illustrates both the ranking for each offer based on a calculated expected value, and also indicates the ranking for each prescreened offer based only on bounty [in brackets]. As shown, each of the offer rankings has changed. For example, the second highest ranked prescreened offer based only on bounty is the highest ranked prescreened offer based on the expected value, while the highest ranked prescreened offer based only on bounty is now the third highest ranked prescreened offer.

[0054] In another embodiment, the attributes used in determining an expected value of prescreened offers may be weighted differently, such that certain heavily weighted factors may have more affect on the expected value than other

lower weighted attributes. For example, with regard to Table 2, if the bounty and the conversion rate are the most important factors, while the click-through-rate is not as important in determining an expected value, the bounty and conversion rates may each be weighted higher by multiplying their values by 2, 3, 4, 5 or some other multiplier, while not multiplying the click-through-rate by a multiplier, or multiplying the click-through-rate by a fractional multiplier, such as 0.9, 0.8, 0.7, 0.5, or lower. Table 3 below illustrates the four exemplary prescreened offers illustrated above, but with an exemplary weighting of 2 assigned to the bounty and conversion rate and no weighting assigned to the click-through rate.

TABLE 3

Offer Number	Bounty (\$)	Weighted Bounty (*2)	Click-through-rate (percent)	Conversion rate (percent)	Weighted Conversion rate (*2)	Expected Value (weighted Bounty * CTR * weighted CR)	Weighted Rank [Rank in Table 1, Table 2]
1	0.40	0.80	4	0.3	0.6	1.92	4 [4, 3]
2	0.30	0.60	2.5	1.1	2.2	3.3	3 [2, 4]
3	1.20	2.40	1	0.6	1.2	2.88	2 [3, 1]
4	0.75	1.50	3	1.4	2.8	12.6	1 [1, 2]

In the example of Table 3, the ranking for offers 2 and 3 have alternated when the exemplary weightings for the bounty and the conversion rate were added.

[0055] In one embodiment, special interests of the borrower are used in calculating an expected value for certain or all prescreened offers. For example, an expected value formula may include a special interest value, where certain credit cards are associated with various special interests that increase the special interest value for borrowers that are determined to have corresponding special interests. For example, a first credit card may be sports related, while a second credit card may have a rewards program offering movie tickets to cardholders. Thus, for a borrower with special interests in one or more sports, the special interest value for the first card may be increased, such as to 2 or 3, while the special interest value for the same borrower may be 1 or less for the second card. In one embodiment, the special interest values vary based on the borrowers strength in a particular interest segment. For example, a strong NASCAR fan might have a special interest value of 3 for a NASCAR-related credit card, while a weak traveler might only have a special interest value of 1.1 for a travel-related credit card. In other embodiments, the special interest values may be lower or higher than the exemplary values described above. The special interests of the borrower may be used in other manners in ranking prescreened offers.

[0056] In one embodiment, expected values for prescreened offers include a factor indicating expected future rankings for a respective card. Alternatively, a calculated expected value for a card may be adjusted based on a determined expected future ranking for the card. For example, the expected future ranking of one or more credit card offers X hours (where X is any number, such as 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2, 4, 8, 12, or 24, for example) after determining the initial rankings may impact the initial rankings. Thus, rankings for each of a plurality of prescreened offers may first be generated and then modified based on expected future rankings for respective offers. For example, prescreened offer rankings for a first user determined at a first time, e.g., in the morning, may include multiple prescreened offers ranked according to the prescreened offers respective expected values in the order: offer

A, E, and D. In this embodiment, the expected value for offer A may be only slightly larger than offer E (or may be significantly larger than offer E). In one embodiment, after determining the ranking order for the first user, the ranking module 150 analyzes a historical traffic pattern for one or more of offers A, E, and D, and determines that typically later in the day (e.g., 4-8 hours after the initial prescreening is performed) a large quantity of borrowers apply for the card associated with offer A, while very few apply for the card associated with offer E. Thus, in certain embodiments offer E may be promoted to the first choice for the first user because offer E is even less likely to be applied-for later in the day. In

one embodiment, an expected value formula for a group of prescreened offers may include an expected future ranking value, where the expected future ranking value for the prescreened offers may be determined using precalculated trending data or using realtime updated trending data. In some embodiments, the expected values for credit card offers may be affected by offer presentation limits or quotas associated with certain prescreened offers.

[0057] FIG. 4 is one embodiment of a user interface 400 that allows a potential borrower to enter information for submission to a ranking provider and/or to a prescreen provider. In one embodiment, the user interface 400 is controlled by the prescreen provider such that data submitted in the user interface 400 is transmitted to the ranking device 100 (FIG. 1). In other embodiments, the user interface 400, or similar interface, may be presented to a borrower by the prescreen provider or by a third party website. For example, the third party data source 166 may comprise software code, such as HTML, CSS, XML, JavaScript, etc., configured to render a user interface, such as the user interface 400, in the browser of the borrower 164.

[0058] In the embodiment of FIG. 4, the user interface 400 comprises a first name and last name field 410, 420, a home address field for 30, a state field 440, and a zip code field 450, each comprising text entry fields in the exemplary user interface 400. Depending on the embodiment, one or more of the fields 410, 420, 430, 440, 450 may be replaced by other data controls, such as drop-down lists, radio buttons, or auto-fill text boxes, for example. In other embodiments, the user interface 400 comprises only a subset of the text entry fields illustrated in FIG. 4. For example, in one embodiment the user interface 400 may include only a last name field 420 and a ZIP code field 450. The user interface 400 further comprises a start button 460 that is selected in order to transmit entered data to the prescreen provider, the ranking provider, and and/or the hosting third party website. In one embodiment, when the borrower selects the start button 460, the borrower data is transmitted to the ranking device 100 and a prescreening and ranking procedure, such as the method of FIGS. 2 and/or 3, is performed using the borrower data.

[0059] FIG. 5 is one embodiment a user interface 500 presenting a credit card offer that a first borrower was matched to, along with a link 510 that may be selected in order to apply for the illustrated credit card. Exemplary user interface 500 also includes a link 520 that may be selected in order to display one or more additional credit cards to which the borrower has been matched. In the embodiment of FIG. 5, the user interface 500 comprises term information 530, overview information 532, summary information 534, and a card image 536 for the prescreened credit card offer. In one embodiment, the user interface 500 is presented to the borrower after the borrower completes the text entry fields of a user interface, such as user interface 400, and submits the borrower information, such as by clicking on the start button 460 of user interface 400. In other embodiments, a third party website may provide borrower information to the prescreen provider and, in response, the prescreen provider may transmit a ranked listing of prescreened credit card offers to the third party website, which may be presented to the borrower via a user interface such as user interface 500.

[0060] In the embodiment of FIG. 5, the user interface 500 indicates that the borrower has been prescreened for 4 credit cards, meaning that the prescreening process has indicated that there are 4 credit cards that the particular borrower would likely be granted after completion of a full application with the respective issuers. While the prescreen module 130 indicates that there are 4 prescreened credit card offers for the particular borrower, the user interface 500 displays information regarding only a single highest ranked prescreened credit card offer. In one embodiment, if the borrower does not care to apply for the displayed highest ranked prescreened offer, the borrower may select the link 520 and be presented with one or more of a second through fourth ranked prescreened offers. As noted above, the prescreened offers may be ranked according to various combinations of criteria associated with the borrower, such as the borrowers credit information, Web browsing characteristics, geographic location, as well as criteria established by the respective credit card issuers, among other attributes.

[0061] FIG. 6 is one embodiment of a user interface 600 presenting a second highest ranked credit card offer to the borrower in response to selecting the link 520 of FIG. 5, for example. As noted above with respect to FIG. 5, if the borrower is not interested in applying for the highest ranked credit card offer presented in the user interface 500, the borrower may select to view another prescreened credit card offer, such as is presented in the user interface 600. The user interface 600 comprises a link 610 that may be selected in order to apply for the illustrated (second highest ranked) credit card and a link 620 that may be selected in order to display one or more additional lower ranked (e.g., third highest ranked) prescreened credit card offers to which the borrower. Similar to the user interface 500, the user interface 600 also comprises term information 630, overview information 632, summary information 634, and a card image 636 for the illustrated prescreened credit card offer. Depending on the embodiment, the borrower is not aware of any special ordering of the credit card offers that are presented.

[0062] FIG. 7 is one embodiment of a user interface 700 that may be presented to a visitor of a third party website, such as a website that offers goods and/or services to visitors. For example, a user interface similar to that of FIG. 7 may be presented to a visitor of a shopping website after the visitor has selected one or more products for purchase and has

selected a “checkout” or “complete transaction” link on the shopping website. The exemplary user-interface 700 comprises information 710 regarding a highest ranked prescreened credit card offer for the particular visitor, as determined by the ranking device 100, for example, via one or more network connections, such as the network 160. In one embodiment, the third party website requests visitor information that is used in locating prescreened credit card offers for the visitor prior to presenting the user interface 700. In one embodiment, the third party website comprises a customer database that contains visitor information that was received during a previous visit to the third party website by the visitor. Thus, in one embodiment the visitor is not requested to supply personal information, but instead the third party website locates the visitor information and provides the information to the ranking device 100.

[0063] In the embodiment of FIG. 7, the borrower can apply for the prescreened credit card by selecting the start button 720 of user interface 700. In one embodiment, when the start button 720 is selected by the borrower, a user interface from the credit card issuer, or an agent of the credit card issuer, is provided to the borrower in order to complete the credit card application process. In one embodiment, after completing the application process with the credit card issuer, the borrower is able to use the new credit card for purchase of the goods and/or services from the third party website.

[0064] In the embodiment of FIG. 7, the visitor to the third party website may choose to view additional prescreened offers by selecting the link 730, in response to which the visitor is provided with additional prescreened credit card offers in an order that is determined by the rankings for the respective offers. For example, the visitor may be presented with a user interface including data regarding a second highest ranked credit card offer.

[0065] FIG. 8 is one embodiment of a user interface 800 for presenting multiple credit card offers that a borrower was matched to, along with respective links associated with the offers that may be selected in order to apply for a credit card. In the embodiment of FIG. 8, a top three highest-ranked prescreened offers are simultaneously displayed to the borrower in the user interface 800. In one embodiment, the top three ranked prescreened offers are the three credit card offers with the highest calculated expected values. As discussed above, the expected values for respective credit card offers may be calculated based on various combinations of attributes and possibly weightings for respective attributes. In certain embodiments, the host of the interface 800, such as the ranking provider or a third party website, may select a combination of attributes to be used in calculating expected values for available prescreened credit card offers.

[0066] In one embodiment, the prescreened offer 810 is associated with a highest ranked prescreened offer, the offer 820 is associate with a second highest ranked prescreened offer, and the offer 830 is associated with a third-highest prescreened offer. In another embodiment, the highest-ranked prescreened offer is displayed as offer 820, such that the highest ranked offer is in a more central portion of the user interface 800. In this embodiment, the second-highest rank prescreen offer may be presented as offer 810, and the third-ranked prescreen offer may be presented as offer 830. The user interface 800 also comprises start buttons 812, 814, and 816 that may be selected in order to initiate application for respective of the prescreened offers 810, 820, 830 by the borrower.

[0067] The foregoing description details certain embodiments of the invention. It will be appreciated, however, that no matter how detailed the foregoing appears in text, the invention can be practiced in many ways. The use of particular terminology when describing certain features or aspects of the invention should not be taken to imply that the terminology is being re-defined herein to be restricted to including any specific characteristics of the features or aspects of the invention with which that terminology is associated. The scope of the invention should therefore be construed in accordance with the appended claims and any equivalents thereof.

- 1. (canceled)
- 2. A method of determining an expected value for each of a plurality of credit card offers, the method comprising:
 - receiving an indication of a plurality of prescreened credit card offers associated with an individual;
 - receiving an indication of a plurality of attributes associated with each of the prescreened credit card offers; and
 - calculating an expected value for each of the prescreened credit card offers using at least two of the plurality of attributes for each respective prescreened credit card offer.
- 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the attributes comprise values representing one or more of: a bounty, a historical click-through-rate, a historical conversion rate, a special interest of the borrower, a geographic location of the borrower, a click propensity of the borrower, a time of day, a day of week, and a desired display rate for respective prescreened credit card offers.
- 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the at least two of the plurality of attributes comprise a bounty value associated with a bounty for respective prescreened credit card offers and a click-through-rate value associated with a click-through-rate for respective prescreened credit card offers, wherein the respective expected values for the prescreened credit card offers are calculated by multiplying respective bounty values and click-through-rate values.
- 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the at least two of the plurality of attributes further comprises a conversion value associated with a historical conversion rate for respective prescreened credit card offers, wherein the respective expected values for the prescreened credit card offers are calculated by multiplying respective bounty values, click-through-rate values, and conversion values.
- 6. The method of claim 2, wherein respective expected values for the prescreened credit card offers are calculated by multiplying respective bounty values and respective values

associated with one or more of the geographic location of the borrower, the time of day, the day of week, the click propensity, and the special interest.

- 7. The method of claim 2, wherein the at least two of the plurality of attributes comprise only a click-through-rate value associated with a click-through-rate for respective prescreened credit card offers and a conversion value associated with a historical conversion rate for respective prescreened credit card offers, wherein the respective expected values for the prescreened credit card offers are calculated by multiplying respective click-through-rate values and conversion values.
- 8. A method of ranking a plurality of credit card offers that have been prescreened for presentation to a potential borrower, the method comprising:
 - receiving information regarding each of a plurality of prescreened credit card offers;
 - determining an expected value of each of the prescreened credit card offers, wherein the expected value for a particular credit card offer is based on at least (1) a money amount payable to a referrer if the potential borrower is issued a particular credit card associated with the particular credit card offer, (2) an expected ratio of potential borrowers that will apply for the particular credit card offer in response to being presented with the particular credit card offer, and (3) an expected ratio of potential borrowers that will be issued the particular credit card associated with the particular credit card offer; and
 - ranking the plurality of credit card offers based on the expected values for the respective credit card offers.
- 9. The method of claim 8, wherein only the credit card offer with the highest ranking is displayed to the potential borrower.
- 10. The method of claim 8, wherein two or more of the credit card offers are displayed to the potential borrower in an order based on their respective rankings.
- 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the two or more credit card offers are displayed in a user interface provided by a commercial website.
- 12. The method of claim 8, wherein the expected value for a particular credit card offer comprises the product of values representing (1) the money amount payable to the referrer if the potential borrower is issued the particular credit card, (2) the expected ratio of potential borrowers that will apply for the particular credit card offer in response to being presented with the particular credit card offer, and (3) the expected ratio of potential borrowers that will be issued the particular credit card associated with the particular credit card offer.

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