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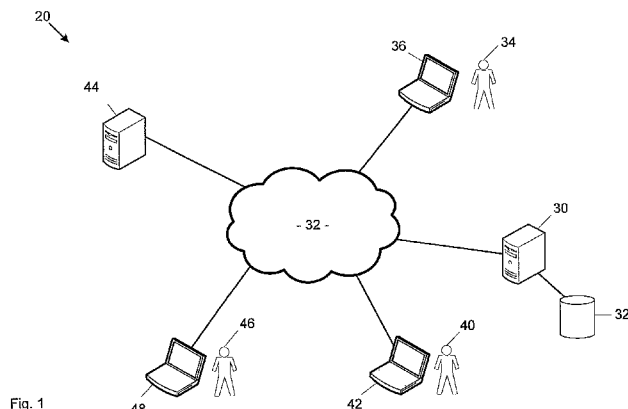
(54) Title: ON-LINE ADVERTISING



Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: The invention concerns on-line advertising. In an aspect the invention is a method for on-line advertising, the method comprising the steps of: (a) storing information of a first user in a data store, including information identifying an account associated with the first user; (b) on request from the first user, sending a pointer to the first user for distribution, wherein the pointer is to a website from which a product or service can be purchased, and the pointer uniquely identifies the first user; (c) on request from a second user based on the pointer received by them from the first user, providing for the sale of the product or service to the second user; (d) using the information stored in the data store, identifying the associated account of the first user who is uniquely identified by the pointer of the second user's request; and (e) determining the commission owed to the first user due to the sale of the product or service to the second user, and causing that commission to be paid to the associated account of the first user.

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**Title**

ON-LINE ADVERTISING

**Technical Field**

5    The invention concerns on-line advertising.   In particular, the invention concerns
electronic advertising using the internet, such as websites and emails, that promote the
sale of products or services.   Aspects of the invention includes computer systems,
methods and software.

10   **Background Art**

For many products the advertising cost is high, such as 20% for the average concert
ticket.

To help reduce these advertising costs advertisers are increasingly relying on on-line
15   advertisements, such as banner advertisements on websites.  Commonly, the advertiser
pays the web content providers a set fee to provide space in their web pages for
advertisements to be placed for a determined period of time.

**Summary of the Invention**

20   In one aspect the invention is a method for on-line advertising, the method comprising
the steps of:

(a) storing information of a first user in a data store, including information
identifying an account associated with the first user;

(b) on request from the first user, sending a pointer to the first user for
25   distribution, wherein the pointer is to a website from which a product or service can be
purchased, and the pointer uniquely identifies the first user;

(c) on request from a second user based on the pointer received by them from
the first user, providing for the sale of the product or service to the second user;

(d) using the information stored in the data store, identifying the associated
30   account of the first user who is uniquely identified by the pointer of the second user's
request; and

(e) determining the commission owed to the first user due to the sale of the
product or service to the second user, and causing that commission to be paid to the
associated account of the first user.

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The information of the first user may include a unique identifier. The information of the first user may include name and address information. The account may be a bank account, and information of the bank account associated with the first user may be the bank account number and the name of the owner of the bank account. The account

5   may also be an online account provided by an online payment service such as Paypal, PayMate and Google Payment, in which case the information of the account associated with the first user may be the login identifier of the owner of the account.

The request of step (b) may be received from the first user using a website. Sending

10  the pointer to the first user may comprise causing the pointer to be displayed on the website and allowing it to be downloaded by the first user. Step (b) may further comprise generating the pointer. The pointer may uniquely identify the first user by including the unique identifier of the first user. The pointer may uniquely identify the first user by including a unique value computed based on the unique identifier of the

15  first user and an identifier of the product or service.

Distribution may be by inclusion of the pointer in an email to the second user or placing the pointer on a further webpage that is accessed by the second user. This may be accompanied with the first user's recommendation to purchase the product or sale.

20
The request of step (c) may comprise the selection of the pointer by the second user so as to access a website from which the product or service can be purchased. The sale may be provided to the second user using the same or different website.

25  Step (d) may comprise searching the data store of the part of the pointer that uniquely identifies the first user so as to identify the information of the first user.

The commission may be based on the value of the sale of the product or services to one or more second users. The commission may be paid by electronic transfer of funds to

30  the associated account of the first user. Again, the account may be a bank account or an account provided by an online payment service. The commission may also be paid in the form of a product.

The method may further comprise the step of providing confirmation to the first user

35  that the second user has accessed the website using the pointer and purchased a product or service, or that the commission has been paid. This confirmation may be an email.

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The product may be tickets, merchandise, memberships or digital downloads.

In another aspect, the invention provides software (i.e. instructions stored in a computer
5    readable medium), that when installed on a computer system causes it to operate in
accordance with the method described above.

In a further aspect, the invention provides a computer system to perform the method
described above, the computer system having:
10          an input port connected to the internet to receive the request from the first and
second user;
             an output port connected to the internet to send the pointer to the first user and
to send instructions to cause the commission to be paid;
             a datastore to store the information of the first user; and
15          a processor to provide the sale of the product or service, to determine the
commission owed to the first user, to identify the associated account and to cause the
instructions to pay the commission to be sent.

In yet a further aspect, the invention provides a method for on-line advertising, the
20   method comprising the steps of:
             (a) sending information about a first user for storage, the information including
information identifying an account associated with the first user;
             (b) accessing a first website and downloading from the first website a pointer to
the first or a second website from which a product or service can be purchased, wherein
25   the pointer uniquely identifies the first user;
             (c) distributing on-line the pointer to multiple second users;
             (d) if the second user uses the pointer to access the first or second website to
purchase the product or service, receiving a commission for the sale as a payment in the
associated account of the first user.
30
In another aspect, the invention provides software (i.e. instructions stored in a computer
readable medium), that when installed on a computer system causes it to operate in
accordance with the method described directly above.

35   In a further aspect, the invention provides a computer system of the method described
directly above.

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It is estimated that currently two thirds of all North American sales are based on peer recommendation. The invention utilises social networking (i.e. distribution of the first user) in order to promote sales of a product or service. This exploits the fact that recommendation is the best form of advertising. The incentive for the first user to recommend the purchase of a product or service is that they are given a commission by way of payment to their account.

It is a further advantage of at least one embodiment of the invention that the first user is able to gain social kudos from helping to promote brands associated with the products or services.

**Brief Description of the Drawings**

An example of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is schematic diagram of the computer system used in this example, and

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of the method of this example.

**Best Modes of the Invention**

Referring first to Fig. 1, a computer system 20 will be described. In this example, the online advertising relates to concert tickets.

A server 30 hosts a website, herein referred to as 'posse', from which advertisements for the concerts can be downloaded, and tickets for the concert purchased. Associated with the server 32 is storage means, such as a database, that stores the details of members of posse. The server 30 is connected to the Internet 32 making the website accessible from Internet enabled computers. The server 30 comprises an input port, an output port, a processor and software to enable it to host a posse website and pay commissions in the manner described below.

An event promoter 34 in this example is someone who is aiming to promote one or more concerts so as to sell more tickets. They can access the posse website using their Internet enabled computer 36 that has software installed, such as Internet Explorer™. Many promoters 34 can simultaneously access the posse website, however for simplicity only one promoter 34 will be discussed here. Stored on the computer 36 or available to the computer 36 via a computer network, such as a Local Area Network

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(not shown), is information related to the concert, especially advertisements. Further, the promoter 34 has available to them a mailing list of people that can be contacted to promote the concert. The list may be stored locally on the computer 36, or may be stored by a third party (not shown) who is responsible for contacting the people on the

5    list.

Members 40 (i.e. a first user) are users of the posse website that have signed up to the posse website to promote the sale of tickets, and in return to receive a commission. There of course will be many members 40, however for simplicity only one member

10   will be discussed here. Again, the member 40 is able to access the posse website using their Internet enabled computer 42 that has software installed, such as Internet Explorer$^{TM}$. The computer 42 includes an input port, output port (i.e. Internet connection), display means (monitor) and a processor that allows a member to access the server 30 so as to view and interact with the posse website as described below. The

15   member 40 has a financial account, such as a transaction account with a bank. The account may also be an online account provided by an online payment service such as Paypal, Google Payment and PayMate.

In this example, the member 40 has a bank account with the Commonwealth Bank of

20   Australia (CBA). The computer system of the CBA that is responsible for managing deposits and withdrawals from the bank account is shown at 44. The server 44 is also accessible over the internet so that deposits and withdrawals can be performed by a computer also connected to the internet, such as 42 or 30. In this example member 40 also has their own webpage that they are able to control the content of. The webpage

25   may be part of a website that is typically aimed at social networking, such as Facebook. In this example, the webpage is hosted by a computer server (not shown) also connected to the internet.

Finally, a user 46 (i.e. second user) is able to access the posse website to purchase the

30   tickets. There of course will be many users 46, however for simplicity the one user will be discussed here. Again, the user 46 is able to access the posse website using their Internet enable computer 48 that has software installed, such as Internet Explorer$^{TM}$ and the same hardware components as computer 42. The user 46 can also access the Facebook website of member 40.

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A method of using the computer system in accordance with this example will now be described with reference to Fig. 2.

In this example the promoter 34 is already a member of the website posse. The
5  promoter 34 accesses the posse website using their computer 36 and logs in. Their login credentials are stored in the storage means 32 and are verified in the usual way.

Using the website, the promoter 34 may upload to the server 30 information about the concert. In this example, the information includes:
10        performing artists and their biographies
          tour dates
          locations
          the number of tickets that can be sold on the posse website.

15 Related advertising material is also uploaded to the server 30, this can be:
          image files, such as graphic artwork, banner ads or photos of the artists
          video files
          audio files

20 The server 30 then stores this concert information and advertising material in the data store 32. The server 30 further operates to make the advertising material available to members 40. A new webpage is created or an existing webpage is nominated, such as www.posse.com/concert1, from which information about the concert can be viewed, the advertising material can be downloaded, and the tickets can be bought.
25

Next, the promoter 34 notifies their mailing list that they are now promoting the concert using the posse website, and that they can become an agent of the promoter and in doing so will receive a commission on the tickets sold. In this example, member 40 is on the mailing list and receives the email that includes the link
30 www.posse.com/concert1.

The member 40 using their computer 42 is able to access the webpage www.posse.com/concert1 on the posse website. In this example the member 40 is already a member of the posse website and is able to login using a username and
35 password that is verified by the server by comparison to stored member information in

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the datastore 32 in the usual manner. Alternatively, the member 40 can become a member of posse by signing up as a member using the posse website.

For every member, the datastore 32 stores the following:
5       login name
        password
        name and address
        unique identifier
        details of their bank or equivalent account
10
This information is then stored in the data store 32.

In this example, the member 40 has a login name of JSmith and has a unique identifier 2544. The member 40 is interested in promoting the sale of tickets to a concert event
15   which has been assigned a unique identifier; in this example 789, so as to receive a commission. Using the website they are able to view information about the concert and to receive a pointer to the webpage www.posse.com/concert1 that uniquely identifies both the event 789 and the member 40 by calculating a value in the form of a unique product descriptor (UPD) using the unique identifier of the member 40 (i.e. 2544) and
20   the identifier of the event (i.e. 789). For example the pointer can be the web address of the   webpage   in   combination   with   the   unique   UPD,   such   as www.posse.com/concert1:5382.

In this example, the member 40 locates on the website artwork that they would like to
25   incorporate into their web page on the social networking website Facebook. The member 40 enters into the website a request 62 to down load the artwork. The server operates to generate the pointer such as www.posse.com/concert1:5382, embed it into the artwork and to send it to the computer 42.

30   The member 40 then distributes the pointer by placing a copy of the artwork having the pointer embedded onto their Facebook webpage. The member 40 may also update their Facebook webpage to indicate that they think that this is a great concert to go to, and encouraging their friend visitors to their Facebook page to click on the artwork to buy tickets from the posse website.
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As friends of the member 40 access the member's Facebook webpage they are
encouraged to buy tickets to the concert based on the member's 40 recommendation. In
this example the user 46 clicks 64 on the artwork of the concert on the member's
Facebook webpage.   This directs the user's 46 internet browser to the webpage
5   www.posse.com/concert1:5382 hosted by the server 30 or directly to the retailer of that
ticket.

If the user 46 is directed to the webpage www.posse.com/concert1 then from this
webpage the user 46 can buy tickets.  The backend process of offering the tickets for
10   sale is the same as a standard ticketing retailer, may interface to a standard ticketing
retailer's sale site or the promoter's ticketing sale site but is masked from the user 46 so
that it appears to them that they are still only interacting with the posse website.  The
server 30 is able to identify 66 that link used by the user 46 includes the identifier 5382
which uniquely identifies a member and an event.
15
In this example the user 46 proceeds to purchase tickets to the concert from the posse
website.  The server 30 then operates to perform a search 66 on the datastore for the
record of the member 40 that corresponds to the unique identifier 5382, in this case
member JSmith.   In this example, the commission based on this sale to user 46 is
20   determined 68 and an indication that a commission is now owed to JSmith is recorded
in the datastore 32 associated with member's 40 record.  The amount of the commission
is also stored.

Multiple users 46 may come to buy tickets following the member's 40 advertisement on
25   their Facebook webpage.  In this example when a member 40 has reached a minimum
commission for events that have taken place the member 40 can request transfer 68 of
the accrued commission to the financial account of the member 40 as sorted in the
datastore.  Information of the transfer is received by server 44, recorded and reflected
in the balance of the account.
30
Posse makes money by taking a share of the commission of every sale.  For example,
the ticket sold is marked up by 7.5%.  The member's 40 commission is 5% and posse's
commission is the remaining 2.5%.  In other words, the ticket is $40.  That is how
much posse must return to the promoter 34. These figures are provided here by way of
35   example only, for instance, there may be a ticket vendors commission to consider.  The
ticket attracts an additional fee of $3, with the member's commission being $2 and

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posse's commission being $1.  As every sale on posse has significantly reduced marketing costs, posse is able to negotiate a 7.% deduction from the promoter 34 so that the end cost to the user 46 is the same if they were purchased directly from the promoter 34.  The average marketing cost on tickets is 20% so the promoter saves
5    12.5% on marketing and is therefore also advantaged by using posse.

It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the scope of the invention as broadly described.
10

The example above has discussed the sale of tickets using the posse website.  The invention can be used in addition or alternatively for further products or services.  Examples include:
       tickets, such as films or flights
15       digital downloads, such as music, films or software
       memberships, such as of clubs
       vouchers, such as accommodation or (online or real) store credits
       physical products that can be later delivered or picked up by the user

20  The advertisements that are visible to a member 40 for download may depend on the physical location of the member so that only relevant advertisements are displayed for download, such as the graphic corresponding to the Sydney concert, not the Melbourne concert, when the member 40 resides in Sydney.

25  In this example, the posse website is described as offering one webpage www.posse.com/concert1 where advertisements can be downloaded and tickets can be purchased.  In fact, the webpages used in this example may be over multiple different webpages of a website.  Alternatively, the posse website may itself be comprised of multiple websites.
30

The event promoter 34 can be anyone that is interested in selling more products or services that can be sold on the posse website.

In this example, only one member, promoter and user has been described.  Clearly,
35  there are multiples of each, with a member distributing multiple links to purchase products or services of multiple promoters.

10

The computer 42 can be any device that is able to access the server 30 in the manner described above, such as a personal digital assistant (PDA).

5    The commissions owing to the member can be transferred once a sale is made, at regular intervals or once the total outstanding balance of commissions reaches a predetermined value.

The member 40 can promote the purchase of the product or service by distributing the
10   pointer, usually in an electronic way so that the pointer can be easily followed by the user with the member's unique identifier embedded. Examples include:
         on a webpage of a social networking site such as Myspace, Facebook, Bebo
         included as part of an email signature
         other documents that are distributed electronically
15
In addition, the member can send email alerts to their friends that their webpage includes a link to buy tickets and recommend that they go to the webpage to following the pointer to purchase tickets.

20   The account may be monetary account, such as a bank account or an online payment account provided by online payment service providers such as Paypal. Alternatively, it may be credits (i.e. token) on the posse system which they can use to purchase goods or services on the posse website.

25   The pointer may be a link to a website, alternatively it can be a shortcut to a software application on the user's computer that activates a software application that is able to receive information from and send requests to the server 30 in order to purchase the offered good or service.

30   In the example described, the pointer may only include the unique identifier (i.e. 2544) of the member 40, in which case the pointer is the web address of the webpage with the identifier: www.posse.com/concert1:2544.

The commission may also be in the form of a product.
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The posse website may further build a mailing list of people categorised by previous purchases or downloads. That way when new advertising material is added to the posse website, posse is able to send to people in this list a notification that new advertising material is available on the posse website.

5

The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

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CLAIMS:

1.    A method for on-line advertising, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) storing information of a first user in a data store, including information identifying an account associated with the first user;

(b) on request from the first user, sending a pointer to the first user for distribution, wherein the pointer is to a website from which a product or service can be purchased, and the pointer uniquely identifies the first user;

(c) on request from a second user based on the pointer received by them from the first user, providing for the sale of the product or service to the second user;

(d) using the information stored in the data store, identifying the associated account of the first user who is uniquely identified by the pointer of the second user's request; and

(e) determining the commission owed to the first user due to the sale of the product or service to the second user, and causing that commission to be paid to the associated account of the first user.

2.    A method of claim 1, wherein the information of the first user includes a unique identifier.

3.    A method of claim 1 or 2, wherein the information of the first user includes name and address information

4.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the account is a bank account, and information of the bank account associated with the first user includes the bank account number and the name of the owner of the bank account.

5.    A method of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the account is an online account provided by an online payment service, and information of the account associated with the first user includes the login identifier of the owner of the online account.

6.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the request of step (b) is received from the first user using a website.

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7.    A method of claim 6, wherein sending the pointer to the first user comprises causing the pointer to be displayed on the website and allowing it to be downloaded by the first user.

5    8.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein step (b) further comprises generating the pointer.

9.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the pointer uniquely identifies the first user by including a unique identifier of the first user.

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10.    A method of any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the pointer uniquely identifies the first user by including a unique value computed based on the unique identifier of the first user and an identifier of the product or service.

15    11.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the distribution is by inclusion of the pointer in an email to the second user or placing the pointer on a further webpage that is accessed by the second user.

12.    A method of claim 11, wherein the email includes the first user's
20    recommendation to purchase the product or sale.

13.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the request of step (c) comprises the selection of the pointer by the second user so as to access a website from which the product or service can be purchased.

25

14.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein step (d) comprises searching the data store of the part of the pointer that uniquely identifies the first user so as to identify the information of the first user

30    15.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein commission is based on the value of the sale of the product or services to one or more second users.

16.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the commission is paid by electronic transfer of funds to the associated account of the first user.

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17.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the commission is paid in the form of a product.

18.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, further comprising the step of providing confirmation to the first user that the second user has accessed the website using the pointer and purchased a product or service, or that the commission has been paid.

19.    A method of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the product is a ticket, merchandise, membership or digital download.

20.    Software, that when installed on a computer system causes it to operate in accordance with the method according to any one of claims 1 to 19.

21.    A computer system to perform the method according to any one of claims 1 to 19, the computer system having:
        an input port connected to the internet to receive the request from the first and second user;
        an output port connected to the internet to send the pointer to the first user and to send instructions to cause the commission to be paid;
        a datastore to store the information of the first user; and
        a processor to provide the sale of the product or service, to determine the commission owed to the first user, to identify the associated account and to cause the instructions to pay the commission to be sent.

22.    A method for on-line advertising, the method comprising the steps of:
        (a) sending information about a first user for storage, the information including information identifying an account associated with the first user;
        (b) accessing a first website and downloading from the first website a pointer to the first or a second website from which a product or service can be purchased, wherein the pointer uniquely identifies the first user;
        (c) distributing on-line the pointer to multiple second users;
        (d) if the second user uses the pointer to access the first or second website to purchase the product or service, receiving a commission for the sale as a payment in the associated account of the first user.

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23.     Software, that when installed on a computer system causes it to operate in accordance with the method according to claim 22.

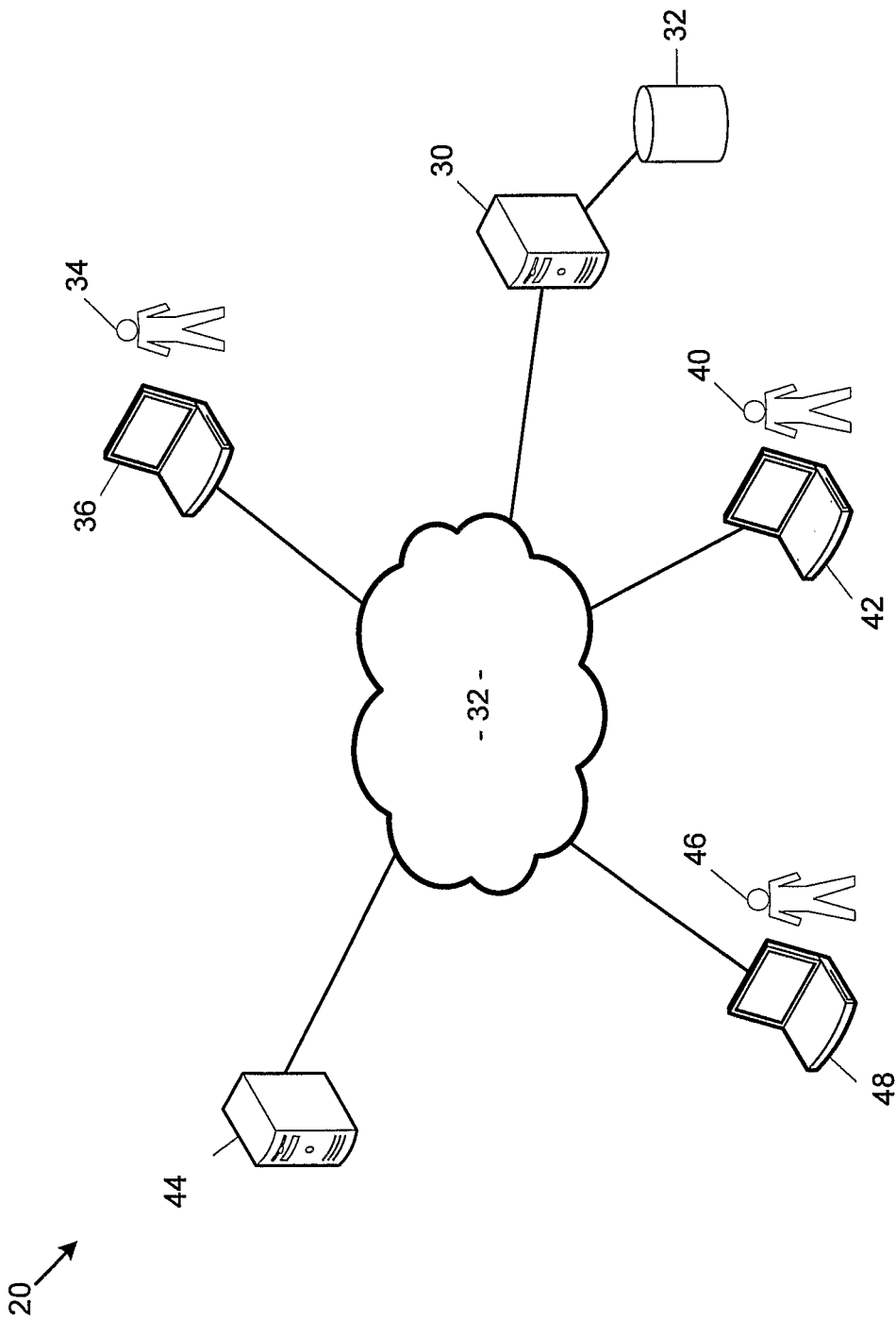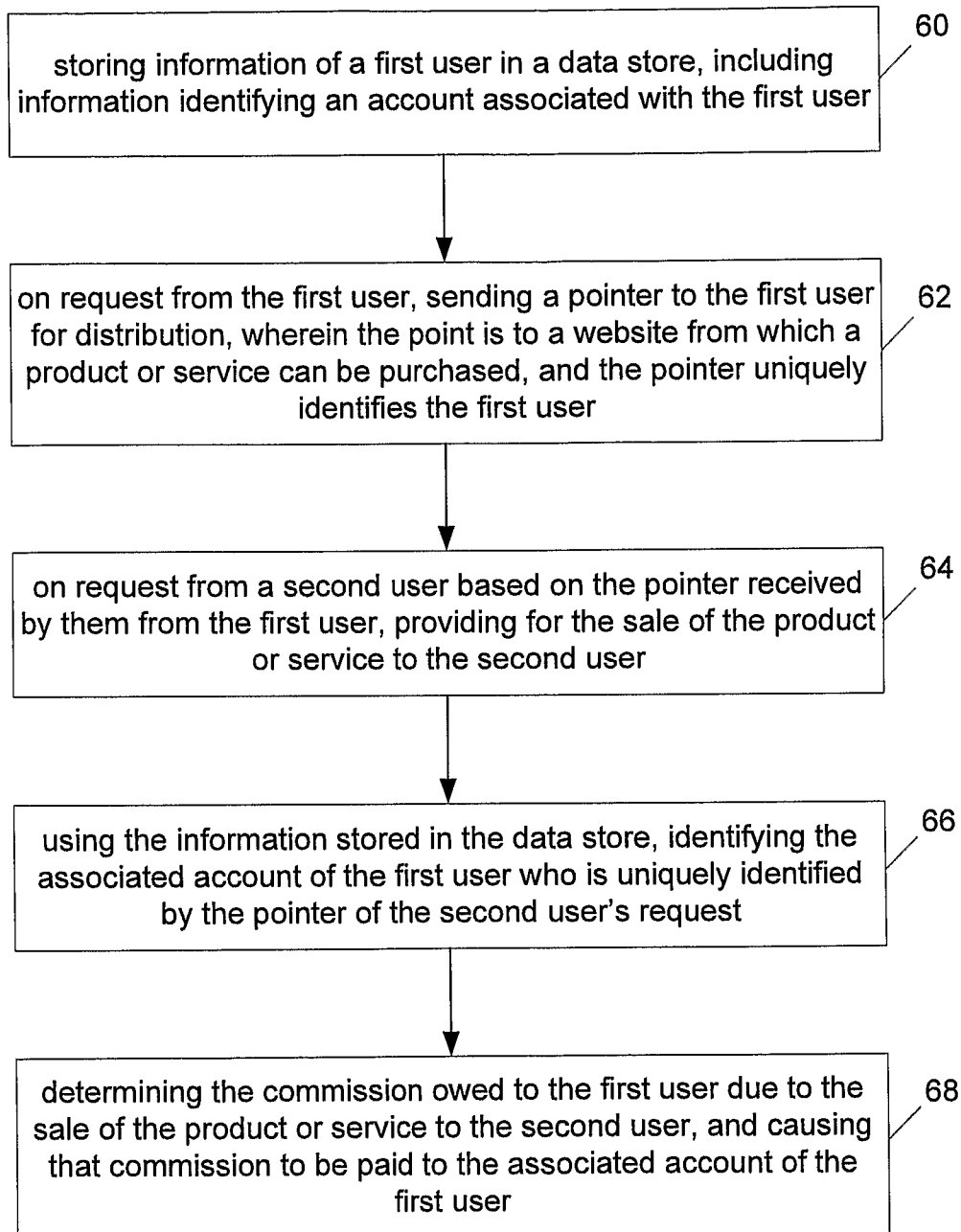24.     A computer system to perform the method according to claim 22.

Fig. 1

storing information of a first user in a data store, including
information identifying an account associated with the first user          60

on request from the first user, sending a pointer to the first user         62
for distribution, wherein the point is to a website from which a
product or service can be purchased, and the pointer uniquely
identifies the first user

on request from a second user based on the pointer received                 64
by them from the first user, providing for the sale of the product
or service to the second user

using the information stored in the data store, identifying the             66
associated account of the first user who is uniquely identified
by the pointer of the second user's request

determining the commission owed to the first user due to the               68
sale of the product or service to the second user, and causing
that commission to be paid to the associated account of the
first user

Fig. 2

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

## A.   CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int. Cl.

*G06Q 30/00* (2006.01)

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)

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
EPODOC : IPC G06F G06Q & Keywords ( MARKET+, PROMOT+, COMMISSION+, EMBED+, IDENTIF+)and like terms

## C.  DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|---|---|---|
| X | US 6029141 A (BEZOS et al.) 22 February 2000<br>See the whole document | 1 – 24 |
| X | US 2001/0032129 A1 (MORIMOTO) 18 October 2001<br>See the whole document | 1 – 4, 6, 8 – 10 , 13 – 17 and 20 |
| X | US 2005/0182707 A1 (YEAGER) 18 August 2005<br>See the whole document | 1 – 24 |

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C        ☒ See patent family annex

| | | | |
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| * | Special categories of cited documents: | "T" | later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention |
| "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 | "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 |
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| Date of the actual completion of the international search | Date of mailing of the international search report |
|---|---|
| 23 October 2009 | **6 NOV 2009** |

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This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

| Patent Document Cited in Search Report | | Patent Family Member | | | | | |
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| US | 6029141 | US | 7337133 | US | 7512548 | US | 2008167946 |
| US | 2001032129 | JP | 2001291001 | | | | |
| US | 2005182707 | NONE | | | | | |

Due to data integration issues this family listing may not include 10 digit Australian applications filed since May 2001.

END OF ANNEX