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(54) **ADVERTISING AND SHOPPING CONTEST**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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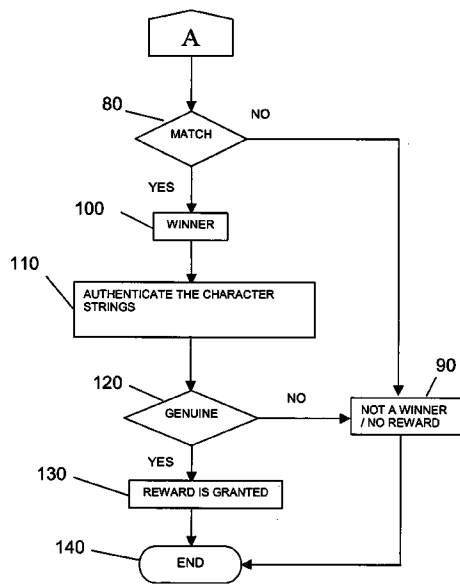
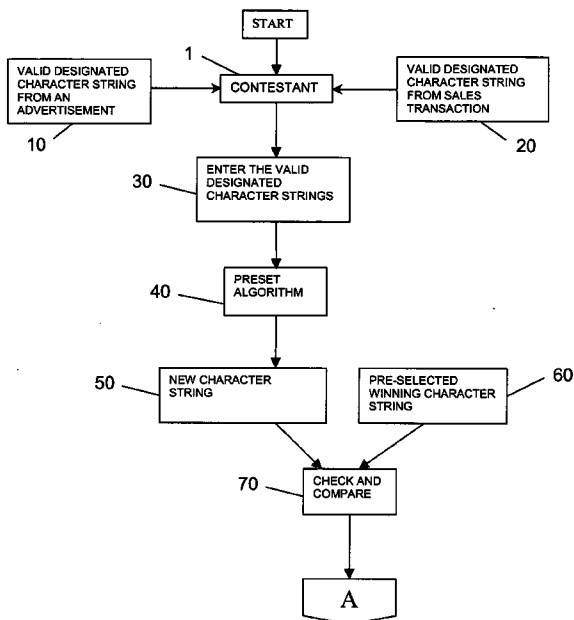
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An advertising and shopping contest whereby a contestant (1) enters a valid designated character string from an advertisement (10) and a valid designated character string from a sales transaction record (20) into a preset algorithm (40). The preset algorithm (40) processes the information supplied by the contestant (1) and derives a new character string (50). If the new character string (50) matches (80) the pre-selected winning character string (60), the contestant (1) is deemed a winner (100), otherwise the contestant is not a winner (90). However, in order to receive a reward, it will be necessary to authenticate the character strings (110) the winner (100) entered, as being genuine (120), to prevent fraud. If they are genuine (120), then a reward is granted (130). If said character strings are not genuine, the contestant is not a winner (90).



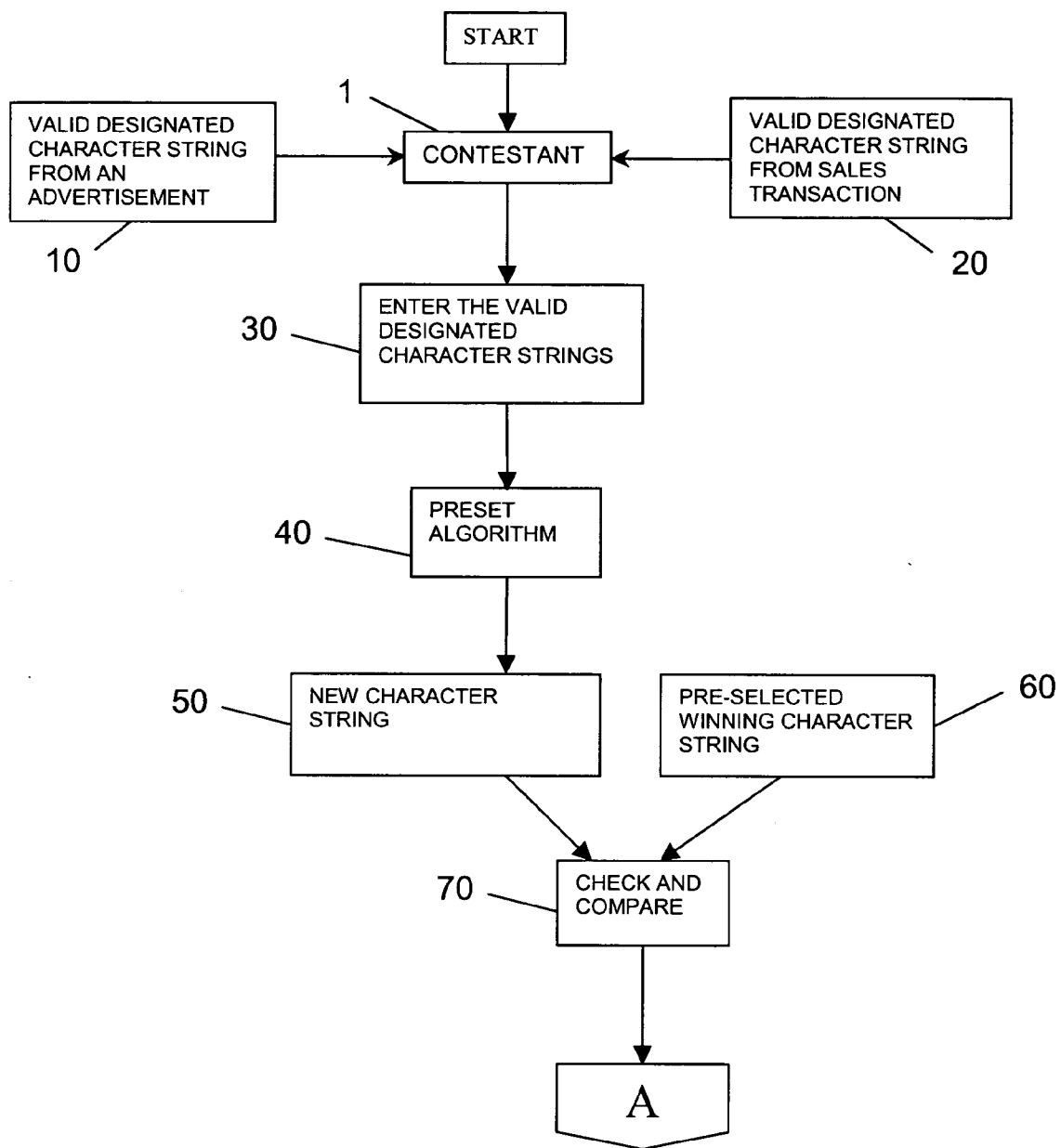


FIG. 1

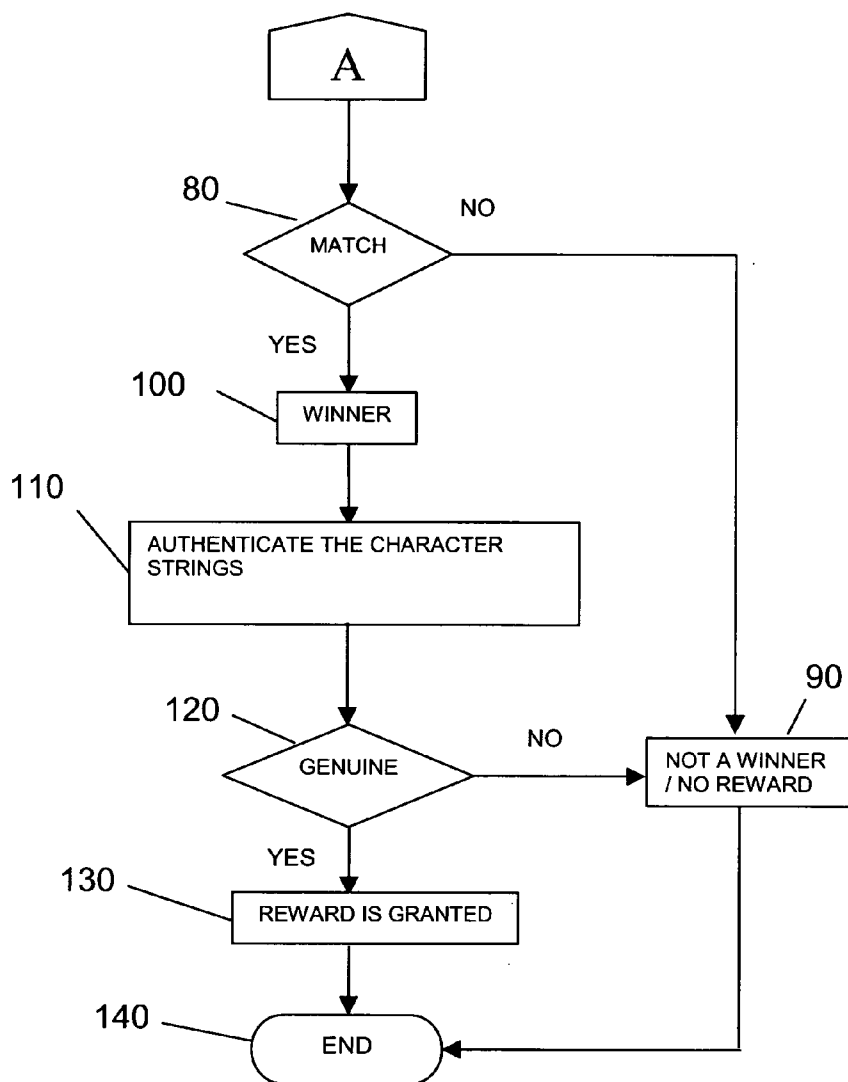


FIG. 1

## ADVERTISING AND SHOPPING CONTEST

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] Not applicable.

### BACKGROUND

[0002] 1. Field of Invention

[0003] This invention relates to contests conducted by marketers, specifically to such contests which requires participants to obtain information contained in advertisements and information contained in sales transaction records in order to win.

[0004] 2. Description of Prior Art

[0005] The purpose of radio and television commercials is to inform consumers of new products and sale events, build brand recognition and to pay for the transmission of copy-righted content and other associated costs. People are now able to subscribe to commercial free radio and commercial free television, if they decide not to listen to or view, commercial advertisements. However, revenue generated by commercials is an important part of the economy and makes its way throughout society keeping the economy healthy. In fact, economists use advertising revenue as an economic indicator. However, with the widespread use of videocassette recorders (VCRs), digital video recorders (DVRs), and the availability of commercial free radio and television services, marketers are having a difficult time getting people to listen to or watch their commercial advertisements.

[0006] For example, commercial free satellite radio services are now available for a monthly service fee. People can now listen to their favorite radio programming without ever listening to a commercial advertisement. Even regular commercial advertisement supported television is losing its ability to reach consumers as a marketing medium because VCRs and DVRs come equipped with a button that gives people the ability to skip the commercials found during regular programming. Consequently, this prevents a marketer's messages from reaching audience members, resulting in wasted time, money and resources. People in the marketing industry and business owners who use advertising to attract customers lose business and face the possibility of financial failure if they are unable to communicate their product or service, to potential customers.

### SUMMARY

[0007] In accordance with the present invention, a contest consists of a predetermined winning character string that participants try to reproduce using information found in sales transaction records, combined with information found in advertisements. The information contained in the sales transaction record and the information contained in the advertisement are input into a preset computer algorithm and are manipulated by the algorithm to produce a new character string. If the new character string matches the predetermined winning character string then the participant is deemed a winner. In order to redeem his/her reward, the character strings used by the winner must first be authenticated as being genuine, to prevent a fraudulent claim.

## OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

[0008] Accordingly, several objects and advantages of my invention are:

[0009] a) to provide marketers with a contest that will require participants to view or listen to advertisements in order to participate.

[0010] b) to provide participants with an easy, way to participate in a contest.

[0011] c) to provide participants a way to know almost immediately whether they will receive a reward or not.

[0012] d) to provide manufacturers with a contest that will help build brand recognition.

[0013] e) to provide business owners with a contest that will garner their advertisements attention.

Further objects and advantages are to provide a contest, which can be easily and conveniently, conducted using common data already being issued. Still further objects and advantages will become apparent from a consideration of the ensuing description and drawing.

### DRAWING FIGURES

[0014] **FIG. 1** shows a flowchart describing how a person enters an advertising and shopping contest and how to determine if he/she is given a reward or not, based on the information he/she collects.

### REFERENCE NUMERALS IN DRAWINGS

[0015] **1**—contestant

[0016] **10**—valid designated character string from an advertisement

[0017] **20**—valid designated character string from a sales transaction record

[0018] **30**—enter the valid designated character strings

[0019] **40**—preset algorithm

[0020] **50**—new character string

[0021] **60**—pre-selected winning character string

[0022] **70**—check and compare

[0023] **80**—match

[0024] **90**—not a winner/no reward

[0025] **100**—winner

[0026] **110**—authenticate the character strings

[0027] **120**—genuine

[0028] **130**—reward is granted

[0029] **140**—end

### DESCRIPTION—FIG. 1—PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0030] **FIG. 1** shows how a contestant **1** enters an advertising and shopping contest and how to determine if he/she is given a reward or not based on a valid designated character string he/she obtains from an advertisement, and a valid designated character string he/she obtains from a sales transaction record.

[0031] Item **10** is a valid designated character string from an advertisement, such as a television commercial, radio commercial or print ad. Typically, this will be a random

number consisting of a plurality of digits. However, it could also be a word or phrase, such as a tag line or slogan, that the advertiser wishes people to remember. Furthermore, it will typically be issued with an expiration date, telling the contestant **1** how long the character string will remain valid for the contest, such as 90 days from initial issue. The more advertisements a contestant **1** sees or hears, the greater his/her chances are of winning the contest because he/she will collect more different designated character strings to use to try to win the contest.

[0032] Item **20** is a valid designated character string from a sales transaction record. This will normally be the transaction number or invoice number or confirmation number found on most sales receipts and is essentially a random number issued to the contestant **1**. However, it could also be another character string printed on the receipt such as a word or a phrase or telephone number or address. The more sales receipts a contestant **1** collects, the greater his/her chances are of winning the contest because he/she will collect more different designated character strings to use to try to win the contest. The transaction number or confirmation number or reference number on a sales receipt, is a number consisting of a plurality of digits that a merchant issues for sales records control. Typically, the valid designated character string from a sales transaction record **20** will remain valid for as long as the sales receipt remains valid, which could range anywhere between 1 and 90 days, depending on the issuing merchant's return policy. However, some merchants may decide to allow their receipts to remain valid for the contest, for the entire duration of the contest. If a manufacturer is conducting this contest, or desires to draw greater attention to his/her product then he/she may prefer to substitute this character string with a designated character string that is present on the labels of his/her product instead.

[0033] The contestant **1** is required to enter the valid designated character strings **30** into the preset algorithm **40**. Typically this will be performed using any computer interface and means that will accept input from a person. Normally, this will consist of using the contestant's computer, communicating with a computer conducting the advertising and shopping contest, by means of the Internet. However, the character strings could also be entered into the algorithm by using another means such as, a telephone or other communication device and means capable of interfacing with the computer conducting the contest.

[0034] The preset algorithm **40** is encoded into the computer conducting the contest and resides in the computer's memory. It is invoked whenever the contestant **1** tries to win the contest. The preset algorithm **40** is defined before the contest officially starts and is not altered until the contest is officially terminated. Typically, the preset algorithm **40** is a random number generator that uses the valid designated character string from an advertisement **10** and the valid designated character string from a transaction record **20**, as seeds. The preset algorithm **40** then proceeds to generate a new character string **50**. Typically, the new character string will be a new random number, however it could also be a new word or new phrase.

[0035] The new character string derived from the preset algorithm **50**, is checked and compared **70** against a pre-selected winning character string **60**. Typically, the pre-selected winning character string **60** would be a random

number consisting of a plurality of digits that is defined before the contest officially starts and is not altered until the contest is officially terminated. However it could also be a word or phrase if desired. Keeping both the input and output of the preset algorithm **40** as random numbers, and making the pre-selected winning character string **60** a random number, ensures fairness to everyone hoping to win the contest.

[0036] If the new character string **50** derived from the preset algorithm **40** matches **80** the pre-selected winning character string **60**, the contestant **1** is deemed a winner **100**, otherwise the contestant **1** is not a winner and does not receive a reward **90**. The process of trying to win the contest ends **140** when the contestant is deemed not a winner **90**.

[0037] In order for the winner **100** to receive a reward, it is necessary to authenticate the character strings **110** input into the preset algorithm **40** are in fact genuine **120**. Ensuring that the character strings used by the winner **100** are genuine **120**, reduces the possibility of fraud and keeps the contest fair for all the contestants. Verifying the valid designated character string from an advertisement **10** used to win the contest is genuine **120**, can be done by checking with the company that created and issued the advertisement. It can also be done by checking a database created to contain all the valid designated character strings used in advertisements, for this contest. This database would be populated with the valid designated character strings used in advertisements, by companies sponsoring and participating in the contest. The winner **100** must retain and present the sales transaction record with the valid designated character string used to win, to contest officials for identification and verification purposes. Verifying that the valid designated character string from a sales transaction record **20** used to win the contest is genuine **120**, can be done by contacting the retailer that issued the sales receipt and have him/her check their records to ensure that the transaction number was actually issued.

[0038] Once the character strings used to win the contest have been verified as being genuine **120**, a reward is granted **130** to the winner **100**. The reward granted to the winner **100** is typically preset at the beginning of the contest and is appealing to most people in order to attract a large number of contestants. Once the reward is granted **130**, the contest process ends **140** for the winner **100**.

#### Advantages

[0039] From the description above, several advantages of my advertising and shopping contest become evident:

[0040] (a) The advertising and shopping contest can be easily conducted by retailers, marketers and manufacturers that conduct business on-line using the Internet.

[0041] (b) Internet based service companies, such as search engines and other portals, can also conduct my advertising and shopping contest, since many of them contain advertisements and online sales transactions are completed with a confirmation number or transaction number.

[0042] (c) Kiosks can be set up in stores and shopping malls, where shoppers can use their newly issued transaction records and valid designated character

strings found on in-store flyers or ads, to see if they can win the contest.

Operation—FIG. 1

[0043] The manner of operating the advertising and shopping contest invention is illustrated in FIG. 1. Through the course of daily events, a contestant 1 does some shopping and receives a valid designated character string from a sales transaction record 20, and views TV, or reads the paper or listens to the radio, or uses the Internet, and is able to extract a valid designated character string from an advertisement 10.

[0044] Prepared with said valid designated character strings, said contestant 1 can access a computer conducting the advertising and shopping contest, via the internet or other communicative means, and enter the valid designated character strings 30 into a preset algorithm 40 contained in the computer's memory. The preset algorithm 40 controllably generates a new character string 50 by using information contained in said valid designated character strings. Said new character string 50 is then checked and compared 70 against a pre-selected winning character string 60. If said new character string 50 matches 80 said pre-selected winning character string 60, then said contestant is deemed a winner 100. If they do not match 80, then said contestant is not a winner 90 and is not rewarded. At this point the contest process ends 140 for said contestant.

[0045] However, in order for the winner 100 to receive a reward, it is necessary to authenticate the character strings 110 he/she entered into the preset algorithm 40 are genuine 120 to avoid fraud. If said character strings are not authenticated as genuine 120 then no reward 90 is granted and the contest process ends 140 for this contestant. However, if said character strings are authenticated as genuine 120 then the reward is granted 130. Once the reward is granted 130, the contest process ends 140 for the winner 100.

CONCLUSION, RAMIFICATIONS AND SCOPE

[0046] Accordingly, the reader will see that the advertising and shopping contest invention can be conducted by retailers, manufacturers and marketers easily and conveniently. Contestants can participate in such a contest conveniently from their own home using their computer and an Internet connection, or they can participate by using the telephone, e-mail and wireless e-mail, or kiosks set up in stores and shopping malls. My invention will also be able to provide contestants with a win or lose result quickly so they will not feel inconvenienced waiting for a result. It will also give contestants that do not win, the opportunity to try again with

different valid designated character strings if they wish. Furthermore, having the winning character strings authenticated as genuine, will provide all contestants with a sense of fairness and prevent people from attempting fraud.

[0047] This invention will cause consumers to pay more attention to commercials assuring retailers, manufacturers and marketers that their time, money and message is not being wasted. Since this contest will cause consumers to pay more attention to advertisements, it will give manufacturers the ability to build their brand recognition and increase sales.

I claim:

1. A method of determining a winner of a contest, comprising of:

- (a) a predetermined winning character string,
- (b) a designated character string found in a sales transaction record,
- (c) a designated character string found in an advertisement,
- (d) providing a means of controllably generating a new character string by using said designated character string found in said sales transaction record and said designated character string found in said advertisement,

whereby a contestant will be deemed a winner if said new character string controllably generated for him/her matches said predetermined winning character string.

2. The designated character string found in said sales transaction record in claim 1, may be substituted by a designated character string found in an item of commerce.

3. The designated character string found in said sales transaction record in claim 1 and the designated character string found in said advertisement in claim 1 and the designated character string found in an item of commerce in claim 2, may not be usable in the contest after a specified set time period after first being issued or released for use.

4. The designated character string found in said sales transaction record in claim 1 or the designated character string found in an item of commerce in claim 2 and the designated character string found in said advertisement in claim 1 must be authenticated as genuine before a contest winner can receive a reward.

5. The use of designated character strings contained in sales transaction records as a means of winning a contest.

6. The use of designated character strings contained in advertisements as a means of winning a contest.

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