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(71) Applicant(s):  
**Paythru Ltd**  
**(Incorporated in the United Kingdom)**  
**Bell Lane Office Village, Bell Lane, AMERSHAM,**  
**Bucks, HP6 6GL, United Kingdom**

(72) Inventor(s):  
**David Martin**

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service:  
**Bawden & Associates**  
**4 The Gatehouse, 2 High Street, HARPENDEN,**  
**Hertfordshire, AL5 2TH, United Kingdom**

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(56) Documents Cited:  
**None**

(58) Field of Search:  
 Other: **No search performed: Section 17(5)(b)**

(54) Title of the Invention: **System and method for online shopping**  
 Abstract Title: **System and method of providing sale offers**

(57) An Internet (12, fig. 1) merchant server (10) allows shopping from customers using client devices (14). The merchant server can generate an offer for one or more given goods at a predetermined price and make available a clickable link (22, fig. 2) on a display screen (18) indicating details of the offer. If a customer clicks the link the client device accesses an offer web page and the merchant server can place the goods into the shopping basket and automatically proceed to checkout at the predetermined price. The merchant server may also be able to provide normal shopping. Plural offers can preferably be made at the same time and individually serviced by providing at least as many offer URLs as there are offers. A text message facility (80, fig. 6) may be provided to allow the merchant server to send text messages, such as email messages, providing a displayed clickable link when the text message is opened. A corresponding method of providing sales offers includes the steps of: generating an offer involving one or more goods and a predetermined price; providing a URL specific to the offer; providing a link clickable screen display to a client device; and, in the event of a customer clicking the link, placing the items into a shopping basket and proceeding directly to checkout.

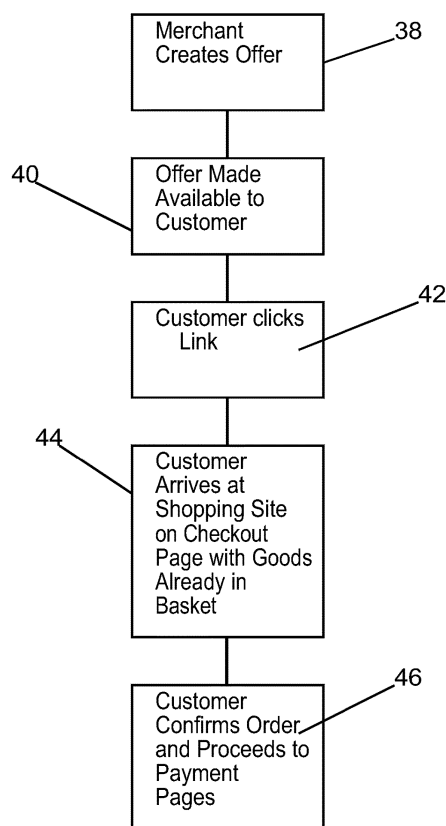


Figure 4

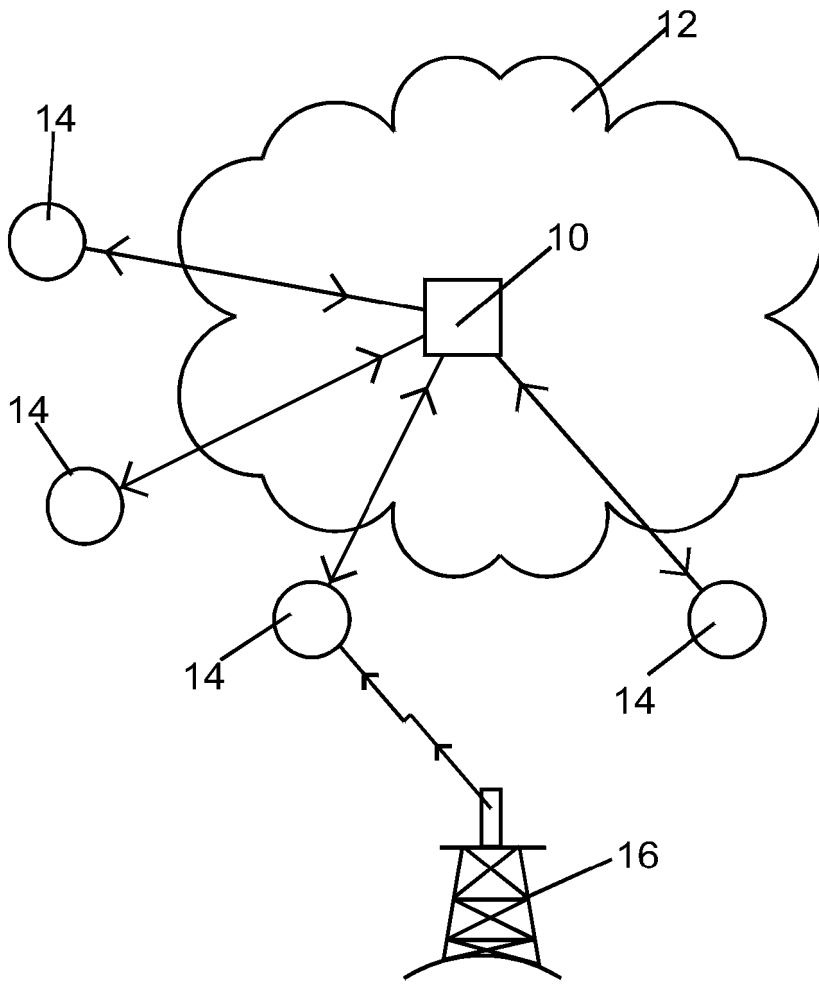


Figure 1

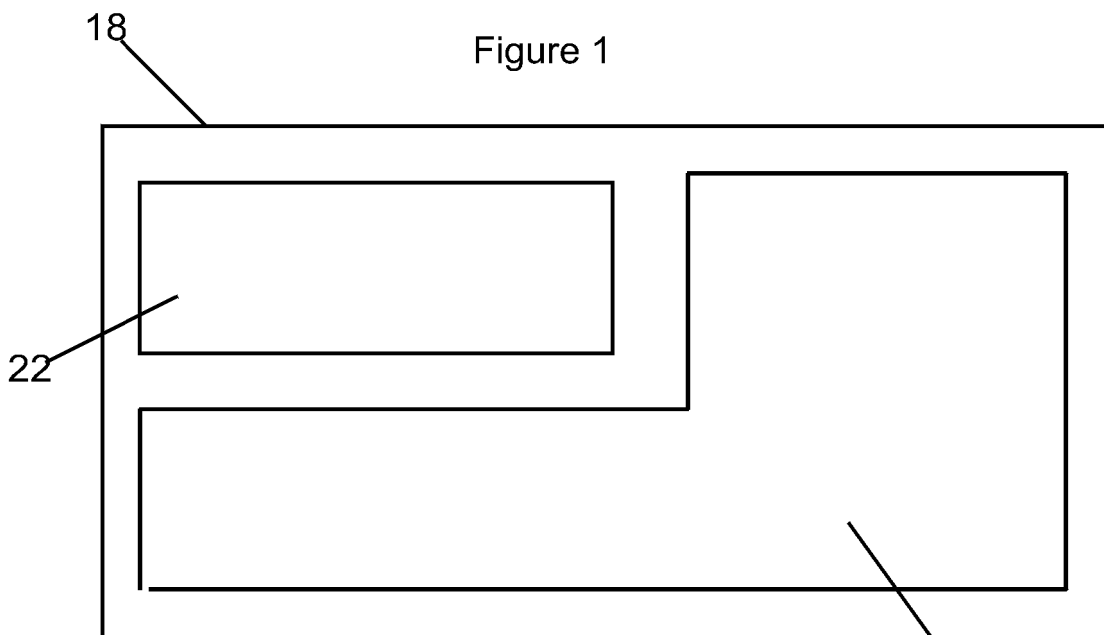


Figure 2

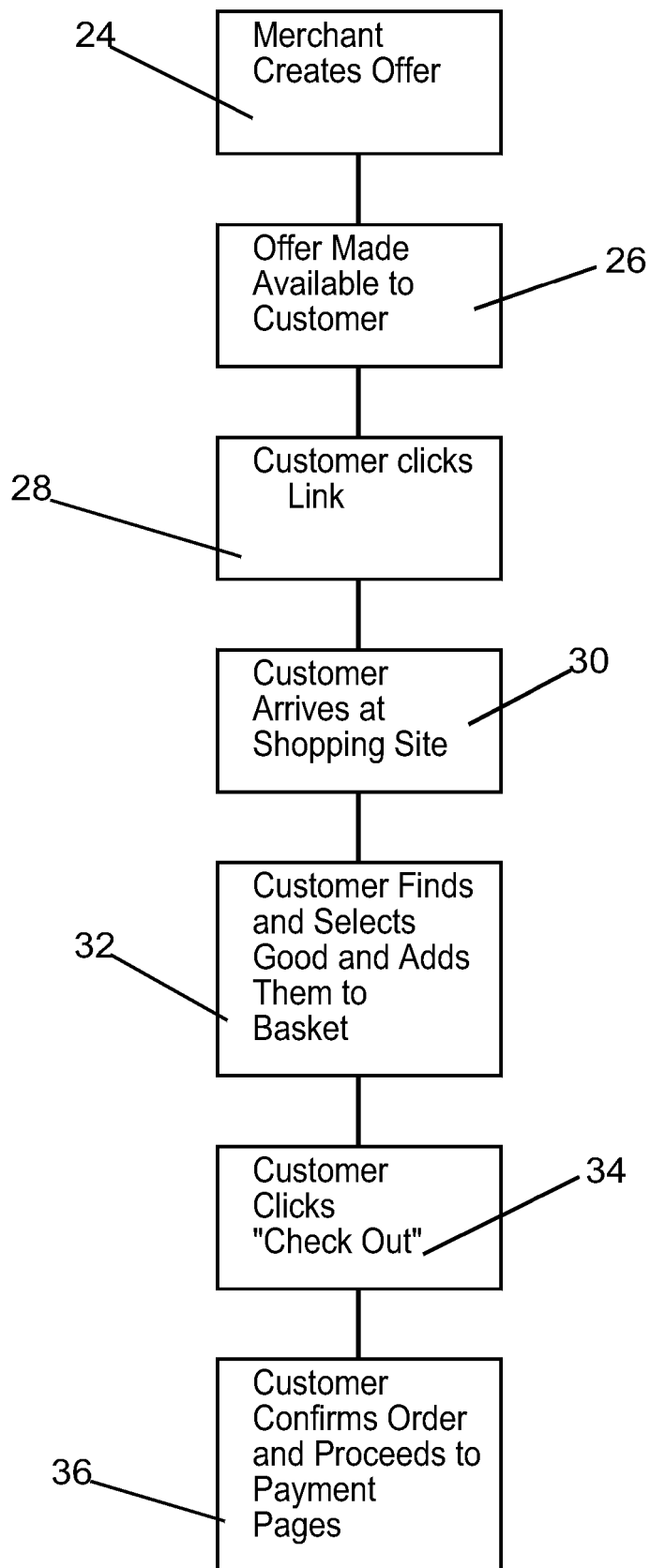


Figure 3

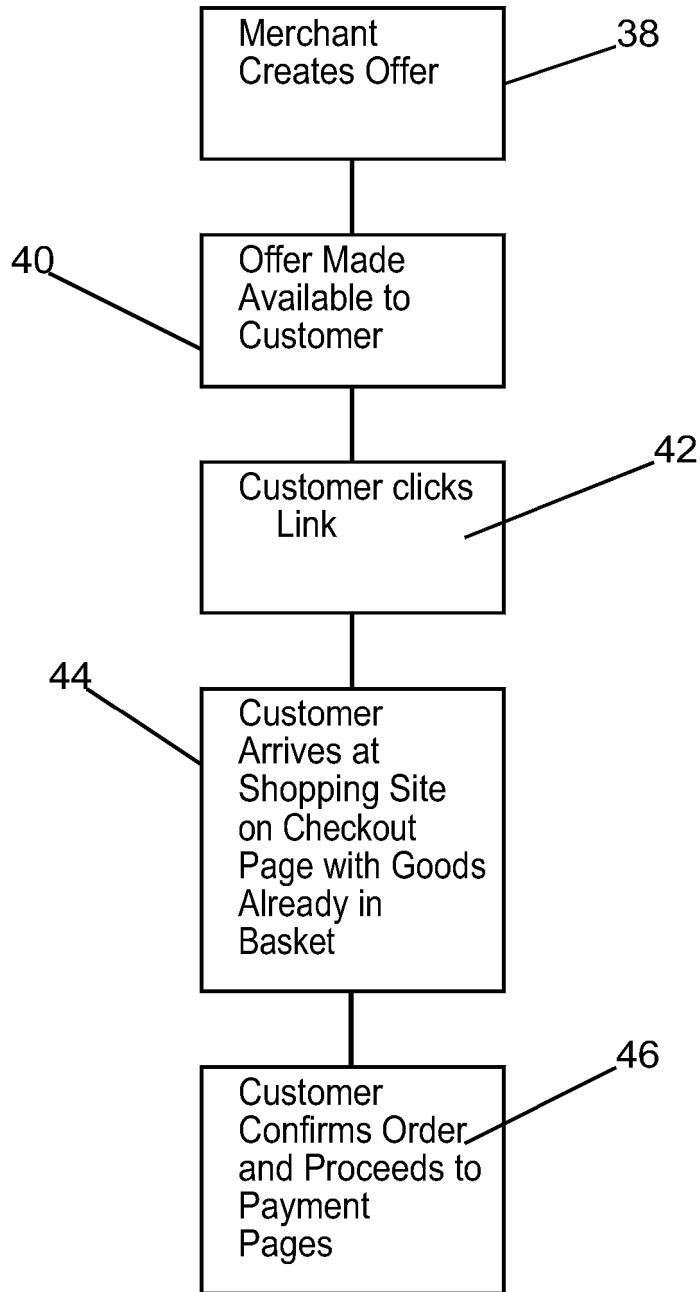


Figure 4

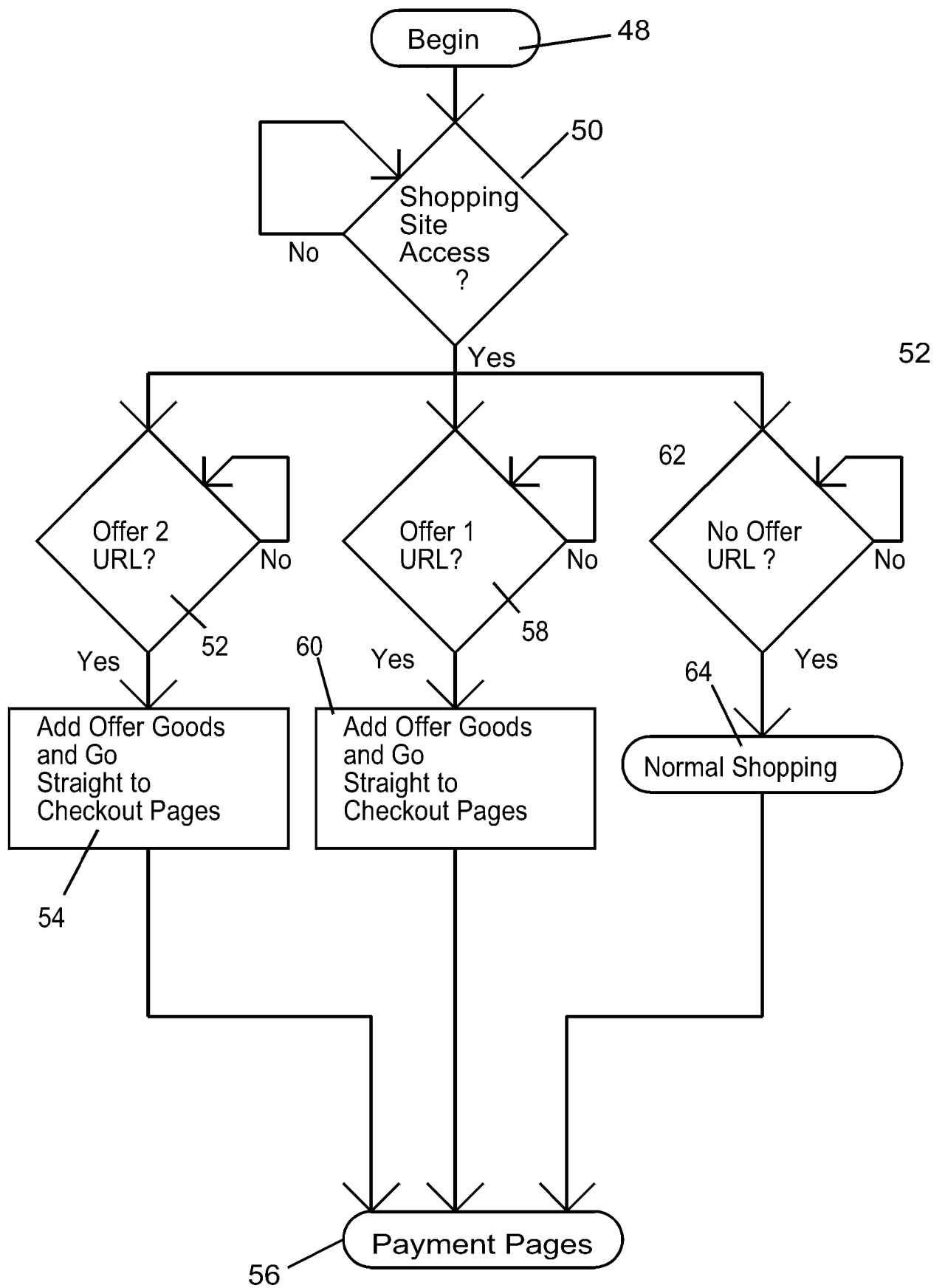


Figure 5

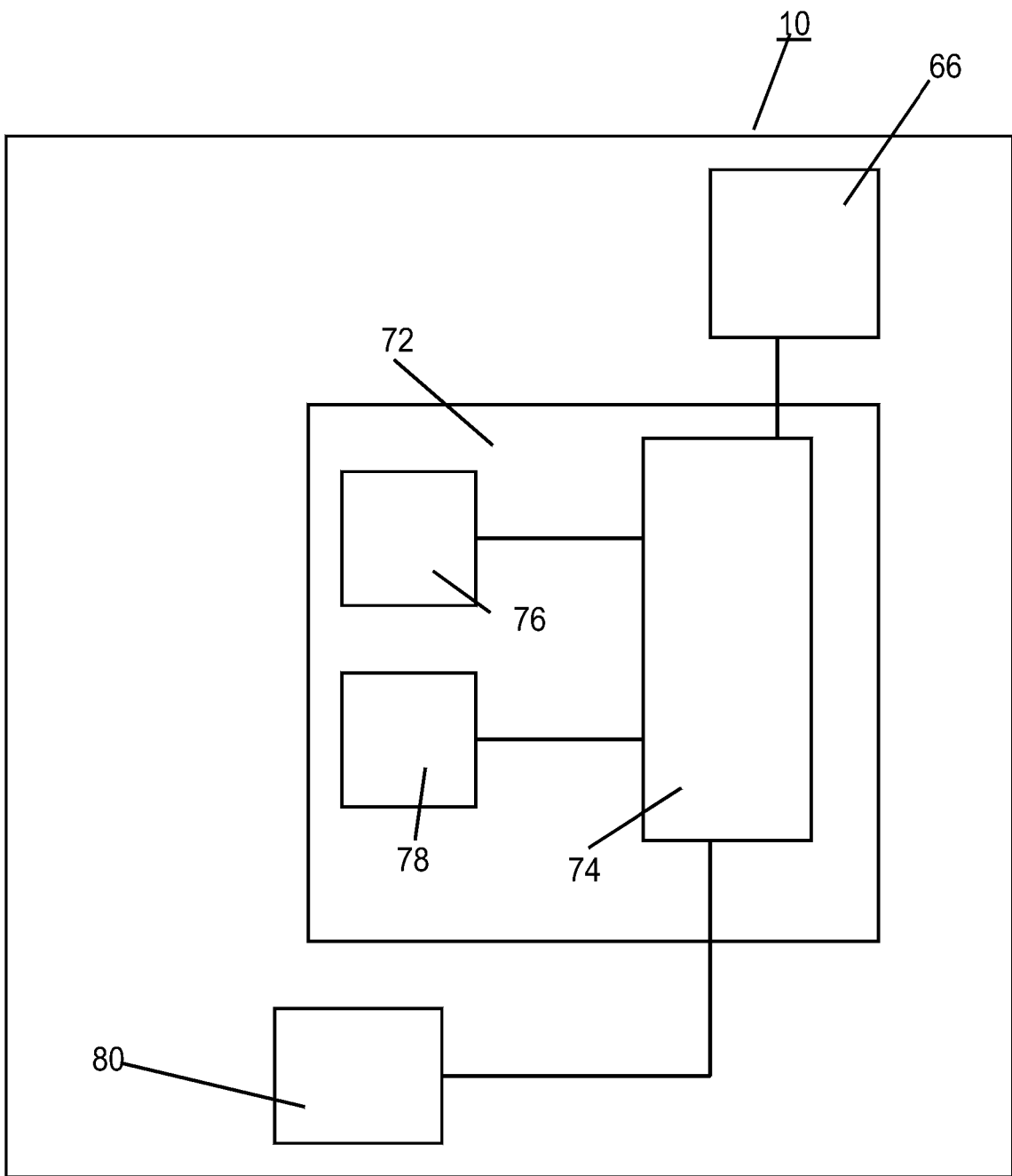


Figure 6

## System and Method for Online Shopping

### Field of the invention.

5 The present invention relates to Internet sales. The invention particularly relates to a method and system whereby special offers can be made which an Internet vendor (merchant) provides to potential customers from time to time.

### The prior art.

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In the operation of an online sales business, a merchant or vendor will often wish to make an offer. Offers can be targeted to particular groups, made as a reward, or generally made available across all potential customers.

15

The act of online selling and paying is well documented.

20

For example, Japanese Patent Application JP2009169977 discloses an electronic settlement method and system for enabling a user to obtain enough merchandise information on each merchandise and enabling a seller to provide an effective sales promotion activity. The system has a server for a sales site, an SNS (Social Networking Site) server linked to the sales site, and a plurality of terminals. The terminal posts public information to a service of the SNS server in accordance with an operation of a user. Point values corresponding to an SNS service are given to a user identifier of a user who posts the public information, and are added in accordance with the use of the SNS service. The SNS server transmits to the terminal a coupon for an amount equivalent to the point values. The terminal transmits the coupon to the server for a sales site and requests the purchase of merchandise disclosed in the sales site in accordance with an operation of the user. The server for a sales site subtracts the amount of the coupon from the price of the merchandise disclosed in the sales site and settles the sale of the merchandise.

30

International Patent Application WO2009059424 (A1) discloses a procedure that entails presenting to a customer, prospective customer, or other user in a sales environment utilizing an electronic ordering interface, an opportunity to receive, with a random or skill-based probability, an award in the form of a product, a service, or a money-saving discount.

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One preferred embodiment includes a computerized photo kiosk as a user electronic interface within the sales environment. Another preferred embodiment includes a computer accessing the Internet as a user interface within an online sales environment. The selection

process used to determine the award may be described to the user through an entertaining electronic game of chance or game of skill.

5 The present invention seeks to improve thereon by providing an adaptable offer sales process.

No acknowledgement of the above patent documents as anticipation for the present invention is here made.

## 10 **Summary of the Invention.**

According to a first aspect, the present invention consists in a network system operable to provide sale of offers to a purchasing public, the system comprising:

15 a merchant server, operable to generate an offer involving one or more goods at a predetermined price and to provide a link clickable screen display accessible to a client device, the link having a unique link address (URL) specific to the offer;

where

the merchant server comprises means operable to respond to customer access, including a shopping basket, and a checkout;

20 and

in the event of a customer clicking on the link clickable screen display, the merchant server means operable to respond to customer access is automatically operable to place the one or more goods into the shopping basket and is further operable automatically to proceed to checkout at the predetermined price.

25

According to a second aspect, the present invention consists in a method for providing sale offers to a purchasing public, involving the steps of:

a step of a network server generating an offer involving one or more goods and a predetermined price:

30 a step of providing a unique link address (URL) specific to the offer;

a step of providing a link clickable screen display to a client device;

in the event of a customer clicking the link clickable screen display, a step of the network server placing the one or more items into the shopping basket and proceeding directly to checkout at the predetermined price.

35

The invention also provides that the merchant server also can comprise means operable to provide normal shopping.



The invention also provides that the merchant server can also comprise:

means operable to generate more than one offer;

and

5 means operable to respond to a particular one of the more than one offer in response to a customer clicking a link address (URL) relating to that offer.

The invention further provides that the merchant server can comprise a main network modem and at least as many offer web pages as there are offers.

10

The invention yet further provides that the merchant server can comprise:

a merchant server processor with a customer service program accessible by a customer accessing a main network modem address;

and

15 one or more add-on program portions each responsive to access by a customer of a respective offer web page to add the goods of the prospective offer at the predetermined price of the prospective offer and to proceed directly to checkout in the customer service program.

## 20 **Brief Description of the Drawings**

The invention is further explained, by way of example, by the following description, to be read in conjunction with the appended drawings, in which:

25 Figure 1 shows a schematic block diagram of an exemplary environment in which the invention can be practised.

Figure 2 shows an exemplary screen display 18 that can be employed to initiate offer investigation and acceptance when shown on a client device.

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Figure 3 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating activities required for establishing a customer offer acceptance transaction according to the prior art.

35 Figure 4 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating the activities involved in access acceptance and payment for a vendor offer according to the present invention.

Figure 5 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating how a merchant server 10 shopping site can deal with customer access in accordance with the present invention.

and

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Figure 6 is a schematic diagram of exemplary contents of a merchant server 10.

### **Detailed Description**

10 Attention is drawn to figure 1. Figure 1 shows a schematic block diagram of an exemplary environment in which the invention can be practised.

A merchant server 10 is coupled for communication in the Internet 12. One or more portable or static client devices 14 are capable of establishing bidirectional communication with the  
15 merchant server 10. The client devices 14 include, but are not limited to: Internet enabled telephone devices; Wi-Fi (registered trademark) enabled telephone devices; and broadband, 3G, 4G, telephone network connected, and fibre optic connected portable and fixed computer devices of all kinds.

20 The client devices 14 can also receive email and other message communication through, in this example, a wireless telephone network connection via a telephone mast 16. Email and other message communications can also be received via an Internet 12 connection or via a local network connection, neither which is his shown that which are to be understood to be possible communication contributors within the invention as described.

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The client devices 14 can be stimulated to respond to an offer made by the merchant server 10 by various means. The client device 14 can directly enter into communication with the merchant server 10. As another possibility, a client device 14 can receive and open an email or other textual communication that offers a link to the offer provided by the merchant server  
30 10. As yet another possibility, a link to the merchant servers 10 offer can be provided within material shown on a non-merchant server 10 website. As yet another possibility, a pop-up appearing on the client device screen can provide an Internet link to the web page whereon the merchant server 10 link is accessed.

35 Attention is next drawn to figure 2. Figure 2 shows an exemplary screen display 18 that can be employed to initiate offer investigation and acceptance when shown on a client device 14.

The exemplary screen display 18 comprises a non—offer link area 20 that contains material that does not initiate connection to the merchant server 10 offer website page. The screen display also comprises an offer link area 22. Whenever the client device 14 pointing device  
5 such as a mouse, stylus or finger is placed onto the offer link area 22 and clicked, tapped or otherwise used to select the underlying item 22, the client device 14 has its browser software access the merchant server 10 particular offer web page to begin interaction with the merchant server 10.

10 The exemplary screen display 18 of figure 2 can be any message or Internet page display that contains an offer link area 22 allowing the client device 14 to access the offer web page of the merchant server 10. The screen display 18 of figure 2 can omit the non-offer link area 20 without impairment, if that is not required. The offer link area 22 can contain simple words, and/or graphical images that act as a link when selected and activated.

15 Attention is next drawn to figure 3. Figure 3 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating activities required for establishing a customer offer acceptance transaction according to the prior art.

20 In a first operation 24 the retailer or vendor creates the offer. This involves human activity in making a decision and machine activity in creating and storing text and images suitable for presentation to a customer.

25 The presentation material having been prepared, a second operation 26 has the offer sent to a customer. This can be done, as explained above, by email, by presentation in the start pages of the merchant server 10 when a client device 14 initiates communication with the merchant server 10, or by provision of advertising material in a pop-up or other website. All that is required is that an offer link area 22 is provided on the screen display 18.

30 A third operation 28 is performed when the customer clicks or otherwise activates the offer link area 22. In response, in a fourth operation 30, the customer arrives at the merchant server 10 shopping site.

The customer, with a fifth operation 32 then finds and selects goods to purchase and adds to the customer's shopping basket.

35

In a sixth operation 34, when the basket is full to the customer's satisfaction, the customer clicks "check out" and in a seventh operation 36 the customer confirms the order and the software in the merchant server 10 proceeds to the payment pages.

5 The present invention seeks to minimise the number of customer interactions required in accepting an offer thereby avoiding the possibility of errors and false purchases. The present invention also seeks to minimise the amount of time required both by the merchant server 10 and the customer.

10 Attention is next drawn to figure 4. Figure 4 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating the activities involved in access acceptance and payment for a vendor offer according to the present invention.

As with the first operation 24 of figure 3, an eighth operation 38 has the retailer or vendor  
15 create the offer. This involves human activity in making a decision and machine activity in creating and storing text and images suitable for presentation to a customer. The difference between the 1<sup>st</sup> operation 24 of figure 3 and the eighth operation 38 of figure 4 is that the merchant or vendor includes the goods in the offer already installed into a customer basket.

20 A ninth operation 40, corresponding to the second operation 26 of figure 3, then has the offer made available to the customer. As with the second operation 26 figure 3, the ninth operation 40 can make the offer available to the customer by email, by presentation in the start pages of the merchant server 10 when a client device 14 initiates communication with the merchant server 10, or by provision of advertising material in a pop-up or other website.

25

A tenth operation 42, corresponding to the third operation 28 of figure 3, occurs when the customer clicks the link.

In an eleventh operation 44, unlike the fourth operation 30 of figure 3, has the customer  
30 arriving on the merchant server 10 shopping site with the offer goods already in the shopping basket and checked out. The customer thereby has no need to go through the prior art stages of good selection and procedure to check out. It is all performed automatically.

35 Thereafter, all of the customer is required to do, in a twelfth operation 46, is to confirm the order before proceeding to the payment pages.

Those skilled in the art will be aware of various methods and variations available whereby a customer can return to goods selection for further shopping before payment is made.

5 Attention is next drawn to figure 5. Figure 5 is an exemplary flow chart illustrating how a merchant server 10 shopping site can deal with customer access in accordance with the present invention.

10 From a beginning 48 a first test 50 checks to see if the merchant server 10 shopping site is accessed. If the first test 50 finds that the merchant server 10 shopping site has been accessed, the first test makes available three or more options as a next phase.

A second test 52 checks to see if a first offer has been chosen. This is simply achieved by detecting that which URL (particular web page) has been activated by customer clicking.

15 If the second test 52 detects that the first offer has been chosen, a thirteenth operation 54 has the merchant server 10 shopping site add the goods of the first offer to the shopping basket for the first offer and proceeds straight to the checkout pages. The thirteenth operation 54 then proceeds to a continuation to payment pages 56 where the merchant server 10 goes through the processes used for every kind of shopping, not only shopping for offers..

20 A third test 58 checks to see if the customer has, by the link (URL) clicked, selected the goods and terms of a second offer. If the customer has selected the second offer, a fourteenth operation 60 has the merchant server 10 shopping site add the goods of the second offer to the shopping basket for the second offer and proceeds straight to the checkout pages. The fourteenth operation 60 then proceeds to the continuation to payment pages 58 where the merchant server 10 goes through the processes used for every kind of shopping, not only shopping for offers.

30 A fourth test 62 responds if no offer URL has been selected. If this is so, the fourth test 62 passes control to a continuation to normal shopping pages 64, that, on its conclusion, uses the continuation to payment pages 56 to effect payment by the customer.

35 Whilst in this example, only second 52 and third 58 tests have been shown to check which offer was intended to be accepted by the customer, it is to be appreciated that as few as one test 52 can check for offer selection, and, on the other hand, an unlimited plurality of

activatable URL offer acceptance checks 52 58 can be provided whereby a single merchant server 10 can make and simultaneously service an unlimited plurality of different offers.

Of course, during the execution of payment pages 56, the merchant server 10 can always be instructed to re-enter the merchant server 10 shopping site to select more freely selectable items to be added to the shopping basket.

Attention is next drawn to figure 6. Figure 6 is a schematic diagram of exemplary contents of a merchant server 10.

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The merchant server 10 comprises a main network modem 66 that allows the merchant server 10 to receive and send information to client devices 14 on the Internet 12

Thus, when a customer wishes to shop using the merchant server 10, the client device 14 provides to the Internet 12 the link address (URL) of the main network modem 66 thereby to gain interaction with the merchant server 10.

The merchant server 10 further comprises a first offer web page which has a URL (link address) corresponding to the first offer as indicated in figure 5. The merchant server 10 also comprises a second offer web page having a link address (URL) corresponding to the second offer as indicated in figure 5. Although only two offer web pages referred to in relation to Figure 6, it is to be understood that they can be as many offer web pages as there are different offers, each offer web page having its own unique link address (URL).

The merchant server 10 comprises a merchant server processor 72 containing a customer service program 74 operable to treat with customers when they access the merchant server 10.

When a customer employs the main network modem 66 link address (URL) to access the merchant server 10, the merchant server 10 deals with the customer to provide regular shopping as shown in figure 5.

When a customer employs the first offer web page link address (URL) to access the merchant server 10, a first offer program portion 76 inserts the goods from the first offer directly into the shopping basket at the predetermined first offer price and proceeds directly to checkout in the customer service program 74.

When a customer employs the second offer web page link address (URL) to access the merchant server 10, a second offer program portion 78 inserts the goods from the second offer directly into the shopping basket at the predetermined second offer price and proceeds directly to checkout in the customer service program 74.

5

Although only two offer program portions 76 78 are shown in figure 6, it is to be understood that there can be provided as many add-on offer program portions as there are offer web pages

10 The program 76 78 for execution of each offer by the merchant server 10 is simply added to the regular program 74 of the merchant server 10. Each offer program portion 74 78 involves merely adding the goods for the particular offer to the shopping basket and proceeding to checkout stage. As many or as few offer offer execution programs 76 78 as may be desired may be provided, with each offer having a different link (URL) address for  
15 the customer to click. In this manner, minimum disruption to the normal merchant server 10 program 74 is achieved, while allowing plural offer execution program portions 68 70 to be “tacked on” without disruption.

The merchant server processor 72 also is operable to control a text message generation  
20 facility, such as, but not limited to, and email facility 80, operable to send messages to client devices 14 which, when opened, provide a screen clickable link address (URL) corresponding to the link address (URL) of the particular offer web page that relates to an offer.

25 The invention has been here described in terms of different examples. It is to be appreciated that those skilled in the art will be aware of variations and modifications that can be applied to the invention without deviation from the invention as claimed.

The invention is more clearly defined by the following appended claims.

30

## Claims

1. A network system operable to provide sale of offers to a purchasing public, the system comprising:
  - 5 a merchant server, operable to generate an offer involving one or more goods at a predetermined price and to provide a link clickable screen display accessible to a client device, the link having a unique link address (URL) specific to the offer;  
where  
the merchant server comprises means operable to respond to customer access,  
10 including a shopping basket, and a checkout;  
and  
in the event of a customer clicking on the link clickable screen display, the merchant server means operable to respond to customer access is automatically operable to place the one or more goods into the shopping basket and is further operable automatically to proceed  
15 to checkout at the predetermined price.
2. The network system of claim 1 wherein the merchant server also comprises means operable to provide normal shopping.
- 20 3. The network of any of the preceding claims comprising:  
means operable to generate more than one offer;  
and  
means operable to respond to a particular one of the more than one offer in response to a customer clicking a link address (URL) relating to that offer.  
25
4. The network of any of the preceding claims wherein the merchant server comprises a main network modem and at least as many offer web pages as there are offers.
5. The network of claim 4 wherein the merchant server comprises:  
30 a merchant server processor with a customer service program accessible by a customer accessing a main network modem address;  
and  
one or more add-on program portions each responsive to access by a customer of a respective offer web page to add the goods of the prospective offer at the predetermined  
35 price of the prospective offer and to proceed directly to checkout in the customer service program.



6. A method for providing sale offers to a purchasing public, involving the steps of:  
a step of a network server generating an offer involving one or more goods and a predetermined price:  
a step of providing a unique link address (URL) specific to the offer;  
5 a step of providing a link clickable screen display to a client device;  
in the event of a customer clicking the link clickable screen display, a step of the network server placing the one or more items into the shopping basket and proceeding directly to checkout at the predetermined price.
- 10 7. The method of claim 1 including the step of the merchant server also providing normal shopping.
8. The method of any of claims 6 or 7 comprising:  
a step of generating more than one offer;  
15 and  
a step of responding to a particular one of the more than one offer in response to a customer clicking a link address (URL) relating to that offer.
9. The method of any of claims 6 to 8 including the step of providing in the merchant  
20 server a main network modem and at least as many offer web pages as there are offers.
10. The method of claim 9 including the steps of:  
providing, in the merchant server, merchant server processor with a customer  
service program accessible by a customer accessing a main network modem address;  
25 and  
a step of providing in the merchant server program, one or more add-on program  
portions each responsive to access by a customer of a respective offer web page to add the  
goods of the prospective offer at the predetermined price of the prospective offer and to  
proceed directly to checkout in the customer service program.
- 30 11. A system, substantially as described with reference to the appended drawings.
12. A method, substantially as described with reference to the appended drawings.

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