



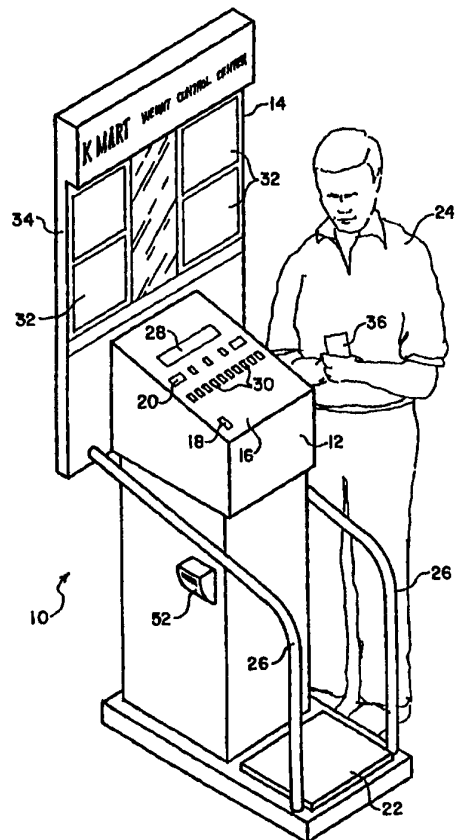
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

<p>(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : G06F 17/60</p>	<p>A1</p>	<p>(11) International Publication Number: WO 95/27950 (43) International Publication Date: 19 October 1995 (19.10.95)</p>
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/US95/04337 (22) International Filing Date: 6 April 1995 (06.04.95) (30) Priority Data: 08/224,664 7 April 1994 (07.04.94) US (71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: CRAFT, Cecil, I. [US/US]; 7304 McNeil Drive #506, Austin, TX 78729 (US). (74) Agents: SHAFFER, J., Nevin, Jr. et al.; Shaffer & Culbertson, Building One, Suite 360, 1250 S. Capital of Texas Highway, Austin, TX 78746 (US).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: CA, MX, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i></p>

(54) Title: AN APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR DISPENSING PERSONAL DATA AND PRODUCT RELATED COUPONS

(57) Abstract

An apparatus and method for dispensing personal data and product related coupons. The apparatus includes an analyzer (12) for providing information selected by a user (24) connected to a display device (14) for illustrating items and services for which coupons (36) may be selectively issued. A user interface (16) is connected to the analyzer (12) and to the display device (14) so that the user (24) may interact with each for the selection of desired information and coupons (36). The user interface (16) can be used for free or upon payment. The major problem associated with the printing and distribution of prior art coupons without regard to the interest of the consumer is obviated because the user (24) has intentionally interacted with the analyzer (12) for a specific purpose.



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AN APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR
DISPENSING PERSONAL DATA AND PRODUCT RELATED COUPONS

5

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to an apparatus and method for dispensing personal data and product related coupons.

For some time now, manufacturers and distributors of goods and services have
10 endeavored to tempt customers to buy their products by means of issuing coupons
which yield a discount when claimed. From the late 80's to date, some of the many
problems associated with the issuance and redemption of coupons have been addressed
by prior art patents. For example, the Lemon et.al. device, U.S. Patent No. 4,674,041,
discloses a device that is a point of purchase display video for displaying coupons
15 available for selection and a means for monitoring and controlling the number of
coupons distributed. The Nichtberger et. al device, U.S. Patent No. 4,882,675,
distributes and redeems coupons that are issued electronically at an individual store.
The user selects coupons from a display and those coupons are identified to that user.
When redeemed, the customer is credited immediately in accordance with the terms
20 of the matched coupons. The Bissel device, U.S. Patent No. 4,124,109, attempts to
address the problem of the issuance of too many coupons to a single user by requiring
the user to buy a coupon card which is analyzed by a device to determine whether or
not it has been used within a minimum period of time, prior to the distribution of
additional coupons. The Johnsen et.al. device, U.S. Patent No. 4,791,281, attempts to

control the issuance of coupons by requiring that not only the initial product code be applied to the coupon but, also, a "person" code so that tracking of the use of the coupons issued to a specific individual may be accomplished. Two Humble devices, U.S. Patents Nos. 4,825,045 and 4,833,308, attempt to analyze the purchases made by a customer and then issue additional coupons to the customer that may be of similar interest to the customer or which fit a promotional plan established by the retail center in conjunction with an analysis of products selected by the customer. The Smith device, U.S. Patent No. 4,896,791, features a display of high resolution pictures showing products for which coupons may be obtained. This device requires that the consumer have an access code so that multiple unauthorized coupons will not be issued to the same person.

Still, further, there are known in the art methods for issuing and redeeming coupons and tracking the coupons from issuance to utilization to redemption as illustrated in Counts, U.S. Patent No. 5,192,854; in Marshall, U.S. Patent No. 5,245,533; and in Off et.al, U.S. Patent No. 5,173,851. In general, these prior art patents in the field of coupon issuance, utilization, and redemption focus on, and are concerned with, the misappropriation of coupon benefits by unauthorized users, retailers, marketers, and so forth. In fact, the primary overriding concern with the majority of these prior art patents is that coupons only be issued to the actual user and that only the actual user receive the benefit of the discount.

This inventor has observed that, concurrent with the focus marketers have been giving to customer coupons and attempts to generate sales through the random issuance of coupons there has been a rise in the attention customers have been giving

themselves and their health. That is, a wave of health consciousness has swept the country primarily aided by advanced technology enabling rapid, accurate, inexpensive feedback to users of simple machines and devices for providing health related data outside of a visit to a doctor's office. In fact, devices for providing relevant health related data to interested users are now located in the very markets where, until recently, only food stuffs and limited medical services, such as pharmaceutical drugs and eye glasses, have commonly been available. As a result, it is now possible for a customer to go shopping for groceries and medicines and at the same time weigh him or herself, check blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, pregnancy, cholesterol, and so forth. While some devices are free, typically these devices are operated by means of inserting a few coins and waiting a few minutes for the test results. Users of these devices, therefore, have specifically sought them out, at least, may have invested in the results, and must wait some few moments or minutes until the results are displayed.

A drawback of the prior art coupon distribution and redemption system is that coupons are typically distributed randomly for free and are, therefore, subject to abuse or are distributed to uninterested consumers and are subject to waste. These drawbacks, coupled with the rising health consciousness of individuals utilizing machines that vend services and provide health related data in a controlled environment, illustrate that there is a need in the art for providing an apparatus and method for dispensing personal data and product related coupons in response to the intentional use of health related devices. It, therefore, is an object of this invention to provide an apparatus and method for providing personal data and product related

coupons in response to the intentional use of health related devices in a controlled environment.

SHORT STATEMENT OF THE INVENTION

5 Accordingly, the apparatus for dispensing personal data and product related coupons in response to the use of a health related device of the present invention includes an analyzer for providing information concerning some aspect of the physical condition, and/or determining the health, of an individual user; a product display device connected to the analyzer for illustrating items and services for which coupons
10 may be selectively issued, and a user interface connected to the analyzer, for interacting with the analyzer and for selecting coupons from the product display device. In a preferred embodiment, the user interface includes a device for accepting payment for the determination of health facts, that must be operated before the apparatus will conduct the analysis. The apparatus and method include an analyzer
15 that is selectively operated by the user to choose an analysis of one set of personal data including weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, pregnancy, cholesterol, heart rate and/or any other data that becomes available and is desired. Additionally, the apparatus and method includes the issuance of coupons that are encoded by bar codes or the like at the point of distribution so that the coupons can be readily accounted
20 for and traced. Additionally, an embodiment of the apparatus and method of the present invention incorporates the ability of the analyzer to be voice activated and to respond audibly to input from the user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other objects, advantages, and features of the present invention will become more fully apparent from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment, the appended claims and the accompanying drawings in which:

5 FIGURE 1 is a plan view of a preferred embodiment of the apparatus for dispensing personal data and product related coupons in response to the use of a health related device; FIGURE 2 is a top view of a representative coupon of the present invention, including health related and/or product or service related information provided in response to the utilization of the health related device;

10 FIGURE 3 is a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the apparatus of FIGURE 1; and

 FIGURE 4 is a block diagram providing amplifying detail of Block 62 of FIGURE 3.

15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated by way of example in FIGURES 1-4. With specific reference to FIGURE 1, the apparatus for dispensing personal data and product related coupons in response to the use of a health related device 10 includes an analyzing device 12, a product display device 14, and a user interface device 16. FIGURE 1 also illustrates a preferred embodiment of the invention in which a device for accepting payment 18 is connected to user interface device 16. In another embodiment of the invention the user interface device

16 also includes voice activation and response devices 20 so that the interface 16 may be operated vocally.

Analyzing device 12, in one embodiment, consists of a weight scale 22 upon which user 24 stands. Analyzing device 12, in the usual case will have user supports
5 26 on either side of analyzing device 12 for safety and security. Analyzing device 12 further includes a visual display 28 for showing the results of the analysis accomplished by analyzing device 12. Manual selection buttons 30 are a part of the user interface 16 and enable interaction with product display device 14 and analyzing device 12.

Referring now to product display device 14 there is illustrated an embodiment
10 of the invention whereby a variety of advertising pictures 32 are displayed in close association with analyzing device 12. Advertising pictures 32 may be physical pictures inserted into frame 34 of product display device 14 or may be virtual pictures in the nature of TV or computer images selectively activated by manual selection buttons 30. Finally, FIGURE 1 illustrates user 24 reviewing health related data and coupon 36
15 provided as a result of the intentional interaction with the apparatus for dispensing personal data and coupons 10.

Referring now to FIGURE 2, health data and coupon 36 is illustrated. By way of example, health data and coupon 36 will include the date and time 38 of the test and health related data 40 and appropriate advice 42. Appropriate salutations 44 and
20 solicitation for additional health related data 46 may also be included.

Health data and coupon 36 also includes a coupon discount selectively chosen by user 24 by means of user interface device 16. Coupon 36 includes bar code data 48

and a human readable description of the chosen product or service 50. Coupon 36 is dispensed from coupon dispenser 52 (see FIGURE 1).

Referring now to FIGURE 3, a flow diagram illustrates the operation of the apparatus 10. Block 54 is the apparatus in the general "wait" state. At Block 56, the user 24 decides whether to utilize the analyzing device. If yes, the flow diagram shows at Block 58 the choice of two embodiments, that being the first choice of there being a charge for use of the analyzer. If so, Block 60 requires the insertion of coins or money of some sort to operate the analyzer. If not, the flow diagram proceeds to Block 62 where the desired analyzing is performed and the results, where appropriate, are visibly displayed. After that, while waiting for the results, as is often the case, Block 64 enables the choosing of a desired coupon from the product display device 14. If no coupon is chosen, the apparatus 10 returns to the general wait state illustrated in Block 54. If the user 24 had desired to skip the analyzer and proceed directly to the issuance of the coupon selected from product display device 14, this is accomplished at Block 66. Block 68 illustrates the printing and dispensing of the selected coupon and Block 70 illustrates the accounting for the coupon dispensed for internal records. Subsequent to the accounting of Block 70, the device returns to Block 54--the general wait state. This is also true if the user 24 determines that no analyzer use is desired in Block 56 and, subsequently, no coupon is desired in Block 66.

Referring now to FIGURE 4, beginning with Block 63, the question is asked whether personal data is required. If not, the process flows to Block 64 as previously described. If personal data is required the process moves to Block 72 where the consumer inputs personal data. From Block 72, the process proceeds to Block 74

where the appropriate measurement is made and the analysis performed. At Block 76, the data is modified by personal information from Block 66 and then results in the display of the analysis along with a comparison made to pre-determined standards in Block 78.

5 Examples of health related devices to be used in conjunction with the apparatus for displaying personal data and coupons 10 of the present invention are numerous. Representative devices are as follows: cholesterol testers manufactured by Kodak under the brand name Eckachem 500; blood pressure analyzers manufactured by Health Clinic, Inc. under the brand name Cardio Analysis Systems; pulse analyzers
10 manufactured by Omron under the brand name Wrist Pulse & Pressure; heart rate analyzers manufactured by Space Labs under the brand name Health Center; ear temperature analyzers manufactured by ThermoScan, Inc. under the brand name ThermoScan; weight analyzing machines by F & O Electronics under the brand name Weight Check 2000; and blood sugar analyzers by Johnson & Johnson under the brand
15 name One Touch.

The prior art cited herein is representative of the variety of devices that are available for the creation and dispensing of coupons. The inventor has determined, however, that there has been no suggestion of the combination of the above-described devices and like devices with coupon dispensers as, again, more fully described-above.

20 In operation, the apparatus for dispensing personal data and product related coupons in response to the use of the health related device begins with user 24 approaching analyzing device 12. Analyzing device 12 may offer one or a number of health related data opportunities, including but not limited to, weight, blood pressure,

heart rate, blood sugar, pregnancy, and cholesterol. User 24 steps on weight scale 22 or, if weight is not to be determined, support 22, utilizing user support handrails 26 and intentionally interacts with the device. In one embodiment, the user inserts coins or dollars into the device for accepting payment 18, as is known in the art. Change
5 may be provided as well, again, as is known in the art. In any event, utilizing user interface device 16 and manual selection buttons 30 or voice activated and response device 20, all of which are known in the art, the user 24 proceeds to be analyzed. While the user 24 is waiting for the results of the test that the user has chosen, the product display device either automatically or manually displays products or services
10 that are of interest to the user. For example, if weight is a concern, as indicated by the intentional selection of the scale device, the user may be prompted to select displays concerning weight loss/gain products or services. Upon the completion of the analysis, health data and coupon 36 is dispensed from the machine. Health data included on the read out is directed toward the analysis of the particular selected
15 health related concern and further includes, if selected, a coupon for a discount for products or services of particular interest to the user.

By means of the combination of health data devices and coupon printing devices through the present invention wherein the user actively selects the products and test data to be obtained, by paying for the service, a major problem associated
20 with the issuance of coupons for free has been solved. If there is no charge for the health information the user selects, the user still is identified as a specific consumer with a demonstrated interest in the particular health related device that dispenses the

coupon. This, as a result, solves another major problem that occurs when coupons are dispensed and distributed randomly.

The method of the present invention includes the steps of providing the analyzer for determining some aspect of the physical condition and/or the health of
5 the individual user, connecting the product display means to the analyzer for illustrating items and service for which coupons may be selectively issued, and connecting both of them to an interface means so that the user can interact with the analyzer and selectively chose coupons from the product display that are of interest.

While the apparatus and method for dispensing personal data and product
10 related coupons have been disclosed in relation to health related data, it should be appreciated that the apparatus and method can be used in the dispensing of other data, such as horoscopes, bio-rhythms, Farmer's Almanac information and so forth. The present invention, in any case, provides an improvement on prior art dispensers and independent personal data providers through the combination thereof. The
15 advantages, as described above, overcome major deficiencies in the random distribution of coupons by means of dispensing coupons only as a result to intentional interaction with the apparatus. Thus, the apparatus and method of the present invention has the important advantage of providing a control to the issuance of coupons in combination with the specifically sought out personal data for a user.

20 While the present invention has been disclosed in connection with the preferred embodiment thereof, it should be understood that there may be other embodiments which fall within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.

I CLAIM:

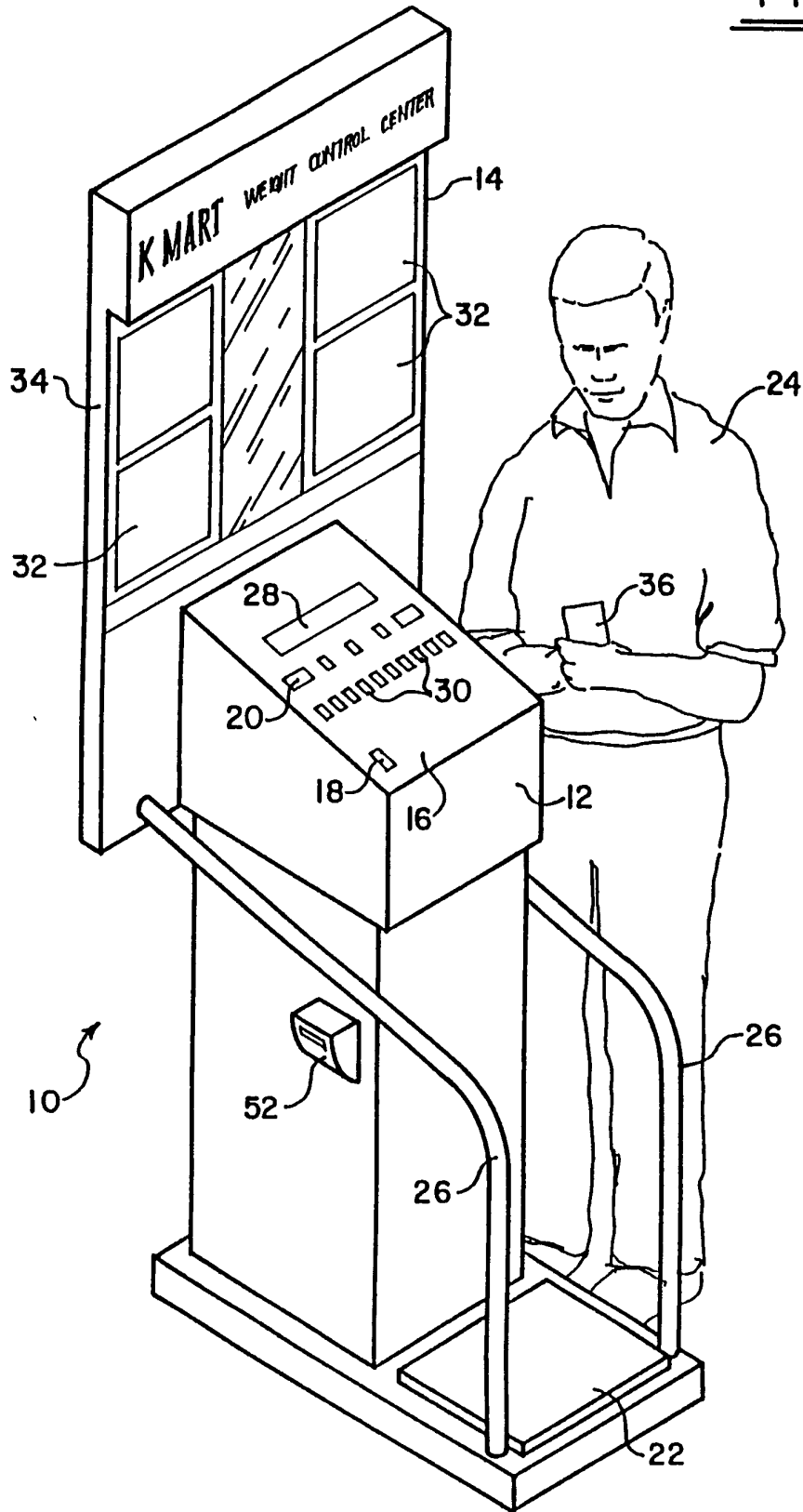
1. An apparatus for dispensing personal data and product related coupons comprising:
 - 5 a) an analyzing means for providing information selected by an individual user;
 - b) a product display means connected to the analyzer means for illustrating items and services for which coupons may be selectively issued; and
 - 10 c) a user interface means, connected to the analyzer means, for interacting with the analyzer means and for selecting coupons to be dispensed from the product display means.
- 15 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the user interface means further comprises a means for accepting payment before the analyzer means provides the selected information.
- 20 3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the analyzer means is selectively chosen by the user to analyze a set of health related personal data from a group including weight, blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, pregnancy, and cholesterol.
4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the coupons include coding so that the coupons can be traced.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the user interface further comprises voice activation means.
6. A method for dispensing personal data and product related coupons comprising the steps of:
- 5 the steps of:
- a) providing an analyzing means for providing information selected by an individual user;
 - b) connecting a product display means to the analyzing means for illustrating items and services for which coupons may be selectively
10 issued;
 - c) connecting a user interface means to the analyzer means for interacting with the analyzing means and for selecting coupons from the product display means; and
 - d) utilizing the user interface means so that the selected information and
15 product related coupon(s) are dispensed.
7. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of attaching to the analyzing means a means for accepting payment, before the analyzing means will provide the selected information.
- 20
8. The method of claim 6 wherein the step of providing an analyzing means further comprises the step of the user selectively choosing to analyze one of a

set of personal data from the group including weight, blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, pregnancy, and cholesterol.

- 5
9. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of coding the coupons so that the coupons can be traced.
 10. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of interacting with the interface audibly.

FIG. 1



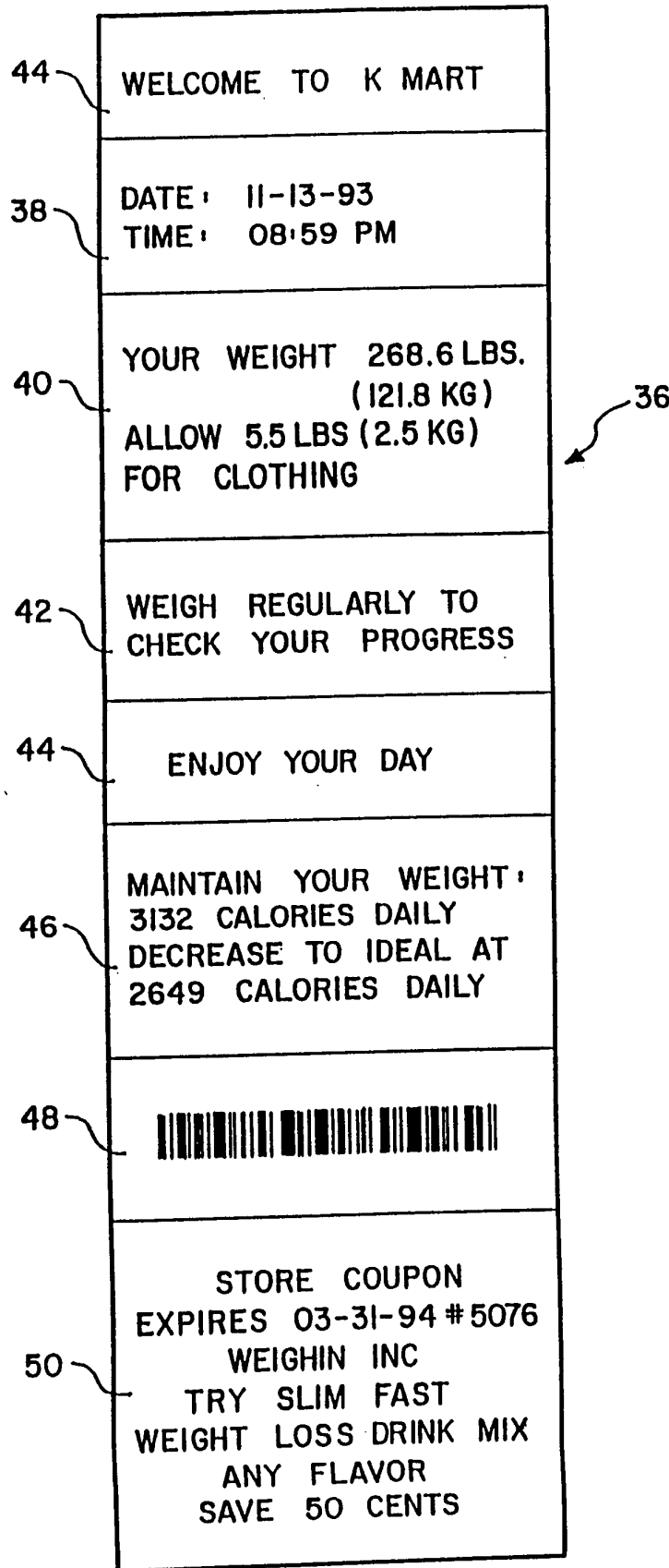


FIG. 2

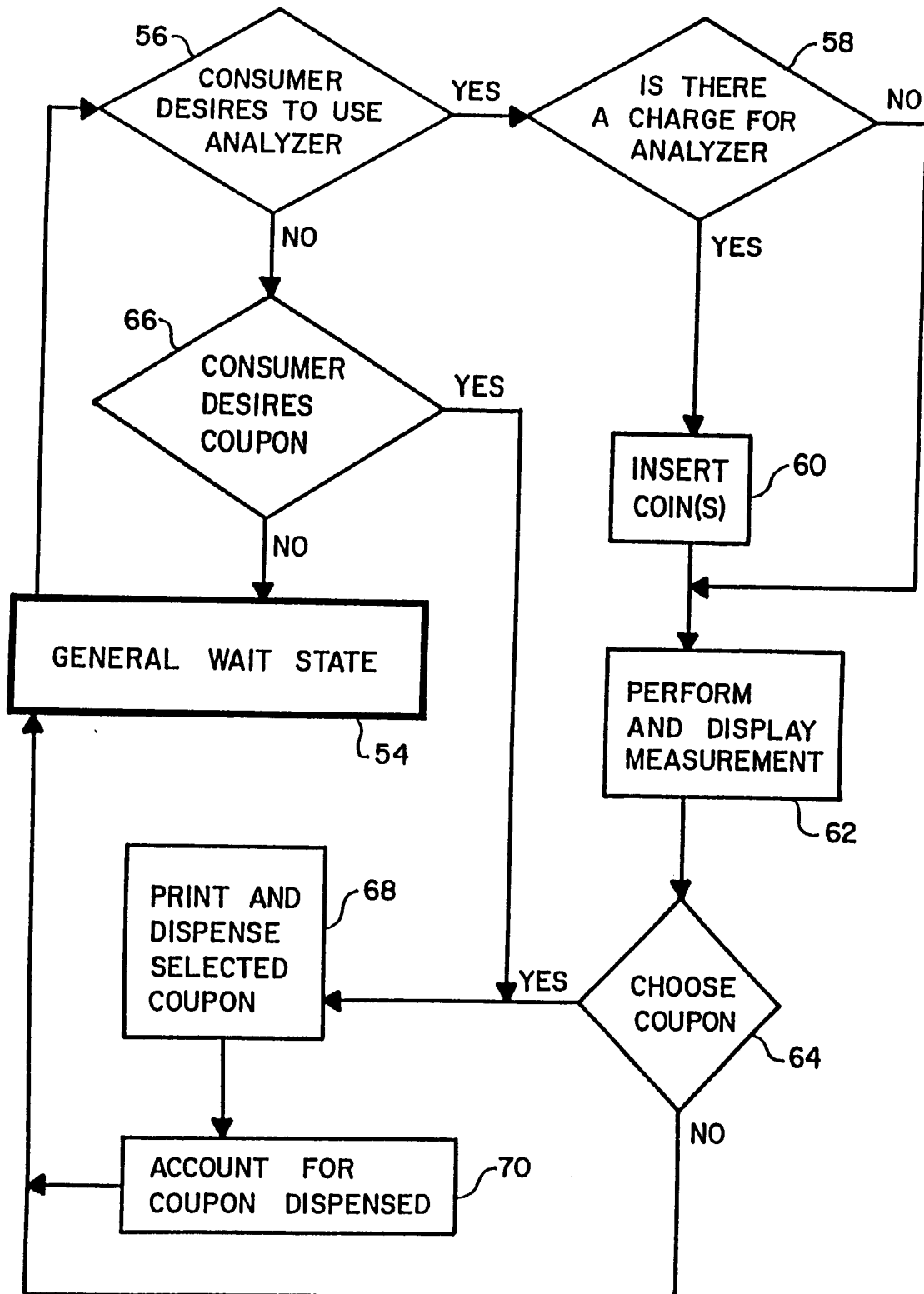
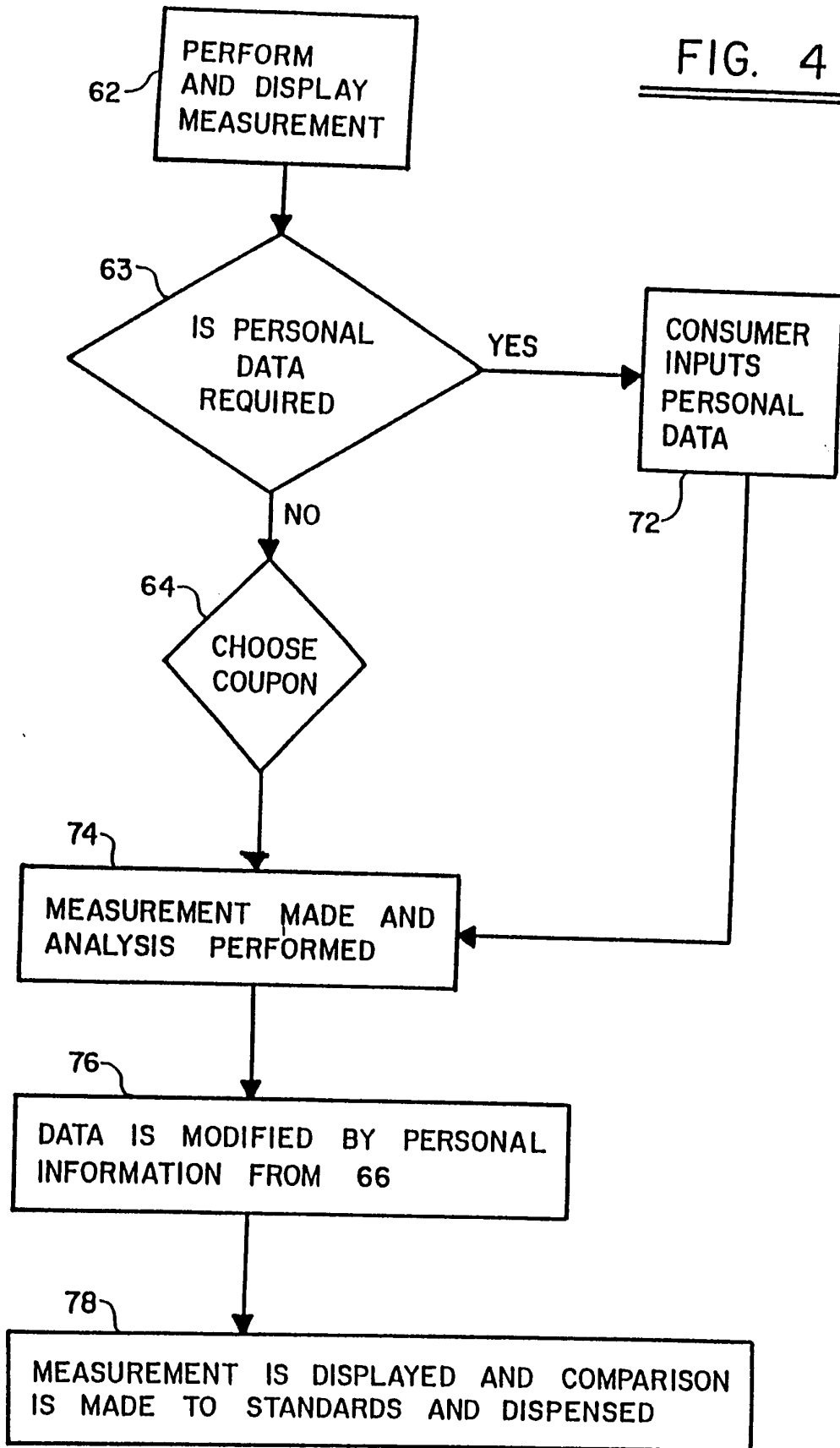


FIG. 3

FIG. 4



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US95/04337

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :G06F 17/60
US CL : 364/401

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)

U.S. : 364/401

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)

APS

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US, A, 4,844,187 (JABERO) 04 July 1989, col. 2, lines 1-55, col. 3, lines 25-45, col 1, lines 15-25, col 1 50-64, col 5, lines 35-38, col. 3, lines 57-65,.	1-10
Y	US, A, 4,882,675 (NICHTBERGER ET AL.) 21 November 1989, col. 2, lines 46-59, col. 3, lines 35-40, col 11, line 65 - col 12, line 5.	1-10
Y	US, A, 4,908,761 (TAI) 13 March 1990, col. 6, lines 4-53.	4 and 9

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

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 06 MAY 1995	Date of mailing of the international search report 29 AUG 1995
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