

Appendix 1 Hypothetical Claim Sets (Group1)

1.1 Hypothetical Claim Set A (Point-granting service)

Brief Description

Conventional customer loyalty point-award services have been used for rewarding (loyalty) points in accordance with the amount of merchandise purchased and for permitting points to be redeemed (as if money) as part of the transaction amount. However, points have been rewarded only to individual customers, who are prohibited from owning them jointly even with family members.

The present invention provides a service method of allowing points (issued per merchandise transaction) to be given to any person other than the customer. The invention allows the customer to use the points as a gift.

A shop can advertise its own shop to new customers to whom the points are given. The shop may provide various services to attract more customers, but no matter how good the services may be, if customers do not know the existence of the shop, the shop will not be able to attract consumers to visit the shop. Besides, since the quality of services may be judged subjectively even if the existence of the shop is known, new customers may not necessarily return to or regularly visit the shop if they do not truly appreciate the services offered by the shop. In other words, points offered as a gift would preferably be utilized by new customers to test the services of the shop.

The invention is useful especially for shops on the Internet because, unlike a real (conventional) shop, users find it harder to become aware of the existence of shops on the Internet. In the event that the invention is used for shops on the Internet, notification that points have been granted can be more appropriately conveyed by means of e-mail than using a letter or facsimile.

When a customer A purchases an item at the shop on the Internet, the customer A enters the name of a (new) customer B to whom points are issued to the server. The server looks for the e-mail address of the customer B in a customer list storage unit. If the e-mail address of the customer B is not registered, the customer A enters the e-mail address, address, telephone number, and facsimile number of the customer B to the server. Then the server stores the point value granted to the customer B in a customer list storage unit, and notifies the customer B of the granted point value, by the e-mail,

to the e-mail address which the customer A entered, or, to the e-mail address which is stored in the customer list storage unit. Furthermore, for the future service, the data that has been entered in the server is stored in the customer list storage unit.

The service can be also used by shops to send a comprehensive list of merchandise to the Internet users. This service will become more effective if merchandise available by redeeming granted points can be highlighted in order to distinguish such merchandise from other merchandise, for instance, by changing the font type or color of characters.

To provide an additional incentive to use the service, customers could be entered in a type of lottery in which they would have an opportunity to increase the number of points awarded for that transaction. For example, for every twenty transactions completed, one of the twenty customers would win ten times the amount of points normally awarded. As word of this potential point option is discussed among the service customers, new customers may be attracted to join the service.

Fig.1 is a diagram comparatively illustrating the conventional point-award service and the point-award service in an embodiment of the present invention.

Fig.2 is a flow chart which illustrates the flow of the process of storing points in the customer point storage unit that is mounted on the server.

Drawing Figure

Fig. 1

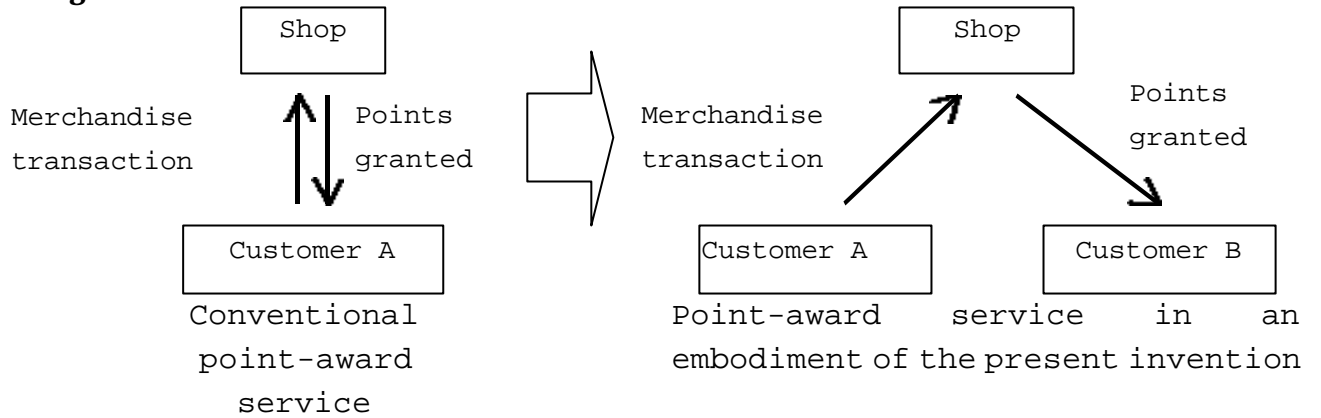
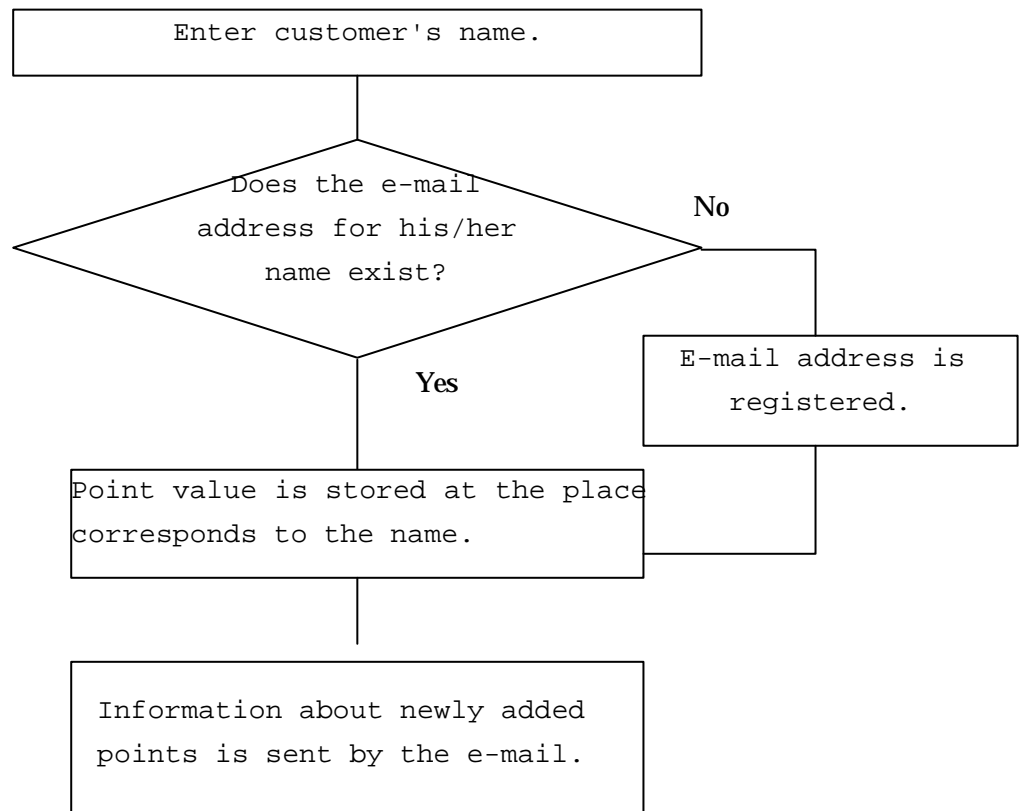


Fig. 2



Claims

1.

A service method of granting points in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction, comprising the steps of:

designating by a customer, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting, in response to the name of the designated person, the address of the designated person from a customer list;

registering the address of the designated person in a customer list if the address is not available;

storing the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list; and

sending a notice that the points were granted, to the address of the designated person.

2.

A service method, wherein points are granted in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction made by a customer at a shop on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

designating by the customer, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting, in response to the name of the designated person, the e-mail address of the designated person from a customer list;

registering the e-mail address of the designated person in a customer list if the e-mail address is not available;

storing the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list; and

sending a notice that the points were granted, to the e-mail address of the designated person.

3.

A service method for granting points in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction at a shop on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

designating to a server, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting by the server, in response to the name of the designated person, the e-mail address of the designated person from a customer list storage unit, which is provided on the server;

registering by the server, the e-mail address of the designated person in a customer list storage unit if the e-mail address is not available;

storing by the server, the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list storage unit; and

sending by the server, a notice that the points were granted, to the e-mail address of the designated person.

4.

A service method for granting points in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction at a shop on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

designating to a server, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting by the server, in response to the name of the designated person, the e-mail address of the designated person from a customer list storage unit, which is provided on the server;

registering by the server, the e-mail address of the designated person in a customer list storage unit if the e-mail address is not available;

storing by the server, the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list storage unit; and

sending by the server, a notice that the points were granted, to the e-mail address of the designated person, and

the steps being characterized in that:

the points issued against the merchandise transaction are calculated as those issued against the cost of the merchandise transaction inclusive of taxes;

5.

A service method for granting points in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction at a shop on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

designating to a server, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting by the server, in response to the name of the designated person, the e-mail address of the designated person from a customer list storage unit, which is provided on the server;

registering by the server, the e-mail address of the designated person in a customer list storage unit if the e-mail address is not available;

storing by the server, the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list storage unit; and

sending by the server, a notice that the points were granted, to the e-mail address of the designated person, and

the steps being characterized in that:

the number of points awarded are increased to 10 times the number of points normally awarded for that merchandise transaction in one out of every twenty transactions.

6.

A service method for granting points in accordance with an amount of the merchandise transaction at a shop on the Internet, comprising the steps of:

designating to a server, a name of a person to whom points issued in accordance with the amount of the merchandise transaction are to be granted;

selecting by the server, in response to the name of the designated person, the e-mail address of the designated person from a customer list storage unit, which is provided on the server;

registering by the server, the e-mail address of the designated person in a customer list storage unit if the e-mail address is not available;

storing by the server, the value of the points granted to the designated person in the customer list storage unit;

calling by the server, a comprehensive list of merchandise from a merchandise information storing means for storing a list of merchandise corresponding with the name and price of the merchandise purchased or the number of points necessary for the purchase thereof;

converting by the server, the comprehensive list of merchandise into a list, such that the merchandise available merely by redeeming the value of the points can be distinguished from other merchandise; and

sending by the server, a notice that the points were granted, attaching thereto the comprehensive list of merchandise as converted, to the e-mail address of the designated person.

**Trilateral Project B3b-Mutual Understanding
in Search and Examination**

Questionnaire (Group 1)

Hypothetical Claim Set A (Point-granting service)

- (1) Is the subject matter appropriate for patent protection? Please include the analysis to support this determination.
- (2) Scope of the claim as interpreted by the Office – what does the claim cover/include?
- (3) Assuming that there exist following known prior art, please determine whether the claimed invention lacks novelty or non-obviousness / inventive step. Please include the analysis to support this determination.

List of hypothetical prior art:

- (a) Claim “1” of this hypothetical case.
- (b) A service method for granting points against the cost of the merchandise transaction taking taxes into account. (It is assumed that to issue points 10 times of the payment in certain probability is **not** known as the prior art.)

(4) Assuming that there exist following known prior art, please determine whether the claimed invention lacks novelty or non-obviousness / inventive step. Please include the analysis to support this determination.

List of hypothetical prior art:

- (c) Claim “2” of this hypothetical case.
- (d) A service method for granting points against the cost of the merchandise transaction taking taxes into account. (It is assumed that to issue points 10 times of the payment in certain probability is **not** known as the prior art.)