(54) Title: LOYALTY PROGRAM FOR CONSUMERS AND METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR REWARDING A CONSUMER

(57) Abstract: The invention relates generally to methods, systems and programs for engendering loyalty in various consumers and customers and, in particular, to a loyalty program for television stations, radio stations and other providers of media, as well as a method and system for rewarding a consumer/user of a medium (e.g., a television viewer who watches various channels of television, a listener of a radio station or a reader of a publication).
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to methods, systems and programs for engendering loyalty in various consumers and customers and, in particular, to a loyalty program for television stations, radio stations and other providers of media, as well as a method and system for rewarding a consumer / user of a medium (e.g. a television viewer who watches various channels of television, a listener of a radio station or a reader of a publication).

Description of Related Art

Presently, television is the most popular form of media entertainment and watched by millions of viewers across the world. As the various media outlets grow, the consumer or viewer now has many more options and channels to choose from on the television. In short, the viewer typically has hundreds of channels and choices, and it is difficult for a television station or channel to attract and maintain a multitude of viewers in such a competitive environment. Therefore, there remains a need for developing a relationship between the viewer and the channel (or television station), thereby increasing the viewing time, which increases the market share of the channel or television station.
Television stations and channels typically receive income for a vendor's or merchant's use of commercial airtime on the station. However, additional sources of income should be explored based upon sales revenue sharing, telephone proceeds and other similar consumer sources. Such additional sources of income would make the television station or channel more resistant to fluctuating commercial revenues and markets.

Presently, there is no existing program that engenders loyalty between a consumer or viewer and a channel or television station. Further, when multiple channels are offering multiple, yet similar, programming, the viewer now makes the choice strictly based upon personal preference. Accordingly, there is a need for producing some lasting and mutually beneficial relationship between a particular television viewer and a specific television channel. In addition, any information or data exchanged between the viewer and the channel also is mutually beneficial, in that the viewer can receive better targeted marketing to his or her needs or desires and the channel can better assess its viewing population and use such targeted advertising.

In general, there remains a need for providing a community of viewers and channels (or television stations), where there are emotional ties between the viewers and the channels. There is also a need for linking viewers to certain affiliated trade partners of the linked channel, such as affiliated vendors or merchants, which thereby provides additional ties between the viewers and channels and these trade partners.
The said above similarly applies to radio stations and their listeners and to other providers of media and their consumers like readers of publications, for example. Thus, the present application generally applies to situations, where a medium (e.g. a telecast, a radio transmission or a publication) is broadcasted and/or distributed to an indefinite number of persons (e.g. viewer of the television or listeners of the radio or reader of the publication). The way of distribution might be electronically (wired (e.g. via a local or global cable network or the internet) or wireless) or even physical (e.g. by distributing a printed publication).

To measure the audience rating of television programs and channels or radio programs and stations it is known to use special set-top boxes that are connected to a communication network like a telephone line or the Internet. Once a consumer decides to watch a television program or to listen to a radio program, he identifies himself by pressing a corresponding button of the set-top box and enters the channel respectively station he is watching respectively listening. The set-top box monitors the at least one identified consumer, the entered channel or station and the corresponding time of day and generates a corresponding protocol. Said protocol comprises said identified consumer, said entered channel or station and said time of day. Said protocol is output once a day via the communication network to a central server. The central server compares the received protocols with a television program respectively radio program of different channels and stations. Based on the protocol the central server identifies which television programs (or radio programs) were observed by which consumer and thus outputs audience rating of television
programs and channels respectively radio programs and stations.

It is a disadvantage with the known apparatus and method to measure audience rating of television programs and channels (respectively radio programs and stations) that the attention of a consumer cannot be taken into account. Thus, it cannot be distinguished whether the program is observed passively in the background (e.g. during housework) or actively with full attention. Moreover, it cannot be guaranteed that the input of the consumer to the set-top box is correct. Thus, a consumer intentionally or unintentionally might input a program he is not actually observing. A possible reason might be that the consumer is ashamed of the program he is actually observing (e.g. in the case of a pornographic motion picture or a program having low intellectual quality), that the consumer is too cushy to program the set-top box or simply forgets, to correctly program the set-top box. In consequence, the known apparatus and method is insufficient to correctly monitor the television programs and channels respectively radio programs and stations that are observed by a consumer. In this respect it is emphasized, that the present application is not limited with respect to the kind of broadcasting of the respective program. Thus, the program might be broadcasted wireless or via a hardwired network, for example. Said network might e.g. be a global cable network or even a local company network. Furthermore, said program might even be broadcast via the Internet, for example. Similar, a receiving apparatus does not necessarily have to be a conventional stationary or portable television or radio but might even be a mobile phone, organizer or computer having a program receiving function, for example.
Furthermore, in the prior art there is a demand to detect the spread of publications (printed media like books, newspapers, advertisements, journals etc.). In this respect, it has to be considered that publications frequently are read by plural persons. For example, a household having a subscription of a newspaper usually buys only one newspaper. Nevertheless, plural or even all persons of the household usually read the newspaper. Thus, by only counting the number of sold publications it is not yet possible to determine how many persons indeed read said publication. Furthermore, there is a risk that a publication is not read at all but simply thrown away. This is frequently the case with gratis newspapers or advertisements. Thus, even publications can be considered as being distributed to an indefinite number of persons. Currently, it is tried to solve the above problem by regularly conducting public polls. Nevertheless, depending on the number of people participating with said polls the poll either is inaccurate or very expensive. Once again, the present application is not limited to the kind of publication and/or way of distribution of the publication. Thus, the publication might be sold, published in the Internet or even laid open for public inspection, for example.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is, therefore, an object of the present invention to provide a loyalty program for consumers of a medium (e.g. television viewers, radio listeners or readers of publications) and a method and system for rewarding a consumer (e.g. a television viewer, a radio listener or a reader of a publication) that overcomes the deficiencies of the prior
art. It is another object of the present invention to provide a loyalty program for consumers of a medium and a method for rewarding consumers of a medium that engenders loyalty between the consumer and the provider of the medium (e.g. TV-channel, radio station or publishing company) and/or affiliated trade partners. It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a loyalty program for consumers of a medium and a method and system for rewarding the consumer of a medium that provides tangible benefits to the consumer in the form of various offers. It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a loyalty program for consumers of a medium and a method and system for rewarding consumers of a medium that allows for the flow of information and data between the parties to the mutual benefit of both parties. It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a loyalty program for consumers of a medium and a method and system for rewarding consumers of a medium that provides additional income to the provider of the medium (e.g. TV-channel, television station, radio station or publishing company) and affiliated trade partners.

According to a further aspect of the present invention it is another object to provide an apparatus and method that monitors whether a medium has been observed (e.g. watched, listened or read) by a consumer (e.g. viewer, listener or reader) with increased accuracy.

According to a further aspect of the present invention it is another object to provide an apparatus and method that monitors the television and/or radio programs and channels and/or stations that are observed by a consumer (viewer or listener) with increased accuracy.
According to another aspect of the present invention it is another object to provide an apparatus and a method that reliably detect whether a publication (printed medium) is observed (read) by a consumer in a cheap and easy way. Further, it is an object to provide an apparatus and a method that are capable to reliably detect in a cheap and easy way how many consumers (persons) observe (read) a publication.

The above objects respectively are solved by the combination of features of the independent claims. Preferred embodiments are defined in the dependent claims.

Accordingly, the present invention is directed to a loyalty program for consumers of a medium (e.g. television viewers or radio listeners). Specifically, the present invention is directed to a method for detecting and rewarding a consumer of a medium who observes (e.g. watches or listens to) a program over a channel of a television or radio.

This method includes the steps of: assigning a value to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a specified channel or station of a plurality of channels or stations; receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified program or the specified time slot that the consumer (viewer or listener) observed or intends to observe; storing the assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data reflective of the specified program or the data reflective of the specified time slot in a consumer account; and interacting with the consumer.
In particular, the interaction with the consumer is based upon: the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; the data reflective of the specified program; the data reflective of the specified time slot; the sum of all observing time (e.g. viewing time or listening time); the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period; the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; and/or a specified portion of a stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

According to an embodiment, the method further comprises a step of communication with the consumer in real time. In this respect the term "real time" means, that communication is at least partially performed during a program or short after a program observed by the consumer. Another part of the communication with the consumer might be performed at any time.

According to an embodiment, said communication comprises requesting the consumer to contact the central data system within a limited short time period upon a request, wherein said request is sent during an actual program or after the end of the program. In this respect a short time period means maximum 60 minutes, preferably 15 minutes and most preferred 5 minutes. This contact can be to at least one of an automated system or a representative of the central data system, for example. Moreover, said contact can be at least one of directly via a communication network or indirectly by using a special set-top box or television being adapted for communication with the central data system. Said communication network can be hardwired or wireless. The
Internet or a telephone line or a data channel for wireless
communication (e.g. SMS channel) can be used as
communication network, for example. When using an
interactive remote control, for example, the consumer can
perform said indirect contact via a special set-top box or
television respectively radio.

According to an embodiment, said contact of the consumer
with the central data system, which is performed within a
limited short time period upon a request sent during the
program or after the end of the program comprises submit-
tting a consumer identification and a program identifica-
tion. Said consumer identification can be explicit (e.g. by
submitting an individual consumer ID-code) or implicit
(e.g. by recognizing a phone number or an IP-address of the
consumer or a serial number of a special set-top box of
television respectively radio used by the consumer for
contacting the central data system and by comparing said
recognized phone number or IP-address or serial number with
a database storing information with respect to the
consumer). Even said program identification can be explicit
(e.g. by submitting an individual program code contained in
the request submitted to the consumer during an actual
program or after the end of the program) or implicit (e.g.
by contacting an individual telephone number or IP-address
contained in the request submitted to the consumer).

The step of communicating with the consumer in real time
has the advantage, that the programs and channels re-
spectively stations that are observed by a consumer can be
monitored with increased accuracy. Moreover, the attention
of a consumer can be accounted for.
In one preferred and non-limiting embodiment of the present invention, the method further includes the step of offering to the consumer, by a central data system manager, a service, an item, a discount, a redemption, a coupon, a voucher, a non-cash benefit, an incentive, a ticket, an invitation, and/or an event. The offer is based upon the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; the data reflective of the specified program; the data reflective of the specified time slot; the sum of all observing time; the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period; the sum of all stored assigned values in a consumer account; a stored consumer status value; a consumer observing rating; a consumer status rating; and/or the specified portion of any of these values or sums.

The present invention is further directed to a system for detecting and rewarding a consumer who observes at least one program over a channel of the television or radio station. The system includes means for assigning a value to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a specified channel of a plurality of channels; means for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified program or the specified time slot that the consumer observed or intends to observe; means for storing the assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data reflective of the specified program or the data reflective of the specified time slot in a consumer account; and means for interacting with the consumer based upon various values, collected data, sums, averages or specified portions of these values and sums.
According to an embodiment the system further comprises a communicator for communicating with the consumer in real time. This means, that the communicator is adapted to perform at least a part of the communication with the consumer during a program or short after a program observed by the consumer. Another part of the communication with the consumer might be performed at any time. It is obvious that the communicator preferably is adapted to communicate with a huge (e.g. more than 100) number of consumers at the same time. The communicator can be an Internet-Server (and thus automated system) or a call-center (and thus representative), for example.

According to an embodiment, said communicator automatically controls a sender for broadcasting the program to the consumer in a way that a message, requesting the consumer to contact the communicator within a limited short time period upon sending the message, is sent. Said message can be faded into an actual program or sent separately after the end of the program, for example. Furthermore, said message can be at least one of legible or audible. In this respect a short time period means maximum 60 minutes, preferably 15 minutes and most preferred 5 minutes. To allow this contact the communicator is connected to a conventional public or a specialized private communication network. Said communication network can be hardwired or wireless.

According to an embodiment the communicator further receives consumer identification and program identification via said communication network. Said consumer identification can be explicit (e.g. individual consumer ID-code) or implicit (e.g. by automatically detecting a phone number
or an IP-address of the consumer or a serial number of a special set-top box or television respectively radio used by the consumer). Even said program identification can be explicit (e.g. an individual program code that has been contained in the message sent to the consumer during the actual program or after the end of the program) or implicit (e.g. by receiving a reply of the consumer at an individual telephone number or an IP-address that has been contained in the message sent to the consumer).

Accordingly, the present invention is further directed to a method for reliably detecting and rewarding a consumer (reader) of a publication (said publication can be any printed medium like a newspaper, a journal, a flyer, or a book, for example). Furthermore, said publication can be distributed physically or electronically (e.g. via the Internet), for example.

This method includes the steps of: assigning a value to a specified publication or part of the publication (e.g. an article) of a plurality of publications or parts of the publication; communicating with the consumer for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the publication or part of the publication that was observed (read) by the consumer; storing the assigned value of the publication or part of the publication and/or the received data reflective of the publication or part of the publication in a consumer account; and interacting with the consumer.

In particular, the interaction with the consumer is based upon: the stored assigned value of the publication or part of the publication in the consumer account; the data re-
fective of the publication or part of the publication; the sum of all observed (read) publications or parts of the publication; the average number of observed publication or part of the publication of a consumer over a specified period; the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; and/or a specified portion of a stored assigned value, the sum of all observed publications or parts of the publication or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

According to an embodiment, said communicating step comprises requesting the consumer (reader) to contact the central data system by a corresponding request/message (that can be a text or a symbol, for example) included in the publication or printed next to a part of the publication. This contact can be to at least one of an automated system or a representative of the central data system, for example. Said contact can be established via a communication network, for example. Said communication network can be hardwired or wireless. The Internet or a telephone line or a data channel for wireless communication (e.g. SMS channel) can be used as communication network, for example. Said contact of the consumer with the central data system comprises submitting consumer identification and publication information identifying a corresponding publication or part of the publication that was observed by the consumer. Said consumer identification can be explicit (e.g. by submitting an individual consumer ID-code) or implicit (e.g. by recognizing a phone number or an IP-address of the consumer and by comparing said recognized phone number or an IP-address with a database storing information with respect to the consumer). Even said publication identification can be submitted in an explicit
way. Examples for the submission of the publication identification in an explicit way are e.g. submitting a reference code definitely identifying a corresponding publication or part of the publication, wherein said reference code can either be individual for each copy of the publication or part of the publication (and thus e.g. comprise a counter value of the copy) or identical for all identical publications or parts of publications. Alternatively, said publication identification might be submitted implicitly (e.g. by contacting an individual telephone number or IP-address contained in the request submitted to the consumer).

The consumer might be rewarded for communicating with the central data system in a similar way to the consumer of a program as described above.

It is obvious for a skilled person that the above method for detecting and rewarding a consumer of a program can be combined with the above method for detecting and rewarding a consumer of a publication.

The present invention is further directed to a system for detecting and rewarding a consumer (reader) who observes (reads) at least one publication or part of publication. The system includes means for assigning a value to a specified publication or part of publication of a plurality of publications or parts of publications; means for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified publication or part of publication that the consumer has observed (read); means for storing the assigned value of the specified publication or part of publication and/or the received data reflective of the
specified publication or part of publication in a consumer account; and means for interacting with the consumer based upon various values, collected data, sums, averages or specified portions of these values and sums.

According to an embodiment the system further comprises a communicator for communicating with the consumer. According to an embodiment, said communicator either automatically or upon request generates a request/message (e.g. a text or symbol) that is printed together with the publication or next to a part of a publication. In this respect, "next to" means on the same page or a following / preceding page. Said request asks the consumer to contact the communicator. To allow this contact the communicator is connected to a conventional public or a specialized private communication network. Said communication network can be hardwired or wireless as described above with respect to the consumer of a program.

According to an embodiment the communicator further receives consumer identification and publication identification via said communication network. Said consumer identification can be submitted either explicitly or implicitly as it is described above. Even said publication identification can be submitted either explicitly or implicitly as described above.

It is obvious for a skilled person that the above system for detecting and rewarding a consumer of a program can be combined with the above system for detecting and rewarding a consumer of a publication. In this respect, the means for assigning are adapted to both assign a value to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a
specified channel of a plurality of channels and a value to a specified publication or part of publication of a plurality of publications or parts of publications. Furthermore, the means for receiving are adapted to receive at the central data system both data reflective of the specified program or the specified time slot that the consumer observed or intends to observe and data reflective of the specified publication or part of publication that the consumer has observed (reader has read). Moreover, the means for storing are adapted to store both the assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data reflective of the specified program or the data reflective of the specified time slot in a consumer account and the assigned value of the specified publication or part of publication and/or the received data reflective of the specified publication or part of publication in the same or a different consumer account. And the means for interacting are adapted to interact with the consumer based upon various values, collected data, sums, averages or specified portions of these values and sums. Similar, the communicator is adapted to communicate with both the consumer of the program (viewer or listener of a television or radio program) and the consumer (reader) of a publication in the way described above.

The present invention, both as to its construction and its method of operation, together with the additional objects and advantages thereof, will best be understood from the following description of exemplary embodiments when read in connection with the accompanying drawings.
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a flow diagram of a method for rewarding a television viewer according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic view of one preferred and non-limiting embodiment of a method and system for rewarding a television viewer according to the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a front view of a television displaying a banner in a method and system for rewarding a television viewer according to the present invention; and

Fig. 4 is an information flow diagram showing the flow of information according to an embodiment of the inventive method.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

It is to be understood that the invention may assume various alternative variations and step sequences, except where expressly specified to the contrary. It is also to be understood that the specific devices and processes illustrated in the attached drawings, and described in the following specification, are simply exemplary and presently preferred embodiments of the invention.

The present invention is directed to a method for rewarding a consumer of a medium (e.g. a television viewer, radio listener or reader of a publication) and a system for implementing such a method.
In the following, the present invention is explained by example of a television viewer. Nevertheless, it is obvious for the skilled person that the invention alternatively or additionally might be applied to any consumer of a medium e.g. a listener of a radio station or a reader of a publication in the same or a similar way.

In general, the present invention provides a method 100 and system 10 that engenders loyalty between a viewer (consumer) 12 and a television 14 station or channel (provider of a medium) that the viewer 12 watches or intends to watch. The various preferred and non-limiting embodiments of the presently-invented method 100 and system 10 are illustrated in FIGs. 1-4.

In one embodiment, the method 100 according to the present invention is a method 100 for rewarding a television viewer 12 that views at least one program over a channel of a television 14. The method includes the steps of: assigning a value 16 to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a specified channel of a plurality of channels (Step 102); receiving, at a central data system 18, data 20 reflective of the specified program or the specified time slot that the viewer 12 watched or intends to watch (Step 104); storing the assigned value 16 of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data 20 reflective of the specified program or the data 20 reflective of the specified time slot in a viewer account 24 (Step 106); and interacting with a viewer 12 based upon: (i) the stored assigned value 16 of the specified program or specified time slot in the viewer account; (ii) the data 20 reflective of the specified program; (iii) the data 20 reflective of the specified time slot; (iv) the sum of all
viewing time; (V) the average viewing time of a viewer 12 over a specified period; (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values 16 in a viewer account 24; and/or (vii) a specified portion of the stored assigned value 16, the sum of all viewing time or the sum of all assigned values in the viewer account 24 (Step 108). See FIG. 1.

FIG. 2 illustrates one preferred and non-limiting embodiment of the system 10 and how the various entities in this embodiment interact. Further, the system 10 (and method 100) are used in connection with a television viewer 12 who views one, and typically multiple, programs over a channel of a television 14. In the system 10, a value is assigned to a specific program or a specific time slot of a specified channel, thereby providing an assigned value 16 for this specified program or time slot.

At this point, the viewer 12 may begin watching, have watched or may intend to watch a specific program or time slot on the channel on the television 14. Accordingly, a central data system 18 receives data 20 that is reflective of this specified program or specified time slot. Further, this data 20 and/or the assigned value 16 is stored in the central data system 18. Finally, a central data system manager 22 interacts with the viewer 12 based upon the stored assigned value 16 of the specified program or specified time slot, the data 20 reflective of the specified program or specified time slot, the sum of all viewing time, the average viewing time of the viewer 12 over a specified period, the sum of all stored assigned values 16 in a viewer account 24, and/or a specified portion of the stored assigned value 16, the sums, the averages, and the like.
In order to initiate the method 100 in the system 10, there is some communication or a form of contact between the viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22. In particular, and in one preferred and non-limiting embodiment, the viewer 12 communicates with a representative 26 or an automated system 28 of the central data system manager 22. This allows the central data system manager 22 to track the provision of the program or time slot over the channel of the television to the viewer 12. Once the communication is complete between. The viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22, the viewer account 24 can be appropriately modified using the supplied data 20. For example, if the viewer 12 indicates that he or she has watched, is watching or intends to watch a specified program to the representative 26 or automated system 28, the central data system manager 22 can then credit the viewer account 24 the appropriate assigned value 16.

It is also envisioned that the viewer 12 can interact directly with the television 14, such as through the use of an interactive remote control, which may be in communication with the central data system manager 22. Accordingly, no direct communication between the viewer 12 and central data system manager 22 would be required. Such an automated system 10 would allow for easier and quicker interaction between the viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22. The communication between the television 14 (or associated control box) and the central data system manager 22 could be hardwired or wireless.

Dependent upon the data 20 and other information in the viewer account 24 in the central data system 18, the central data system manager 22 can make certain offers to a
viewer 12. For example, the central data system manager 22 may offer to the viewer 12 a service, an item, a discount, a redemption, a coupon, a voucher, a non-cash benefit, an incentive, a ticket, an invitation, an event, and the like. The type, quality and value of the offer is based upon the information available to the central data system manager 22 regarding the viewer account 24. In particular, the offer can be based upon: the stored assigned value 16 of a specified program or specified time slot in the viewer account 24; the data 20 reflective of the specified program; the data 20 reflective of the specified time slot; the sum of all viewing time; the average viewing time of a viewer 12 over a specified period; the sum of all stored assigned values 16 in the viewer account 24; a stored viewer status value 38; a viewer viewing rating 30; a viewer status rating 32; and/or a specified portion of these values, sums, averages, and the like. In one embodiment, the offer is a coupon or voucher, such as an entry ticket for an event (the cinema, the zoo and the like), which can be downloaded from the Internet. For example, in order to initiate the download, the viewer 12 appropriately identifies himself or herself on a website.

It is envisioned that the viewer 12 can interact with the system 10 after registration with the system 10 or the central data system manager 22. Initial registration may be accomplished via any normal means of communication, such as by telephone, by Internet, by e-mail, by mail, through the television 14, and the like. For example, registration forms may be available at various cooperating entities. Once registered, the viewer account 24 is created in the central data system 18, and the viewer 12 can begin
accruing or accumulating values 16 and data 20 in the viewer account 24.

In one preferred and non-limiting embodiment, in order to accrue assigned values 16 in the viewer account 24, the viewer 12 calls a specific telephone number or logs on to a specific website, which has been identified as a viewer contact point. For example, when using the automated system 28, a voice may prompt the viewer 12 to identify himself or herself. Once appropriately identified, the viewer 12 will identify the specified program or specified time slot that the viewer 12 intends to watch, is watching or has watched. Such information may be entered via a voice recognition program, and all such entries will be saved in the viewer account 24 in the central data system 18.

In addition to the accrual of assigned values 16 or compilation of data 20 in the viewer account 24, the viewer 12 may be assigned a viewer viewing rating 30 or a viewer status rating 32. In one embodiment, the viewer viewing rating 30 is dependent upon the frequency of which the viewer 12 engages in the activity of watching television 14. The viewer viewing rating 30 will increase or otherwise change, based upon the viewer's 12 increased television 14 viewing habits. Similarly, the viewer 12 may be assigned the viewer status rating 32 indicative of the viewer's 12 status within the system 10 or program. An increased or elevated viewer status rating 32 will indicate to the system 10 that the viewer 12 deserves additional or upgraded offers, as discussed above. The viewer viewing rating 30 or the viewer status rating 32 may be based upon any of the values, averages and sums discussed above. However, the viewer viewing rating 30 is typically based
upon either the sum of all viewing time or the average viewing time of a viewer over a specified period, while the viewer status rating is typically dependent upon the sum of all stored assigned values 16 or other viewer status value 38 in the viewer account 24.

One benefit of the method 100 and system 10 of the present invention is the flow of data and information between the viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22. Accordingly, additional personal data may be collected in the central data system 18 (and specifically in the viewer account 24) by the central data system manager 22. Based upon such data, a viewer profile 34 can be established in a central data system 18, and this profile 34 is associated with the viewer account 24. Such collected data may take many forms. For example, the data collected may be last name, first name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, gender, age, occupation, television program preference, hobby, interests, salary, available income, household data, credit card data, purchase data, purchase location, purchased item data, purchased service data, sales volume, transaction data and personal data. Some or all of this information can be used in establishing the user's or a viewer's 12 profile 34. Furthermore, using this data and the profile 34, the central data system manager 22 can provide improved and targeted offers to the viewer 12 in the system 10.

In order to facilitate appropriate and secure communication between the viewer 12 and the representative 26 and/or automated system 28, the viewer 12 may be assigned a viewer identification and/or a viewer password. The viewer identification and viewer password can be provided to the
viewer 12, and then used in all future communications between the viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22. For example, the viewer identification and viewer password can be used when the viewer 12 is interacting with the system 10 and identifying the specified program or time slot that the viewer 12 is watching, has watched or intends to watch. In addition, the viewer identification and viewer password can be used on an affiliated website associated with the system 10.

In one preferred and non-limiting embodiment of the present invention, a specified program or specified time slot is assigned a specified program or specified time slot identification 50. It is this identification 50 that is provided over the television 14 to the viewer 12, such that the viewer 12 can interact with the central data system manager 22 regarding his or her viewing habits. This identification 50 can be a number, a letter, a numeric value, an alphanumercial value, or the like. As seen in FIG. 3, the identification 50 is presented in a banner 52, which extends across the bottom portion of the screen of the television 14. In this example, the banner 52 includes a logo portion 54, which identifies the central data system manager 22. In addition, the banner 52 may include an advertisement portion 56, as well as a message portion 58. The advertisement portion 56 provides the central data system manager 22 with advertising possibilities, as well as advertising possibilities for any affiliated trade partners or related entities. Further, the message portion 58 provides an area where the central data system manager 22 can provide messages to the viewer 12, such as an indication that the viewer 12 should communicate with the central data system manager 22, indicate the identification.
50 and earn or accrue assigned value 16 in the viewer account 24.

In this respect, the central data system manager 22 further comprises a communicator for communicating with the viewer 12 in real time. In Figure 2, the communicator corresponds to both the representative 26 and the automated system 28. This means, that the communicator is connected to a public communication network (in the present embodiment a telephone network) adapted to perform at least a part of the communication with the viewer during a program or short after a program watched by the viewer 12. Nevertheless the communication with the viewer is not completely restricted to a certain time period or kind of communication network. In FIG. 2, the communicator is represented by the automated system 28 and adapted to communicate with a huge (e.g. 100) number of viewers 12 at the same time.

Said communicator automatically controls a sender (not shown) for broadcasting the program to the viewer 12 in a away, that the above banner 52 requesting the viewer to contact the central data system manager 22 within a limited short time period upon sending the banner 22 (request/message), is sent. In the above example, said banner 52 is a text message that is faded into the actual program. Alternatively, said banner 52 might be replaced by an audible message or a combined readable / audible message. Further alternatively, said banner can be replaced by a message sent separately after the end of the program, for example. Moreover, in the present example, said limited short time period is 15 minutes after sending of the banner 52.
The communicator further receives a phone call of a viewer 12 and automatically detects viewer identification and a program identification sent by the viewer 12 via a communication network. In the present embodiment, said viewer identification automatically is detected by reading a phone number of the calling viewer 12 using a CLIP (Calling Line Identification Presentation) function of the communication network. The program identification automatically is detected by receiving the call of the viewer at a certain individual telephone number. This individual telephone number corresponds to the identification 50 contained in the banner 52 and has been allocated to said program. Thus, the transmission of both the viewer identification and the program identification is very comfortable for a viewer. Since ringing is sufficient to transmit said information, it is not even necessary to initiate a telephone conversation. Thus, the viewer 12 does not even have to pay for the transmission of the information.

The transmission of the viewer identification and the program identification is not limited to the above. Alternatively, one or both of the above identifications can be transmitted explicitly by using an individual viewer identification code respectively a program identification code, for example. Thus the identification 50 contained on the banner 52 might comprise a code that has to be transmitted by the viewer 12 to the central data system manager 22. Further alternatively, the above-described interactive remote control might be used by the viewer 12 to transmit the respective identification code. In this case, a serial number of the remote control might be used as viewer identification, for example.
Although usage of the automated system 28 has been described above, it is obvious that a representative 26 might implement the communicator.

Returning to FIG. 2, and as discussed above, the viewer 12 may be assigned a viewer viewing rating 30. In one embodiment, and based upon this viewer viewing rating 30, the viewer 12 is only permitted to accrue a certain amount of assigned values 16 in the viewer account 24. Therefore, the more often the viewer 12 views a specified program, time slot or channel, the resulting increased viewer viewing rating 30 allows for more value 16 to be accumulated in the viewer account 24, which translates into increased and better offers.

It is also envisioned that the viewer 12 can be assigned to a specific membership level 36. For example, at initial registration, the viewer 12 would be assigned the lowest membership level 36, but based upon the viewer 12 data, the information or data in the viewer account 24, the viewer viewing habits or other interactions, the membership level 36 can increase, allowing the viewer 12 to accumulate additional value and receive increased offers. The membership level 36 may be associated with a number, a color, a symbol, an alphanumeric symbol, a label, a word, a term, or the like.

In one preferred and non-limiting embodiment of the present invention, a viewer status value 38 can be accrued in the viewer account 24. The viewer status value 38 in the viewer account 24 may be based upon the viewer's 12 interaction in other non-television media. The viewer status value 38 can
be accrued, and there is additional interaction between the viewer 12 and the central data system manager 22 based upon the accrued value. For example, the non-television media may be a video, a box office movie, a newspaper, a magazine, a book, a document, a website, or the like.

In one embodiment, based upon the accrued viewer status value 38 in the viewer account 24 an affiliated trade partner 40 may make additional, subsequent or supplementary offers to the viewer 12. The affiliated trade partner 40 would be associated with and in communication with the central data system manager 22. As with the central data system manager 22, the affiliated trade partner 40 could offer the viewer 12 a service, an item, a discount, a redemption, a coupon, a voucher, a non-cash benefit, an incentive, a ticket, an invitation, an even or other rewards or benefits. The trade partner 40 may be a merchant, a company, a website, a seller, a reseller, or other entity affiliated with the central data system manager 22.

In a further embodiment, the accumulated viewer status value 38 can be used for moving or elevating to a higher viewer status rating 32 or membership level 36. Accordingly, the viewer status value 38 would not be used directly for any redemption, discount, coupon, and the like. However, in yet another embodiment, the accumulated viewer status value 38 would be redeemable as discussed above in connection with the assigned value 16. For example, the accumulated assigned value 16 and the viewer status value 38 could be used in making various offers by the central data system manager 22 to the viewer 12.
In another embodiment, the viewer 12 is provided with a viewer account card 42 associated with the viewer account 24. It is envisioned that the viewer 12 can use this card 42 in connection with interactions with the central data system manager 22 and/or any of the affiliated trade partners 40. In addition, the card 42 can be associated with a certain membership level 36, viewer viewing rating 30, and/or viewer status rating 32. For example, the cards 42 can be associated with a membership level 36, which are blue, silver and gold. The blue card 42 would be issued directly following registration. All other cards 42 will be issued to viewer 12 after the relevant higher level 36 has been reached. The viewer status rating 32, membership level 36 and/or card 42 level can be associated with various aspects of the viewer's 12 profile. For example, special cards may be available or offered for persons over a certain age, for example over 50 years, and rechargeable cards 42 can be offered for children. Various targeted viewer status ratings 32 and membership levels 36 are envisioned for providing specific benefits to various classes of viewers 12.

With respect to card validity, these cards 42 may only be valid according to the relevant level of observed programs for one year after issuance. For example, a blue level card 42 may be issued in the year 2005, but if the viewer 12 does not reach the next level, then the blue card 42 will be maintained in 2006 as well. Accordingly, no new card 42 will be issued. If the viewer 12 cannot validate his or her level in 2006, the card 42 will automatically expire after twelve months. If the viewer 12 reaches the next level in 2006, then he or she will automatically receive the silver or gold card, which he or she has to validate until 2007.
Similarly, if he or she cannot validate this level in 2007, then the card 42 will, in turn, expire after twelve months. The viewer 12 will then receive the card 42, which relates to the current accrued value 16 in the viewer account 24.

In another embodiment, the viewer account card 42 can be replaced by a barcode, an identification number or the like, which is associated with the viewer account. As the viewer account card 42, the barcode or identification number can be used for interactions of the user with the central data system manager 22 and/or any of the affiliated trade partners 40.

In creating the profile 34 for the viewer account 24 in the central data system 18, and as discussed above, different User data can be obtained. In addition, when a viewer 12 is interacting with an affiliated trade partner 40, such as a vendor or merchant, additional purchase transaction data can be gathered at the point of sale. This information, in turn, can be used to accrue viewer status value 38 in the viewer account 24.

EXAMPLE

In one example of the presently-invented method 100 and system 10, and in operation, a central data system manager 22 logo, identification 50 (in the form of a n-digit (n being a natural number greater than one) e.g. four digit number) and a message portion 58 (in the form of a request to "call now") are displayed on the television 14 screen for 15 seconds on the upper or lower screen margin. The telephone number of the central data system manager 22 is
provided either on the screen or on the card 42 provided to the viewer 12.

The viewer then contacts the representative 26 or automated system 28, such as by telephone, e-mail, Internet, SMS, an interactive remote control and the like, and states the correct numerical sequence or identification 50. The viewer 12 has a 15-minute time limit open to make this communication, and all of the digits of the identification 50 must be correct to be awarded the assigned value 16 of the program or time slot. In general, the viewer 12 collects points (in the form of an accrued assigned value 16) in the viewer account 24. The programs or time slots for which the viewer 12 can collect points (assigned values 16) should be spread throughout the daily television 14 schedule. This assists the central data system manager 22 in gathering more precise and representative data 20 regarding viewing habits. One example of such a schedule is as follows:

Night Time
11:00 p.m. - 6:00 a.m. one show with assigned value 16

Morning Time
6:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. one show with assigned value 16

Day Time
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. one show with assigned value 16

Access Time
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. one show with assigned value 16

Prime Time
8:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. two shows with assigned value 16

In order to reward the viewer 12 for more frequent viewing of the a specified channel, in this example, the viewer viewing rating 30 is used to determined how many assigned
values 16 or how much accrued assigned value 16 can be obtained by the viewer 12 on a daily basis. One example of such a viewer viewing rating 30 system is as follows:

Each program or time slot has an assigned value of 10 points.

Frequent Viewer views television for at least 400 minutes per day:
Can collect an assigned value 16 a maximum of 6 times per day = 60 points.
Average Viewer views television for at least 200 minutes per day:
Can collect an assigned value 16 a maximum of 3 times per day = 30 points.
Occasional Viewer views television for at least 100 minutes per day:
Can collect an assigned value 16 a maximum of 1 time per day = 10 points.

In order to upgrade a viewer's 12 viewer status rating 32 or membership level 36, in this example, the viewer 12 collects viewer status values 38 for certain activities. These viewer status values 38 are "status" points, which cannot be directly redeemed, but instead are credited towards a higher viewer status rating 32 or membership level 36. One example of an activity that awards the viewer 12 with viewer status values 38 is purchases made at an affiliated trade partner 40. For each monetary increment spent at the trade partner 40, the viewer 12 receives a status point or a viewer status value 38. In this example, if the viewer 12 would make all of his or her purchases at
one of the affiliated trade partner 40, the viewer 12 could accrue up to 10,000 status points.

In this example, the following model is arrived at: a maximum of 21,900 points can be earned watching television 14; a maximum of 10,000 points can be earned from the affiliated trade partners 40; and a grand total of 31,900 points can be earned. The following viewer status ratings 32 or membership levels 36 can be used:
Blue 1,500 points per year
Silver 3,000 points per year
Gold 6,000 points per year

It is obvious that there could be more/less than three membership levels. Alternatively, the system could also be designed with only one membership level, while the rewarding of the viewer is based on the total amount of points the consumer accumulates in a certain period of time.

The television used in the above embodiment can be a conventional stationary or mobile television or even integrated into a mobile phone or organizer, for example. According to an alternative embodiment the program might not be a television program but a radio program broadcast by a radio station. In this case, the above "banner" would be an audible message (requesting the listener to communicate with the central data system manager) comprised in the radio program. Moreover, both the television and the radio program might be broadcast wired or wireless or even through the Internet, for example.
In addition, viewer status values 38 can be collected by using the above described system by reading daily newspapers, magazines, books or even an individual part of a publication (e.g. an article or advertisement). In this respect, the publication might be distributed either physically (e.g. sold at a kiosk) or electronically (e.g. published on a website in the Internet or submitted by a SMS or MMS to a mobile phone).

In this example, a n-digit (e.g. four-digit) code will be printed in the newspaper (or respective publication). If the publication is distributed via the Internet the n-digit code preferably is changed on a daily basis to avoid abuse.

A value (corresponding to the value 16) is assigned to said n-digit code and thus to a specified publication or part of publication. The assigned value is stored in the central data system 18. By a text message accompanying the n-digit code the viewer (reader/consumer) 12 is asked to communicate with the central data system manager 22. Communication is performed by using the above described communicator in the above described way. Thus, the viewer (reader) submits his viewer identification and publication information identifying a corresponding publication or part of the publication that was read by the viewer. To guarantee that the same n-digit code is used only once by a respective viewer (reader), the n-digit code can either be extended e.g. by an additional counter value identifying each individual copy of the publication. In this case, the central data system manager automatically monitors the received codes and guarantees that each code is used only once. Alternatively, the central data system manager automatically monitors the submitted viewer identifications.
together with the submitted codes to guarantee that an individual viewer (reader) only submits each n-digit code once.

In case viewer status values 38 are only collected by reading publications, no real time functionality for communicating with the viewer has to be provided.

Based upon the viewer's 12 accrued assigned values 16 in the viewer account 24, the central data system manager 22 may offer the viewer 12 special opportunities and activities, such as invitations to television shows, trips to events (such as film openings or award ceremonies), special merchandising and product give-aways, and other specific television- and lifestyle-related product discounts.

The viewer 12 can receive non-cash benefits or incentives from the affiliated trade partners 40, which may match the viewer status rating 32 or membership level 36. In a transaction with a trade partner 40, the viewer 12 may simply display his or her card 42. The card 42 is read into the trade partner 40 system, and the viewer 12 receives the appropriate points, values, benefits, incentives or awards matching the accumulated levels. The card 42 may be a combination card with a barcode, digit code and magnetic strip. The card 42 can then be used by all trade partners 40 with existing hardware.

In this manner, the present invention provides a method 100 and system 10 that creates a viewer 12 loyalty program, which rewards viewers 12 for watching a specific channel of television 14. This method 100 and system 10 is
advantageous to the viewer 12, the central data system manager 22, the television station and the trade partners 40. The viewer 12 receives rewards for watching television, such as items, services, discounts and redemptions. The television station receives increased income, increased market share, increased viewer 12 loyalty and more accurate data regarding their viewing public. The trade partners receive increased income, increased marketing ability, increased loyalty and better advertising. In all, the presently-invented method 100 and system 10 provides a mutual beneficial and loyal relationship between the participating parties.

This invention has been described with reference to the preferred embodiments. Obvious modifications and alterations will occur to others upon reading and understanding the preceding detailed description. It is intended that the invention be construed as including all such modifications and alterations.
CLAIMS

1. Method for detecting a consumer of a medium including the steps of:
assigning a value to a specified medium or part of the medium of a plurality of media or parts of the medium; communicating with the consumer for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the medium or part of the medium that was observed by the consumer; and
storing the assigned value of the medium or part of the medium and/or the received data reflective of the medium or part of the medium in a consumer account.

2. Method according to claim 1, wherein said communicating step comprises requesting the consumer to contact the central data system by a corresponding request included in the medium or temporarily or spatially related to the medium.

3. Method according to claim 2, wherein said contact is established via a communication network and comprises submitting explicitly or implicitly consumer identification identifying the consumer and medium information identifying a corresponding medium or part of the medium that was observed by the consumer.

4. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 3, wherein the medium is at least one of a telecast, a radio transmission, a publication and part of a publication, and
wherein the consumer is at least one of a television viewer, a radio listener and reader of the publication or part of the publication.
5. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 4, further comprising the step of interacting with the consumer based upon at least one of:
(i) the stored assigned value of the specified medium or specified time slot in the consumer account;
(ii) the data reflective of the specified medium;
(iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot;
(iv) the sum of all observing time;
(v) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period;
(vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; and
(vii) a specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account

6. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 5 for rewarding a television consumer who views at least one program over a channel of a television, the method further comprising the steps of:
- assigning a value to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a specified channel of a plurality of channels;
- receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified program or the specified time slot that the consumer watched or intends to watch;
- storing the assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data reflective of the specified program or the data reflective of the specified time slot in a consumer account; and
- interacting with the consumer based upon at least one of:
  (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account;
  (ii) the data reflective of the specified program;
  (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot;
  (iv) the sum of all observing time;
  (v) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period;
  (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; and
  (vii) a specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the receiving step comprises a communication between the consumer and at least one of a representative and an automated system of a central data system manager that tracks the provision of the at least one program over a channel of a television to the consumer.

8. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of offering, to the consumer by a central data system manager, at least one of a service, an item, a discount, a redemption, a coupon, a voucher, a non-cash benefit, an incentive, a ticket, an invitation and an event, based upon at least one of (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; (ii) the data reflective of the specified program; (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot; (iv) the sum of all observing time; (v) the average observing
time of a consumer over a specified period; (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; (vii) a stored consumer status value; (viii) a consumer observing rating; (ix) a consumer status rating; and (x) the specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

9. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of creating a consumer account in the central data system for at least one consumer.

10. The method any one of the claims 6 to 9, further comprising the step of assigning at least one of a consumer observing rating and a consumer status rating to the consumer account based upon at least one of (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; (ii) the data reflective of the specified program; (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot; (iv) the sum of all observing time; (v) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period; (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; (vii) a stored consumer status value; and (viii) a specified portion of the stored assigned value, the stored consumer status value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

11. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
   collecting data regarding the consumer in central data system; establishing a consumer profile in the central data system based upon the collected data;
and associating the consumer profile with the consumer account.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the collected data is at least one of last name, first name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, gender, age, occupation, television program preference, hobby, interest, salary, available income, household data, credit card data, purchase data, purchase location, purchased item data, purchased service data, sales volume, transaction data and personal data.

13. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
   assigning at least one of a consumer identification and a consumer password to a specified consumer;
   providing the specified consumer with at least one of the consumer identification and the consumer password; and communicating, by the consumer to a central data system manager, at least one of the consumer identification and the consumer password.

14. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
   - assigning a specified program or specified time slot identification; and
   - providing the specified program or specified time slot identification to the consumer via the television.

15. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
- accruing the stored assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot in the consumer account; and
- limiting the accruable value based upon the consumer rating.

16. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
- assigning a consumer status rating based upon a consumer status value; and
- interacting with the consumer based upon the consumer status rating.

17. The method of one of the claims 6 or 16, wherein the consumer status value is at least one of a point value, a numeric value and an alphanumerical value.

18. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of assigning a membership level based upon at least one of (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; (ii) the data reflective of the specified program; (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot; (iv) the sum of all observing time; (V) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period; (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; (vii) a stored consumer status value; (viii) the consumer observing rating; (ix) a consumer status rating; (X) the specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account; and (xi) a portion of consumer data.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein the membership level is associated with at least one of a number, a color, a symbol, an alphanumeric symbol, a label, a word and a term.

20. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
- storing at least one of an assigned value and a consumer status value in the consumer account based upon the consumer's interaction in other non-television media;
- accruing the assigned value or consumer status value in the consumer account;
and
- interacting with the consumer based upon the accrued value.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the non-television media is at least one of a video, a box office movie, a newspaper, a magazine, a book, a document and a web site.

22. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of offering, to the consumer by an affiliated trade partner, at least one of a service, an item, a discount, a redemption, a coupon, a voucher, a non-cash benefit, an incentive, a ticket, an invitation and an event, based upon at least one of (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account; (ii) the data reflective of the specified program; (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot; (iv) the sum of all observing time; (v) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period; (vi) the
sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account; (vii) a stored consumer status value; (viii) a consumer observing rating; (ix) a consumer status rating; and (x) the specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the affiliated trade partner is at least one of a merchant, a company, a web site, a seller, a reseller and an entity affiliated with the central data system manager.

24. The method of claim 6, further comprising the step of providing a consumer account card to the consumer, wherein the card is associated with the consumer account of the consumer.

25. System for detecting and rewarding a consumer who observes at least one medium or part of medium including:
means for assigning a value to a specified medium or part of medium of a plurality of media or parts of medium;
means for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified medium or part of medium that the consumer has observed; and
means for storing the assigned value of the specified medium or part of medium and/or the received data reflective of the specified medium or part of medium in a consumer account.

26. System according to claim 25, wherein the system further comprises a communicator for communicating with the consumer, wherein said communicator gene-
rates a request that is output together with the medium or temporarily or spatially related to the medium.

27. System according to claim 26, wherein the communicator is connected to a communication network and adapted to receive explicit or implicit consumer identification and medium identification via said communication network.

28. System according to one of the claims 25 to 27, wherein the medium is at least one of a telecast, a radio transmission, a publication and a part of a publication, and wherein the consumer is at least one of a television viewer, a radio listener and reader of the publication or part of the publication.

29. System according to one of the claims 25 to 28, wherein the system further comprises means for interacting with the consumer based upon various values, collected data, sums, averages or specified portions of these values and sums.

30. System according to one of the claims 25 to 29 for rewarding a television consumer who views at least one program over a channel of a television, the system further comprising: - means for assigning a value to a specified program of a plurality of programs or a time slot of a specified channel of a plurality of channels; - means for receiving, at a central data system, data reflective of the specified program or the specified
time slot that the consumer watched or intends to watch;
- means for storing the assigned value of the specified program or the specified time slot, the data reflective of the specified program or the data reflective of the specified time slot in a consumer account; and
- means for interacting with the consumer based upon at least one of:
  (i) the stored assigned value of the specified program or specified time slot in the consumer account;
  (ii) the data reflective of the specified program;
  (iii) the data reflective of the specified time slot;
  (iv) the sum of all observing time;
  (v) the average observing time of a consumer over a specified period;
  (vi) the sum of all stored assigned values in the consumer account;
and
  (vii) a specified portion of the stored assigned value, the sum of all observing time or the sum of all assigned values in the consumer account.
FIG. 1

ASSIGNING A VALUE TO A SPECIFIED PROGRAM OF A PLURALITY OF PROGRAMS OR A TIME SLOT OF A SPECIFIED CHANNEL OF A PLURALITY OF CHANNELS

RECEIVING, AT A CENTRAL DATA SYSTEM, DATA REFLECTIVE OF THE SPECIFIED PROGRAM OR THE SPECIFIED TIME SLOT THAT THE VIEWER WATCHED OR INTENDS TO WATCH

STORING THE ASSIGNED VALUE OF THE SPECIFIED PROGRAM OR SPECIFIED TIME SLOT, THE DATA REFLECTIVE OF A SPECIFIED PROGRAM OR THE DATA REFLECTIVE OF A SPECIFIED TIME SLOT IN A VIEWER ACCOUNT

INTERACTING WITH THE VIEWER BASED UPON AT LEAST ONE OF: (I) THE STORED ASSIGNED VALUE OF THE SPECIFIED PROGRAM OR SPECIFIED TIME SLOT; (II) THE DATA REFLECTIVE OF THE SPECIFIED PROGRAM; (III) THE DATA REFLECTIVE OF THE SPECIFIED TIME SLOT; (IV) THE SUM OF ALL VIEWING TIME; (V) THE AVERAGE VIEWING TIME OF A VIEWER OVER A SPECIFIED PERIOD; (VI) THE SUM OF ALL ASSIGNED VALUES IN THE VIEWER ACCOUNT; AND (VII) A SPECIFIED PORTION OF THE STORED ASSIGNED VALUE, THE SUM OF ALL VIEWING TIME OR THE SUM OF ALL ASSIGNED VALUES IN THE VIEWER ACCOUNT
FIG. 4

Viewer (consumer)  

Television (provider)  

Instruction to broadcast banner  

15 Min.  

Central data system  

Representative / automated system (Communicator)  

Wait for contact  

Stop waiting

- Broadcasting of program  
- Broadcasting of banner  
- Sending of viewer identification and program identification  

(12)  
(14)  
(26, 28)  
(18)
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

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)

606F

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 database and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, IBM-TDB, INSPEC, COMPENDEX

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim No.</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>WO 02/079367 A (INTELLOCTY USA, INC; MARCEL, STEVEN, 0) 19 September 2002 (2002-09-19) abstract page 3, line 17 - page 5, line 19 page 7, line 6 - page 10, line 26</td>
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<td>X</td>
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

**A** document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

**E** earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

**L** document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

**O** document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

**P** document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

<T> later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

<T> 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

<T> document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

<T> document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

30 March 2006

Date of mailing of the international search report

06/04/2006

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5618 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-3040, Tx. 31 551 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Peelen, B
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abstract  
paragraphs [0024] - [0031]  
paragraphs [0088], [0089]  
paragraphs [0097] - [0099]  
paragraph [0184] | 1-30 |
the whole document | 1-30 |
the whole document | 1-30 |
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