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(54) TRUSTED TRANSACTIONAL SET-TOP BOX

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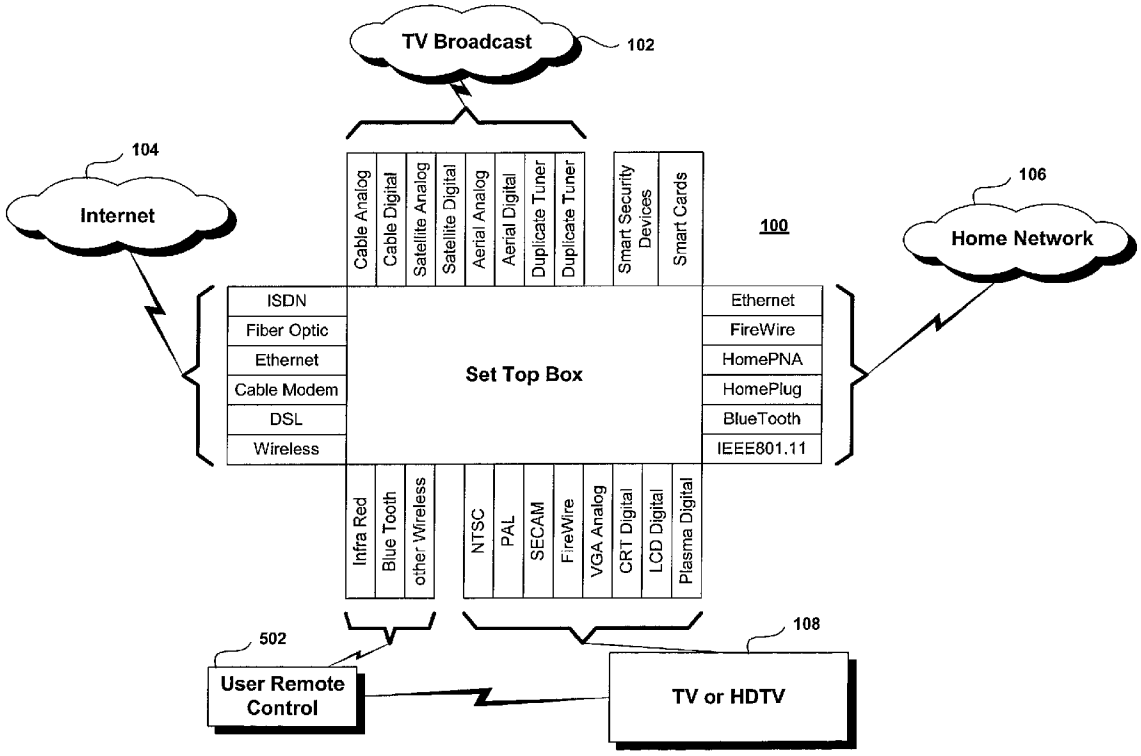
(57) ABSTRACT

A set top box (STB) includes a trusted transactional cache and associated transactional protocol and enables e-commerce transactions to be securely committed to a remote server extremely quickly and with little network overhead. The invention does away with the user concern of whether the transaction was successful. The STB operates equally well on robust private networks as on unpredictable Internet or wireless networks, and avoids upsetting users who would otherwise have to wait in front of a display screen for confirmation of completion of the transaction after a temporary communication failure with the central site. The method may advantageously be used to provide cost-effective micro-payments solutions. The STB may include a dual headed display capability in which data and video maybe be directed to separate displays. The STB may feature an embedded ticket printer, as well as an embedded barcode scanner. This enables non computer literate users to more conveniently track transactions committed via the STB, or to take advantage of promotional coupons. The STB features an embedded hardware true Random Number Generator to produce maximum entropy encryption keys, therefore providing maximum secure and fool-proof means to protect private data using government authorized encryption schemes.



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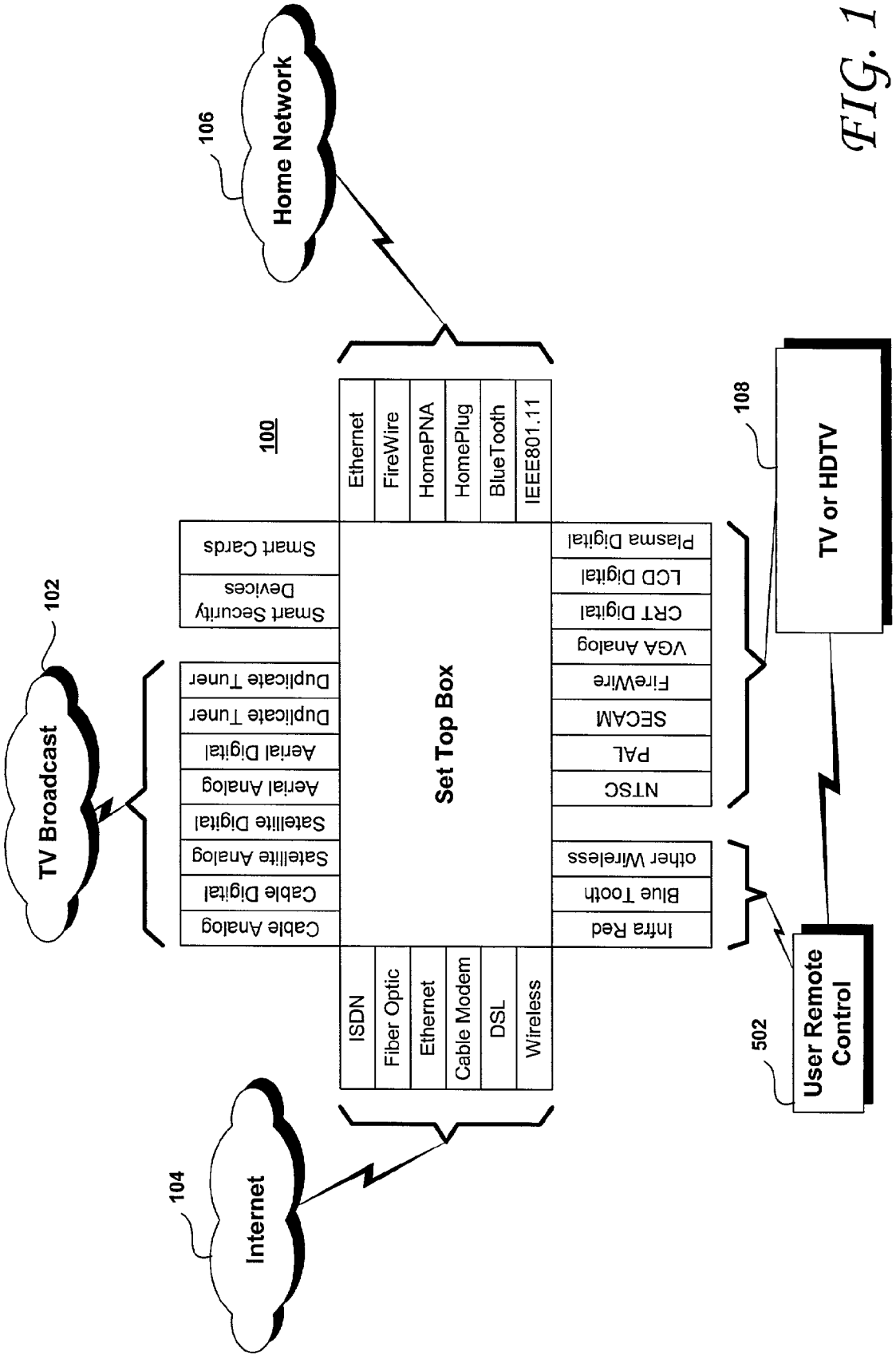
TV Broadcast
102
Cable Analog
Cable Digital
Satellite Analog
Satellite Digital
Aerial Analog
Aerial Digital
Duplicate Tuner
Duplicate Tuner
Smart Security Devices
Smart Cards
100
Set Top Box
Ethernet
FireWire
HomePNA
HomePlug
BlueTooth
IEEE801.11
Home Network
106
ISDN
Fiber Optic
Ethernet
Cable Modem
DSL
Wireless
Internet
104
Infra Red
Blue Tooth
other Wireless
NTSC
PAL
SECAM
FireWire
VGA Analog
CRT Digital
LCD Digital
Plasma Digital
TV or HDTV
108
User Remote Control
502

FIG. 1

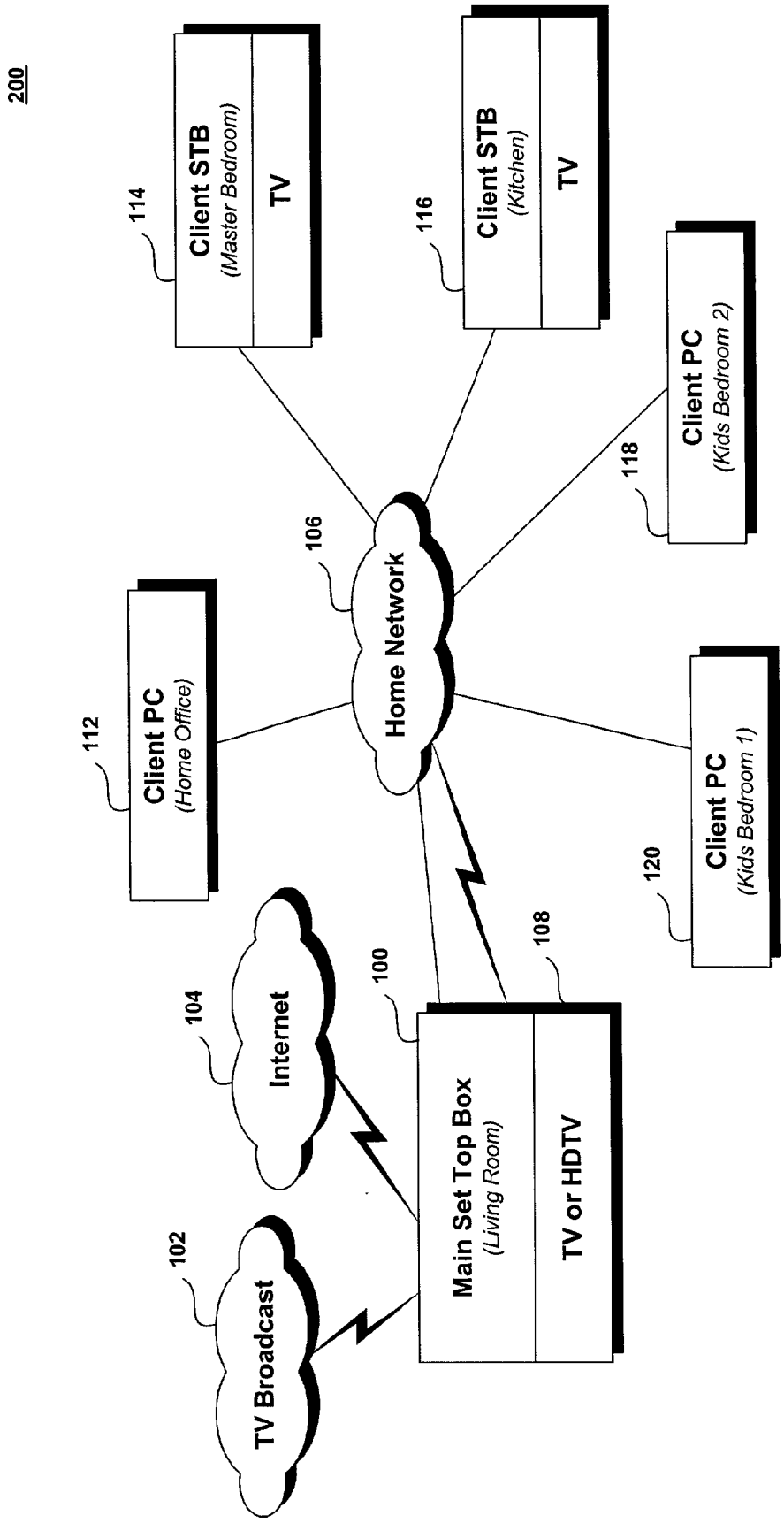
200
114
Client STB
(Master Bedroom)
TV
116
Client STB
(Kitchen)
TV
118
Client PC
(Kids Bedroom 2)
106
Home Network
112
Client PC
(Home Office)
120
Client PC
(Kids Bedroom 1)
104
Internet
100
108
102
TV Broadcast
Main Set Top Box
(Living Room)
TV or HDTV

FIG. 2

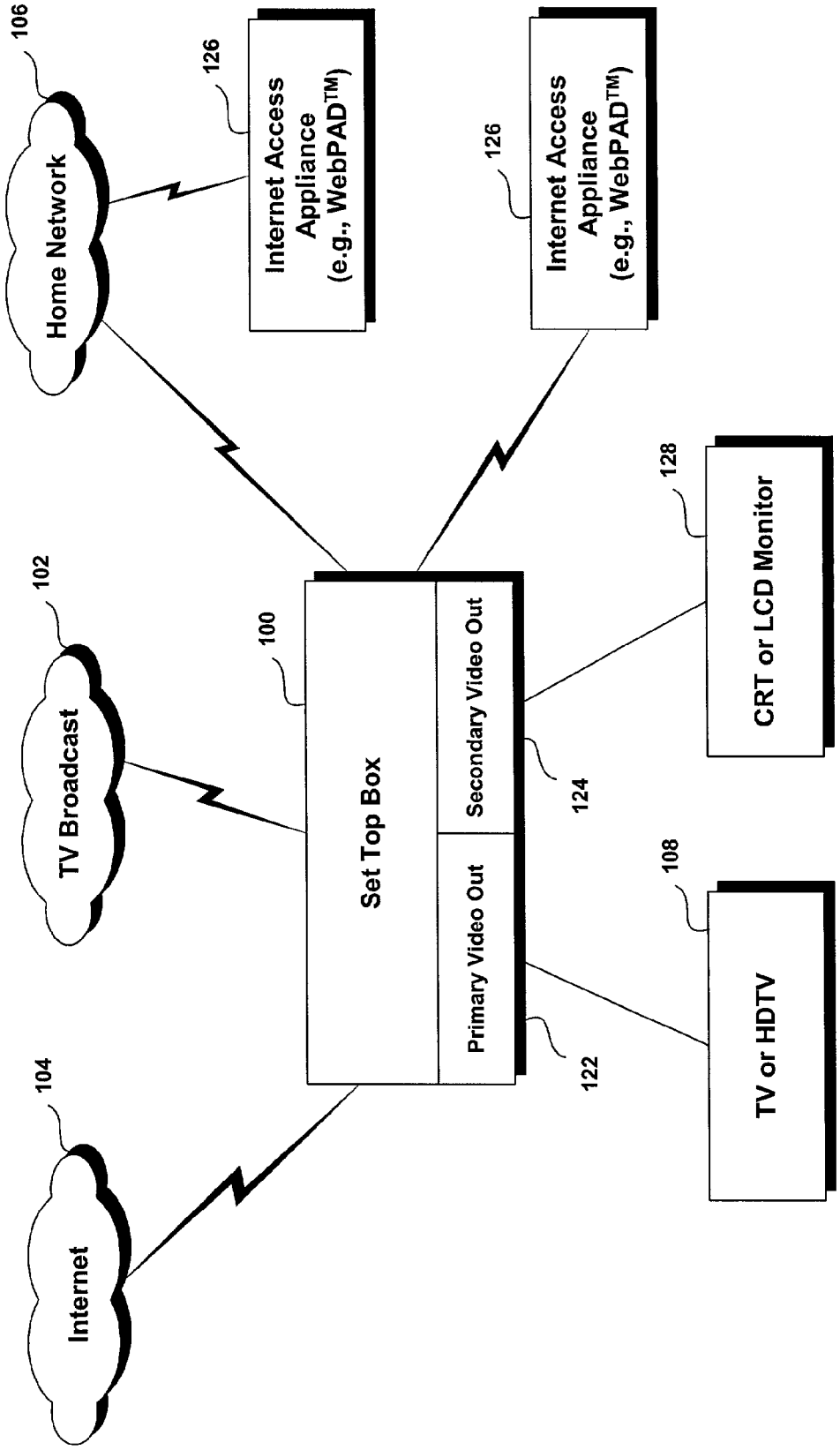
106
Home Network
126
Internet Access Appliance (e.g., WebPAD™)
126
Internet Access Appliance (e.g., WebPAD™)
102
TV Broadcast
100
Set Top Box
Secondary Video Out
Primary Video Out
124
122
128
CRT or LCD Monitor
108
TV or HDTV
104
Internet

FIG. 3

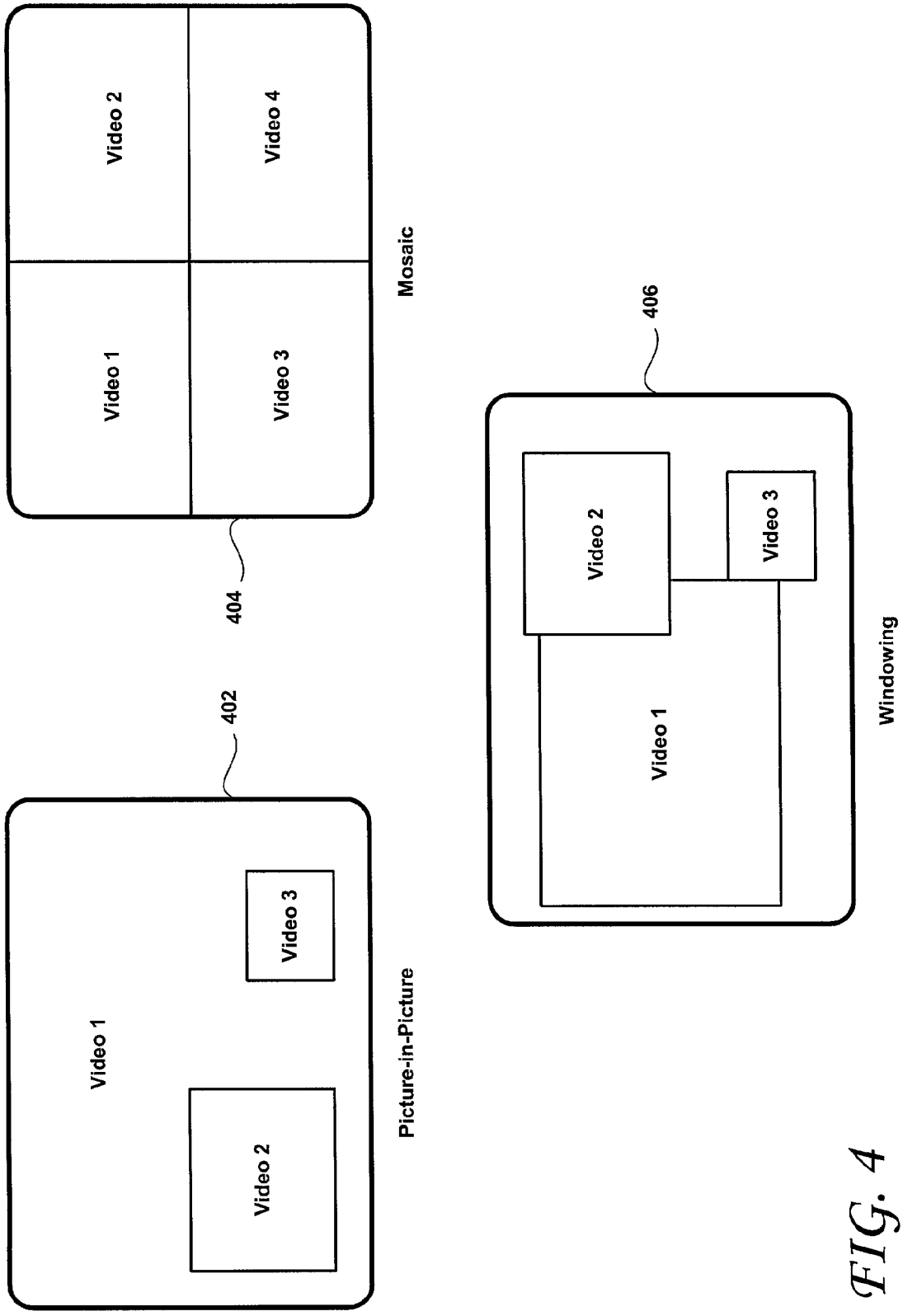
Video 2
Video 4
Video 1
Video 3
Mosaic
404
402
Video 1
Video 3
Video 2
Picture-in-Picture
406
Video 2
Video 3
Video 1
Windowing

FIG. 4

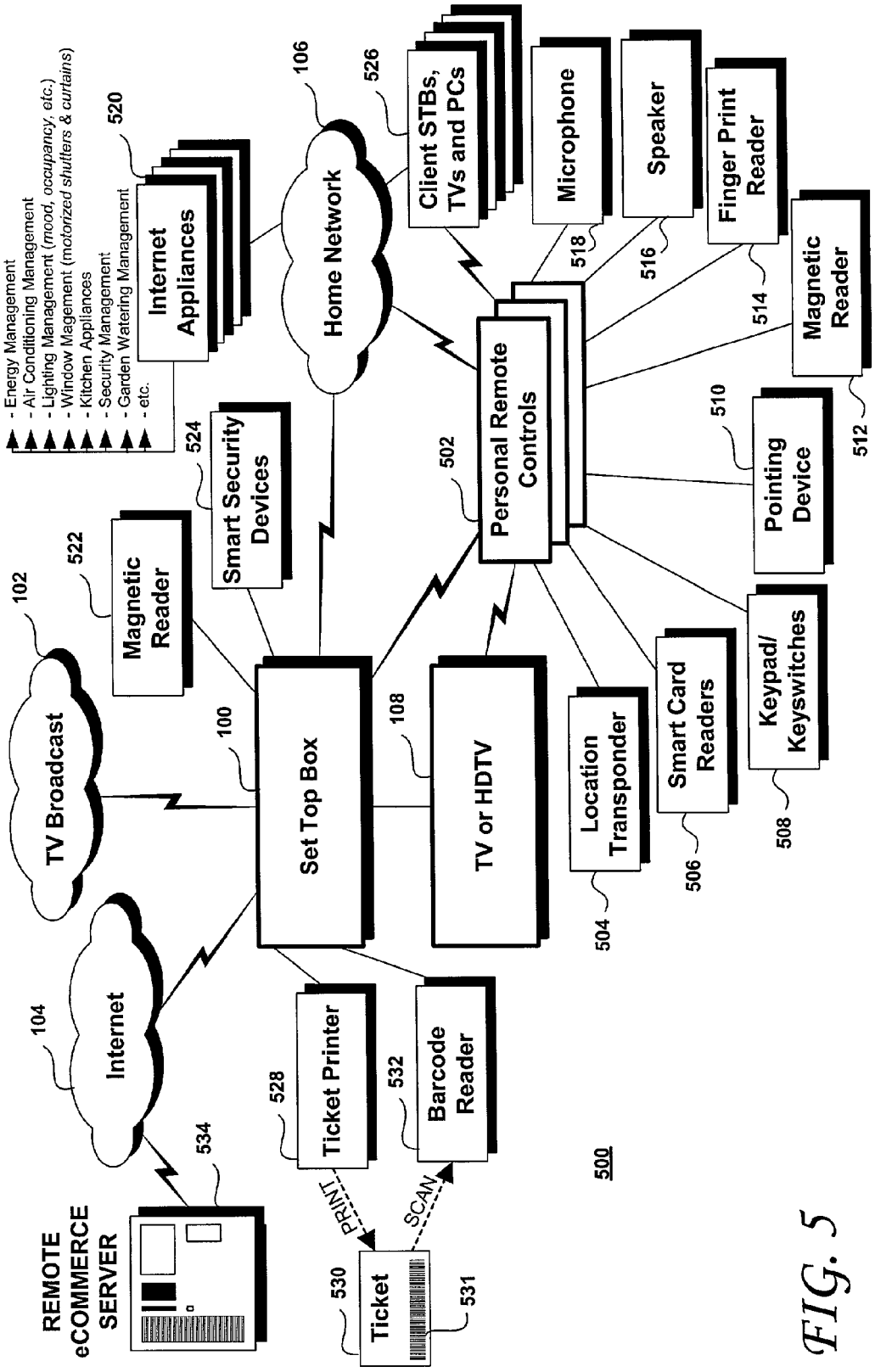
- Energy Management
- Air Conditioning Management
- Lighting Management (mood, occupancy, etc.)
- Window Magement (motorized shutters & curtains)
- Kitchen Appliances
- Security Management
- Garden Watering Management
- etc.
520
Internet Appliances
106
Home Network
526
Client STBs, TVs and PCs
Microphone
Speaker
Finger Print Reader
Magnetic Reader
518
516
514
512
510
Pointing Device
502
Personal Remote Controls
524
Smart Security Devices
522
Magnetic Reader
102
TV Broadcast
100
Set Top Box
108
TV or HDTV
Location Transponder
Smart Card Readers
Keypad/ Keyswitches
504
506
508
104
Internet
528
Ticket Printer
532
Barcode Reader
534
REMOTE eCOMMERCE SERVER
PRINT
SCAN
530
Ticket
531
500

FIG. 5

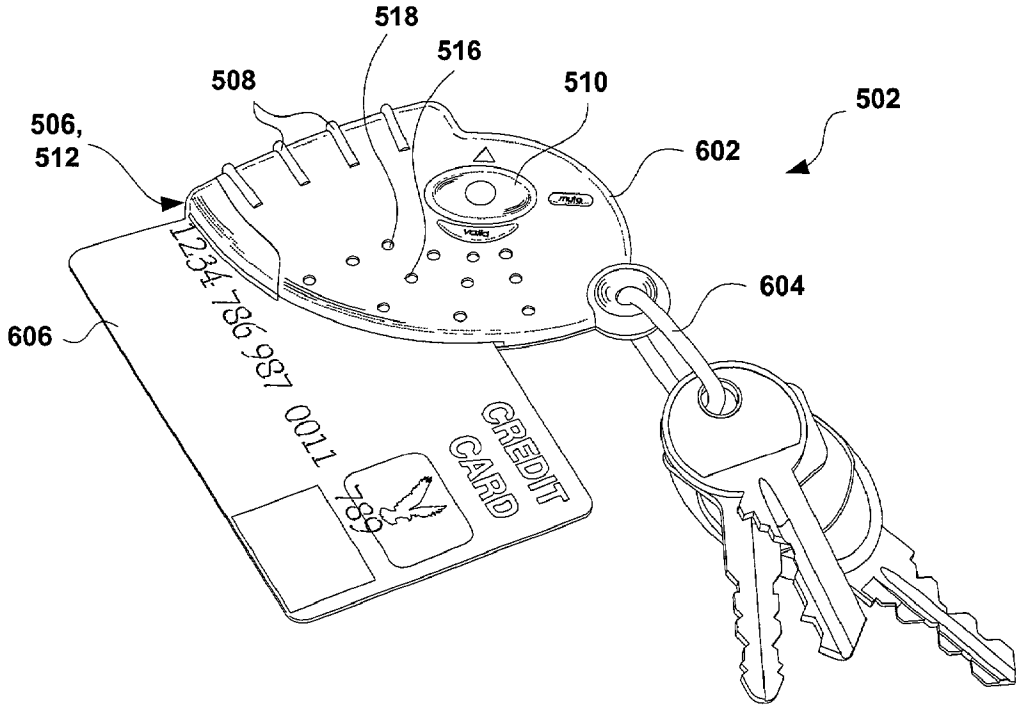
518
516
508
510
502
506,
512
602
604
606
1234 786 987 0011
789
CREDIT
CARD

FIG. 6

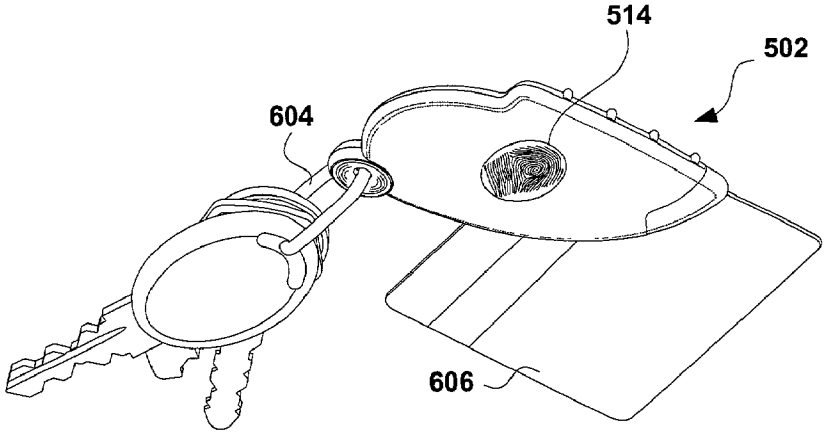
514
502
604
606

FIG. 7

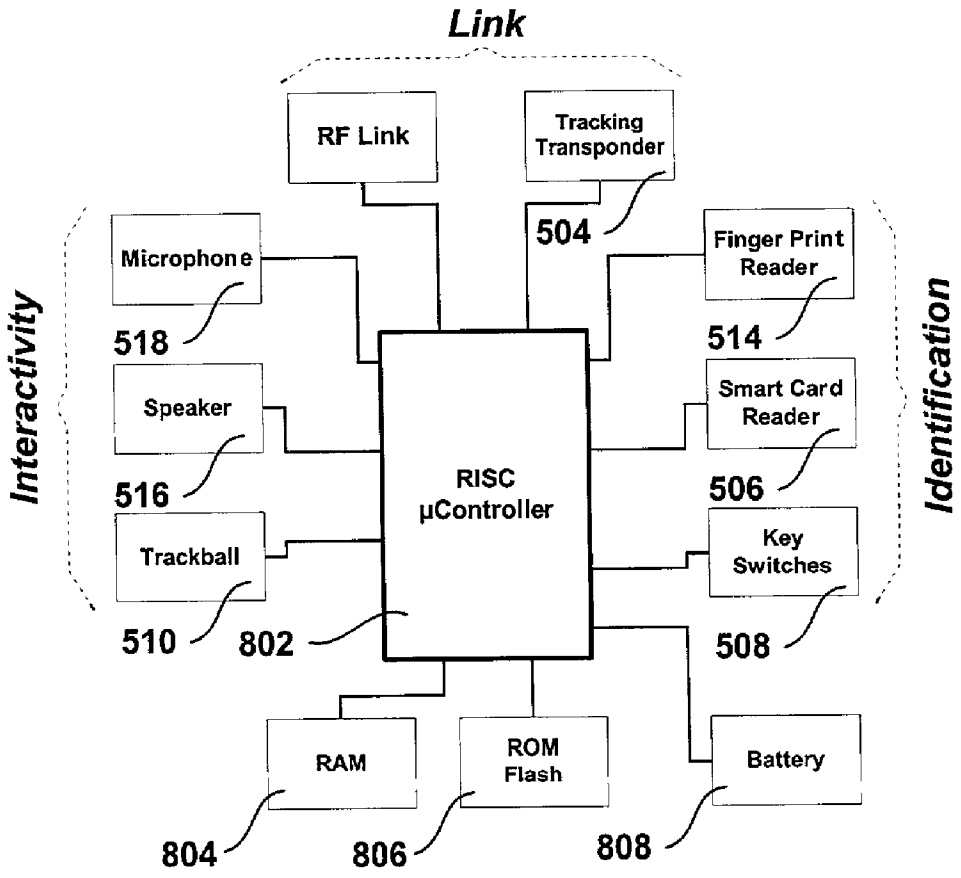
Link
RF Link
Tracking Transponder
504
Microphone
518
Speaker
516
Trackball
510
Interactivity
RISC µController
802
Finger Print Reader
514
Smart Card Reader
506
Key Switches
508
Identification
RAM
804
ROM Flash
806
Battery
808

FIG. 8

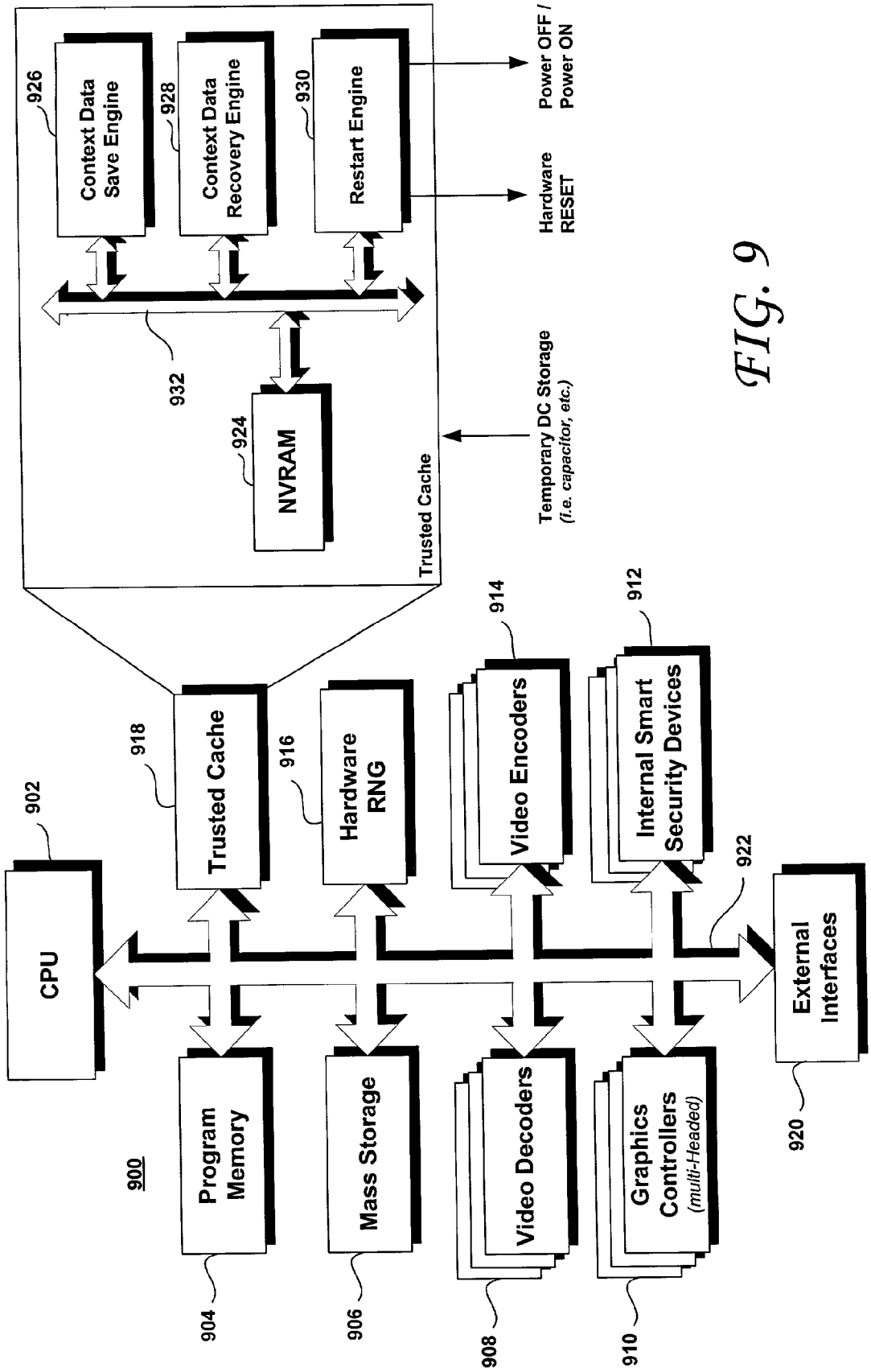
900
CPU
902
Trusted Cache
918
Hardware RNG
916
Video Encoders
914
Internal Smart Security Devices
912
External Interfaces
920
922
Program Memory
904
Mass Storage
906
Video Decoders
908
Graphics Controllers (multi-Headed)
910
Context Data Save Engine
926
Context Data Recovery Engine
928
Restart Engine
930
NVRAM
924
932
Trusted Cache
Power OFF / Power ON
Hardware RESET
Temporary DC Storage (i.e. capacitor, etc.)

FIG. 9

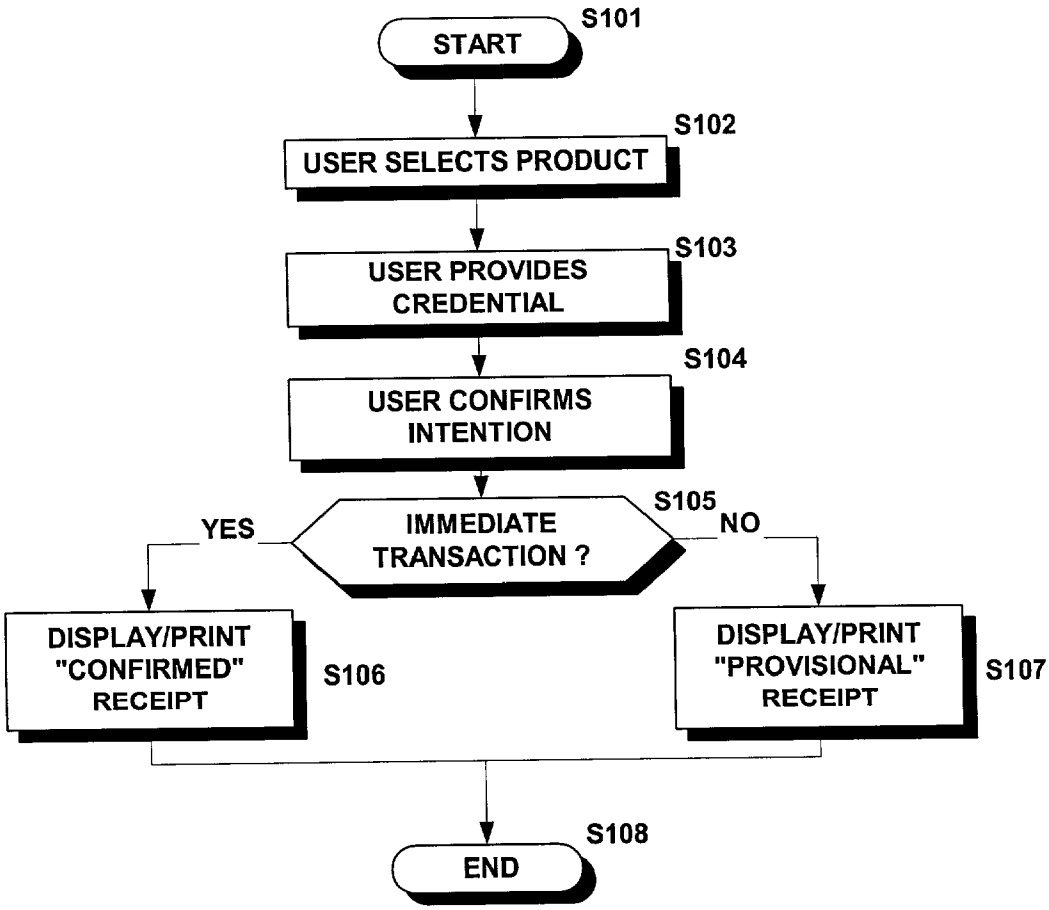
START
S101
USER SELECTS PRODUCT
S102
USER PROVIDES CREDENTIAL
S103
USER CONFIRMS INTENTION
S104
IMMEDIATE TRANSACTION ?
S105
YES
NO
DISPLAY/PRINT "CONFIRMED" RECEIPT
S106
DISPLAY/PRINT "PROVISIONAL" RECEIPT
S107
END
S108

FIG. 10

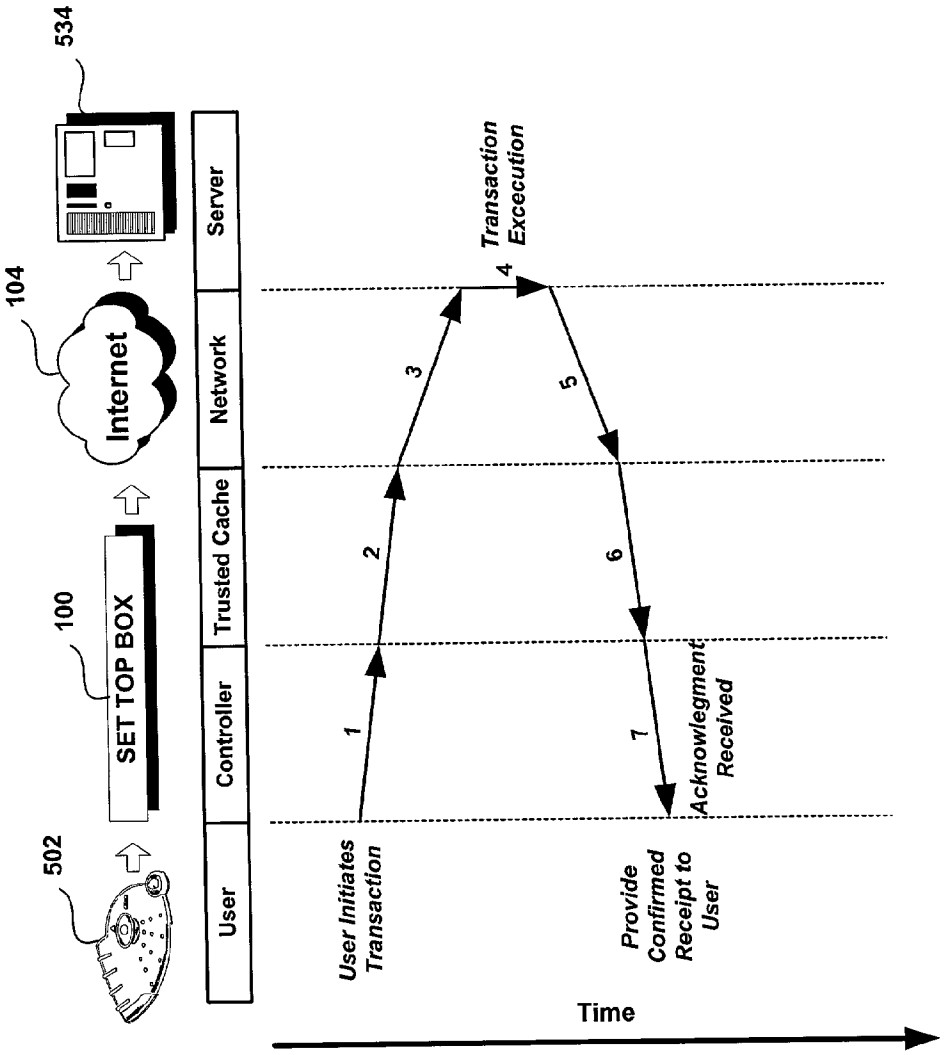
502
100
SET TOP BOX
104
Internet
534
User
Controller
Trusted Cache
Network
Server
User Initiates Transaction
1
2
3
4
Transaction Execution
5
6
7
Acknowlegment Received
Provide Confirmed Receipt to User
Time

FIG. 11

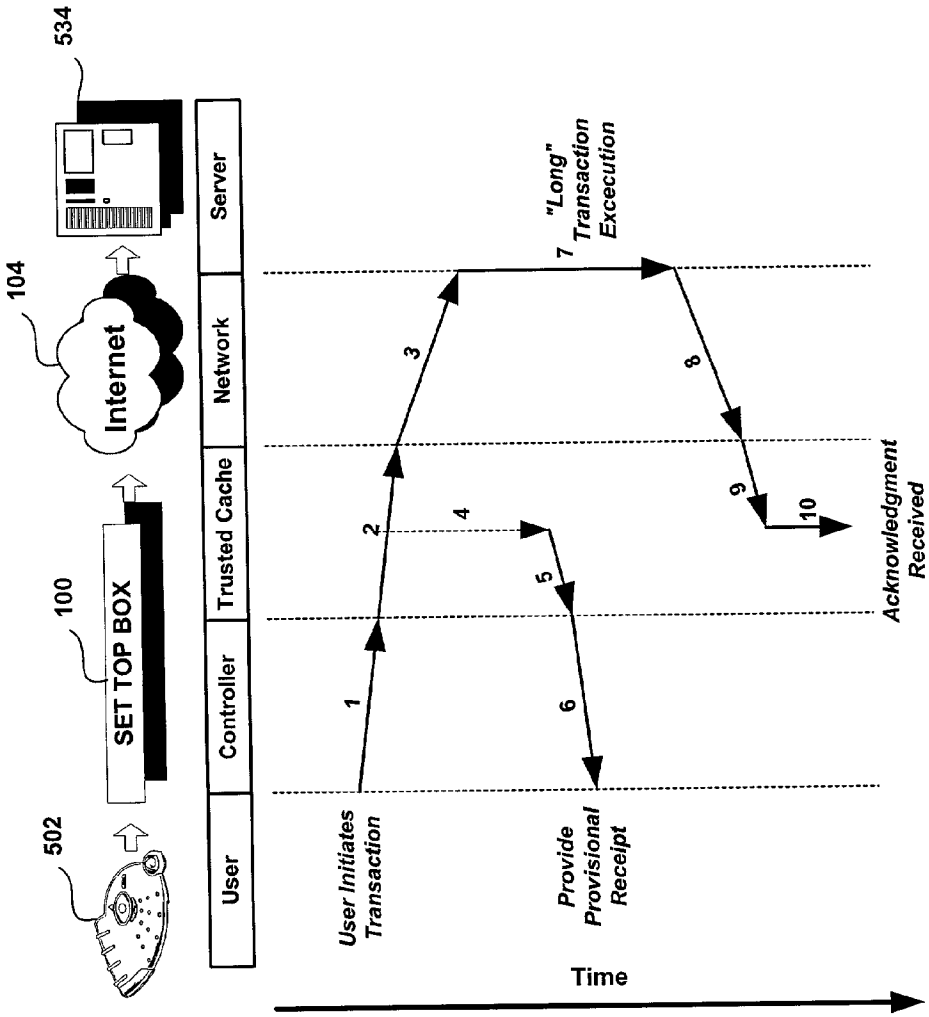
534
104
Internet
100
SET TOP BOX
502
User
Controller
Trusted Cache
Network
Server
User Initiates Transaction
Provide Provisional Receipt
"Long" Transaction Execution
Acknowledgment Received
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Time

FIG. 12

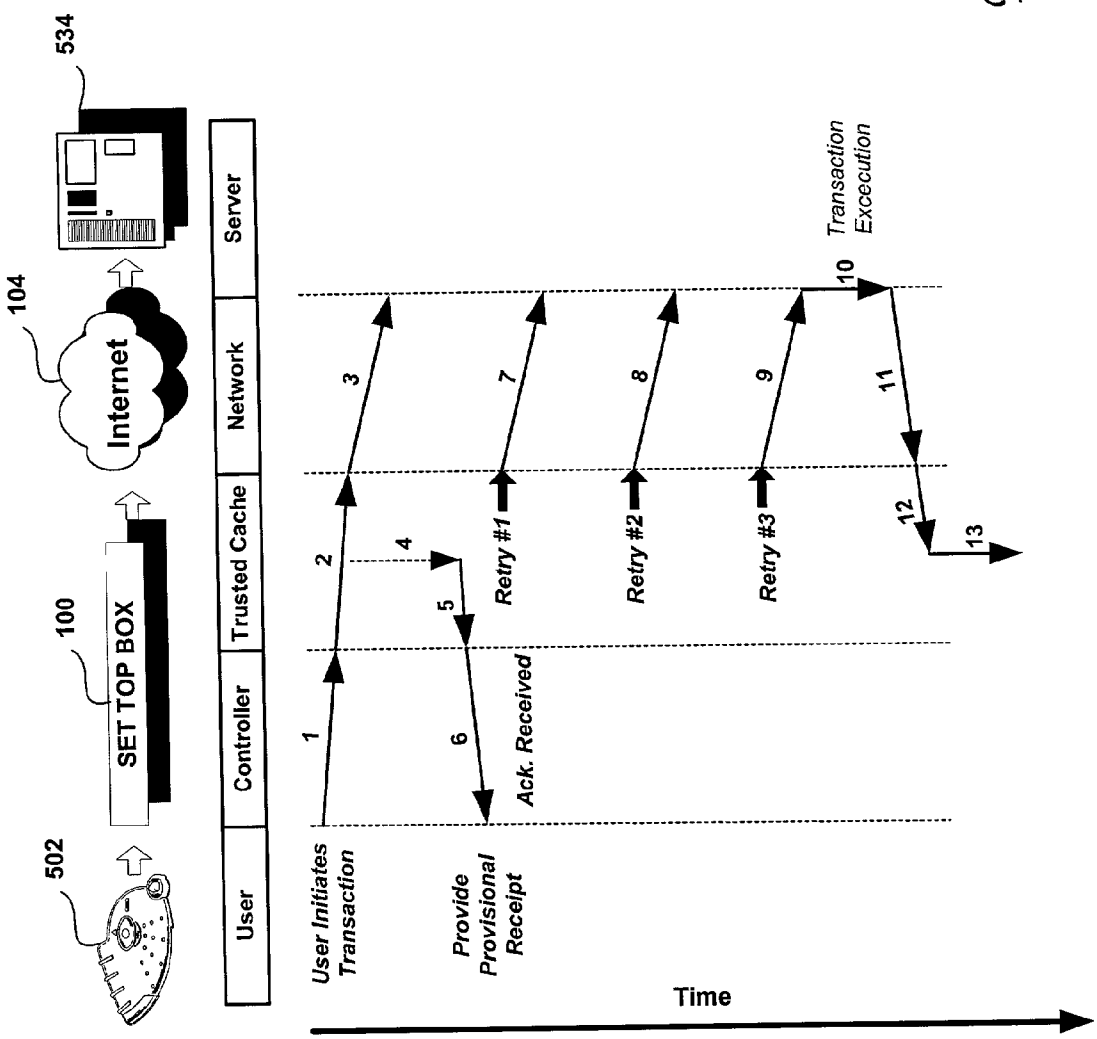
534
104
Internet
100
SET TOP BOX
502
User
Controller
Trusted Cache
Network
Server
User Initiates Transaction
Provide Provisional Receipt
Ack. Received
Retry #1
Retry #2
Retry #3
Transaction Execution
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
Time

FIG. 13

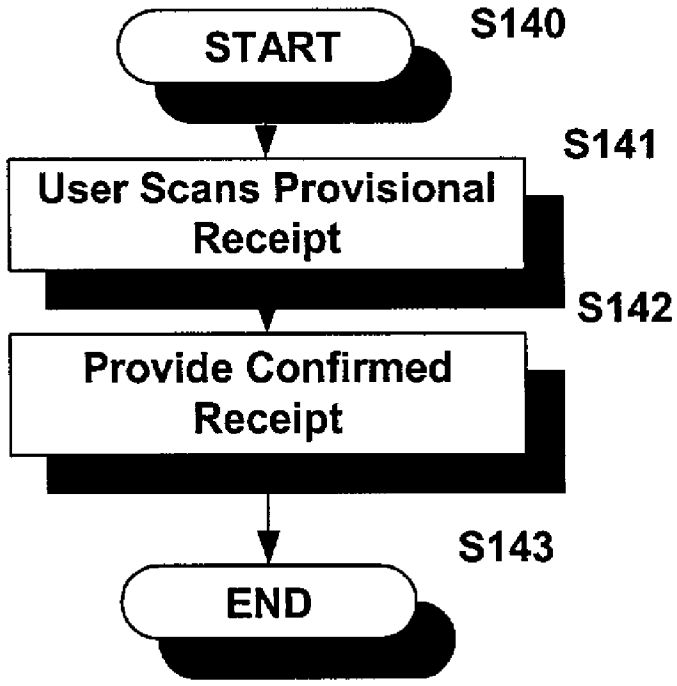
START
S140
User Scans Provisional Receipt
S141
Provide Confirmed Receipt
S142
END
S143

FIG. 14

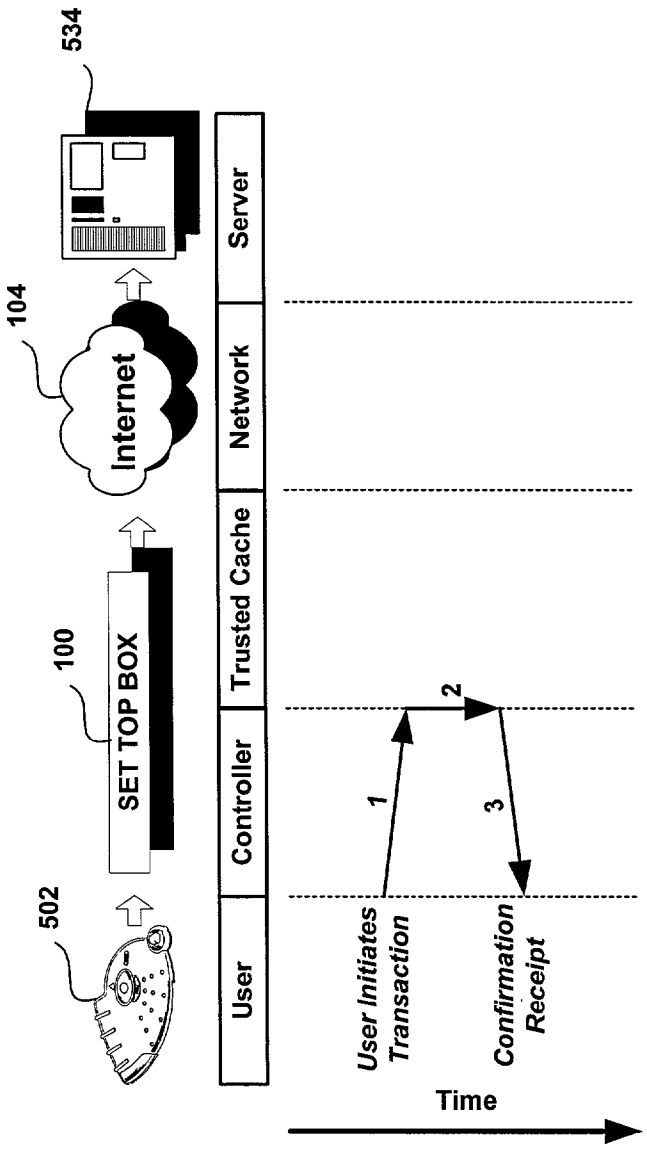
534
104
Internet
100
SET TOP BOX
502
User
Controller
Trusted Cache
Network
Server
1
2
3
User Initiates Transaction
Confirmation Receipt
Time

FIG. 15

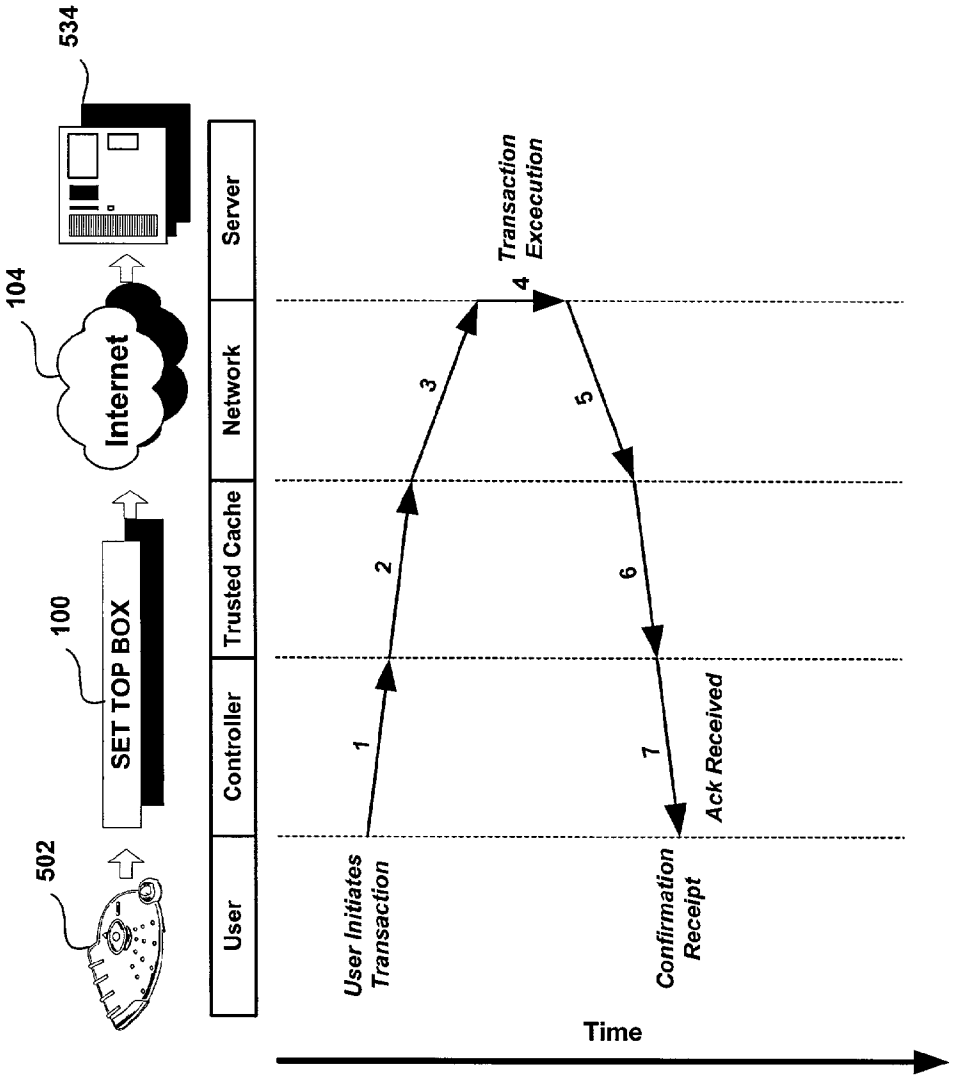
534
104
Internet
100
SET TOP BOX
502
User
Controller
Trusted Cache
Network
Server
User Initiates Transaction
1
2
3
4
Transaction Execution
5
6
7
Confirmation Receipt
Ack Received
Time

FIG. 16

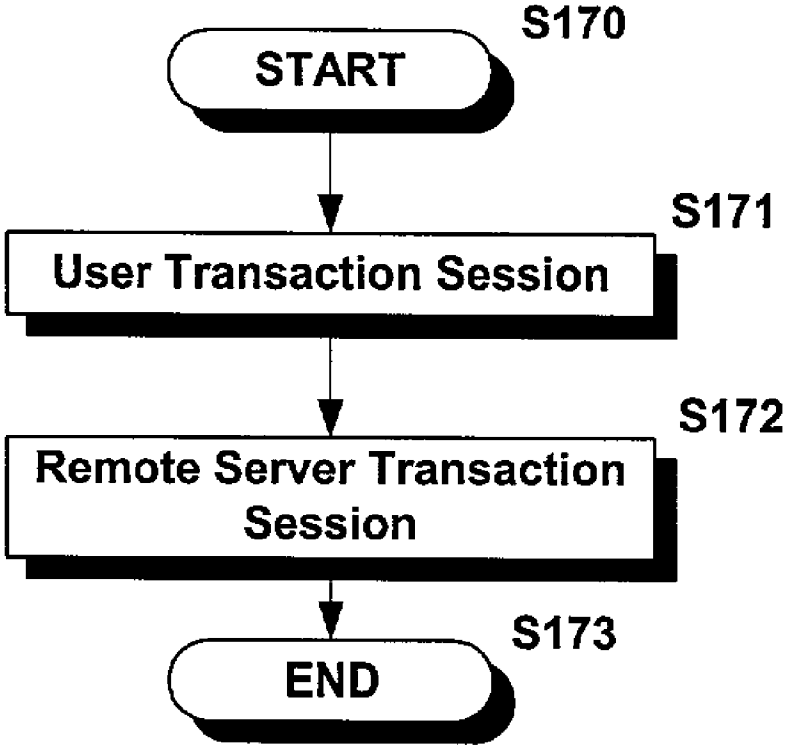
S170
START
S171
User Transaction Session
S172
Remote Server Transaction Session
S173
END

FIG. 17

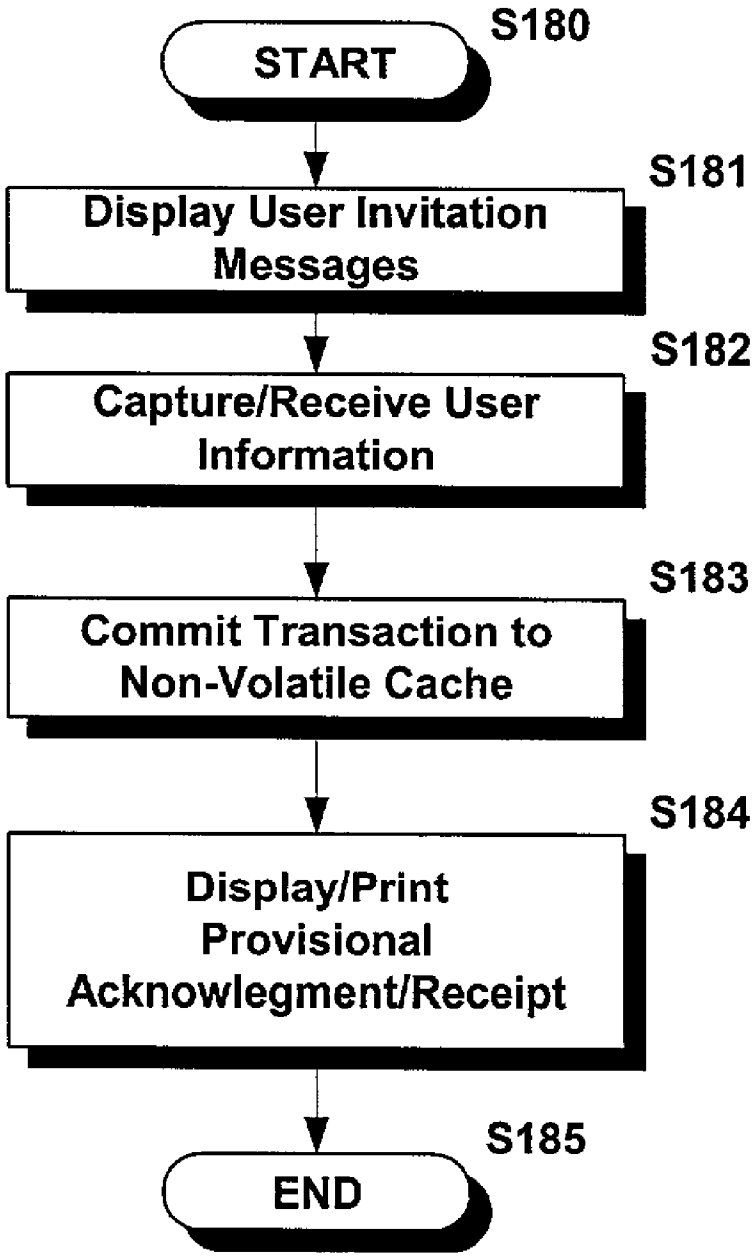
S180
START
S181
Display User Invitation Messages
S182
Capture/Receive User Information
S183
Commit Transaction to Non-Volatile Cache
S184
Display/Print Provisional Acknowlegment/Receipt
S185
END

FIG. 18

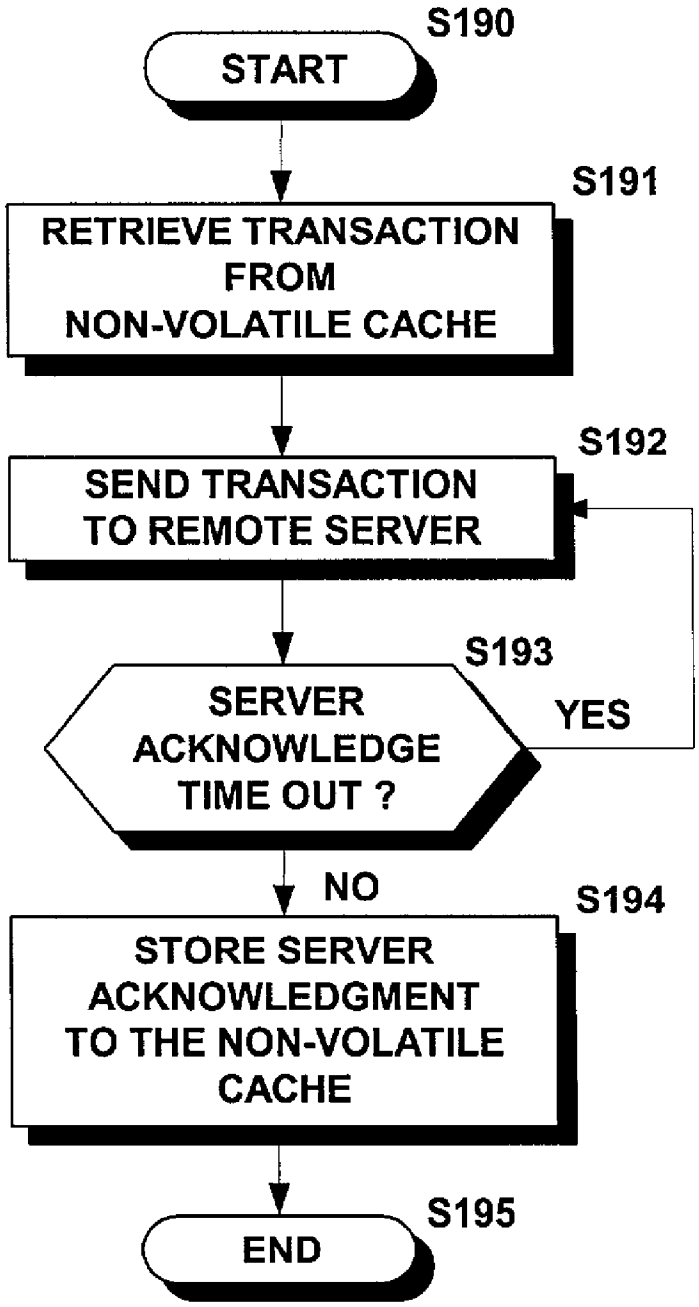
S190
START
S191
RETRIEVE TRANSACTION FROM NON-VOLATILE CACHE
S192
SEND TRANSACTION TO REMOTE SERVER
S193
SERVER ACKNOWLEDGE TIME OUT ?
YES
NO
S194
STORE SERVER ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO THE NON-VOLATILE CACHE
S195
END

FIG. 19

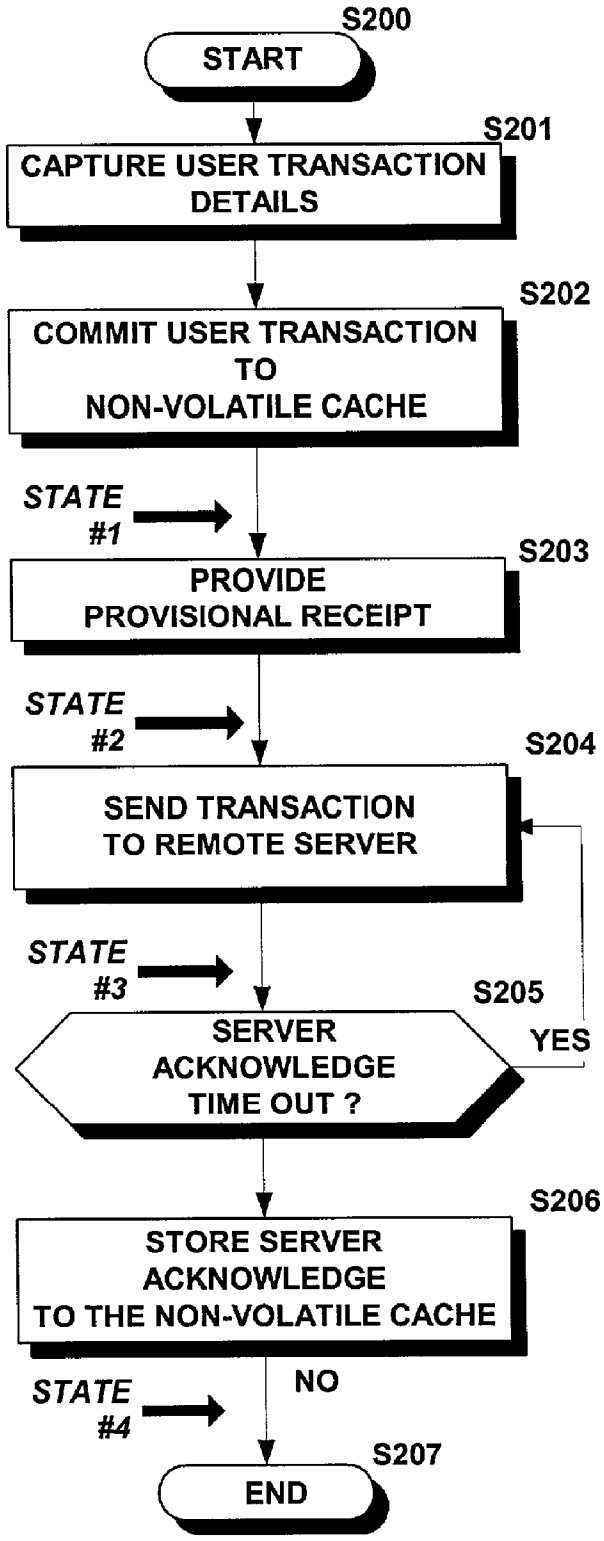
S200
START
S201
CAPTURE USER TRANSACTION DETAILS
S202
COMMIT USER TRANSACTION TO NON-VOLATILE CACHE
STATE #1
S203
PROVIDE PROVISIONAL RECEIPT
STATE #2
S204
SEND TRANSACTION TO REMOTE SERVER
STATE #3
S205
SERVER ACKNOWLEDGE TIME OUT ?
YES
S206
STORE SERVER ACKNOWLEDGE TO THE NON-VOLATILE CACHE
NO
STATE #4
S207
END

FIG. 20

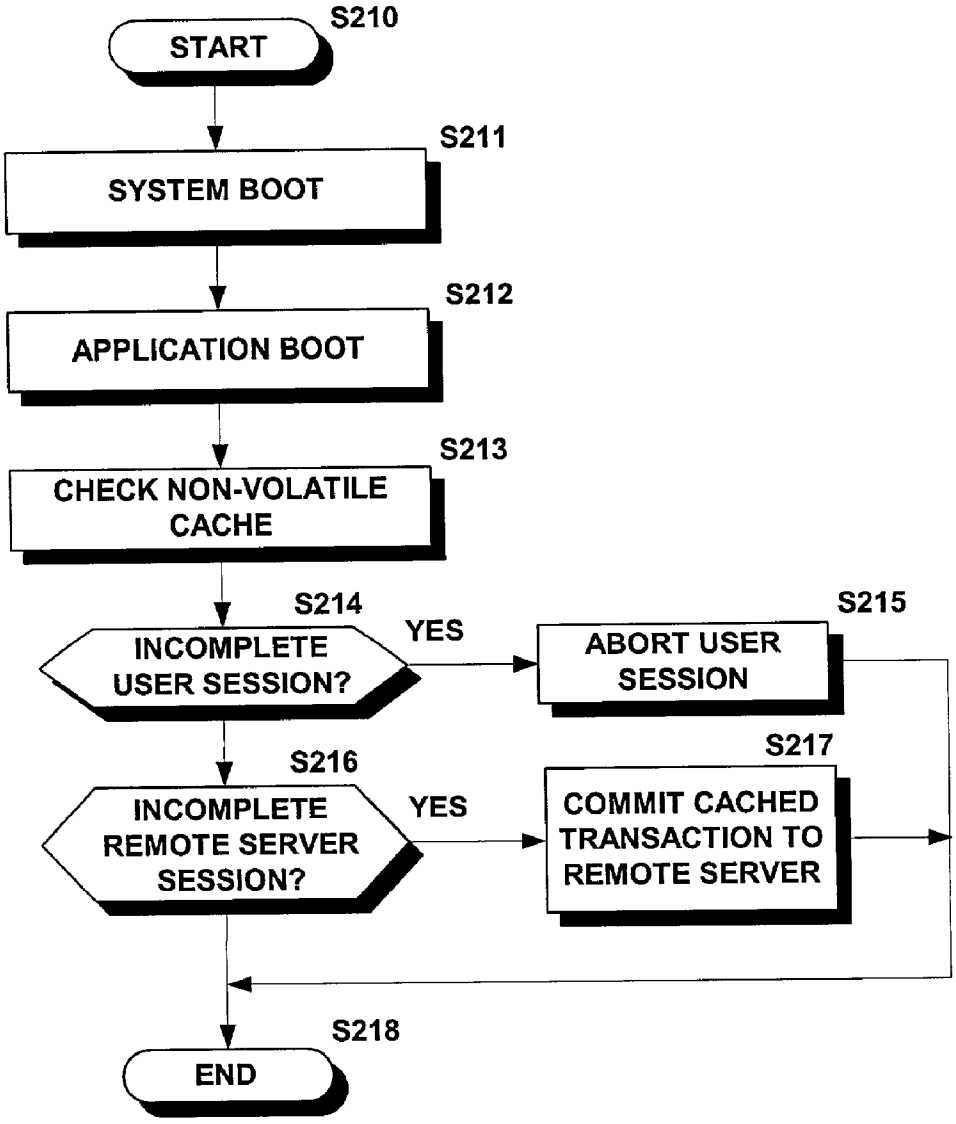
S210
START
S211
SYSTEM BOOT
S212
APPLICATION BOOT
S213
CHECK NON-VOLATILE CACHE
S214
INCOMPLETE USER SESSION?
YES
S215
ABORT USER SESSION
S216
INCOMPLETE REMOTE SERVER SESSION?
YES
S217
COMMIT CACHED TRANSACTION TO REMOTE SERVER
S218
END

FIG. 21

TRUSTED TRANSACTIONAL SET-TOP BOX

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is related to co-pending and commonly assigned application Ser. No. _____ filed on _____, attorney reference CYBS5746 entitled "Trusted Transactional Controller" and co-pending and commonly assigned application Ser. No. _____ filed on _____, attorney reference CYBS5739 entitled "Trusted Transactional Kiosk", the disclosures of each being incorporated herewith by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The invention generally pertains to the field of interactive television (TV) Set-Top Boxes (STB), electronic commerce and the merging of technology and personal services.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] There are approximately 1.5 billion TV sets in homes around the world and 400 million PCs in households worldwide. A conventional set-top box is a device that enhances the viewer's TV experience by incorporating therein some of the functionality of computers, by enabling the TV to become a user interface to the Internet and by enabling the TV to receive and decode digital television broadcasts. Some STBs even provide integrated videoconferencing functionality as well as video editing and Internet-enabled home video security, such as described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,905,521. STBs such as described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,905,521 also feature "Personal Identification" remote control devices capable of automatically identifying the user holding the remote control and producing his credentials (personal and financial information, for example) when conducting secure transactions either locally or with a remote server.

[0006] Such heavily featured STBs are highly desirable for most TV viewers who do not want to be confronted with the usual headaches of setting up and upgrading the hardware and software of a typical personal computer, as well as for hotels and motels who need to attract the new generation of customers accustomed to Internet everywhere. Advances in silicon integration are breathtaking and it is foreseen that most of the features listed above will soon only require only a few integrated circuits (ICs).

[0007] However, time to market considerations and proof of concept cycles do not yet permit to derive the perfect architecture for the STB of the future. For example, until High Definition Television (HDTV) is widely available, the resolution of TV screens is not adequate for comfortably carrying out such activities as email and web browsing. To draw from another example, STBs are beginning to offer Internet broadband to the entire home network, thereby potentially making everybody's confidential information accessible to and available from the Internet. However, the privacy risks inherent in such capabilities have not yet been seriously considered.

[0008] Moreover, the STB e-commerce model is presently ill defined, as it is directly derived from the PC e-commerce model traditionally practiced using a PC connected to the Internet and a web browser. Although goods and services providers can offer attractive, practical, efficient and reliable e-commerce via the Internet, a typical end-to-end e-commerce transaction can take several minutes to complete. As there are no dedicated peripherals to speed up the entry of user credentials and the item chosen, all the details must be entered via a keyboard and mouse.

[0009] Moreover, existing e-commerce methods can leave the consumer wondering whether the online transaction was successfully completed. At times, the consumer may not be certain that the online transaction was successfully completed until the goods actually show up at the door. A good practice is for the e-commerce provider to send an acknowledgment of the consumer's order by email, the email containing all of the details needed to allow the user to check on the current status of the order. E-commerce sites such as Amazon.com have refined the process in order to provide an excellent quality of service that most have come appreciate and trust. For example, the "1-click" purchase model patented by Amazon.com considerably speeds up the purchase of items for already registered users, and the user need not wait online for a confirmation that the credit card payment was accepted. Moreover, easy account access allows the user to check the status of a pending order and the status of the delivery. Every change made either by the user or by the provider is automatically acknowledged in an email message posted to the user.

[0010] Removing the issue of bad or non-payment, such a transactional model for executing an online transaction is essentially biased in favor of the provider, in that the provider always knows whether the purchase request is valid or is invalid. In contrast, the online shopper may have doubts as to the success of his or her purchase request until such time as an explicit acknowledgment is provided, which may not occur until a quite a significant time after the online order has been submitted. Typically, the acknowledgment is supplied as a displayed message or an email. This is because e-commerce servers are not optimized to provide an instantaneous acknowledgment of a purchase request, especially when a clearing bank is involved in validating a credit card purchase. This is particularly annoying for viewers waiting to resume their STB/TV entertainment experience.

[0011] Consequently, because of the lack of a reliable, speedy and trusted e-commerce transactional model for transactions of all sizes (including very small valued transactions), consumer-oriented Internet appliances such as STBs that are optimized to carry out e-micro-commerce are quasi-inexistent.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] An object of the present invention, therefore, is to offer a method for conducting trusted e-commerce transactions via STBs, whereby the e-commerce transaction is performed in seconds or even sub-seconds and whereby the user need not be concerned by the possible failure of the transaction commit to the remote server.

[0013] It is a further object of the invention to help home users keep track of the status of e-commerce transactions by printing tickets with explicit text and/or machine-readable indicia such as barcode. It is another object of the present invention to allow the user to near instantaneously retrieve

the transaction status by scanning the ticket barcode. It is a further object of the present invention to solve the problems inherent in the poor resolution of the TV display for comfortable Internet email and web browsing. It is yet another object of the present invention to provide an STB with strong encryption capabilities. Such an STB would enable the generation of encryption keys with maximum entropy and would, therefore, provide maximum encryption security for trusted and secure e-commerce transactions.

[0014] According to an embodiment of the present invention, a set top box may include a processor for controlling the set top box; a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal; a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display; a network interface to access a computer network; a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and a non-volatile cache memory controlled by the processor and configured to selectively store a context of the transaction to enable a recovery of the transaction after an interruption thereof.

[0015] The non-volatile cache memory may include a Non-Volatile Random Access Memory (NVRAM), a context data save engine for selectively storing the context of the transaction to the NVRAM and a context data recovery engine for retrieving the stored context from the NVRAM and recovering the transaction to enable a successful completion of the transaction. The context data save engine may be configured to store the context of the transaction before sending the transaction to the remote server, after sending the transaction to the remote server but before having received an acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server and/or after having received a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server, for example. The set top box may further include a printer controlled by the processor, the printer being configured to print human-readable information and/or machine-readable information. The printer may be configured to print an acknowledgment (such as a ticket or receipt, for example) of the transaction. The set top box may also include a reader controlled by the processor, the reader being configured to scan and decode printed machine-readable code. The machine-readable information may include a barcode and the reader may include a barcode reader. The processor may be configured to execute the transaction in a first user session that concludes after the context data save engine has saved the context of the transaction to the NVRAM and a provisional acknowledgment has been provided to the user and to execute a second remote server session that concludes after a confirmed acknowledgement has been received from the remote server and provided to the user. The set top box may further include a hardware random number generator, the hardware random number generator being configured to provide the processor with encryption keys to encrypt the user initiated transaction. The display(s) that may be coupled to the present STB may include (one or more of) a television set, a High Definition Television (HDTV) and/or a computer monitor, and the graphics interface may be configured to selectively output the decoded video signal to the display(s) in full screen mode, picture-in-picture mode, mosaic mode or multi-window mode, for example. The set top box may also include a magnetic and/or smart card reader.

[0016] The present invention is also a set top box, comprising a processor for controlling the set top box; a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal; a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display; a network interface to access a computer network; a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and a printer controlled by the processor, the printer being configured to print human readable information and/or machine readable information.

[0017] The present invention, according to another embodiment thereof, is a set top box, comprising a processor for controlling the set top box; a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal; a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display; a network interface to access a computer network; a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and a reader controlled by the processor, the reader being configured to scan and decode printed machine-readable code.

[0018] The present invention may also be viewed as a method of carrying out an online transaction between a set top box and a remote server, each of the set top box and the remote server being coupled to a network, the method comprising the steps of initiating a transaction at the set top box; storing a copy of the transaction in a non-volatile memory within the set top box; sending the transaction to the remote server under a control of the set top box, and carrying out one of: receiving a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server and providing the confirmed acknowledgment, and generating a provisional acknowledgment of the transaction from the copy of the transaction stored in the non-volatile memory if the confirmed acknowledgment is not received within a predetermined period of time.

[0019] The method may further include the step of receiving the confirmed acknowledgment from the remote server after the predetermined period of time and storing the received confirmed acknowledgment in the non-volatile memory. A step of providing the stored confirmed acknowledgment upon request may also be carried out. The method may also include a step of re-sending the copy of the user transaction stored in the non-volatile memory to the remote server upon failure to receive the confirmed acknowledgment from the remote server. The re-sending step may be carried out (preferably under the control of the STB) until a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction is received from the remote server, or may be carried out predetermined number of times, for example. The generating step may include a step of printing the provisional acknowledgment together with corresponding machine-readable information that uniquely identifies the transaction. The generating step may include a step of printing the provisional acknowledgment together with machine-readable information uniquely identifying the transaction and the method further may include a step of the set top box reading the machine-readable information and providing the stored confirmed acknowledgment that corresponds to the read machine-readable information. The stored confirmation acknowledg-

ment providing step may include a step of printing the confirmation acknowledgment. The set top box may include a user interface that enables user interaction with the set top box and the initiating step may include a step of providing user credentials and selecting goods and/or services for purchase via the user interface. The user credentials may include identification and payment instrument information (for example) and the user credentials may be supplied to the set top box via a remote control device. The initiating step may include a step of encapsulating all information required for the remote server to process the transaction into a single data packet and the storing and sending steps may store and send the single data packet in the non-volatile memory and to the remote server, respectively. The information required for the remote server to process the transaction may include user credentials including at least one of an identity of the user; payment instrument information; delivery information, and/or information identifying the subject matter of the transaction, for example. A step of encrypting the single data packet prior to the sending step may also be carried out.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] **FIG. 1** is a diagram of a connected universe accessible to a STB according to the present invention.

[0021] **FIG. 2** is a block diagram of a home network in which STBs according to the present invention may be employed.

[0022] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of a multi-headed STB, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0023] **FIG. 4** is a diagram showing various viewing modes made possible by the multi-headed STB according to the present invention.

[0024] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram of the universe of devices and networks with which the STB according to the present invention may communicate.

[0025] **FIG. 6** is a top perspective view of a Personal Remote Control suitable for communicating with the STB of the present invention.

[0026] **FIG. 7** is a bottom perspective view of a Personal Remote Control suitable for communicating with the STB of the present invention, showing the fingerprint reader feature thereof.

[0027] **FIG. 8** is a block diagram of the top-level architecture of a Personal Remote Control, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] **FIG. 9** is a block diagram of a controller for an STB and of a trusted cache memory, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] **FIG. 10** is a flowchart of a transactional model for providing "Provisional" and "Confirmed" receipts of a trusted e-commerce transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0030] **FIG. 11** is a diagram showing the timing of an immediate trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] **FIG. 12** is a diagram showing the timing of a cached trusted transaction as the transaction progresses from the user to the server and back to the user, as a function of time, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0032] **FIG. 13** is a diagram showing the timing of a failed trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0033] **FIG. 14** is a flowchart of a request for a confirmed acknowledgment, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0034] **FIG. 15** is a diagram showing an in-cache confirmation of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0035] **FIG. 16** is a diagram showing the timing of an out-of-cache confirmation of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0036] **FIG. 17** is a flowchart of a transaction session, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0037] **FIG. 18** is a flowchart of a user session, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0038] **FIG. 19** is a flowchart of a server session, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0039] **FIG. 20** is a flowchart showing the timing of the saving of the critical states or context of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0040] **FIG. 21** is a flowchart illustrating the recovery from a temporary failure of a STB, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0041] Although TVs are currently essentially used for entertainment, interactive TV set top boxes can advantageously leverage on the Internet advances by rapidly integrating all the functions found on advanced entertainment PCs such as:

[0042] Analog and Digital Cable/Satellite/Aerial Tuners (including stackable and replaceable plug-in receivers);

[0043] Broadband Internet (Cable, Ethernet, DSL, Fiber Optic, etc.);

[0044] Direct Video input/output (composite, S-Bus, FireWire IEEE1394, USB2, etc.);

[0045] Multi-Tuners and multi-MPEG2 Decoders (allowing picture-in-picture viewing or mosaic pictures viewing);

[0046] Multi-MPEG2 Encoders (allowing multi-channel recording or as well as direct multi-source video recording);

[0047] Software Video Decoders allowing Internet Video Streaming (such as RealVideo and Microsoft Media Video Player);

[0048] High-Definition TV (HDTV);

[0049] Personal Video Recorder (PVR), allowing recording of video on hard disk;

[0050] DVD Player (allowing viewing of DVD, VCD and MPEG1 movies available on CD format);

[0051] DVD-RAM (allowing off-loading of video recorded on hard disk);

[0052] Electronic Program Guide (EPG);

[0053] Pay Per View;

[0054] Video on Demand (VOD);

[0055] Internet Email & Browsing;

[0056] Interactive TV (WebTV, OpenTV, Liberate, etc. . . .);

[0057] 3D Gaming, including multi-user online gaming;

[0058] Audio Jukebox (MP3, MS Media Player, RealAudio, etc.);

[0059] Karaoke;

[0060] Internet Gateway/Firewall/VPN for the home (home network to client PCs, client STBs and Internet Appliances via wired/wireless network such as Ethernet, HomePNA, HomePlug, BlueTooth, etc.);

[0061] Telephony Voice-over-IP (VoIP);

[0062] Photo Albums/Video Albums;

[0063] Smart Card interfaces for enabling Encryption/Decryption of content, as well as for conducting secured E-Commerce;

[0064] Biometric identification;

[0065] Activation of main STB un-used resources by client STBs, client PCs or Internet Appliances on the home network (un-used resources such as channel tuners, DVD player, PVR, etc.);

[0066] Snap-In External Video Storage (such as high-capacity hard disks connected via Plug-And-Play interfaces such as FireWire, USB2 or Ethernet);

[0067] The concepts underlying the STB of the present invention are best understood when expressed in terms of an "STB connected universe", which shows the manner in which the present STB acts a gateway to the surrounding world. **FIG. 1** is a diagram of such a connected universe accessible to a STB **100** according to the present invention. A STB **100**, according to the present invention, connects to the TV broadcast network **102**, the Internet **104**, the home network **106**, the TV or HDTV set **108** and/or the user remote control **502**, for example. The interface of the present STB **100** to the TV broadcast network **102** may be via a cable analog tuner, a cable digital tuner, a satellite analog tuner, a satellite digital tuner, an aerial analog tuner and/or an aerial digital tuner, for example. All or some of the above-listed tuners may advantageously be provided as stacked replaceable modules. Moreover, multiple identical tuners may be provided to allow the user to simultaneously view several channels from the same tuner type or channel provider.

[0068] The interface of the STB **100** to the Internet **104** may be via a modem (a 56K modem, for example), Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), cable modem (return channel), Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), residential Ethernet and/or residential Wireless, to name only a few illustrative examples. One or several of the above listed interfaces may also be provided as stacked replaceable modules. The interface of the STB **100** to the home network **106** may be via Local Area Ethernet (10/100/1000 Mbits/sec., for example), FireWire, Universal Serial Bus 2 (USB2), HomePNA, HomePlug, BlueTooth, IEEE801.11, to name a few exemplary interfaces. Again, one or more of the above-listed interfaces may be provided as stacked replaceable modules.

[0069] The interface of the STB **100** to the TV or HDTV **108** may be via NTSC/Pal or Secam, VGA (standard PC monitor interface), FireWire, Digital CRT Monitor, Digital LCD Monitor and/or a Digital Plasma Monitor, for example. It is to be noted that as analog video sources are rapidly disappearing, digital interfaces will become the standard interface for all TV and data displays.

[0070] To assist in carrying out secure e-commerce transaction, the STB **100** may also be equipped with security device interfaces, such as smart cards and/or smart card readers (for decrypting), smart security devices such as Smart Compact Flash, Smart Media Flash, Smart Dongles, etc. The STB **100** may also include (and/or include suitable interfaces to) biometric devices such as fingerprint readers and the like. The STB **100** may communicate with the User Remote Control **502** via a number of interfaces such as a traditional TV/VCR-type hand held device, a keyboard/mouse or other pointing device or a Personal Remote Control (shared or individual), for example. The interface may implement any of a number of technologies, such as Infra-Red (IR) or BlueTooth, for example.

[0071] **FIG. 2** is a system-level block diagram of a home network **106** in which STBs according to the present invention may be employed. The present STB **100** is also capable of sharing its unused resources with client devices in the house such as PCs and "Client STBs". The client devices may be connected to the main STB **100** via the home network **106** and have the ability, in addition to Internet access, to make use of the resources of the main STB **100** such as tuners, DVD player, PVR (hard disk) and the like. For example, the lady of the house could watch a DVD movie in the master bedroom, the DVD being inserted in the DVD reader of the main STB **100** using a client STB **114** connected to the bedroom TV. A child in room 1 may watch the "Disney channel" on his PC **120** while another may watch another show in room 2 on her PC **118**. Simultaneously, another member of the household may view a business program recorded on the hard disk earlier during the day on a PC **112** in the study or home office or on a TV in the kitchen connected to a client STB **116**. In each case, the activity is controlled directly at the client device **112**, **114**, **116**, **118** or **120**; that is, without having to stand in front of the main STB **100** with the (Infra-Red, for example) remote control.

[0072] According to the present invention, the client STB **114**, **116** is a relatively uncomplicated device that is configured to accept digital video from the home network **106** and output the necessary video signal for viewing on a connected TV. In addition, the client STB **114**, **116** may be configured to accept commands (issued from a local remote control) that will be executed by the main STB **100**. Similarly, the client PC **112**, **118**, **120** may be configured as a standard PC having means to connect to the home network **106**. Recent PCs are sufficiently powerful to decode and display by software high quality digital video such as

MPEG1, MPEG2, MPEG4, HDTV and other video streaming formats such as RealVideo and Microsoft Media Player, for example. The main STB **100**, therefore, may simply stream the requested video signal over the home network **106** for viewing on the client PC **112**, **118**, **120**. The data rate capacity of current home network technology make possible the simultaneous handling of several video streams across the house.

[**0073**] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of a multi-headed STB, according to an embodiment of the present invention. As the cost of LCD monitors is rapidly decreasing and as the LCD the monitor may be located a maximum of about 10 meters from the graphics interface, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention may advantageously include a multi-headed graphics interface (together with a keyboard and mouse interface, or alternatively a touch screen with stylus capability, for example). The primary Video Out graphics interface **122** of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may be dedicated to the TV or HDTV **108**, and one or more Secondary Video Out graphics interfaces **124** may be dedicated to data displays for applications such as e-mail and Internet browsing. The secondary graphics head **124** in the STB **100**, **114**, **116** need not necessarily feature advanced 3D graphics and may, therefore, require only minimal computer and memory resource from the STB **100**, **114**, **116**. A wired or wireless Web access device **126** such as Honeywell's WebPAD™ Internet Appliance may be connected to the house network **106** or directly to the Internet interface of the STB **100**, **114**, **116**. This solution, however, is expensive as a complete CPU, memory, graphics, wireless network and power supply must be provided. The LCD monitor **128** directly connected to the secondary video out interface **124** of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** does not require such resources to be built-in.

[**0074**] Email and Web browsing via a conventional TV set are not comfortable for any sustained period of time because of the poor screen resolution and the perceptible flickering caused by the interlacing of the video frames. Therefore, an additional dedicated data display is highly desirable. A PC or a WebPAD™ connected to the home network **106** may provide the necessary comfort. However, these solutions require expensive hardware, as comprehensive computing resources are necessary (CPU, memory, network interface, graphics controller, display screen and power supply). Alternatively, a high-resolution data monitor (CRT or LCD) is significantly less expensive than a complete Internet access device such as WebPAD™ or a complete PC. Therefore, adding a second graphic controller **124** in the STB **100**, **114**, **116** to drive the data monitor together with some user interaction means is also highly desirable. Dual- or multi-headed and multi-headed graphics controllers are becoming available for PCs. Such technology may be readily and economically adapted for STBs **100**, as the complexity of the necessary graphic controllers requires only fairly basic 2D functions (as opposed to more expensive 3D acceleration). An LCD monitor with a digital interface requires only minimal (and not intelligent) support electronics in addition to the LCD panel itself (such as a high speed Low Voltage Differential Signaling (LVDS) transmitter). Suitable monitor controllers are available from Silicon Image, Inc., whose Web address is www.siimage.com.

[**0075**] **FIG. 4** is a diagram showing various viewing modes made possible by the multi-headed STB according to the present invention. With a STB **100** featuring a dual or multi-headed graphics controller, the user would typically view TV programs on the TV and/or HDTV set(s), and access the Internet for email and web browsing on the data display(s). However, nothing prevents the user from choosing to mix the various video and data sources to any of the attached displays or TV sets, and view them in full screen mode, in picture-in-picture mode as shown at **402**, in mosaic mode as shown at **404** or in windowing mode, as shown at **406**.

[**0076**] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram of the universe **500** of devices and networks with which the STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention may communicate. The present STB **100**, **114**, **116** is capable of interfacing with a variety of devices connected directly thereto (such as a magnetic card reader **522** or smart security devices **524**, for example), with a variety of networks (such as the Internet **104** and the home network **106**, for example) as well as with a variety of other intelligent devices attached on the networks (such as Internet appliances **520** including, for example, Internet-connected devices for energy management, air conditioning and/or heating management, lighting management, security management, garden watering management, kitchen appliances and the like).

[**0077**] Palmtops, mobile phones and other access devices such as the WebPAD™ are ideal personal platforms to enable a home user to command the STB universe **500**. The cost of acquiring many of these sophisticated control devices may, however, be prohibitive. Therefore, a more function-generic remote control platform is desirable. Accordingly, each member of the household may be given and carry a "Personal Remote Control" (an example of which is shown in **FIGS. 6 and 7**) that enables him or her to command all these devices while being automatically identified and cleared for access. Such a Personal Remote Control is shown in **FIGS. 5, 6** and **7** and may include a keypad or key switches **508**, a pointing device **510** (such as a trackball, for example), a smart card reader **506**, a magnetic card reader **512**, a fingerprint reader **514**, a microphone **518**, a speaker **516** and/or a location transponder **504**, for example. Such a personal remote control may also communicate with and control one or more client STBs, TV and/ PCs **526**.

[**0078**] **FIGS. 6 and 7** show top and bottom perspective views, respectively, of a Personal Remote Control **502** according to an embodiment of the present invention. The ornamental features of the Personal Remote Control are further disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. Design Pat. No. 29/119,553 filed on May 8, 2001, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. As shown in **FIGS. 6 and 7**, the Personal Remote Control **502** may be conveniently integrated with a key ring **604** and may be dimensioned so as to fit comfortably in the user's pockets. The Personal Remote Control **502** is shown in **FIGS. 6 and 7** with a credit card **606** inserted within the magnetic/smart card reader **506**, **512** for illustrative purposes only, it being understood that the credit card **606** forms no part of the present invention.

[**0079**] **FIG. 8** is a block diagram of the top-level architecture of a Personal Remote Control **502**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. The personal Remote Control **502** may be controlled by a Reduced Instruction Set (RISC) microprocessor equipped with Random Access

Memory (RAM) **804**, Flash Read Only Memory (ROM) **806** and a battery **808**. Also coupled to the microprocessor **802** are a number of modules to establish the identity of the user, including, for example, a fingerprint reader **514**, a smart card reader **506** and/or key switches **508** (the user may store a secret sequence of key presses), for example. A number of user-interactivity modules may also be coupled to the microprocessor **802** including, for example, a microphone **518**, speaker **516** and/or a trackball **510**. Other modules may include modules for linking the user with the STB **100**, **114**, **116** such as, for example, an RF link **810** and/or a tracking transponder **504**.

[**0080**] The STB universe of **FIGS. 2, 3** and **5** together with the means of identifying the user and accepting his credentials (personal, confidential and/or financial information, for example) is an ideal platform for conducting e-commerce transactions. However, in order to provide a platform suitable for conducting trusted and secure e-commerce transactions, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** preferably is augmented by a number of technologies that are discussed in detail herein below. Such technologies include an acknowledgment (ticket or receipt) printer, a barcode reader, a trusted cache, the execution protocol associated with such a trusted cache and a hardware random number generator.

[**0081**] Acknowledgment Printer

[**0082**] While PC users are very acquainted with storing and retrieving personal information pertaining to e-commerce transactions made on the Internet (such as the acknowledgement of an online purchase), non computer literate people may be lost when trying to follow the same procedure. Therefore, non-PC literate users will feel more comfortable if the STB **100**, **114**, **116** is capable of printing a detailed ticket such as a lottery ticket or such as those produced at the supermarket that show the items purchased. Therefore, the STB **100**, **114**, **116**, according to an embodiment thereof, is coupled to or includes an integral ticket printer **528**, as shown in **FIG. 5**. The printed ticket **530** generated by such a ticket printer **528** may display clear text information and/or a machine-readable code or indicia (such as a barcode **531**) that uniquely identifies the transaction. The design of such a printer **528** (and that of the barcode reader discussed in detail below) may draw, for example, from aspects of the printers and scanners disclosed in commonly assigned and co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/441,040 filed on Nov. 16, 1999 entitled "Compact Configurable Scanning Terminal" and Ser. No. 09/782,839 filed on Feb. 14, 2001 and entitled "Compact Document Scanner with Branding", the disclosure of each which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

[**0083**] Barcode Reader

[**0084**] Non computer literate users may also feel very comfortable and confident in presenting the ticket **530** in front of an illuminated window of a barcode reader **532** coupled to or integrated within the STB **100**, **114**, **116**. Indeed, most everyone has had the experience of scanning bar-coded coupons (or at least witnessed cashiers doing the same) at a store cash register, or scanning tickets at the lottery counter to check their winnings. The barcode reader **532** (or other reader of machine readable information printed or otherwise present on the ticket **530**), upon being presented with the printed ticket **530**, may then display, cause the printer **528** to print or otherwise provide the user with the information related to the transaction on their TV **108** or computer monitor. Important printed tickets (of high value items, for example) may then be easily filed, as is often done will lottery receipts. Means to print a detailed ticket with machine-readable code as well as means to scan and decode the printed code are very desirable features to integrate on the STB **100**, **114**, **116**. Thermal ticket printers as well as barcode scanners can be made very economically when integrated in the design of the set top box.

[**0085**] According to the present invention, the user may conveniently order a product by simply scanning the barcode **531** of a ticket **530** such as a promotion coupon found for example in his or her mailbox and confirming his or her intention to purchase the featured item. The STB software may then retrieve all the necessary personal user credentials (which includes all of the information that is necessary to complete an online transaction, such as ID, address, credit card details, etc.), commit the transaction to the remote e-commerce server **534** then print a receipt **530**. Indeed, the ticket printer **528** of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may print an acknowledgment, a receipt or most any hard copy, such as generically shown at **530** in **FIG. 5**. Likewise, the barcode reader **532** (which, it is to be understood encompasses readers of any type of machine or human readable information) may be configured to read not only tickets **530** printed by the ticket printer **528**, but any compatible ticket, whether or not originally printed by the ticket printer **528**. This allows the reader **532** to read promotional coupons and other items with machine readable indicia thereon.

[**0086**] **FIG. 9** is a block diagram of a controller **900** for an STB **100**, **114**, **116** and of a trusted cache memory **918**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. The electronic controller **900** that controls the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may include Central Processing Unit (CPU) **902** with sufficient power for software decoding of streaming video, memory **904** for program execution, mass storage **906** (one or more magnetic hard disks or optical disks, for example) of sufficient storage capacity to store at least 30 hours of high-quality video, at least one video decoder **908** configured to decode MPEG2 and/or MPEG4 signals for example, at least one video encoder **914** configured to encode streams into the MPEG2 and/or MPEG4 formats, for example, a multi-headed graphics controller **910** (as discussed relative to **FIG. 3**, for example), at least one internal smart security device **912** and one or more interfaces **920** to the external world of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** as discussed relative to FIGS. **1-8**. In addition, in order to provide a trusted platform for secure e-commerce transactions, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may feature a trusted cache memory **918** (together with its associated execution protocol) to automatically recover from a temporary failure and a hardware random number generator (RNG) **916** for generating true random numbers for maximum entropy encryption keys. Each of the elements **902**, **904**, **906**, **908**, **910**, **912**, **914**, **916**, **918** and **920** are advantageously coupled to one another via a common bus structure, as shown at reference **922**.

[**0087**] Trusted Cache

[**0088**] As shown in **FIG. 9**, the trusted cache **918** of the present invention may include a Non-Volatile Random Access Memory (NVRAM) **924** such as a "battery backed up" static memory or "Flash backed up" static memory (for example). The trusted cache **918** may also include a Context

Data Save Engine **926** that is adapted to save the state and context of the current transaction being executed from the program memory **904** (Dynamic or Static RAM) into the NVRAM **924** as soon as power failure is sensed. A Context Data Recovery Engine **928** may then restore the transaction execution context from NVRAM **924** back into the DRAM or SRAM **904** as soon as the power supply is properly restored. The restart engine **930**, according to an embodiment of the present invention, may be configured to drive a power ON signal even when the main power is cut or removed, using electrical energy supplied by a temporary DC storage device such as a capacitor or a small battery. The trusted cache **918** may be used to continually store the critical states of a transaction session (such as an e-commerce transaction session, for example) into non-volatile memory **924**. Moreover, the context data save engine **926** enables automatic recovery of transaction execution following a temporary failure; that is, a software crash, a hardware latch-up or an accidental power-off, for example. Preferably, the critical states of the transaction are written to the trusted cache **918** without delay and very frequently, and are retained in non-volatile memory **924** in case of temporary failure of the STB, either due to power outage, software crash, hardware latch-up or simply accidental user initiated power down.

[**0089**] Saving such critical states on media such as a magnetic hard disk is believed to be too slow and too unreliable. Likewise, saving the critical states on Flash Memory is also believed to be too slow, and the writing life may be too limited (such as on the order of 100,000 to 1 million cycles, for example). The cache technology for the trusted cache **918**, therefore, is preferably chosen from either non-volatile SRAM or magnetic core memory, for example. Battery or capacitor backed-up SRAM may be included in the trusted cache **918**, but the battery life and reliability may become problematic, and capacitor retention may be unduly limited (to a period of only a few days, for example). A technology that is well suited for the trusted cache **918** is the NVRAM technology developed by Simtek, Inc. (www.simtek.com). Using such NVRAM technology, the entire content of the program memory **904** (DRAM or SRAM) is automatically copied into in Flash memory at once, as soon as a catastrophic failure is detected. Moreover, no external electrical source is required to retain the data stored in the trusted cache's NVRAM **924** and data retention is guarantied for at least 10 years. When power is reapplied, the content of the Flash memory may be automatically rewritten into the program memory **904** (which may include SRAM and/or DRAM) and ready for access. The critical states saved to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918** may be encrypted to prevent tampering during the transaction recovery process.

[**0090**] Random Number Generator

[**0091**] A hardware RNG such as shown at **916** in **FIG. 9** is extremely desirable in order to ensure maximum entropy of encryption of encryption keys such that the encrypted keys are formed of true random bits, thereby rendering a brute force attack thereon to its maximum theoretical level of difficulty.

[**0092**] An embedded true RNG based on diode noise, for example, enables systematic use of the highest encryption strength for the encryption algorithms and key length allowed by government. Flaws in RNGs and badly chosen encryption keys are responsible for highly publicized cracked systems such as Netscape Navigator 1.1, European GSM phones, Russian systems, etc. Although 128-bit encryption such as RSA, 3DES, etc requires a considerable theoretical computer power to crack, a badly chosen encryption key may result in the secret keys being cracked within hours.

[**0093**] Because of all the sensitive and personal data that home users may have on their PCs and other devices connected to the Internet and/or to other networks via the home network (for example), there is a need to provide STBs **100** with almost "Military Defense class" security. Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), Secure Socket layer (SSL) and other secure communication protocols that rely on locally generated encryption keys are solutions that are widely available today. The resilience of such encryption protocols to attack depend on the quality of the encryption keys or their maximum entropy, such as discussed in Schneider, *Secrets and Lies: Digital Security in a Networked World*, Wiley& Sons, Inc.© 2000, pages 102-106, which is incorporated herein by reference.

[**0094**] Trusted E-Commerce Transactions

[**0095**] It is generally recognized that the reliability of embedded computing hardware such as STBs **100** and other Internet Appliances such as shown at **520** is far greater than the reliability of the Internet **104** and of wireless networks. The Internet **104** is a very cost effective medium for viewing rich information and for performing purchases in a secure manner, using smart cards and encryption techniques, for example. However, the availability of the Internet **104** is often unpredictable. Furthermore, an e-commerce transaction may take minutes to complete and any failure between the STB **100**, **114**, **116** and the remote e-commerce server **534** may leave the transaction in an unknown state and the user frustrated or mislead.

[**0096**] The present invention, therefore, offers methods, systems and e-commerce transaction models for conducting trusted e-commerce transactions via a STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention, whereby the e-commerce transaction is performed in seconds or even fractions of seconds. Moreover, the user of the present invention need not be concerned by the possible failure of the transaction commit to the remote server **534**. Moreover, deployment of very large numbers of such STB **100**, **114**, **116***s* according to the present invention (such as 10 millions units), will not slow the connected e-commerce remote server or servers **534** to a crawl when all the STB **100**, **114**, **116***s* are committing transactions simultaneously because of a particular event. The remote servers **534** may be configured to accept the transactional model and easily handle a transaction volume on the order of 1,000,000 transactions per second. A suitable remote server is described in commonly assigned U.S. application Ser. No. 09/565,579 filed on May 4, 2000 and entitled "Fast Web Interface Server, Network Architectures and Systems Using Same", the disclosure of which is incorporated herewith in its entirety.

[**0097**] The e-commerce transactions described herein are an effective and low cost way to provide ultra fast and secure micro-payment or e-microcommerce (wherein the terms refers to low valued and/or frequent transactions—although the applicability of present invention is not limited to such

micro-transactions) solutions for a multitude of competitive providers (with whom the user need not necessary have an open account). Such e-microcommerce transactions may include transactions related to on-demand music listening or delivery, on-demand HDTV music video clips or concerts, charm videos, magazine articles, betting, casino gambling, and voting, to name only a few representative candidates for such a micro-payment model.

[**0098**] "Provisional" and "Confirmed" Receipts

[**0099**] The transactional model proposed herein for conducting trusted e-commerce transactions via the STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention is applicable to transactions such as occur in large lotteries, whereby the STB **100**, **114**, **116** is the transaction "master".

[**0100**] **FIG. 10** is a flowchart of a transactional model for providing "Provisional" and "Confirmed" receipts of a trusted e-commerce transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown therein, the transaction starts at S**101** and the user (not shown) of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** selects (using his or her Personal Remote Control **502**, for example) a product and/or services (displayed on the TV **108** or a monitor of a client PC **112**, **118** or **120**, for example) provided by provider of such products and/or services, as shown at S**102**. At S**103**, the user provides any requested credentials, such as any requested and/or required authentication and/or payment instrument information, as shown at S**103**. The user may then be presented with an opportunity to confirm the selected product(s) and/or services at S**104**.

[**0101**] Transactions that are accepted by the remote server **534** in a predetermined and/or selectable short period of time (such as on the order of 1 second for example) are named "immediate transactions" herein. When it is determined at step S**105** that the current transaction is an immediate transaction (such as when a transaction confirmation is received from the remote server **534** within the predetermined and/or selectable short period of time), the user is given a "confirmed acknowledgement" (receipt or ticket, as the terms acknowledgment, receipt and ticket are used interchangeably herein) as shown at S**106**. When immediate transactions are not possible (such as when a transaction confirmation is not received from the remote server **534** after expiry of the predetermined and/or selectable short period of time), the user is given a "provisional acknowledgment" or receipt, as shown at S**107**. The transaction may then end at S**108**. If the user has received a provisional acknowledgment, the user may request a confirmed acknowledgment at some later point in time, if the user so desires. Very quickly, the user will trust the reliability of the transaction strategy proposed herein, and will not bother to systematically request a confirmed acknowledgement/receipt when a provisional receipt has been issued. If in doubt, the user always has the option and ability of requesting a confirmed acknowledgement/receipt.

[**0102**] In the case of non-immediate transactions according to the present invention, the actual time to complete the overall transaction is preferably masked from the user. The user (person initiating the transaction) remains satisfied with the transaction because of the short period of time needed to complete the transaction. The reliability and the speed of completion of the overall transaction is insured by relying on the "transaction master" model and the use of the trusted cache **918**, as disclosed herein.

[**0103**] Immediate Transaction

[**0104**] **FIG. 11** is a diagram showing the timing of an immediate trusted transaction as the transaction progresses from the user to the server **534** and back to the user, as a function of time, according to an embodiment of the present invention. When an immediate transaction is possible, the transaction may proceed as follows. When initiating a transaction, the user may supply one or more of the following: an identification of the desired product and/or service, the identity of the supplier(s), the user's personal information and/or payment instrument information (which may be inputted by the user or retrieved automatically from secured personal storage—such as from the Personal Remote Control **502**), for example. As shown at (1), the controller **900** of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention may encapsulate all the user-supplied aforementioned information in a single data packet (all such sensitive data being preferably secured in accordance with a predetermined security/encryption protocol), and may then store a copy of the packet into the trusted cache **918**, as shown at (2). The packet may then routed through the network (3) (including, for example, the Internet **104**) until it reaches the remote server **534**. The information related to the item(s) chosen, together with the personal information and/or payment instrument information and the delivery address are preferably sent to the remote server **534** in the same single data packet. The sensitive information may be encrypted using, for example, the provider's public key that is automatically made available together with the rich content describing the product or service, thereby avoiding the unnecessary overhead of establishing a full SSL or Transport Layer Security (TLS) session. The remote server **534** may then complete the transaction (4) and may return a confirmed acknowledgment packet back through the network (5). A copy of the returned confirmed acknowledgment packet may then be copied to the trusted cache **918** (6), and a receipt **530** may be generated by the STB **100**, **114**, **116** (7) that is then displayed or printed or otherwise provided to the user.

[**0105**] Cached Transaction

[**0106**] When an immediate transaction is not possible, a cached transaction is executed. **FIG. 12** is a diagram showing the timing of a cached trusted transaction as the transaction progresses from the user to the server **534** and back to the user, as a function of time, according to an embodiment of the present invention. When initiating a transaction, the user of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** supplies one or more of the following: an identification of the desired product and/or service, the identity of the supplier(s), the user's personal information and/or payment instrument information (which may be inputted by the user or retrieved automatically from secured personal storage such as the Personal Remote Control **502**), for example. The STB **100**, **114**, **116**, as shown at (1), may the encapsulate all of the aforementioned information in a single data packet (all such sensitive information being secured in accordance with a predetermined security/encryption protocol), and may then store a copy of the packet in the trusted cache **918** (2). The packet may then be routed through the network (3) (including, for example, the Internet **104**).

[**0107**] After a predetermined time-out (4), a provisional acknowledgement packet (5) is produced based on the user transaction request already committed to the trusted cache

918. The STB **100, 114, 116** of the present invention may then generate a provisional acknowledgement (6) such as ticket **530** that is viewed or printed by the ticket printer **528** or otherwise made available or provided to the user.

[**0108**] After a certain amount of time, the remote server **534** completes the transaction (7) and may return a confirmed acknowledgment packet back through the network (8). A copy of the returned confirmed acknowledgment packet may then be copied to the trusted cache **918** (9), and the confirmed acknowledgment may be retained in the trusted cache **918** (10). This execution flow has the advantage of providing the user with a provisional acknowledgment very shortly after the user has initiated the transaction, even if a confirmed acknowledgment is not available until some later time. The user retains the option of returning to the STB **100, 114, 116** of the present invention and requesting a confirmed acknowledgment corresponding to the previously provided provisional acknowledgment by presenting the provisional acknowledgment or ticket to the barcode reader **532**. The barcode reader **532** may then read the barcode **531** printed on the acknowledgment **530** and the STB **100, 114, 116** may then cause the ticket printer **528** to print out a confirmed acknowledgment **530**.

[**0109**] Failed Transaction

[**0110**] **FIG. 13** is a diagram showing the timing of a failed trusted transaction as the transaction progresses from the user to the server **534** and back to the user, as a function of time, according to an embodiment of the present invention. When initiating a transaction, the user may supply one or more of the following: an identification of the desired product and/or service, the identity of the supplier(s), the user's personal information and/or payment instrument information (which may be inputted by the user or retrieved automatically from secured personal storage), for example. The STB **100, 114, 116** (the controller **900** thereof) may then encapsulate all of the aforementioned information in a single data packet (all such sensitive information being secured in accordance with a predetermined security/encryption protocol) as shown at (1), and may then store a copy of the packet in the trusted cache **918** (2). The packet may then be routed through the network (3) (including, for example, the Internet **104**).

[**0111**] After a predetermined time-out (4) has elapsed without the generation of a confirmed acknowledgment packet by the server **534**, a provisional acknowledgement packet (5) may be produced by the STB **100, 114, 116** itself, based on the user transaction request already committed to the trusted cache **918**. The STB **100, 114, 116** of the present invention may then generate a provisional acknowledgement (6) such as the ticket **530** that is viewed or printed by the ticket printer **528** or otherwise made available or provided to the user.

[**0112**] When the cached transaction packet (3) fails to reach the remote server **534**, a first re-try packet (7) is sent (under the control of the STB **100**) through the network after a predetermined and/or selectable period of time. If no acknowledgement is received from the remote server **534** after a predetermined and/or selectable period of time, a second retry packet (8) is sent to the network. The same scenario may be repeated forever or (preferably) for a selectable number or retries or period of time or until an acknowledgement is received from the remote server **534**.

[**0113**] In the example illustrated in **FIG. 13**, the third retry packet (9) reaches its destination (the remote server **534**) and the transaction is successfully executed (10). A confirmed acknowledgment is routed back through the network (11). A copy of the returned acknowledgment packet is copied to the trusted cache **918** (12), and a confirmed acknowledgment may be retained in the trusted cache **918** (13) and optionally provided to the user upon request.

[**0114**] Such a transaction model, whereby the STB **100, 114, 116** is the transaction "master" that initiates the transaction with the remote server **534** and repeats forever or for a predetermined number of times until a valid transaction acknowledgment from the remote server **534** is received, is extremely robust albeit lightweight (the transaction consists of single forward packet and a single return packet). This enables the remote server **534** to handle a great many such transactions simultaneously without becoming overwhelmed by the data traffic necessary to complete such a great number of transactions. Moreover, there is no need to identify the exact location and type of failure or to initiate a specific recovery. Indeed, any failure, whether on the outbound network path (i.e., toward the remote server **534**), at the remote server **534** or on the network return path (from the remote server **534** back toward the STB **100, 114, 116**/user) may be automatically recovered according to this transaction model. Any duplicate packet that may be received at either end may simply be ignored.

[**0115**] It is to be noted that the user is not aware of the possible delay in receiving the acknowledgement from the remote server **534**. This feature is expected to be appreciated by users, especially when performing numerous micropayments, as servers conventionally take a long time to get approval from clearing banks.

[**0116**] Confirmed Acknowledgment Request

[**0117**] **FIG. 14** is a flowchart of a request for a confirmed acknowledgment, according to an embodiment of the present invention. Whenever the user is given a provisional acknowledgment, the user may, at some later time, request a corresponding confirmed acknowledgment. If the STB **100, 114, 116** according to the present invention is equipped with a ticket or receipt printer **528** and a barcode reader (such as a scanner, for example) **532** (or other machine vision system), the user may initiate a request for a confirmed acknowledgment at S**140** in **FIG. 14** by simply presenting the previously received provisional acknowledgment to the bar code reader **532** and scan a barcode **531** (or other machine readable indicia) printed on the provisional acknowledgment as shown at S**141** and the device **528** prints out a confirmed acknowledgment (a ticket or receipt) as shown at S**142** to complete the request at S**143**, in accordance with the procedures detailed below.

[**0118**] "In-Cache" Confirmation Transaction

[**0119**] **FIG. 15** is a diagram showing an in-cache confirmation of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention. Depending on the time taken by the remote server **534** to complete the transaction, the confirmed acknowledgment may already be available in the trusted cache **918**. In that case, the user need only present the previously received provisional acknowledgment to barcode reader **110** of the kiosk **100**, of the present invention and the request (1) may be immediately responded to with the

relevant data contained in the trusted cache **918** (2), and a confirmed acknowledgment generated (3) and printed, displayed or otherwise made available to the user.

[**0120**] "Out-of-Cache" Confirmation Transaction

[**0121**] **FIG. 16** is a diagram showing the timing of an out-of-cache confirmation of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention. If the confirmed acknowledgement is not present in the trusted cache **918** (for whatever reason), the request therefor is forwarded to the remote server **534** via the outbound path (1) (2) and (3) through the controller **900**, trusted cache **918** and the network (such as the Internet **104**), whereupon the remote server **534** sends back a transaction confirmed acknowledgment (4) that is routed back to the STB **100**, **114**, **116** via the return path (5) (6) and (7). If the remote server **534** does not respond due to some failure along the way, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention may continuously repeat the request for confirmed acknowledgment until a reply is received. When the remote server **534** has completed the earlier-initiated e-commerce transaction, it will cache the confirmed acknowledgment such that a subsequent request from the STB **100**, **114**, **116** can be immediately responded to and the confirmed acknowledgment sent from the remote server's **534** cache to the trusted cache **918** of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention. If the confirmed acknowledgement is not ready, it will simply ignore the request therefor, thereby forcing the STB **100**, **114**, **116** to repeat the request after a predetermined time until the confirmed acknowledgment is received. In the end, a confirmed acknowledgment is generated and provided to the user, the confirmed acknowledgment indicating either success of the transaction or failure thereof (due, for example, by the user's payment instrument being declined).

[**0122**] Transaction Session

[**0123**] **FIG. 17** is a flowchart of a transaction session, according to an embodiment of the present invention. The overall trusted transaction session called a "Transaction Session" that begins at **S170** and ends at **S173** that is executed by the control software of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** comprises two sessions; namely a user transaction session **S171** followed by a remote server transaction Session **172**, the details of which are discussed below.

[**0124**] User Session

[**0125**] **FIG. 18** is a flowchart of a user session, according to an embodiment of the present invention. The user session begins at **S180** and ends at **S185** and may include one or more of the following intervening steps. As shown at **S181**, a display (such as TV or HDTV **108**, for example) may invite the user to initiate a purchase for a product and/or service. The user may then confirm his or her intention to initiate a purchase. The user's credentials; that is, his or her personal and/or financial information (identity, payment instrument details, etc.) may then be captured and/or inputted into the STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention, as shown at **S182**. The STB **100**, **114**, **116** thus captures the user's personal and/or payment credentials using some means of interaction, or alternatively from secured personal storage accessible to the STB control software. The STB control software may then commit the transaction to the non-volatile memory **924** of the trusted cache **918**, as shown at **S183**, after which the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may provide, display or print a provisional acknowledgment for the user, as shown at **S184**. According to the present invention, the user need only be involved during the user session **S180**-**S185**, which may take only a few seconds or even less if bar-coded (or machine readable) items are scanned by the barcode (for example) reader **532**.

[**0126**] Server Session

[**0127**] **FIG. 19** is a flowchart of a server session from its initiation at **S190** to the conclusion thereof, at **S195**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. According to the present invention, the server session may include one or more of the following steps. As shown at **S191**, the STB control software retrieves the transaction committed in the non-volatile trusted cache **918** during the user session. The STB **100**, **114**, **116** then sends the transaction to the remote server **534** over a computer network (such as the Internet **104**, for example) or other communication channel, as shown at **S192**. If no acknowledgement is received from the remote server **534** by a predetermined and/or selectable timeout period, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention may continually (or for a predetermined period of time or for a predetermined or selectable number of attempts) resend the transaction packet to the remote server **534**, as indicated at **S193**. If the acknowledgment is indeed received by the STB **100**, **114**, **116** before the timeout period has elapsed, the received acknowledgment may be stored in the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**. As is apparent from **FIG. 19**, the user of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention (or the user of the device incorporating the present STB **100**, **114**, **116**—for example, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may be incorporated within the TV or HDTV **108**) is not involved in the remote server **534** session. Optionally, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** control software may notify the user of the successful completion of the transaction by printing or otherwise providing the confirmed acknowledgment automatically, such as by sending an email to the user or by activating an alert message, to name a few possibilities.

[**0128**] In order for a transaction session to complete successfully without involving the user, it is necessary to examine all the failure situations that may interfere with the completion of the transaction. A formal methodology called Failure Modes, Effects and Criticality Analysis (FMECA) is useful in exhaustively identifying all possible failure possibilities, their impact and the effectiveness of the remedies.

[**0129**] The most common cause of transaction failure may be caused by the remote server **534** failing to timely respond with an acknowledgment of the transaction, for whatever reason (including, for example, a failure at some point along the communication path outside the STB **100**, **114**, **116**). An effective remedy to such a failure is the transaction model described above, whereby the STB **100**, **114**, **116** is the transaction "master" that initiates and maintains control over the transaction with the remote server **534**. Advantageously, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** according to the present invention may repeatedly send the transaction to the remote server **534** until a valid transaction acknowledgment is received from the remote server **534**. The second common cause of transaction failure may be attributed to failure of the STB **100**, **114**, **116**, due to mains power-failure, user power down, software crash and/or hardware latch-up, for example. An effective remedy to such failures is the use of NVRAM of the trusted cache **918** in which the critical states of the

transaction are frequently saved. The control software of the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may then recover the context of the transaction from the critical state information stored in the trusted cache **918**, and then resume its execution and control over transaction until completion thereof, as described hereunder.

[**0130**] Transaction Critical States

[**0131**] **FIG. 20** is a flowchart showing the timing of the saving of the critical states of a trusted transaction, according to an embodiment of the present invention. The essential critical states are State#1, State#2, State#3, and State#4, as shown in the flowchart. The present invention provides for the saving in the trusted cache **918** of all the data necessary to describe the context of the transaction at that particular instant, including the state number itself. This saving of the critical states (context) may be carried out four times per transaction as shown in **FIG. 20**, or more or less often as necessary. Following a failure of the transaction, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** and/or the remote server **534** occurring between any of these critical states, the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** may retrieve the last saved state information from the trusted cache **918** and seamlessly resume and complete the execution from the saved state onward. As shown in **FIG. 20**, the method beings at S**200**, whereupon the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** captures (or retrieves) the user's personal and/or financial information. In step S**202**, after the user has selected products and/or services and committed to a transaction, the details of the user's transaction are committed to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**. The STB **100**, **114**, **116** of the present invention may then save all of the information necessary to reconstruct and continue the transaction to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**, as shown at State#1. At S**203**, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may print, display or otherwise provide the user with a provisional acknowledgment or receipt. This state of the transaction (State#2) may then also be saved to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**. The user's transaction may then, as shown at S**204**, be sent to the remote transaction server **534**, and the current state information may then again saved to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**, as shown at State#3. As indicated at S**205**, step S**204** may be repeated (indefinitely if necessary) until a timely acknowledgment is received from the remote server **534**. Alternatively, step S**203** may be omitted between steps S**202** and S**204** and carried out only when the remote server **534** initially fails to send a timely acknowledgement back to the present STB **100**, **114**, **116**. Upon receiving an acknowledgment from the remote server **534**, the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** may store the received acknowledgement and all necessary contextual information to the NVRAM **924** of the trusted cache **918**, as shown at State#4, whereupon the method ends at S**207**.

[**0132**] Recovery from Trusted Transaction Controller Temporary Failure

[**0133**] **FIG. 21** is a flowchart illustrating the recovery from a temporary failure of a STB **100**, **114**, **116**, according to an embodiment of the present invention. Assuming a successful recovery cycle following a temporary failure whereby the STB **100**, **114**, **116** is successfully re-started, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may execute the steps S**210**-S**218** shown in the flowchart of **FIG. 21**. Namely, the operating system of the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** may reboot as shown at S**211** and the application may start-up or boot as shown at S**918**. Thereafter, the CPU **902** (see **FIG. 9**) may examine the contents of the trusted cache **918**, as shown at S**213**. If the last saved critical state (see **FIG. 20**) indicates that a user session is not completed at S**214**, the STB **100**, **114**, **116** may abort the user session, as shown at S**215** and end the recovery, as shown at S**218**. If it is determined step in S**216**, however, that the last critical state saved shows that a remote server **534** session is incomplete, the saved state information may be retrieved from the trusted cache **918** and the transaction committed (sent) to the remote server **534**, as shown at S**217**. The content of the trusted cache **918** may be encrypted or digitally signed, in order to prevent tampering during the transaction recovery process, by service people (for example) if the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** is sent for repair or service.

[**0134**] It is to be noted that the user may choose not to receive a provisional acknowledgment (ticket). In that case, only the confirmed acknowledgment will be printed or otherwise provided whenever the acknowledgement is received from the remote server **534**. In either case, the user need not wait in front of the display screen for the overall transaction to complete, and would therefore be afforded additional time to fully enjoy the shopping and/or entertainment experience provided by the present STB **100**, **114**,**116**.

[**0135**] As noted above, the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** (and not the remote server **534**) is the transaction "master". Therefore, user personal and payment instrument information and the like are supplied to the remote server **534** under the full control of the STB **100**, **114**, **116**, including recovery from failure. Consequently, users will very quickly come to trust such a system, especially when many small merchants are involved in such e-microcommerce transactions that depend upon frequent micro-payments.

[**0136**] It is not recommended, within the context of the present invention, to encapsulate the transaction model described within XML, because of the large overhead created by XML. Instead, the transaction model proposed herein may advantageously be used as a means to efficiently and securely process the transaction "payload" while the associated rich and "free" content may be handled according to traditional protocols, such as HTML, Java, XML, for example. It should be apparent that the transactional model and set top box **100** proposed herein may be initiated by a user from the STB **100**, **114**, **116**, from any client PC **112**, **118**, **120** or client STB **116** connected to a home network **106**.

[**0137**] Unlike other models that require an account with an online provider to have previously been set up, the present invention does not require that the user be previously known to the provider in order to complete a transaction. Indeed, as the present STB **100**, **114**, **116** is equipped with devices to access personal information stored securely (on a personal Smart Card in the smart card reader, or on the Personal Remote Control **502**), the information related to the item chosen together with the user credentials (including the user's personal and/or payment instrument information, for example) and the delivery address are preferably sent to the remote server **534** in the same single data packet. The sensitive information may be encrypted using for example the provider's public key that is automatically made available together with the rich content describing the product or

service, thus avoiding the unnecessary overhead of establishing a full SSL (Secure Socket Layer) or TLS (Transport Layer Security) session.

[0138] While the foregoing detailed description has described preferred embodiments of the present invention, it is to be understood that the above description is illustrative only and not limiting of the disclosed invention. Those of skill in this art will recognize other alternative embodiments and all such embodiments are deemed to fall within the scope of the present invention. Thus, the present invention should be limited only by the claims as set forth below.

What is claimed is:

1. A set top box comprising:

a processor for controlling the set top box;

a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal;

a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display;

a network interface to access a computer network;

a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and

a non-volatile cache memory controlled by the processor and configured to selectively store a context of the transaction to enable a recovery of the transaction after an interruption thereof.

2. The set top box of claim 1, wherein the non-volatile cache memory includes a Non-Volatile Random Access Memory (NVRAM), a context data save engine for selectively storing the context of the transaction to the NVRAM and a context data recovery engine for retrieving the stored context from the NVRAM and recovering the transaction to enable a successful completion of the transaction.

3. The set top box of claim 2, wherein the context data save engine is configured to store the context of the transaction at least one of:

before sending the transaction to the remote server;

after sending the transaction to the remote server but before having received an acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server;

after having received a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server.

4. The set top box of claim 1, further including a printer controlled by the processor, the printer being configured to print at least one of human-readable information and machine-readable information.

5. The set top box of claim 4, wherein the printer is configured to print an acknowledgment of the transaction.

6. The set top box of claim 1, further including a reader controlled by the processor, the reader being configured to scan and decode printed machine-readable code.

7. The set top box of claim 6, wherein the machine-readable information includes a barcode and wherein the reader includes a barcode reader.

8. The set top box of claim 3, wherein the processor is configured to execute the transaction in a first user session that concludes after the context data save engine has saved the context of the transaction to the NVRAM and a provisional acknowledgment is provided to the user and to execute a second remote server session that concludes after a confirmed acknowledgement is received from the remote server and provided to the user.

9. The set top box of claim 1, further comprising a hardware random number generator, the hardware random number generator being configured to provide the processor with encryption keys to encrypt the user initiated transaction.

10. The set top box of claim 1, wherein the at least one display includes at least one of a television set, a High Definition Television (HDTV) and a computer monitor, the graphics interface being configured to selectively output the decoded video signal to the at least one display in full screen mode, picture-in-picture mode, mosaic mode or multi-window mode.

11. The set top box of claim 1, further comprising at least one of a magnetic and a smart card reader.

12. A set top box, comprising:

a processor for controlling the set top box;

a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal;

a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display;

a network interface to access a computer network;

a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and

a printer controlled by the processor, the printer being configured to print at least one of human readable information and machine readable information.

13. The set top box of claim 12, wherein the printer is configured to print an acknowledgment of the transaction.

14. The set top box of claim 12, further including a reader controlled by the processor, the reader being configured to scan and decode printed machine-readable code.

15. The set top box of claim 12, wherein the machine-readable information includes a barcode and wherein the reader includes a barcode reader.

16. A set top box, comprising:

a processor for controlling the set top box;

a video decoder controlled by the processor, the video decoder providing a decoded video signal;

a graphics interface coupled to the video decoder to output the decoded video signal to at least one display;

a network interface to access a computer network;

a user interface enabling user interaction with the processor and initiation of a transaction with a remote server coupled to the computer network, and

a reader controlled by the processor, the reader being configured to scan and decode printed machine-readable code.

17. The set top box of claim 16, wherein the machine-readable information includes a barcode and wherein the reader includes a barcode reader.

18. A method of carrying out an online transaction between a set top box and a remote server, each of the set top

box and the remote server being coupled to a network, the method comprising the steps of:

initiating a transaction at the set top box;

storing a copy of the transaction in a non-volatile memory within the set top box;

sending the transaction to the remote server under a control of the set top box, and carrying out one of:

receiving a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction from the remote server and providing the confirmed acknowledgment, and

generating a provisional acknowledgment of the transaction from the copy of the transaction stored in the non-volatile memory if the confirmed acknowledgment is not received within a predetermined period of time.

19. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of:

receiving the confirmed acknowledgment from the remote server after the predetermined period of time and storing the received confirmed acknowledgment in the non-volatile memory.

20. The method of claim 19, further including a step of providing the stored confirmed acknowledgment upon request.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of re-sending the copy of the user transaction stored in the non-volatile memory to the remote server upon failure to receive the confirmed acknowledgment from the remote server.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the re-sending step is carried out until a confirmed acknowledgment of the transaction is received from the remote server.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein the re-sending step is carried out a predetermined number of times.

24. The method of claim 18, wherein the generating step includes a step of printing the provisional acknowledgment together with corresponding machine-readable information that uniquely identifies the transaction.

25. The method of claim 18, wherein the generating step includes a step of printing the provisional acknowledgment together with machine-readable information uniquely identifying the transaction and wherein the method further includes a step of the set top box reading the machine-readable information and providing the stored confirmed acknowledgment that corresponds to the read machine-readable information.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the stored confirmation acknowledgment providing step includes a step of printing the confirmation acknowledgment.

27. The method of claim 18, wherein the set top box includes a user interface that enables user interaction with the set top box and wherein the initiating step includes a step of providing user credentials and selecting goods and/or services for purchase via the user interface.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the user credentials include at least one of identification and payment instrument information and wherein the user credentials are supplied to the set top box via a remote control device.

29. The method of claim 18, wherein the initiating step includes a step of encapsulating all information required for the remote server to process the transaction into a single data packet and wherein the storing and sending steps store and send the single data packet in the non-volatile memory and to the remote server, respectively.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the information required for the remote server to process the transaction includes at least one of:

user credentials including at least one of an identity of the user;

payment instrument information;

delivery information, and

information identifying the subject matter of the transaction.

31. The method of claim 29, further including a step of encrypting the single data packet prior to the sending step.

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