

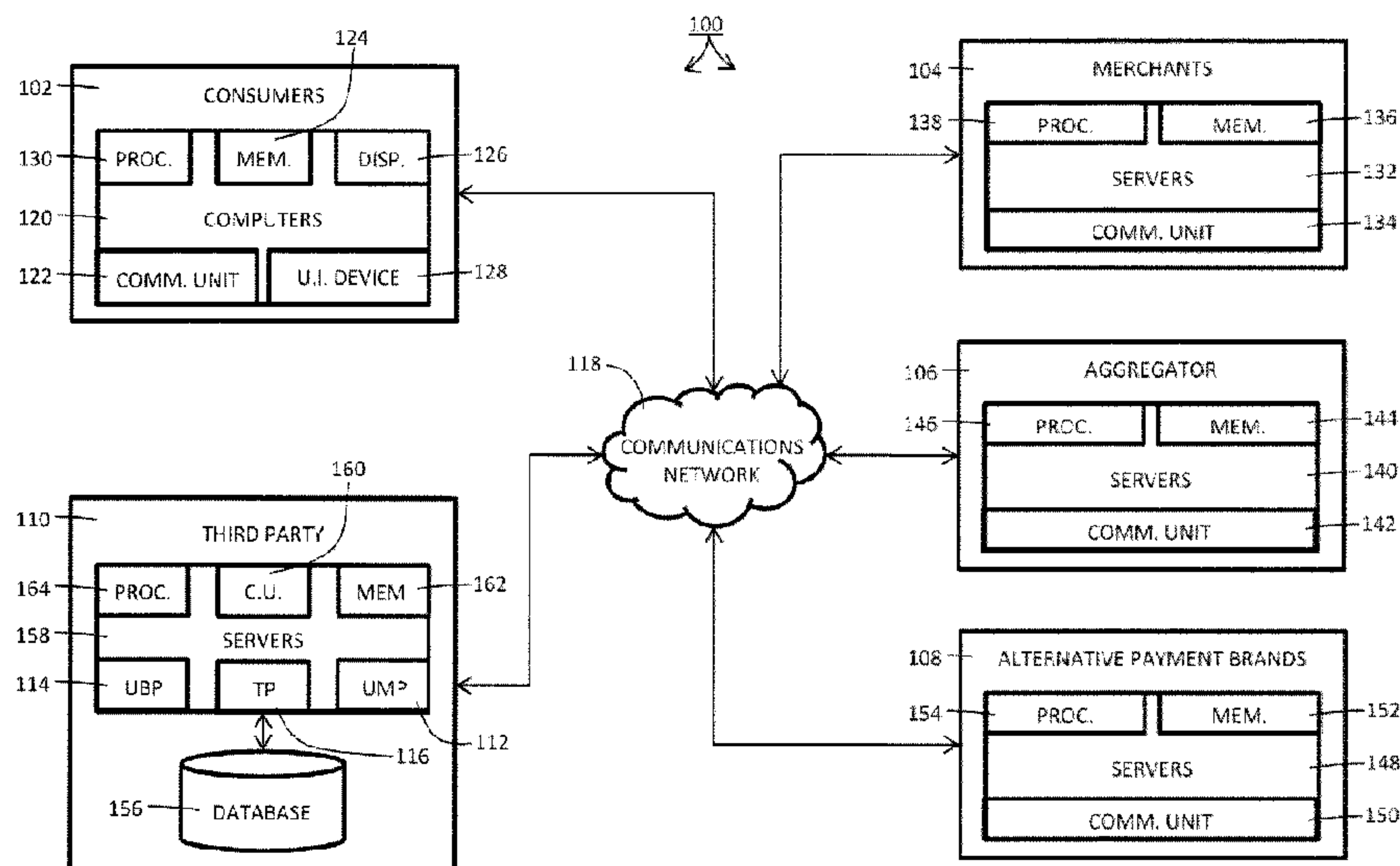


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(54) Title: UNIVERSAL MERCHANT APPLICATION, REGISTRATION AND BOARDING PLATFORM



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A system for processing e-commerce transactions. The system includes one or more processors programmed to receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant. Each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process. Further, the processors are programmed to receive merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands and apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand.

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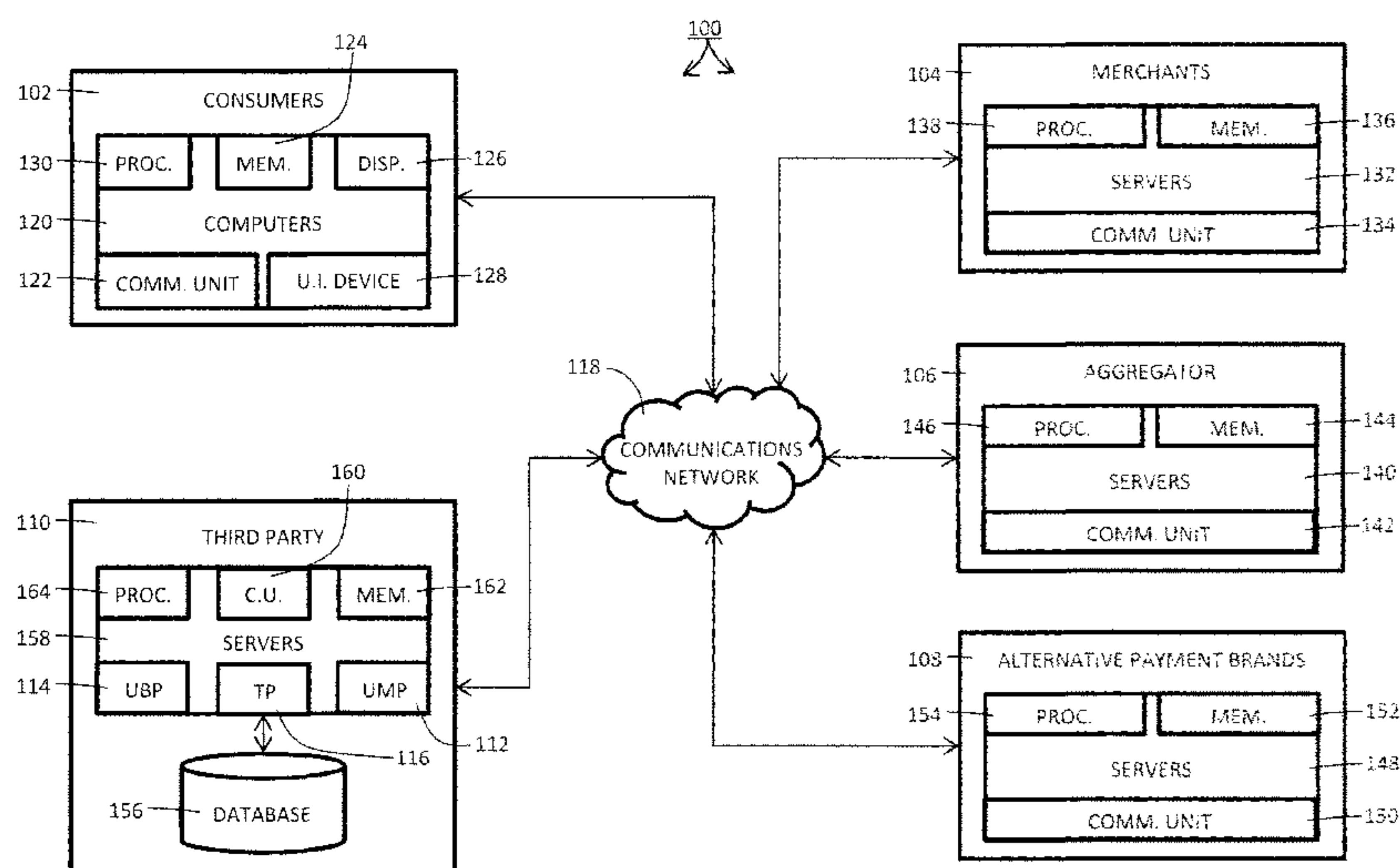


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A system for processing e-commerce transactions. The system includes one or more processors programmed to receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant. Each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process. Further, the processors are programmed to receive merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands and apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand.

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UNIVERSAL MERCHANT APPLICATION, REGISTRATION AND BOARDING PLATFORM

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/321,630, filed April 7, 2010.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The present disclosure relates generally to methods and/or systems for processing electronic payments. In particular, the disclosure is directed to methods and/or systems that provide authentication support and/or other payment processing solutions for merchants conducting business, including over a telecommunications network, e.g., the Internet and wireless networks. However, it is to be appreciated that the presently disclosed subject matter is equally amenable to other like applications and/or environments, such as mobile commerce.

[0003] By way of background, Internet commerce, or e-commerce as it is otherwise known, relates to the buying and selling of products and/or services between consumers and merchants over the Internet or other like transactional exchanges of information. Mobile commerce, also known as m-commerce, is the ability to conduct commerce using a mobile device, such as a mobile phone, a Personal digital assistant (PDA), a smartphone, or other emerging mobile equipment such as dashtop mobile devices.

[0004] The convenience and availability of shopping over the Internet has sparked considerable interest in e-commerce and m-commerce on behalf of both consumers and merchants. While traditional payment options, such as credit and debit cards, still dominate e-commerce transactions, industry momentum is swinging in the direction of alternative payment options, such as GOOGLE CHECKOUT, PAYPAL EXPRESS CHECKOUT, BILL ME LATER EXPRESS and BILL ME LATER BUSINESS. By way of example, in a typical checkout flow, a buyer checks out from the shopping cart page, provides shipping information, chooses a payment option and provides billing and payment information, reviews the order and pays, receives an order confirmation. However, in a PAYPAL EXPRESS CHECKOUT flow, a buyer still checks out at the

beginning of the flow. However, the buyer does not enter shipping, billing, or payment information, because PAYPAL provides the stored information. This simplifies and expedites the checkout process.

[0005] Alternative payment options enhance the consumer and merchant experience by extending the ability of consumers to buy and for merchants to accept different tenders. Also, alternative payment options further remove the merchants and the consumers from potential fraud and allow any fraudulently obtained funds to be more readily recovered. One challenge with alternative payment options, however, is that they generally use authentication, use special integration specifications, and require individual merchant underwriting. Therefore, it is challenging and/or time consuming for merchants to complete multiple applications, registration processes and then individually board (or enable) the alternative payment options.

[0006] The present invention contemplates new and improved systems and/or methods which overcome the above-referenced problems and others.

[0007] The following commonly assigned applications, are mentioned: U.S. Patent No. 7,051,002 entitled "Universal Merchant Platform for Payment Authentication," by Keresman, III et al.; and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2009/0313147 entitled "Alternative Payment Implementation for Electronic Retailers," by Balasubramanian et al.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

[0008] Various details of the present disclosure are hereinafter summarized to provide a basic understanding. This summary is not an extensive overview of the disclosure and is intended neither to identify certain elements of the disclosure, nor to delineate the scope thereof. Rather, the primary purpose of the summary is to present certain concepts of the disclosure in a simplified form prior to the more detailed description that is presented hereinafter.

[0009] According to one aspect of the present disclosure, a system for processing e-commerce transactions is provided. The system includes one or more processors programmed to receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant. Each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process. Further, the processors are programmed to receive merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands and apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the

merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand.

[0010] According another aspect of the present disclosure, a method for processing e-commerce transactions is provided. A selection of one or more alternative payment brands is received from a merchant. Each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process. Merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands is also received. The merchant information is then used to apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand.

[0011] According to another aspect of the present disclosure, a system for processing e-commerce transactions is provided. The system includes a universal merchant platform (UMP) providing merchants with a single interface for processing transactions involving a plurality of different alternative payment brands. The system further includes one or more processors programmed to receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant. Each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process. The processors are further programmed to receive merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands, apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand, register the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP for the merchant, receive notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been accepted, and enable the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP for the merchant.

[0011a] In accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a system for processing e-commerce transactions, said system comprising: a computer with one or more processors programmed to: receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process; receive merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands; and, automatically apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands over a communications network using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand; and a memory including mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields

wherein the processors are further programmed to provide the merchant server with a graphical user interface requesting a merchant enter merchant information for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, as determined by the mappings; wherein the merchant information is received from the graphical user interface; wherein the computer is remote from the merchant and the selected alternative payment brands.

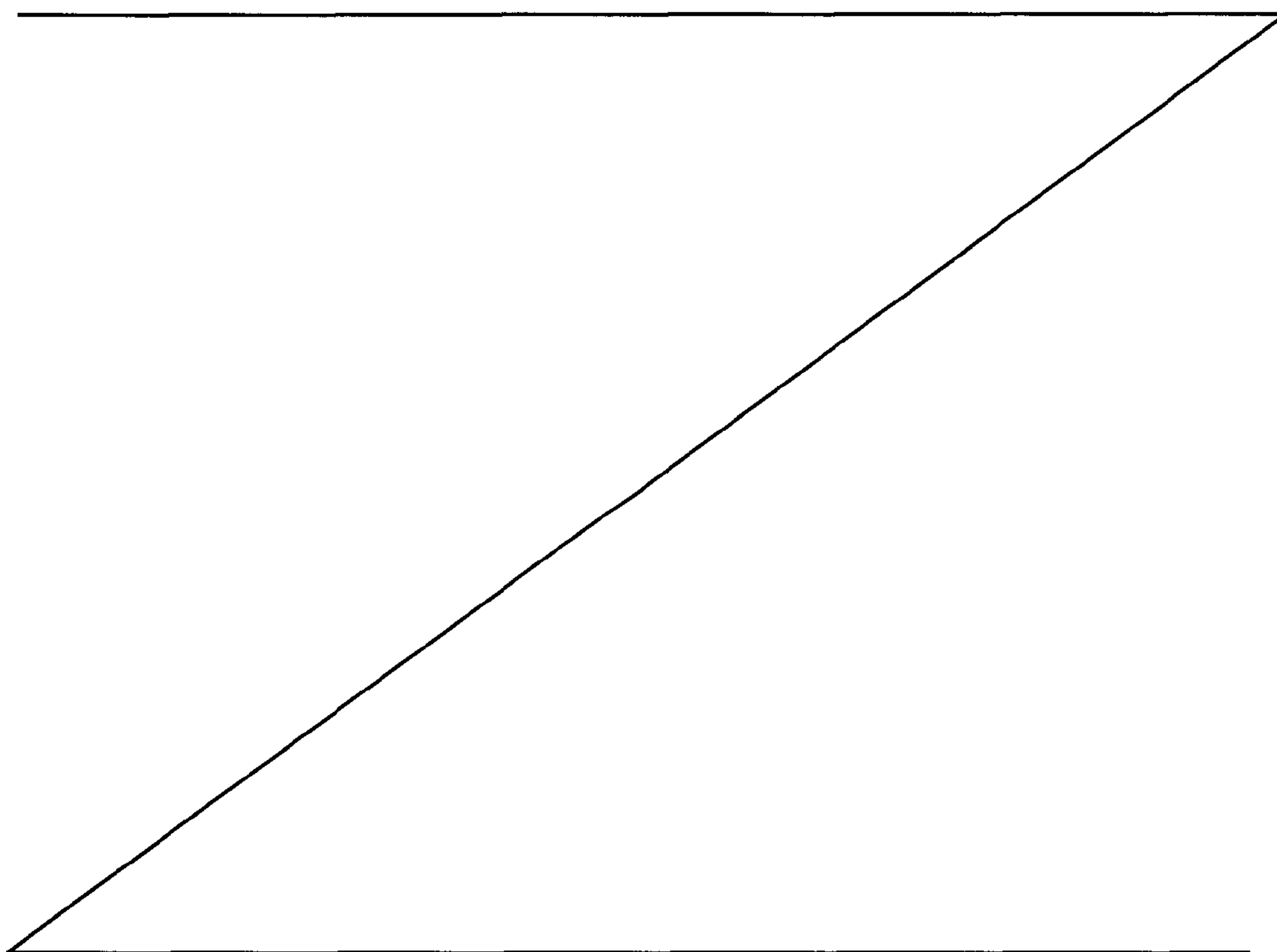
[0011b] In accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a method for processing e-commerce transactions, said method comprising: receiving a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server over a communications network, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process; receiving merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands over the communications network; automatically applying to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand; registering the merchant with a universal merchant platform (UMP) over the communications network to create a UMP account, the UMP providing merchants with a unified payment protocol for conducting transactions with the alternative payment brands, each of the alternative payment brands having a different payment protocol for conducting transactions; receiving notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been met; and in response to the notice, registering the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP account; and providing the merchant with a graphical user interface requesting the merchant enter data for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, wherein the required fields are determined by mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields.

[0011c] In accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided one or more processors programmed to perform the method described above.

[0011d] In accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a non-transitory computer medium having stored thereon instructions which control one or more processors to perform the method described above.

[0011e] In accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a system for processing e-commerce transactions, said system comprising: a universal merchant platform (UMP) providing merchants with a single interface for processing transactions involving a plurality of different alternative payment brands; a

computer with one or more processors programmed to: receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process; receive merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands; apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand; receive notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been accepted; and, register the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP for the merchant; and a memory including mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields; wherein the processors are further programmed to provide the merchant server with a graphical user interface requesting a merchant enter merchant information for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, as determined by the mappings; wherein the merchant information is received from the graphical user interface.



BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIGURE 1 is a block diagram of a system for applying to, registering and boarding alternative payment brands according to aspects of the present disclosure;

[0013] FIGURE 2 is a sequence diagram of one embodiment of an application, registration and boarding process according to aspects of the present disclosure; and,

[0014] FIGURE 3 is a sequence diagram of another embodiment of an application, registration and boarding process according to aspects of the present disclosure; and,

[0015] FIGURE 4 is a block diagram of a method for applying to, registering and boarding alternative payment brands according to aspects of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] With reference to FIGURE 1, a block diagram of a system **100** for applying to, registering and boarding alternative payment brands is provided. The system **100** suitably includes one or more consumers **102**; one or more merchants **104**; optionally, one or more aggregators **106**; one or more alternative payment brands **108**; and a third party **110** providing a universal merchant platform (UMP) **112**, a universal boarding platform (UBP) **114**, and, optionally, a test platform (TP) **116**, interconnected by a communications network **118**. The communications network **118** is typically the Internet, but other communications networks are contemplated. For example, the communications network **118** may include one or more of a local area network, a wireless network, and the like. Further, although the third party **110** in FIGURE 1 typically provides the UMP **112**, the UBP **114** and the test platform **116**, it is to be understood that these platforms may be provided by different parties.

[0017] The consumers **102** electronically purchase products and/or services from the merchants **104** over the communications network **118** via graphical user interfaces, such as e-commerce and/or m-commerce websites of the merchants **104**. Suitably, the consumers **102** employ web browsers to access the graphical user interfaces and purchase the products and/or services. However, it is to be appreciated that other means of electronically purchasing the products and/or services are contemplated. For example, stand alone programs embodying the graphical user interfaces can be distributed, optionally via the communications network **118**, to the consumers **102**. To

purchase the products and/or services over the communications network **118**, the consumers **102** submit a payment type to the merchants **104**. A payment type includes, for example, PIN debit card, credit card, and so on.

[0018] Each of the consumers **102** is suitably embodied by a digital processing device **120**, such as a computer, smart phone, PDA, and the like, connected to the communications network **118**. Further, each of the digital processing devices **120** suitably includes a communications unit **122**, at least one memory **124**, a display **126**, a user input device **128**, a processor **130**, and the like. The communications units **122** allow the digital processing devices **122** to interact with other components connected to the communications network **118**. The memories **124** include computer executable instructions for performing the above-noted functions associated with the consumers **102**. The displays **126** display the graphical user interfaces (e.g., via web browsers) facilitating consumer interaction with the digital processing devices **120**. The user input devices **128** allow the consumers **102** to interact with the graphical user interfaces. The processors **130** execute the computer executable instructions on the memories **124**.

[0019] The merchants **104** provide the consumers **102** the graphical user interfaces, typically via the communications network **118**. For example, it is contemplated that the graphical user interfaces are e-commerce and/or m-commerce websites. The graphical user interfaces suitably allow the consumers **102** to purchase products and/or services electronically over the communications network **118** through submission of payment types. For example, the graphical user interfaces allow consumers **102** to select and submit products and/or services to purchase and select and submit a payment type for payment therefor to the merchants **104**.

[0020] When a merchant receives the payment type from a consumer, the merchant submits the payment type to the UMP **112** and places the consumer in communication with the UMP **112** via, for example, an iFrame, a redirect to the UMP **112**, and so on. The UMP **112** collects payment information, such as a card number and expiration date, for the payment type from the consumer and partially or wholly completes the transaction using the payment type. For example, the UMP **112** collects payment information for the payment type and processes transactions involving authenticated payment initiatives, as discussed in detail in U.S. Patent No. 7,051,002 entitled

“Universal Merchant Platform for Payment Authentication,” by Keresman, III et al. As another example, the UMP **112** collects payment information for the payment type and processes transactions involving alternative payment brands, as discussed in detail in U.S. Patent Publication No. 2009/0313147 entitled “Alternative Payment Implementation for Electronic Retailers,” by Balasubramanian et al.,. Although the UMP **112** can be employed to wholly complete a transaction, it is typically employed to partially complete a transaction. In that regard, the merchant suitably performs the authorization and capture of funds typical of credit card transactions and offloads, for example, authentication or payment selection to the UMP **112**.

[0021] To use the UMP **112**, the merchants **104** suitably register with the third party **110** providing the UMP **112**. This step may include the merchants **104** providing merchant information (e.g., financial information, physical address, category of goods or services sold, Internet address, email address, etc.) to the third party **110**. Typically, the merchant information is provided over the communications network **118** via a graphical user interface, such as a web interface, offered by the third party **110**. However, other means of providing the merchant information, such as via a telephone, are contemplated. Additionally, the merchant information is suitably modifiable, optionally via the graphical user interface and/or the communications network **118**. In certain embodiments, registration may further include signing and/or executing an agreement of the third party **110**.

[0022] Further, to use the UMP **112** the merchants **104** suitably augment their graphical user interface and/or backend systems supporting the graphical user interfaces to employ the UMP **112**. For example, a merchant may add a hosted iFrame linking their graphical user interface to the third party **110**. Advantageously, this allows easy integration with the UMP **112**, especially during the submission of payment information. In certain embodiments, the merchants **104** employ the test platform **116**, discussed hereafter, to test the integration of the UMP **112** with their graphical user interface and/or backend systems.

[0023] Even more, to use the UMP **112**, the merchants **104** register and/or board (or enable) one or more payment brands, such as alternative payment brands, supported

by the UMP **112** with the third party **110**. Registration and/or boarding suitably entails providing merchant information pertaining to the payment brands necessary to complete a transaction using a payment option of the payment brands to the third party **110**. Merchant information may include, for example, a merchant account identifier of a payment brand. The merchants **104** suitably obtain the merchant information during application to the payment brands. For example, during application to an alternative payment brand, a merchant is suitably provided with merchant information to be used for completing transactions involving the alternative payment brand. Typically, the merchant information is provided over the communications network **118** via a graphical user interface, such as a web interface, offered by the third party **110**. However, other means of providing the merchant information, such as via a telephone, are contemplated. The registration and/or boarding of the payment brands can be performed during and/or after registration with the UMP **112**.

[0024] One or more servers **132** connected to the communications network **118** suitably embody each of the merchants **104**. Each of the servers **132** includes one or more of a communications unit **134**, at least one memory **136**, a processor **138**, and the like. The communications units **134** allow the servers **132** to interact with other components connected to the communications network **118**. The memories **136** include computer executable instructions for performing the above-noted functions associated with the merchants **104**. The processors **138** execute the computer executable instructions on the memories **136**.

[0025] The aggregators (or gateways/processors) **106** act as agents for one or more of the merchants **104**. In that regard, they process payments for the merchants, optionally, with the aid of the UMP **112**. Examples of aggregators include CyberSource and First Data. Where an aggregator employs the UMP **112**, it is suitably augmented to use the UMP **112** as described above in connection with the merchants **104**. In certain embodiments, the aggregators **106** further provide their respective merchants with the ability to register with one or more of the alternative payment brands **108** by way of the UBP **114**. In such embodiments, the aggregators **106** provide corresponding merchants with a data entry point from which to select one or more of the alternative payment brands **108** and, optionally, to enter merchant information, such as merchant legal

name, merchant id, merchant bank, contact person, and so on. Typically the data entry point is a website provided via the communications network **118**, but other data entry points, such as telephone based data entry points, are contemplated. Upon collecting the selection and, optionally, the merchant information, the selection and merchant information are forwarded to the UBP **114** and processed as described below.

[0026] One or more servers **140** suitably embody each of the aggregators **106**. Each of the servers **140** includes one or more of a communications unit **142**, at least one memory **144**, a processor **146**, and the like. The communications units **142** allow the servers **140** to interact with other components connected to the communications network **118**. The memories **144** include computer executable instructions for performing the above-noted functions associated with the aggregators **106**. The processors **146** execute the computer executable instructions on the memories **144**.

[0027] The alternative payment brands **108** govern and process purchase and payment transactions. Each of the alternative payment brands **108** provides one or more alternative payment options, suitably via the UMP **112**, to the merchants **104**. Alternative payment brands (or online payment services) include, but are not limited to, GOOGLE, PAYPAL, BILL ME LATER, MYECHECK, AMAZON, SECURE VAULT PAYMENTS, and TELECHECK, and so on. Alternative payment options include, but are not limited to, GOOGLE CHECKOUT, PAYPAL EXPRESS CHECKOUT, BILL ME LATER EXPRESS, BILL ME LATER BUSINESS, CHECK OUT WITH AMAZON, SECURE VAULT PAYMENTS. It is to be understood that the terms “alternative payment brand” and “alternative payment option” may be used interchangeably. Each of the alternative payment brands **108** typically has its own unique alternative payment implementation, which includes, but is not limited to, a processing flow, response codes, communications protocols, message formats, and so on. In addition, each of the alternative payment brands **108** typically includes its own application process for merchants. For example, one of the alternative payment brands **108** may include a first application process and another one of the alternative payment brands **108** may include a second, different application process.

[0028] One or more servers **148** suitably embody each of the alternative payment brands **108**. Each of the servers **148** includes one or more of a communications unit

150, at least one memory **152**, a processor **154**, and the like. The communications units **150** allow the servers **148** to interact with other components connected to the communications network **118**. The memories **152** include computer executable instructions for performing the above-noted functions associated with the alternative payment brands **108**. The processors **154** execute the computer executable instructions on the memories **152**.

[0029] The third party **110** generally facilitates the completion of transactions between the consumers **102** and the merchants **104** by way of the UMP **112**. The UMP **112** serves as a centralized merchant processing system to wholly or partially process transactions using a single platform. In that regard, it enables the merchants **104** to process a variety of different payment options with a single implementation. Moreover, it allows the use of established payment processing infrastructure to process transactions. Typically, the UMP **112** is employed for authentication in traditional card-based transactions, as discussed in U.S. Patent No. 7,051,002 entitled "Universal Merchant Platform for Payment Authentication," by Keresman, III et al., and/or alternative payment brand transactions, as discussed in U.S. Patent Publication No. 2009/0313147 entitled "Alternative Payment Implementation for Electronic Retailers," by Balasubramanian et al. Suitably, the UMP **112** supports each of the alternative payment brands **108**.

[0030] The third party **110** further facilitates the application process to the alternative payment brands **108** via the UBP **114**. In that regard, the UBP **114** allows a merchant to easily apply to one or more of the alternative payment brands **108**. Typically, a data entry point of the UBP **114** collects a selection of one or more of the alternative payment brands **108** from the merchant and all the necessary merchant information to apply to the selected alternative payment brands. Merchant information includes, for example, merchant legal name, merchant id, merchant bank, contact person, and so on. The necessary merchant information is suitably determined via mappings between the alternative payment brands **108** and required fields stored in a memory or database, such as a database **156**. For example, a mapping may specify that an alternative payment brand requires a first field and a second field during application. Typically, the data entry point is a graphical user interface presented to the merchant by way of, for

example, the communications network **118**. However, other data entry points, such as telephone-based data entry points, are contemplated.

[0031] While the data entry point is typically employed to collect the selection and the merchant information, in certain embodiments, an aggregator of the merchant collects the selection and, optionally, at least some of the necessary merchant information. In such embodiments, the **UBP 114** receives a selection of one or more of the alternative payment brands **108** from the aggregator and, optionally, merchant information from the aggregator. After receiving the selection from the aggregator, the **UBP 114** further assesses whether the received merchant information is sufficient to register for the selected alternative payment brands. Insofar as it isn't, the **UBP 114** requests any further merchant information that is necessary from the merchant through coordination with the aggregator. For example, the **UBP 114** may redirect the merchant to the data entry point of the **UBP 114** via the aggregator so as to collect further merchant information.

[0032] The **UBP 114** suitably maintains the selection and the necessary merchant information in a memory or database, such as the database **156**. Based upon the selection, the **UBP 114** applies to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the necessary merchant information. Because each of the alternative payment brands **108** includes its own application process, the **UBP 114** suitably includes the appropriate logic to apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands. In certain embodiments, the **UBP 114** includes a sub-module for each of the alternative payment brands **108**, where the sub-modules implement the application logic for corresponding alternative payment brands and provide a unified interface to the application process. In such embodiments, the appropriate sub-module is selected for each of the selected alternative payment brands. Thereafter, the necessary merchant information is provided to the selected sub-module using the unified interface.

[0033] Where additional information and/or merchant input, such as acceptance and/or acknowledgment, is required during an application process for an alternative payment brand, the data entry point is suitably employed. That is to say, the data entry point is employed to request merchant input and/or additional information. For example, where a merchant needs to accept the terms and conditions of an alternative payment

brand, the data entry point can be employed to present the merchant with the terms and conditions and/or redirect the merchant to the alternative payment brand so the alternative payment brand can present the merchant with the terms and conditions. In certain embodiments, additional information collected by the data entry point is maintained in a memory, such as the database **156**.

[0034] Additionally, the third party **110** may facilitate the registration and boarding of the selected alternative payment brands to the UMP **112** and/or the test platform **116** via the UBP **114** upon formal acceptance of an application for the alternative payment brands based on corresponding underwriting criteria. In certain embodiments, the UBP **114** receives notice from, for example, the selected alternative payment brands of acceptance via the communications network **118**. Underwriting criteria are suitably rules specifying the criteria for acceptance of an application by the merchant. For example, the underwriting criteria may specify that the merchant has to accept Terms of Service and have a U.S. address. Registration of a payment brand suitably entails providing merchant information pertaining to the payment brand necessary to complete a transaction using a payment option of the payment brand to the UMP **112**. Merchant information may include, for example, a merchant account identifier of a payment brand. It is contemplated that the merchant information may be stored in a memory, such as the database **156**. The merchant information for a payment brand is suitably obtained during application to the payment brand, as discussed above.

[0035] In certain embodiments, the third party **110** provides the merchants **104** with the test platform **116** to test against while they are integrating the UMP **112** with their graphical user interface and/or backend systems supporting the graphical user interfaces. The test platform **116** suitably simulates the behavior of the UMP **112** without actually carrying out transactions to completion.

[0036] One or more servers **158** connected to the communications network **118** suitably embody the third party **110**. Each of the servers **158** includes one or more of a communications unit **160**, at least one memory **162**, a processor **164**, and the like. The communications units **160** allow the servers **158** to interact with other components connected to the communications network **118**. The memories **162** generally include computer executable instructions for performing the above-noted functions associated

with the third party **110**. The processors **164** execute the computer executable instructions on the memories **162**. Further, the servers **158** include the UMP **112**, the UBP **114**, and the test platform **116**. Suitably, the UMP **112**, the UBP **114**, and the test platform **116** are embodied by computer executable instructions stored on computer readable mediums, where the processors **164** execute the computer executable instructions. In some embodiments, the computer readable mediums may be the memory **162**.

[0037] With reference to FIGURE 2, a sequence diagram illustrating the functionality of the UBP **114** according to one embodiment is provided. The sequence diagram includes one **166** of the merchants **104** a graphical user interface **168** serving as a data entry point for the UBP **114**, the UBP **114**, the UMP **112**, the test platform **116**, and one **170** of the alternative payment brands **108**. However, it is to be understood that the test platform **116** is not necessary to the functionality of the UBP **114**. The sequence diagram presupposes that the merchant **166** selects only a single alternative payment brand (i.e., the alternative payment brand **170**), but it is to be understood that multiple alternative payment brands can be selected. Actions 14-24 are simply repeated for each of the selected alternative payment brands.

[0038] Initially, at Action 1, the merchant **166** accesses the graphical user interface **168** provided by the UBP **114** by way of, for example, a web browser. Therein, the merchant **166** selects the alternative payment brand **170** from a listing of alternative payment brands presented to the merchant **166** via the graphical user interface **168**. Further, in certain embodiments, the merchant **166** enters all the necessary merchant information to submit an application for the alternative payment brand **170**, such as name, address, etc. When the merchant **166** finishes selecting the alternative payment brand and entering the necessary merchant information, the merchant **166** submits the selection and the necessary merchant information in a merchant boarding request to the UBP **114** via the graphical user interface **168** at Action 2.

[0039] Upon receiving the selection and the necessary merchant information, the UBP **114** registers (or boards) the merchant **166** with the UMP **112** and, optionally, the test platform **116** at Actions 3 and 4, respectively, so the merchant **166** can employ the UMP **112** with the consumers **102**. Further, the UBP **114** generates a transaction ID

and stores the received selection, the transaction ID, and the received merchant information in a record in a memory or database, such as the database **156**.

[0040] The UBP **114** provides the graphical user interface **168** with a universal resource location (URL) to a page thereof and the transaction ID in, for example, a merchant boarding response at Action 5. When the graphical user interface **168** receives the URL and the transaction ID, it provides the merchant **166** with the transaction ID and redirects the merchant **166** to the URL at Action 6. During the redirect, the merchant **166** provides the transaction ID to the graphical user interface **168** at Action 7, and the graphical user interface **168** submits the transaction ID to the UBP **114** at Action 8. The transaction ID serves to identify the merchant **166**.

[0041] The UBP **114**, upon receiving the transaction ID, determines whether it has all the merchant information necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brand **170** at Action 9. Such a determination is made through reference to the memory or database identified above. Insofar as further merchant information is necessary, Actions 10 through 13 are typically performed to request the further merchant information necessary. This further merchant information is then stored in the memory or database, as was done for the merchant information initially received, at Action 14.

[0042] Once all the necessary merchant information for registering with the alternative payment brand **170** is received, the UBP **114** typically submits a boarding (or application) request automatically to the alternative payment brand **170** at Action 15. However, it is also contemplated that the boarding request is submitted manually. In such embodiments, the UBP **114** marks the transaction for manual processing. The boarding request is suitably specific to the alternative payment brand **170**. Responsive to the boarding request, the alternative payment brand **170** returns an acknowledgement as to whether the boarding request was successfully submitted for processing at Action 16. For example, the response may indicate whether all the necessary merchant information has been provided.

[0043] After submitting the boarding request, the UBP **114** notifies the merchant **166** of the results thereof via the graphical user interface **168** at Actions 17 and 18. For example, the UBP **114** notifies the merchant **166** that the application process was successfully initiated or that the application process failed. Some time thereafter, the

alternative payment brand **170** and the merchant **166** communicate to complete the application process per the underwriting criteria of the alternative payment brand **170** at Action 19. Typically, this is initiated by the alternative payment brand **170** and involves the merchant **166** agreeing to the Terms and Conditions of the alternative payment brand **170**. During this time, the UBP **114** remains idle.

[0044] Once the underwriting criteria of the alternative payment brand **170** are met, the UBP **114** is notified thereof at Action 20. This notification typically includes the credentials the merchant **166** needs to process transactions through the alternative payment brand **170**. Upon receiving the notice, the UBP **114** updates the UMP **112** and/or the test platform **116** to allow the merchant **166** to begin using the alternative payment brand **170** at Actions 21 and 22. In that regard, the UBP **114** provides the credentials to the UMP **112** and/or the test platform **116**. Further, the UBP **114** notifies the merchant **116** that the application process is complete and that the alternative payment brand **170** can be employed at Actions 23 through 25.

[0045] With reference to FIGURE 3, a sequence diagram illustrating the functionality of the UBP **114** according to another embodiment is provided. The sequence diagram includes the merchant **166**, an aggregator **172**, the graphical user interface **168** serving as a data entry point for the UBP **114**, the UBP **114**, the UMP **112**, the test platform **116**, and the alternative payment brands **170**. However, it is to be understood that the test platform **116** is not necessary to the functionality of the UBP **114**. The sequence diagram presupposes that the merchant **166** selects only a single alternative payment brand (i.e., the alternative payment brand **170**), but it is to be understood that multiple alternative payment brands can be selected.

[0046] Initially, at Action 1, the merchant **166** accesses the aggregator **172** via, for example, a graphical user interface. The merchant **166** selects the alternative payment brand **170** from a listing of alternative payment brands presented to the merchant **166** by the aggregator **172**. Further, in certain embodiments, the merchant **166** enters necessary merchant information to submit an application for the alternative payment brand **170**, such as name, address, etc. When the merchant **166** finishes selecting the alternative payment brand and entering the necessary merchant information, the

aggregator relays the selection and the necessary merchant information to the UBP **114** via, for example, a merchant boarding request at Action 2.

[0047] Upon receiving the selection and the necessary merchant information, the UBP **114** registers (or boards) the merchant **166** with the UMP **112** and, optionally, the test platform **116** at Actions 3 and 4, respectively, so the merchant **166** can employ the UMP **112** with the consumers **102**. Further, the UBP **114** generates a transaction ID and stores the received selection, the transaction ID, and the received merchant information in a record in a memory or database, such as the database **156**.

[0048] The UBP **114** provides the aggregator **172** with a universal resource location (URL) to the graphical user interface **168** and the transaction ID in, for example, a merchant boarding response at Action 5. When the aggregator **168** receives the URL and the transaction ID, it provides the merchant **166** with the transaction ID and prompts the merchant **166** to access the URL at Action 6, optionally via a redirect. When the merchant accesses the URL, the merchant **166** provides the transaction ID to the graphical user interface **168** at Action 7, and the graphical user interface **168** submits the transaction ID to the UBP **114** at Action 8. The transaction ID serves to identify the merchant. Actions 9-22 then proceed as described above in connection with FIGURE 2. Further, the UBP **114** may notify the aggregator **172** that the application process is complete and that the alternative payment brand **170** can be employed at Actions 23 through 25.

[0049] With reference to FIGURE 4, a block diagram of an exemplary method **400** for applying to, registering and boarding alternative payment brands is provided. The method **400** is suitably performed by the UBP **114**. Initially, a selection **402** of one or more alternative payment brands is received from a merchant. Each of the alternative payment brands includes a different merchant application process. Merchant information from the merchant necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands is also received **404**. The merchant information is then used to apply **406** to each of the selected alternative payment brands in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand. In certain embodiments, the method **400** further includes at least one of registering **408** the merchant with the UMP **112** for the merchant, receiving **410** notice that underwriting

criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been accepted, and enabling **412** the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP **112** for the merchant.

[0050] It is to be appreciated that suitably, the methods and systems described herein are embodied by a computer, or other digital processing device including a digital processor, such as a microprocessor, microcontroller, graphic processing unit (GPU), etc. and storage. In other embodiments, the systems and methods may be embodied by a server including a digital processor and including or having access to digital data storage, such server being suitably accessed via the Internet or a local area network, or by a personal data assistant (PDA) including a digital processor and digital data storage, or so forth. The computer or other digital processing device suitably includes or is operatively connected with one or more user input devices, such as a keyboard, for receiving user input, and further includes, or is operatively connected with, one or more display devices. In other embodiments, the input for controlling the methods and systems is received from another program running previously to or concurrently with the methods and systems on the computer, or from a network connection, or so forth. Similarly, in other embodiments the output may serve as input to another program running subsequent to or concurrently with methods and systems on the computer, or may be transmitted via a network connection, or so forth.

[0051] In some embodiments, the exemplary methods, discussed above, the system employing the same, and so forth, of the present application are embodied by a storage medium storing instructions executable (for example, by a digital processor) to implement the exemplary methods and/or systems. The storage medium may include, for example: a magnetic disk or other magnetic storage medium; an optical disk or other optical storage medium; a random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), or other electronic memory device or chip or set of operatively interconnected chips; an Internet server from which the stored instructions may be retrieved via the Internet or a local area network; or so forth.

[0052] It is to further be appreciated that in connection with the particular exemplary embodiments presented herein certain structural and/or functional features are described as being incorporated in defined elements and/or components. However, it is contemplated that these features may, to the same or similar benefit, also likewise be

incorporated in other elements and/or components where appropriate. It is also to be appreciated that different aspects of the exemplary embodiments may be selectively employed as appropriate to achieve other alternate embodiments suited for desired applications, the other alternate embodiments thereby realizing the respective advantages of the aspects incorporated therein.

[0053] It is also to be appreciated that particular elements or components described herein may have their functionality suitably implemented via hardware, software, firmware or a combination thereof. Additionally, it is to be appreciated that certain elements described herein as incorporated together may under suitable circumstances be stand-alone elements or otherwise divided. Similarly, a plurality of particular functions described as being carried out by one particular element may be carried out by a plurality of distinct elements acting independently to carry out individual functions, or certain individual functions may be split-up and carried out by a plurality of distinct elements acting in concert. Alternately, some elements or components otherwise described and/or shown herein as distinct from one another may be physically or functionally combined where appropriate.

[0054] Even more, it is to be appreciated that, as used herein, a memory includes one or more of a non-transient computer readable medium; a magnetic disk or other magnetic storage medium; an optical disk or other optical storage medium; a random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), or other electronic memory device or chip or set of operatively interconnected chips; an Internet server from which the stored instructions may be retrieved via the Internet or a local area network; or so forth. Further, as used herein, a processor includes one or more of a microprocessor, a microcontroller, a graphic processing unit (GPU), an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field-programmable gate array (FPGA), and the like; a communications network includes one or more of the Internet, a local area network, a wide area network, a wireless network, a wired network, a cellular network, a data bus, such as USB and I2C, and the like; a user input device includes one or more of a mouse, a keyboard, a touch screen display, one or more buttons, one or more switches, one or more toggles, and the like; a database includes at least one memory; and a display includes one or

more of a LCD display, an LED display, a plasma display, a projection display, a touch screen display, and the like.

[0055] In short, the present specification has been set forth with reference to preferred embodiments. Obviously, modifications and alterations will occur to others upon reading and understanding the present specification. It is intended that the invention be construed as including all such modifications and alterations insofar as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalents thereof. That is to say, it will be appreciated that various of the above-disclosed and other features and functions, or alternatives thereof, may be desirably combined into many other different systems or applications, and also that various presently unforeseen or unanticipated alternatives, modifications, variations or improvements therein may be subsequently made by those skilled in the art which are similarly intended to be encompassed by the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A system for processing e-commerce transactions, said system comprising:
 - a computer with one or more processors programmed to:
 - receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process;
 - receive merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands; and
 - automatically apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands over a communications network using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand; and
 - a memory including mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields;
 - wherein the processors are further programmed to provide the merchant server with a graphical user interface requesting a merchant enter merchant information for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, as determined by the mappings;
 - wherein the merchant information is received from the graphical user interface;
 - wherein the computer is remote from the merchant and the selected alternative payment brands.
2. The system according to claim 1, wherein the computer is further programmed to cause the graphical user interface to request the selection of the one or more alternative payment brands, and list a plurality of alternative payment brands supported by a universal merchant platform (UMP), the UMP providing merchants with a unified payment protocol for conducting transactions with the alternative payment brands, each of the alternative payment brands having a different payment protocol for conducting transactions.

3. The system according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein wherein the computer is further programmed to:

determine if all merchant information necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands has been received; and

if not all merchant information necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands has been received, request additional information from the merchant server.

4. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the applying includes:

transmitting an application for each of the selected alternative payment brands to the selected payment brand over the communications network.

5. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the applying includes:

selecting a sub-module for each of the selected alternative payment brands, where the sub-modules implement application logic for corresponding alternative payment brands and provide a unified interface to the application process; and,
submitting the merchant information to the sub-modules via the unified interface.

6. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the computer is further programmed to:

receive notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been met; and,

in response to the notice, automatically register the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP for the merchant server.

7. The system according to claim 6, wherein the underwriting criteria are defined by one or more rules.

8. The system according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the selected alternative payment brands include at least one of GOOGLE, PAYPAL, BILL ME LATER, AMAZON PAYMENTS, and TELECHECK.

9. A method for processing e-commerce transactions, said method comprising:

- receiving a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server over a communications network, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process;
- receiving merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands over the communications network;
- automatically applying to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand;
- registering the merchant with a universal merchant platform (UMP) over the communications network to create a UMP account, the UMP providing merchants with a unified payment protocol for conducting transactions with the alternative payment brands, each of the alternative payment brands having a different payment protocol for conducting transactions;
- receiving notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been met;
- in response to the notice, registering the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP account; and
- providing the merchant with a graphical user interface requesting the merchant enter data for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, wherein the required fields are determined by mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields.

10. The method according to claim 9, further including:

- causing the graphical user interface requesting selection of the one or more alternative payment brands to list a plurality of alternative payment brands supported by a universal merchant platform (UMP).

11. The method according to claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the merchant information is received from the graphical user interface.

12. The method according to any one of claims 9 to 11, wherein the applying includes transmitting an application for each of the selected alternative payment brands to the selected payment brand over the communications network.

13. The method according to any one of claims 9 to 11, wherein the applying includes:

selecting a sub-module for each of the selected alternative payment brands, where the sub-modules implement application logic for corresponding alternative payment brands and provide a unified interface to the application process; and,
submitting the merchant information to the sub-modules via the unified interface.

14. The method according to any one of claims 9 to 13, wherein the underwriting criteria are defined by one or more rules.

15. The method according to any one of claims 9 to 14, wherein the selected alternative payment brands include at least one of GOOGLE, PAYPAL, BILL ME LATER, AMAZON PAYMENTS, and TELECHECK.

16. One or more processors programmed to perform the method according to any one of claims 9 to 15.

17. A non-transitory computer medium having stored thereon instructions which control one or more processors to perform the method according to any one of claims 9 to 15.

18. A system for processing e-commerce transactions, said system comprising:

a universal merchant platform (UMP) providing merchants with a single interface for processing transactions involving a plurality of different alternative payment brands;

a computer with one or more processors programmed to:

receive a selection of one or more alternative payment brands from a merchant server, each of said alternative payment brands including a different merchant application process;

receive merchant information from the merchant server necessary to apply to the selected alternative payment brands;

apply to each of the selected alternative payment brands using the merchant information in accordance with the merchant application process for the selected alternative payment brand;

receive notice that underwriting criteria of the selected alternative payment brands have been accepted; and,

register the selected alternative payment brands with the UMP for the merchant; and

a memory including mappings between alternative payment brands and required fields;

wherein the processors are further programmed to provide the merchant server with a graphical user interface requesting a merchant enter merchant information for each of the required fields of the selected alternative payment brands, as determined by the mappings;

wherein the merchant information is received from the graphical user interface.

19. The system according to claim 18, wherein the computer is remote from the merchant and the selected alternative payment brands.

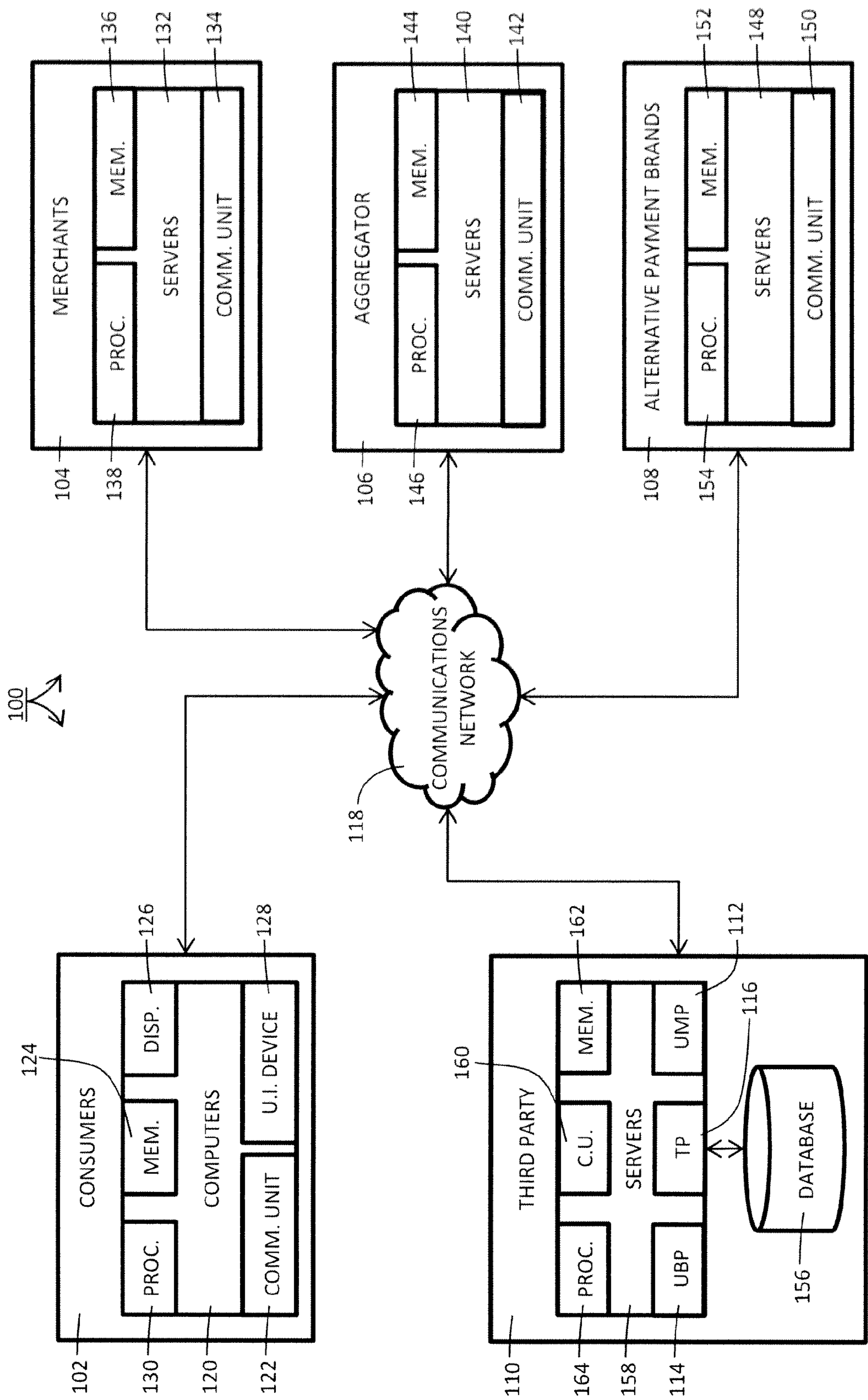


FIG. 1

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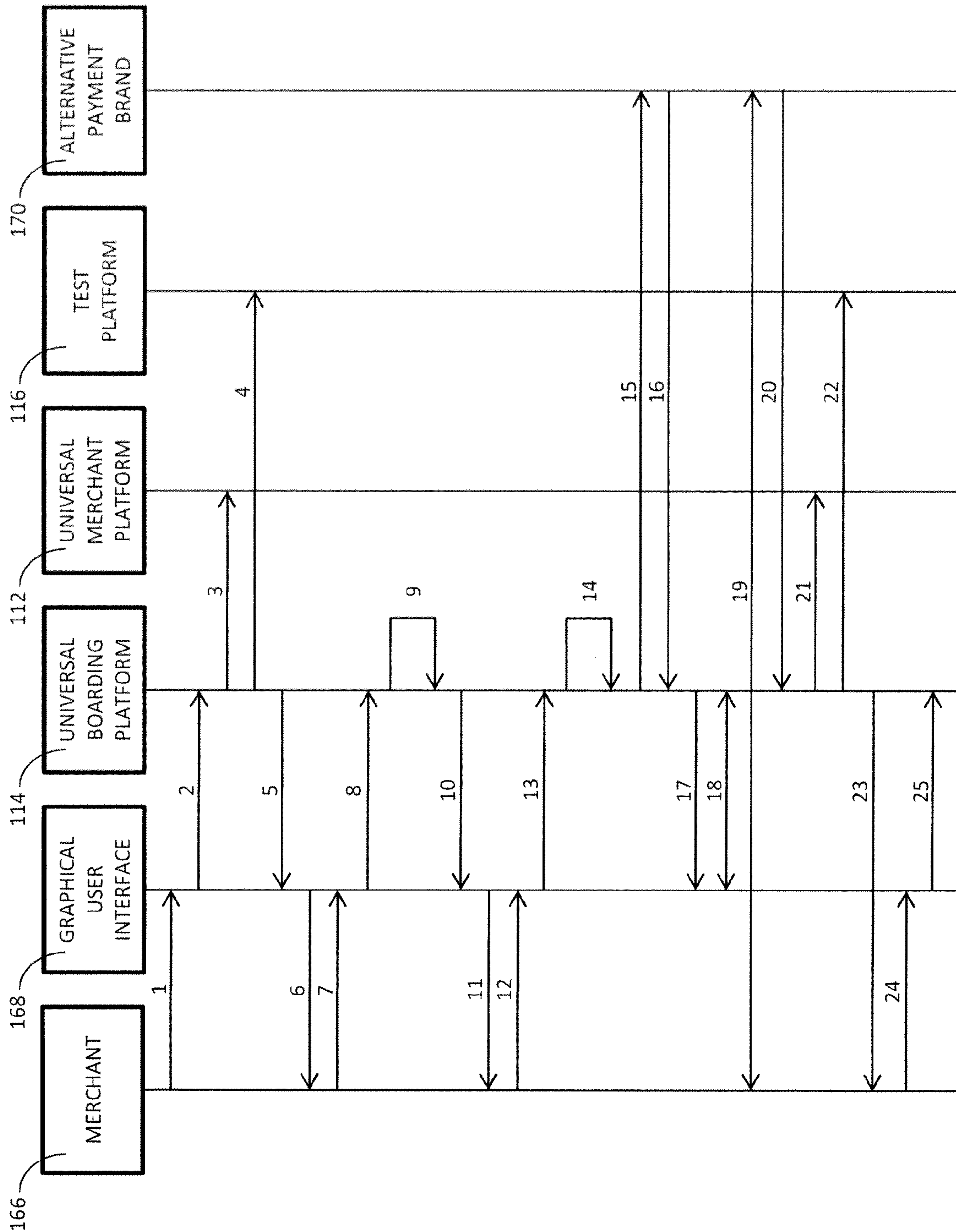


FIG. 2

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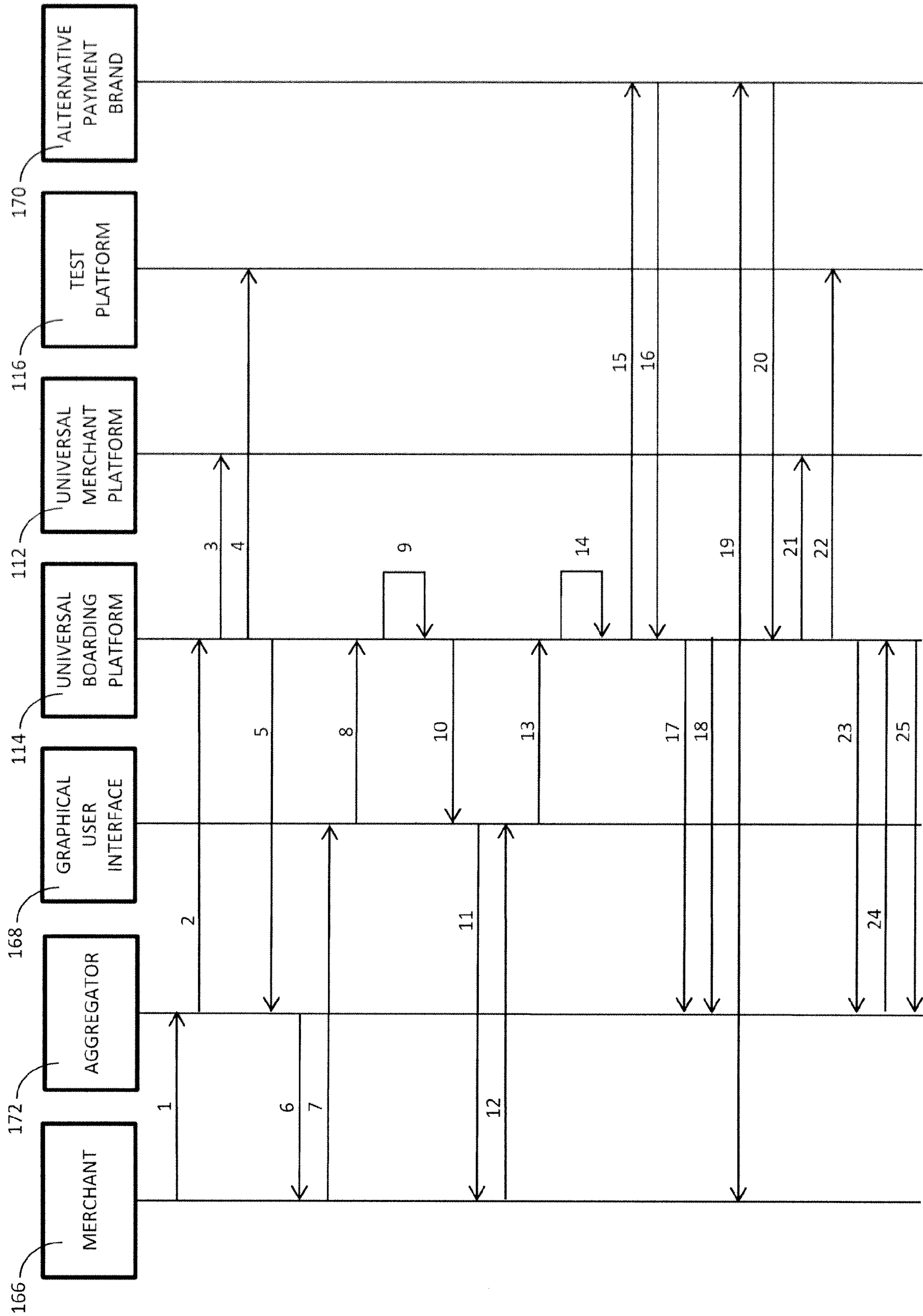
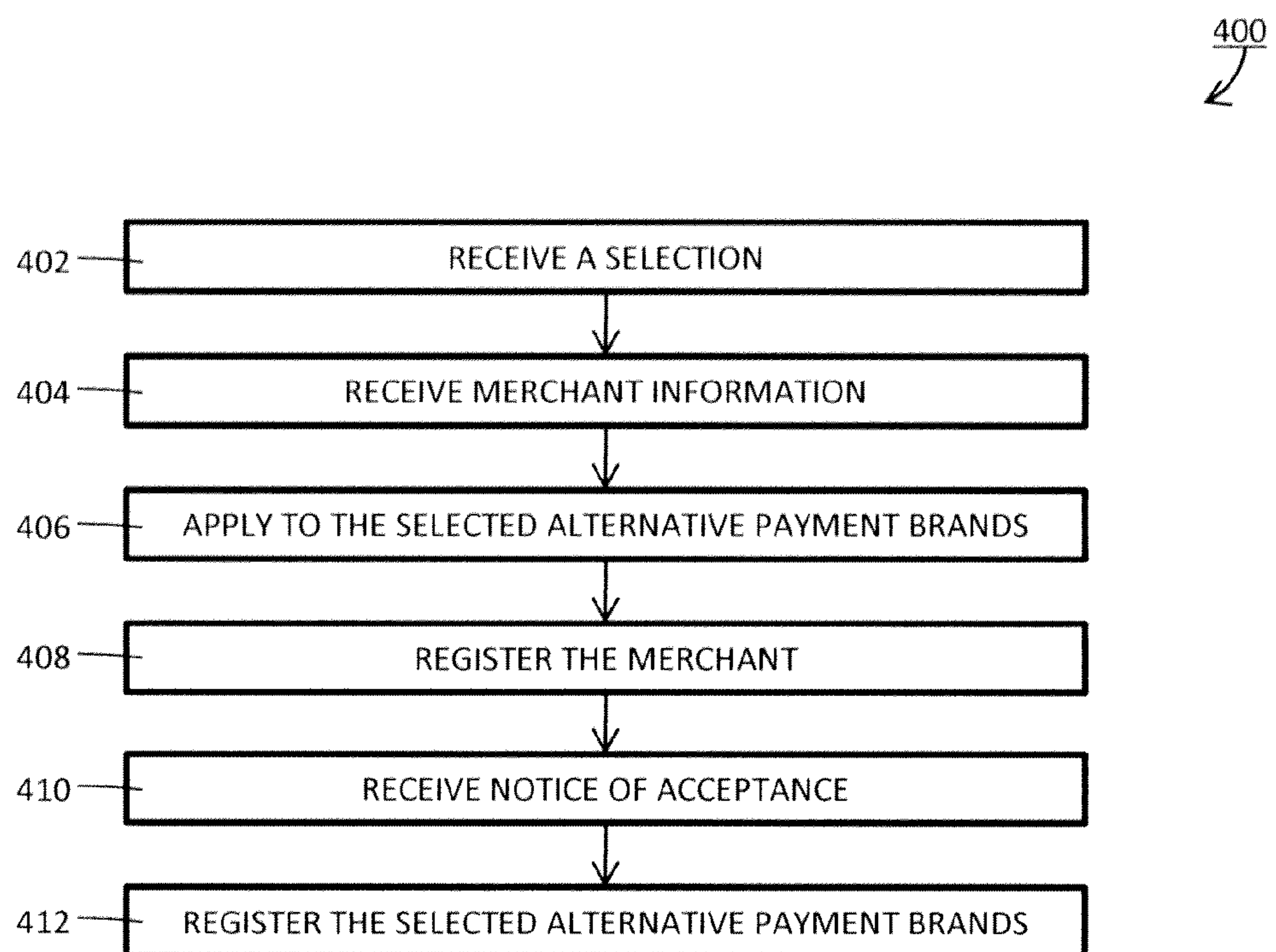


FIG. 3

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FIG. 4

