US008069088B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Foulser et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 8,069,088 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent: Nov. 29, 2011**

(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CREDITING A RETAILER FOR AN INTERNET PURCHASE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **12/794,164**

(22) Filed: **Jun. 4, 2010**

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G06Q 30/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **705/26.1**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 705/26, 705/27, 26.1
See application file for complete search history.

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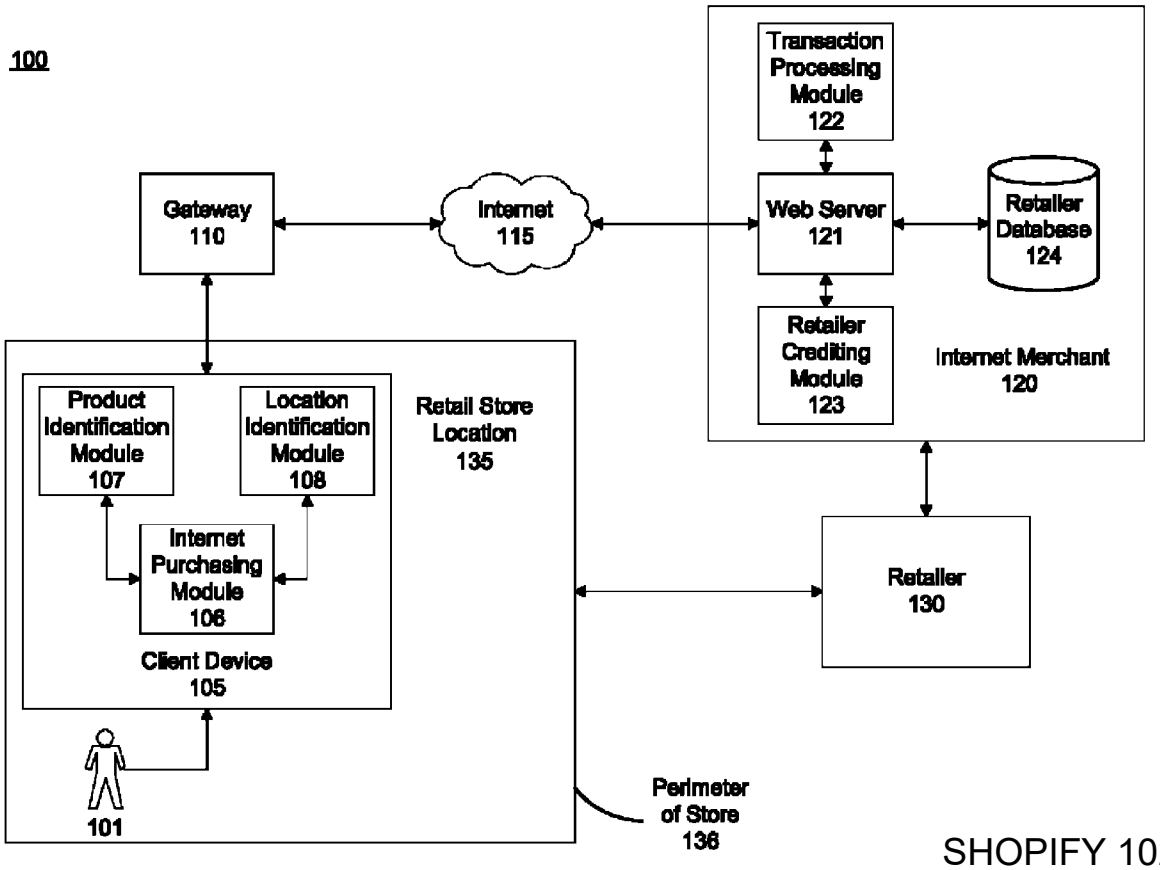
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Systems and methods for crediting a retailer for an online purchase made by a consumer while the consumer is located within or in the proximity of a store location of the retailer are provided. After browsing a retail location for a product, a consumer can purchase the product from an Internet merchant different than that of the retailer using a mobile or networked client device. The client device can include a module for determining the location of the client device at the time of purchase and include the location information with information used to complete the purchase of the product. This location information can include an actual geographic location, a store identifier, or a retailer identifier. The online merchant can match the location information with retailer information to determine whether a credit for the purchase should be given to a retailer.

40 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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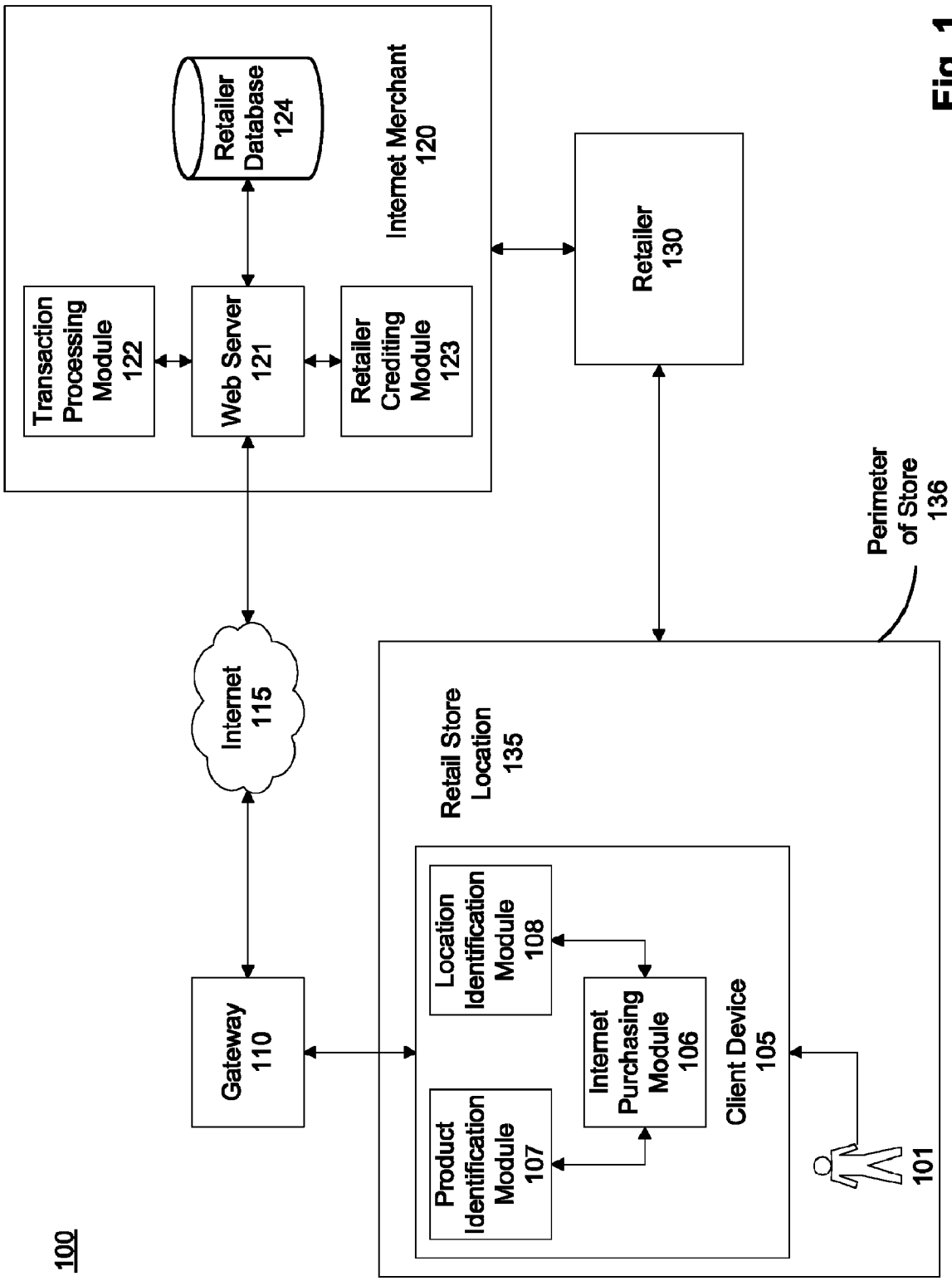
100
Internet Merchant 120
Transaction Processing Module 122
Web Server 121
Retailer Database 124
Retailer Crediting Module 123
Retailer 130
Internet 115
Gateway 110
Perimeter of Store 136
Retail Store Location 135
Location Identification Module 108
Product Identification Module 107
Internet Purchasing Module 106
Client Device 105
101

Fig. 1

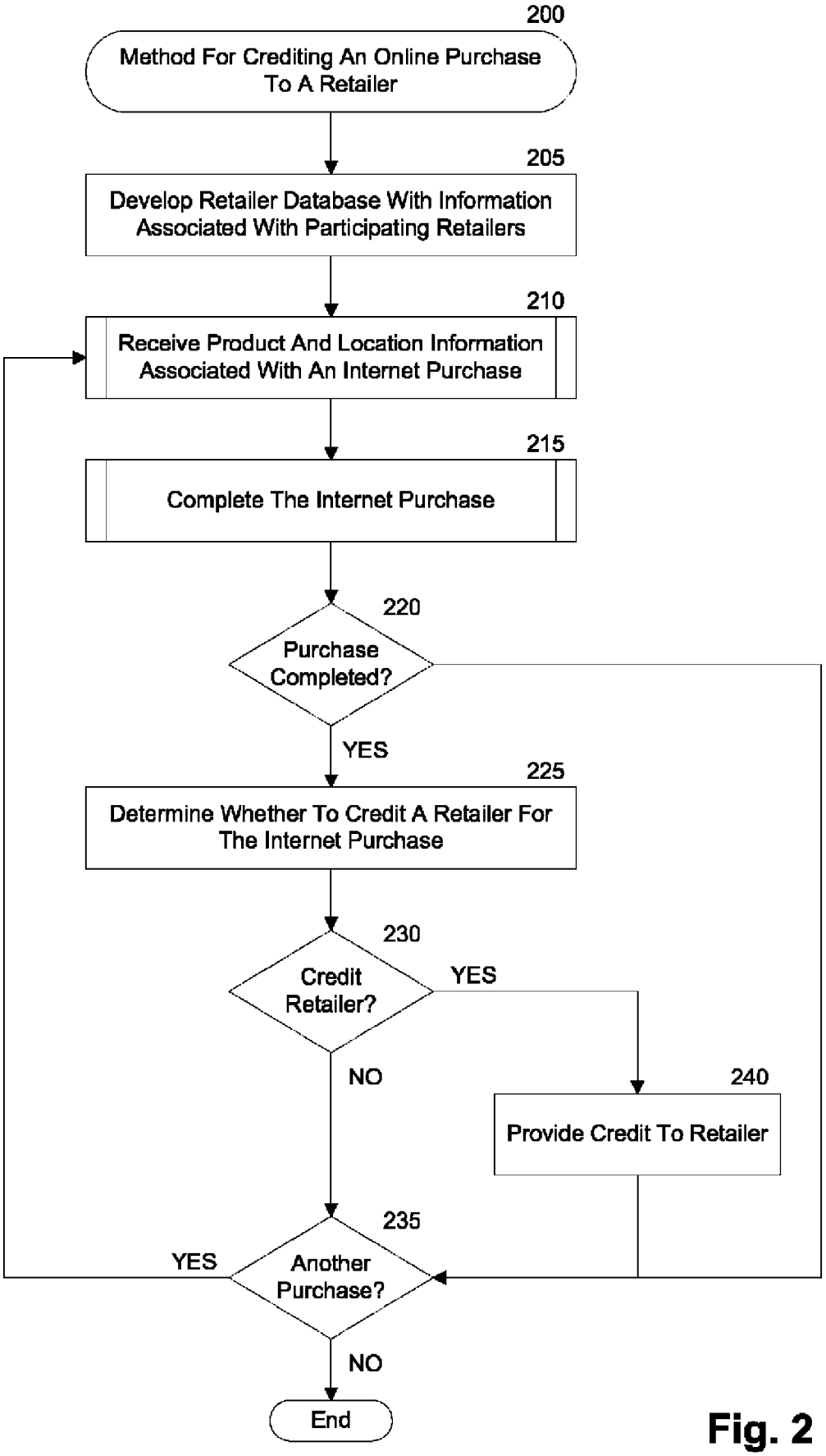
200
Method For Crediting An Online Purchase To A Retailer
205
Develop Retailer Database With Information Associated With Participating Retailers
210
Receive Product And Location Information Associated With An Internet Purchase
215
Complete The Internet Purchase
220
Purchase Completed?
YES
225
Determine Whether To Credit A Retailer For The Internet Purchase
230
Credit Retailer?
YES
NO
240
Provide Credit To Retailer
235
Another Purchase?
YES
NO
End

Fig. 2

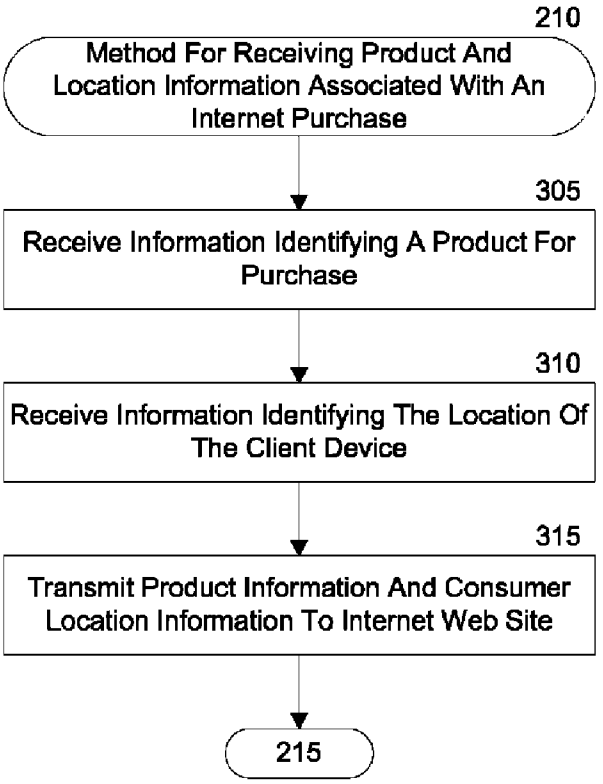
210
Method For Receiving Product And Location Information Associated With An Internet Purchase
305
Receive Information Identifying A Product For Purchase
310
Receive Information Identifying The Location Of The Client Device
315
Transmit Product Information And Consumer Location Information To Internet Web Site
215

Fig. 3

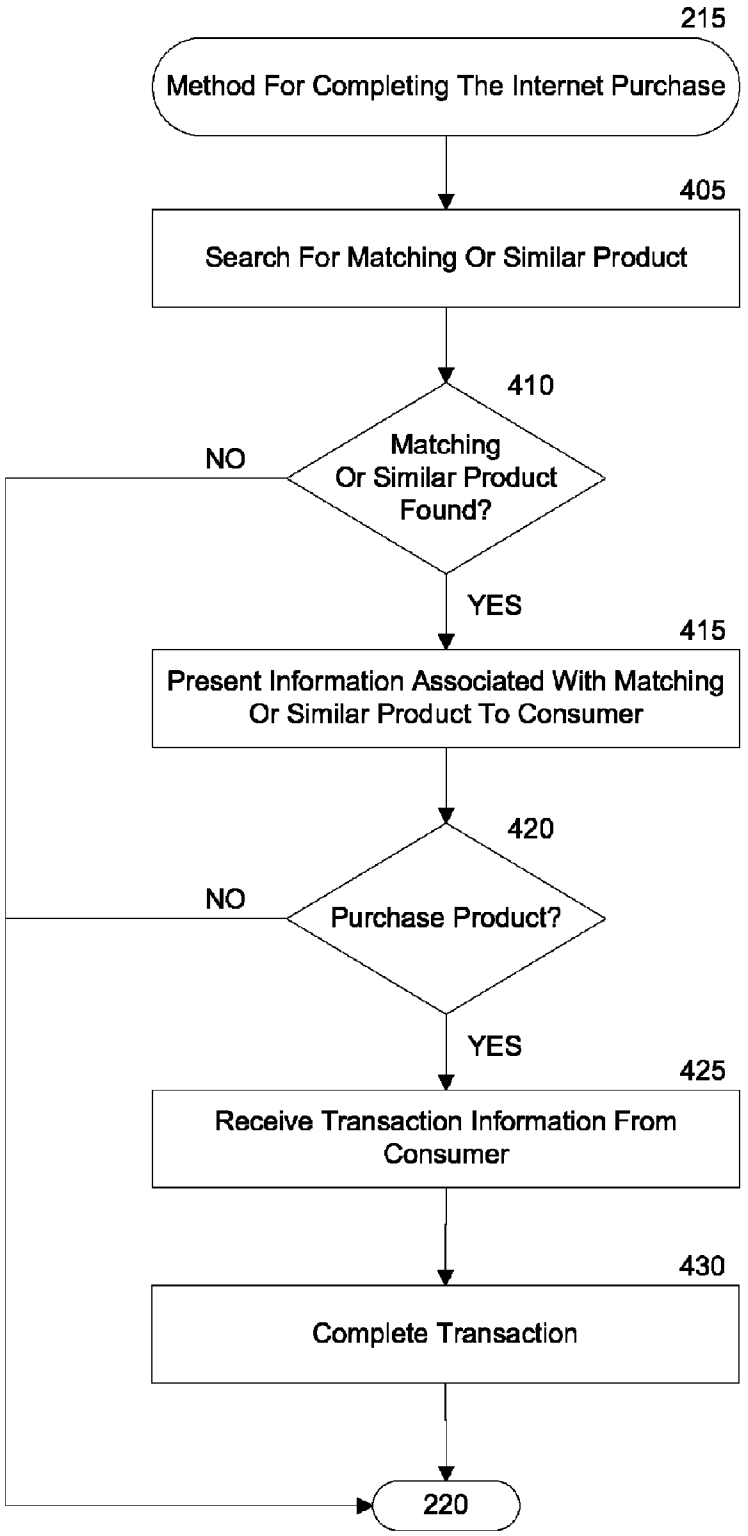
215
Method For Completing The Internet Purchase
405
Search For Matching Or Similar Product
410
Matching Or Similar Product Found?
NO
YES
415
Present Information Associated With Matching Or Similar Product To Consumer
420
Purchase Product?
NO
YES
425
Receive Transaction Information From Consumer
430
Complete Transaction
220

Fig. 4

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR CREDITING A RETAILER FOR AN INTERNET PURCHASE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates generally to online shopping. In particular, the invention relates to crediting a retailer for purchases made by consumers via an Internet Web site of a merchant different than that of the retailer while the consumer is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's locations.

BACKGROUND

Retail bookstores and other retailers provide a convenient environment in the form of physical retail store locations for consumers to browse products prior to making a purchase. The store locations typically have many different products on display so that a consumer can examine and compare products before making a purchasing decision. Many of these retailers make most, if not all, of their revenue from in store sales.

However, the advent of wireless electronic devices, such as smartphones and mobile computers, allow consumers to browse products in a retail store location but purchase the product outside of the retailer's environment. For example, a consumer shopping for books at a bookstore may find a book to purchase. While in the bookstore, the consumer may use a wireless electronic device to browse an Internet Web site of a different merchant to purchase the same book or a digital version of the book. In this example, although the retailer provided the shopping environment that led to the book purchase, the retailer would not share in the revenue or profits of the purchase. As the percentage of Internet purchases continues to grow and the number of consumers carrying wireless electronic devices also continues to grow, retailers having physical retail locations need a means to capitalize on in-store Internet purchases in order to avoid losing significant revenue.

SUMMARY

One aspect of the present invention provides a computer program product for providing a credit to a retailer for a purchase made by a consumer from an Internet merchant. The computer program product can include a computer-readable medium including computer-readable program code for receiving information identifying a product for purchase; computer-readable program code for receiving information identifying a location of a device used by the consumer to purchase the product; computer-readable program code for determining whether the location of the device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer; and computer-readable program code for providing a credit to the retailer based on a determination that the location of the device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a system for providing a credit to a retailer for a purchase made by a consumer from an Internet merchant. This system can include a computer system for receiving information identifying a product for purchase and information identifying a location of a device used by the consumer to complete the purchase; a data storage unit coupled to the computer system for storing information identifying a plurality of retailers; and a retailer crediting module coupled to the computer system for determining whether the location of the device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer and for providing a credit to the retailer based on a determination that the location of the device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a method for providing a credit to a retailer for a purchase made by a consumer from an Internet merchant. This method includes the steps of receiving from a client device associated with the consumer at a computer system associated with the Internet merchant information identifying a product for purchase; receiving from the client device at the computer system information identifying a location of the client device used by the consumer to complete the purchase; determining, by the computer system, whether the location of the client device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer; and associating, by the computer system, a credit to the retailer based on a determination that the location of the client device corresponds to a retail location of the retailer.

Another aspect of the present invention provides a computer-implemented method for crediting a retailer for a purchase. This method includes the steps of receiving, at a computer system, information identifying a product a consumer intends to purchase; receiving, at the computer system, information identifying a location of the consumer; completing, by the computer system, the purchase of the product; determining, by the computer system, whether to credit a retailer for the purchase by determining whether the location of the consumer corresponds to a retail location associated with the retailer; and in response to a determination that the location of the consumer corresponds to a retail location, applying, by the computer system, a credit to the retailer.

These and other aspects, features, and embodiments of the invention will become apparent to a person of ordinary skill in the art upon consideration of the following detailed description of illustrated embodiments exemplifying the best mode for carrying out the invention as presently perceived.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of the exemplary embodiments of the present invention and the advantages thereof, reference is now made to the following description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. **1** is a block diagram depicting a system for crediting a retailer for purchases made by consumers via an Internet Web site of a merchant different than that of the retailer while the consumer is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's locations in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments.

FIG. **2** is a flow chart illustrating a method for crediting a retailer for purchases made by consumers via an Internet Web site of a merchant different than that of the retailer while the consumer is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's locations in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments.

FIG. **3** is a flow chart illustrating a method for receiving product and location information associated with an Internet purchase in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments.

FIG. **4** is a flow chart illustrating a method for completing an Internet purchase in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Exemplary embodiments of the invention are provided. These embodiments include systems and methods for crediting a retailer for purchases made by consumers via an Internet

Web site of a merchant different than that of the retailer while the consumer is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's locations. After browsing a retail location for a product, a consumer can purchase the product from an Internet merchant different than that of the retailer using a mobile or networked client device. The client device can include hardware or software for determining the location of the client device at the time of purchase and include the location information with information used to complete the purchase of the product. This location information can include an actual geographic location, a store identifier, or a retailer identifier. After the transaction is completed, the Internet merchant can match the location information with retailer information to determine whether a credit for the purchase should be given to a retailer.

Embodiments of the invention can comprise a computer program that embodies the functions described herein and illustrated in the appended flow charts. However, it should be apparent that there could be many different ways of implementing the invention in computer programming, and the invention should not be construed as limited to any one set of computer program instructions. Further, a skilled programmer would be able to write such a computer program to implement an embodiment of the disclosed invention based on the flow charts and associated description in the application text. Therefore, disclosure of a particular set of program code instructions is not considered necessary for an adequate understanding of how to make and use the invention. The inventive functionality of the claimed invention will be explained in more detail in the following description, read in conjunction with the figures illustrating the program flow.

A method and system for crediting a retailer **130** for purchases made by a consumer **101** via an Internet Web site of a merchant **120** different than that of the retailer **130** while the consumer **101** is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's store locations **135** will now be described with reference to FIGS. **1-4**, which depict representative or illustrative embodiments of the invention. FIG. **1** is a block diagram depicting a system **100** for crediting a retailer **130** for purchases made by a consumer **101** via an Internet Web site of a merchant **120** different than that of the retailer **130** while the consumer **101** is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's locations **135** in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments. Although the exemplary embodiments are described in terms of a retailer **130** having a retail store location **135**, one skilled in the art would appreciate that the present invention can also be used for other types of businesses, such as wholesalers and service providers.

Referring to FIG. **1**, the exemplary system **100** includes a retailer **130** having a physical retail store location **135**, such as a bookstore, music store, department store, kiosk or store location in a mall. Consumers, such as consumer **101**, can browse the store location **135** for products or services offered by the retailer **130**. As used throughout the specification, the term "products" should be interpreted to include tangible products and intangible products, as well as services. After the consumer **101** finds a product for purchase, the consumer **101** can either purchase the product from the retailer **130** at the store location **135** using conventional methods (e.g., checkout terminal) or purchase the product or a similar product from an Internet merchant **120** different than that of the retailer **130** using a client device **105** in communication with the Internet **115**.

The client device **105** can include a portable computer (e.g., notebook or netbook computer), mobile phone (e.g., smartphone), personal digital assistant ("PDA"), or other device having Internet or other communication capabilities. The client device **105** can include an Internet purchasing module **106**, a product identification module **107**, and a location identification module **108**, each of which will be described in more detail below. The client device **105** can communicate with the Internet **115** by way of a gateway **110**. The gateway **110** can include a mobile phone network that provides mobile Internet capabilities for smartphones. The gateway **110** can also include a Wi-Fi network or wireless local area network ("WLAN") that provides a wireless Internet connection for Wi-Fi enabled devices, such as portable computers, smartphones, and PDAs. The Wi-Fi network may be provided by the retailer **130** in the store location **135** or by an external provider. The gateway **110** may also include a wired Internet connection provided at the store location **135**. For example, the store location **135** may provide a plug-in connection for a consumer **101** to connect a personal laptop. Alternatively or additionally, the store location **135** may provide a kiosk having a computer for the consumer **101** to connect to the Internet **115**.

The Internet purchasing module **106** communicates with a Web server **121** of the Internet merchant **120** to mediate the purchase of products by the consumer **101** from the Internet merchant **120**. The Internet purchasing module **106** can be embodied as a stand-alone software application installed on and executed by the client device **105**. Alternatively, the Internet purchasing module **106** can be embodied as a plug-in application or application programming interface ("API") executing in an Internet web browser application. In a web browser embodiment, the Internet purchasing module **106** may be delivered to the client device **105** as part of an Internet Web page downloaded from the Web server **121** to the client device **105**. The Internet purchasing module **106** provides a user interface (not shown) to the consumer **101** to complete a purchase from the Internet merchant **120**. This user interface can provide standard purchasing functions, such as displaying products for purchase, accepting a method of payment, and confirming the transaction. The user interface can also allow the consumer **101** to browse and research products prior to purchasing.

The Internet purchasing module **106** communicates with the product identification module **107** and the location identification module **108**. The product identification module **107** assists the consumer **101** with identifying a product for purchase. In certain exemplary embodiments, the product identification module **107** includes a scanner installed on or coupled to the client device **105** for scanning a barcode, such as a universal product code ("UPC"), a two-dimensional barcode, a Quick Response code ("QR code"), a European Article Numbering ("EAN") barcode, or other type of barcode. In certain exemplary embodiments, an in-store poster or other signage associated with a product may have a barcode or other scannable image or graphic printed or attached thereon for the consumer **101** scan with the client device **105**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the product identification module **107** includes a user interface for receiving a textual description, title, or search terms associated with the product from the consumer **101**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the product identification module **107** includes a radio frequency identification ("RFID") reader installed on or coupled to the client device **105** for reading RFID tags associated with a product. In certain exemplary embodiments, the product identification module **107** includes a camera installed on or coupled to the client device **105** for taking a picture of a barcode or in-store signage associated with a product, or for taking a picture of the product itself.

After obtaining information identifying a product for purchase, the product identification module **107** communicates

the information to the Internet purchasing module **106**. The Internet purchasing module **106** can then use the information identifying the product to determine if that product or a similar product is sold by the Internet merchant **120**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the Internet purchasing module **106** can search a database (not shown) or other data storage unit stored on or coupled to the client device **105** for a matching or similar product offered by the Internet merchant **120**. Alternatively or additionally, the Internet purchasing module **106** can communicate the information identifying the product to the Web server **121** and the Web server **121** can search for a matching or similar product offered by the Internet merchant **120**. The Internet purchasing module **106** can then display any information associated with matching or similar products to the consumer **101** via the client device **105**.

The location identification module **108** retrieves information identifying the location of the client device **105** and thus, the consumer **101** when the consumer **101** makes a purchase using the Internet purchasing module **106**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the client device **105** includes a global positioning system ("GPS") receiver (not shown) or other real-time location identification system. The location identification module **108** can communicate with the GPS receiver to determine the location of the client device **105**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the location identification module **108** can include a scanner for scanning in-store posters or signage having information identifying the retailer **130** and/or the retailer store location **135**. This information can include the name of the retailer **130**, a code for the retailer **130**, a store name, or a store code. In certain exemplary embodiments where the store location provides a Wi-Fi gateway **110**, the location identification module **108** can obtain the network address of the Wi-Fi gateway **110**. After obtaining information identifying the location of the client device **105**, the location identification module **108** communicates the information to the Internet purchasing module **106**.

The Internet purchasing module **106** can communicate the information identifying the product for purchase, the information identifying the location of the client device **105**, and other transactional information (e.g., form of payment, method of delivery, etc.) to the web server **121** of the Internet merchant **120** to mediate the purchase of the product. The Web server **121** can include or be coupled to a transaction processing module **122**. The transaction processing module **122** can receive the information identifying the product and the other transactional information and use this information to mediate the purchase of the product.

In certain exemplary embodiments, the transaction processing module **122** may include or be coupled to a third party payment processor (not shown). Consumers **101** having an account with a third party payment processor can make purchases from Internet merchants **120** without disclosing sensitive payment information (e.g., credit card number) to the Internet merchant **120**. Instead, the consumer **101** provides payment information for one or more financial accounts (e.g., checking account, credit card account, etc.) to the third party payment processor for use in Internet transactions. When purchasing a product from an Internet merchant **120** that accepts payments via the third party payment processor, the consumer **101** can select from one of the financial accounts to pay for the product. The third party payment processor can then debit the selected account for the amount of the purchase and credit this amount to an account of the Internet merchant **120**. Examples of third party payment processors include GOOGLE CHECKOUT and PAYPAL.

The Web server **121** of the Internet merchant **120** can include or be coupled to a retailer crediting module **123**. The retailer crediting module **123** can determine if a purchase from the Internet merchant **120** was received from a consumer **101** located within or in the proximity of a store location **135** of a retailer **130**. If so, the retailer crediting module **123** can determine a credit to be distributed to the retailer **130** for the purchase.

The retailer crediting module **123** can determine if a purchase from the Internet merchant **120** was received from a consumer **101** located within or in the proximity of a retailer location **135** by comparing the information identifying the location of the client device **105** with retailer information stored in a retailer database **124** that is stored on or coupled to the Web server **121**. This retailer information can include information associated with any number of retailers **130** that are partnered with or otherwise associated with the Internet merchant **120** to receive credit for purchases made from the Internet merchant **120** by a consumer **101** located within or in the proximity of a store location **135** of the retailer **130**. Retailer information may include the retailer's **130** name, information identifying particular store locations **135** (e.g., store name/code), GPS coordinates associated with each store location **135**, products offered by the retailer **130** for which credits may be received, network address of the store location's **130** Wi-Fi gateway **110**, barcodes or other types of codes associated with the retailer **130** and/or a store location of the retailer **130**, and any other information associated with retailers **130**. The GPS coordinates for each store may include a center point of the store location **135** and a radius. The GPS coordinates can also include coordinates identifying the store location's **135** perimeter **136**.

If the information identifying the location of the client device **105** matches information associated with a retailer **130** or a retailer's **130** store location **135**, the retailer crediting module **123** can determine whether a credit is appropriate and the amount of the credit to be given to the retailer **130**. A credit may be appropriate for certain products only or for purchases made during a certain time period only. For example, if a consumer **101** purchases a product from the Internet merchant **120** that is not offered by the retailer **130** although the consumer **101** is located at one of the retailer's **130** store locations **135**, the retailer **130** may not be eligible for a credit. The amount of the credit may also depend on the product(s) purchased. For example, the credit given to a retailer **130** may be a flat fee based on the product or a percentage of the price of the product. Although not shown, the Internet merchant **120** can include one or more credit databases for accruing credits for retailers **130**.

FIG. **2** is a flow chart illustrating a method **200** for crediting a retailer **130** for purchases made by a consumer **101** via an Internet Web site of a merchant **120** different than that of the retailer **130** while the consumer **101** is located within or in the proximity of one of the retailer's store locations **135** in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments. The method **200** will be described with reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**.

In step **205**, a retailer database **124** is developed. The retailer database **124** can include information associated with retailers **130** eligible for a credit for purchases made from the Internet merchant **120** while the consumer **101** is located within or in the proximity of a store location **135** of the retailer **130**. For example, the Internet merchant **120** may partner with one or more retailers **130** to provide credits to these retailers **130** for appropriate purchases. In an alternative embodiment, a third party who may be involved in the Internet transaction (such as a payment processor receiving payment from the customer and providing payment to the merchant **120**) may partner with the retailers **130** to provide them with credits for appropriate purchases. Information associated with each of

the one or more retailers **130** can be stored in the retailer database **124**. As described above with reference to FIG. **1**, the retailer information can include the retailer's **130** name, information identifying particular store locations **135** (e.g., store name/code), GPS coordinates of each store location **135**, products offered by the retailer **130** for which credits may be received, network address of the store location's **130** Wi-Fi gateway **110**, bar codes or other types of codes associated with the retailer **130** and/or a store location of the retailer **130**, and any other information associated with retailers **130**.

In step **210**, the Web server **121** receives information associated with an Internet purchase from the client device **105** associated with the consumer **101**. This information can include information identifying one or more products for purchase and information identifying the location of the client device **105**. The product identification module **107** can receive the information identifying the one or more products for purchase and communicate this information to the Internet purchasing module **106**. The location identification module **108** can receive information identifying the location of the client device **105** and communicate this information to the Internet purchasing module **106**. After receiving the information associated with the Internet purchase, the Internet purchasing module **106** communicates this information to the Web server **121** of the Internet merchant **120**. Step **210** is described in further detail below with reference to FIG. **3**.

In step **215**, the Web server **121** completes the purchase of the one or more products. The Web server **121** can use the information identifying each of the one or more products to search a product database (not shown) for a matching or similar product offered by the Internet merchant **120**. For example, if the consumer **101** is attempting to purchase a musical compact disc ("CD"), the Web server **121** can search for that CD or for a downloadable version of the CD. After finding a matching or similar product, the Web server **121** can present information associated with the matching or similar product to the consumer **101** via a user interface, such as an Internet Web site, at the client device **105**. The consumer **101** can then decide whether to purchase the matching or similar product. If the consumer **101** decides to purchase the matching or similar product, the Internet purchasing module **106** can prompt the consumer **101** for payment information, delivery information, and any other information necessary to complete the transaction. After receiving this transaction information, the transaction processing module **122** can complete the transaction. Step **215** is described in further detail below with reference to FIG. **4**.

In step **220**, if the consumer purchased a product from the Internet merchant **120**, the method **200** proceeds to step **225**. Otherwise, the method **200** proceeds to step **235**.

In step **225**, the retailer crediting module **123** determines whether to credit a retailer **130** for the purchase. The retailer crediting module **123** can receive the information identifying the purchased product(s) and the information identifying the location of the client device **105** from the Web server **121**. The retailer crediting module **123** can compare the information identifying the location of the client device **105** to the retailer information stored in the retailer database to **124** determine if the client device **105** was located within or in the proximity of a retailer location **135** when the purchase was completed.

In certain exemplary embodiments, the retailer crediting module **123** compares GPS coordinates obtained by the location identification module **108** to GPS coordinates of one or more store locations **135** stored in the retailer database **124**. The GPS coordinates stored in the retailer database **124** can include a center or near center coordinate and a radius or coordinates defining a perimeter **136** of the store locations **135**. If the GPS coordinates obtained by the location identification module **108** are located within or proximal to a store location **135** of a retailer **130**, that retailer **130** may be eligible for a credit.

In certain exemplary embodiments, the retailer crediting module **123** compares information identifying a retailer **130** or store location **135** obtained from in-store posters or signage to the retailer information stored in the retailer database **124**. This information can include the name of the retailer **130**, a code for the retailer **130**, a store name, a store code, or any other information that can be used to identify a retailer **130** or store location **135**. If the information matches a retailer **130** or store location **135** of the retailer **130**, that retailer **130** may be eligible for a credit.

In certain exemplary embodiments, the retailer crediting module **123** compares a network address of a store location's **135** Wi-Fi gateway **110** to network addresses associated with store locations **135** or retailers **130** in the retailer database **124**. If the network address of the store location's **135** Wi-Fi gateway **110** matches a network address associated with a store location **135** or retailer **130** in the retailer database **124**, that retailer **130** may be eligible for a credit.

If the retailer crediting module **123** determines that the location of the client device **105** matches information associated with a retailer **130** or a retailer's store location **135**, the retailer crediting module **123** can determine whether the retailer **130** is eligible for a credit based on the product(s) purchased. For example, the retailer **130** may not offer one of the product(s) purchased from the Internet merchant and thus may not be eligible for a credit for that purchased product. Or, the Internet merchant **120** and the retailer **130** may agree to award credits for certain products only. Additionally, the Internet merchant **120** may award credits for predefined time periods only.

If the retailer crediting module **123** determines that a retailer **130** should be credited for the purchase, the method **200** branches to step **240**. Otherwise, the method **200** branches to step **235**.

In step **240**, the Internet merchant **120** provides a credit to the retailer **130**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the Internet merchant **120** accrues credits for a retailer **130** for a predetermined time period and provides the credits at the end of that time period. For example, the Internet merchant **120** may provide credits to the retailer **130** at the end of each month. As discussed above, in an alternative embodiment, a third party such as a payment processor, may provide the credit to the retailer **130** instead of the merchant **120**.

In another embodiment, other entities related to a give transaction—in addition to the retailer **130**—may receive credits. For example, a payment processor such as one assisting in the apportionment of credits between merchants **120**, retailers **130**, and other entities may also receive credits stemming from the purchase. Additionally, a publisher or other manufacturer of the product being purchased (e.g., the publisher of an e-book being purchased) may receive credits. Moreover, retailers also may receive additional credits for facilitating the purchase of goods from an online merchant **120**. For example, a retailer **130** that displays signage for an online merchant **120**, or a QR code associated with a link to purchase a product from an online merchant **120** can receive additional credits when a consumer **101** purchases the product from an online merchant **120**.

In step **235**, the Web server **121** determines whether there are more purchases to process. If so, the method **200** returns to step **210**. Otherwise, the method **200** ends.

FIG. **3** is a flow chart illustrating a method **210** for receiving product and location information associated with an Inter-

net purchase in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments, as referenced in step **210** of FIG. **2**. The method **210** will be described with reference to FIGS. **1** and **3**.

In step **305**, the product identification module **107** of the client device **105** receives information identifying a product for purchase. In certain exemplary embodiments, the consumer **101** may scan a UPC barcode, an EAN barcode, a two dimensional barcode, or other type of barcode, or an in-store poster or signage associated with a product. In certain exemplary embodiments, the consumer **101** may enter a textual description, title, or search terms associated with the product into a user interface on the client device **105**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the consumer **101** may use the product identification module **107** to read an RFID tag associated with the product. In certain exemplary embodiments, the consumer **101** may use a camera installed on or coupled to the client device **105** to take a picture of the product or of a barcode or in-store poster or signage associated with the product.

In step **310**, the location identification module **108** of the client device **105** receives information identifying the location of the client device **105**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the location identification module **108** can obtain the location from a GPS receiver stored on or coupled to the client device **105**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the consumer **101** may scan in-store posters or signage having information identifying the retailer **130** or the store location **135**. In certain exemplary embodiments, the location identification module **108** obtains the network address of a Wi-Fi or other Internet gateway **110** associated with the retailer **130** or store location **135** that is used to connect the client device **105** to the Internet **115**.

In step **315**, the Internet purchasing module **106** obtains the information identifying the product and the information identifying the location of the client device **105** from the product identification module **107** and the location identification module **108**. The Internet purchasing module **106** transmits the information identifying the product and the information identifying the location of the client device **105** to the Web server **121**. After step **315**, the method proceeds to step **215**, as referenced in FIG. **2**.

FIG. **4** is a flow chart illustrating a method **215** for completing an Internet purchase in accordance with certain exemplary embodiments, as referenced in step **215** of FIG. **2**. The method **215** will be described with reference to FIGS. **1** and **4**.

In step **405**, the Web server **121** uses the information identifying the product to search for a product offered by the Internet merchant **120** that matches or is similar to the product that the consumer **101** intends to purchase. For example, if the consumer **101** scanned a UPC code for a movie, the Web server **121** would search for various versions of that movie, such as a DVD, BLU-RAY, VHS, or a downloadable version. The Web server **121** may include or be coupled to one or more product databases having information associated with each product offered by the Internet merchant **120**. Alternatively or additionally, the Internet purchasing module **106** can use the information identifying the product to search for a product offered by the Internet merchant **120** that matches or is similar to the product that the consumer intends to purchase prior to transmitting the product and location information to the Web server **121**.

In step **410**, if a matching or similar product is found, the method **215** proceeds to step **415**. Otherwise, the method **215** proceeds to step **220**, as referenced in FIG. **2**.

In step **415**, the Internet purchasing module **106** presents information associated with the matching or similar product to the consumer **101** via the client device **105**. This information can include a title, picture, description, versions, price, and any other information associated with the product. The consumer **101** can use the information to determine whether to purchase the product.

In step **420**, if the consumer **101** decides to purchase the product, the method **215** proceeds to step **425**. Otherwise, the method **215** proceeds to step **220**, as referenced in FIG. **2**.

In step **425**, the Internet purchasing module **106** prompts the consumer **101** for information to complete the transaction. In certain exemplary embodiments, this transaction information includes payment and delivery information. Delivery information can include a shipping address and shipping method if the product is to be shipped to the consumer **101**. Or, the delivery information may include instructions to download a digital product. After receiving the transaction information, the Internet purchasing module **106** transmits that transaction information to the Web server **121**.

In step **430**, the transaction processing module **122** processes the transaction. The transaction processing module **122** can receive the information identifying the product and the other transactional information and use this information to mediate the purchase of the product. After completing the transaction, the transaction processing module **122** can provide a confirmation to the consumer **101** via the Internet purchasing module **106**. If the consumer **101** purchased a digital product for download, the Web server **121** can transmit the product to the client device **105** via the Internet **115**.

The exemplary methods and steps described in the embodiments presented previously are illustrative, and, in alternative embodiments, certain steps can be performed in a different order, in parallel with one another, omitted entirely, and/or combined between different exemplary methods, and/or certain additional steps can be performed, without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention. Accordingly, such alternative embodiments are included in the invention described herein.

The invention can be used with computer hardware and software that performs the methods and processing functions described above. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the systems, methods, and procedures described herein can be embodied in a programmable computer, computer executable software, or digital circuitry. The software can be stored on computer readable media for execution by a processor, such as a central processing unit, via computer readable memory. For example, computer readable media can include a floppy disk, RAM, ROM, hard disk, removable media, flash memory, memory stick, optical media, magneto-optical media, CD-ROM, etc. Digital circuitry can include integrated circuits, gate arrays, building block logic, field programmable gate arrays (FPGA), etc.

Although specific embodiments of the invention have been described above in detail, the description is merely for purposes of illustration. It should be appreciated, therefore, that many aspects of the invention were described above by way of example only and are not intended as required or essential elements of the invention unless explicitly stated otherwise. Various modifications of, and equivalent steps corresponding to, the disclosed aspects of the exemplary embodiments, in addition to those described above, can be made by a person of ordinary skill in the art, having the benefit of this disclosure, without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention defined in the following claims, the scope of which is to be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass such modifications and equivalent structures.

What is claimed is:

1. A computer program product for providing a credit to a first merchant for a purchase from a second merchant different than the first merchant, the computer program product comprising:

a computer-readable medium comprising:

computer-readable program code for receiving product information identifying a product for purchase, the product information obtained via a device from an item at a location associated with the first merchant;

computer-readable program code for receiving from the device information identifying a location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information;

computer-readable program code for determining whether the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information corresponds to a location of the first merchant;

computer-readable program code for determining that the product was purchased from the second merchant via the device;

computer-readable program code for determining whether the product is currently available for sale at the location of the first merchant; and

computer-readable program code for providing a credit to the first merchant based on a determination that the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information corresponds to the location of the first merchant, a determination that the product was purchased from the second merchant via the device, and a determination that the product is currently available for sale at the location of the first merchant.

2. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information comprises at least one of information identifying a physical location of the device, information identifying the location of the first merchant, and information identifying the first merchant.

3. The computer program product of claim 2, wherein information identifying the physical location of the device comprises a location determined by a global positioning system receiver of the device.

4. The computer program product of claim 2, wherein the information identifying the first merchant comprises at least one of a store name and a store code.

5. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information comprises information identifying an Internet gateway that provides access to the Internet for the device to complete the purchase of the product via an Internet web site of the second merchant.

6. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the device comprises at least one of a portable computer, a mobile telephone, and a personal digital assistant.

7. The computer program product of claim 1, wherein the computer-readable program code for determining whether the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information corresponds to a location of the first merchant comprises computer-readable program code for comparing the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information to information associated with a plurality of merchant locations to determine whether the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information matches one of the plurality of merchant locations.

8. The computer program product of claim 1, further comprising computer-readable program code for aggregating a plurality of credits for the first merchant, the plurality of credits corresponding to purchases made by consumers from the second merchant while the consumers are located in the vicinity of a location of the first merchant.

9. The computer-program product of claim 1, wherein the product information is obtained via the device by receiving an input of at least one of a universal product code, a radio frequency identifier, an international standard book number, a picture of the product, a brand and model of the product, a quick response code, and signage located in the location of the first merchant.

10. A system for providing a credit to a first business for a purchase from a second business different than the first business, the system comprising:

a computer system that receives, from a device, product information identifying a product for purchase and information identifying a location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information, the product information obtained by the device from an item at a location associated with the first business;

a data storage unit of the computer system that stores information identifying a plurality of businesses; and

a retailer crediting module of the computer system that:

determines whether the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information corresponds to the location associated with the first business;

determines whether the product was purchased from the second business via the device;

determines whether the product is currently available for sale at the location associated with the first business; and

provides a credit to the first business in response to a determination that the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information corresponds to the location of the first business, a determination that the product was purchased from the second business via the device, and a determination that the product is currently available for sale at the location associated with the first business.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information comprises at least one of information identifying a physical location of the device, information identifying the location of the first business, and information identifying the first business.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the information identifying the physical location of the device comprises a location determined by global positioning system receiver of the device.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein the information identifying the first business comprises at least one of a store name and a store code.

14. The system of claim 10, wherein the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product information comprises information identifying an Internet gateway that provides access to the Internet for the device to complete the purchase of the product via an Internet web site of the second business.

15. The system of claim 10, wherein the device is one of a portable computer, a mobile telephone, and a personal digital assistant.

16. The system of claim 10, wherein the retailer crediting module compares the information identifying the location of the device at the time that the device transmitted the product

information to the information identifying the plurality of businesses stored in the data storage unit to determine whether the location of the device corresponds to the location of the first business.

17. The system of claim **10**, wherein the retailer crediting module aggregates a plurality of credits for the first business, the plurality of credits corresponding to purchases made by consumers from the second business while the consumers are located in the vicinity of a location of the first business.

18. The system of claim **10**, wherein the product information is obtained via the device by receiving an input of at least one of a universal product code, a radio frequency identifier, an international standard book number, a picture of the product, a brand and model of the product, a quick response code, and signage located at the location of the first business.

19. The system of claim **10**, further comprising a third party payment processor for mediating the purchase, wherein the third party payment processor:

receives a selection of a form of payment from the device;

debits an account associated with a consumer purchasing the product via the device; and

credits an account associated with the second business.

20. A method for providing a credit to a retailer for a purchase made from an Internet merchant different than the retailer and competing with the retailer, the method comprising:

receiving, at a computer, from a client device, product information identifying a product for purchase, the product information obtained via the client device from an item at a location associated with the retailer;

receiving, at the computer system, from the client device, information identifying a location of the client device at the time that the client device transmitted the product information;

determining, by the computer system, whether the location of the client device at the time that the client device transmitted the product information corresponds to a retail location of the retailer;

determining, by the computer system, that the product was purchased from the Internet merchant;

determining, by the computer system, whether the product is currently available for sale at the retail location of the retailer; and

associating, by the computer system, a credit to the retailer based on a determination that the location of the client device at the time that the client device transmitted the product information corresponds to the retail location of the retailer, a determination that the product was purchased from the Internet merchant, and a determination that the product is currently available for sale at the retail location of the retailer.

21. The method of claim **20**, wherein the information identifying the location of the client device at the time that the device transmitted the product information comprises at least one of information identifying a physical location of the client device, information identifying the retail location of the retailer, and information identifying the retailer.

22. The computer program product of claim **21**, wherein the information identifying the physical location of the client device comprises a location determined by a global positioning system receiver of the client device.

23. The method of claim **21**, wherein the information identifying the retail location comprises one of a store name and a store code.

24. The method of claim **20**, wherein the client device is one of a portable computer, a mobile telephone, and a personal digital assistant.

25. The method of claim **20**, wherein the step of determining whether the location of the client device at the time that the client device transmitted the product information corresponds to a retail location of the retailer comprises comparing, by the computer system, the information identifying the location of the client device at the time that the device transmitted the product information to information associated with a plurality of retailer locations to determine whether the location of the client device matches one of the plurality of retailer locations.

26. The method of claim **20**, further comprising the step of aggregating, by the computer system, a plurality of credits for the retailer, the plurality of credits corresponding to purchases made by consumers from the Internet merchant while the consumers are located in the vicinity of a retail location of the retailer.

27. The method of claim **20**, wherein the product information is obtained via the device by receiving an input of at least one of a universal product code, a radio frequency identifier, an international standard book number, a picture of the product, a brand and model of the product, a quick response code, and signage located in the retail location.

28. A computer-implemented method for crediting a first merchant for a purchase made from a second merchant different than the first merchant and competing with the first merchant, comprising:

receiving, at a computer system, product information identifying a product a consumer intends to purchase, the product information obtained via a device associated with the consumer from an item at a location associated with the first merchant;

receiving, at the computer system, information identifying a location of the consumer at the time that the product information was transmitted by the device;

processing, by the computer system, the purchase of the product from the second merchant;

determining, by the computer system, whether to credit the first merchant for the purchase by determining whether the location of the consumer at the time that the product information was transmitted by the device corresponds to a location associated with the first merchant and determining whether the product is currently available at the location associated with the first merchant; and

in response to processing the purchase of the product from the second merchant, a determination that the location of the consumer at the time that the product information was transmitted by the device corresponds to a location associated with the first merchant, and a determination that the product is currently available for sale at the location associated with the first merchant, applying, by the computer system, a credit to the first merchant.

29. The method of claim **28**, wherein the information identifying the location of the consumer at the time that the product information was transmitted by the device comprises at least one of information identifying a physical location of the device of the consumer, information identifying the location associated with the first merchant, and information identifying the first merchant.

30. The method of claim **29**, wherein information identifying the location of the consumer is received from a global positioning system ("GPS") receiver of the device.

31. The method of claim **30**, wherein the step of determining whether to credit the retailer comprises comparing, by the computer system, the location received from the GPS receiver to GPS coordinates that define each of a plurality of merchant

locations to determine if the location received from the GPS receiver is located within the one of the plurality of merchant locations.

32. The method of claim **30**, wherein the step of determining whether to credit the retailer comprises comparing, by the computer system, the location received from the GPS receiver to an area for each of a plurality of merchant locations, the area being defined by a central GPS coordinate and a radius extending from the central GPS coordinate in each direction.

33. The method of claim **28**, wherein the information identifying the retail location comprises one of a store name and a store code, and wherein the step of determining whether to credit the first merchant comprises comparing, by the computer system, the store name or store code to a plurality of store names or store codes to determine whether the store name or store code matches one of the plurality of store names or store codes that is associated with the first merchant.

34. The method of claim **28**, wherein the step of determining whether to credit the retailer comprises comparing, by the computer system, the information identifying the location of the consumer at the time that the product information was transmitted by the device to information associated with a plurality of merchant locations to determine whether the location of the client device matches one of the plurality of merchant locations.

35. The method of claim **28**, further comprising the step of aggregating, by the computer system, a plurality of credits for the first merchant, the plurality of credits corresponding to purchases made by consumers from the second merchant while the consumers are located at the location of the first merchant.

36. The method of claim **28**, wherein the product information is obtained by the device by receiving an input of one of a universal product code, a radio frequency identifier, an international standard book number, a picture of the product, a brand and model of the product, a quick response code, and signage located in the retail location.

37. The method of claim **36**, wherein the device receives an input of the product information by scanning or capturing at least one of the universal product code, the radio frequency identifier, the international standard book number, the picture of the product, the brand and model of the product, the quick response code, and signage located in the location of the first merchant.

38. The computer program product of claim **9**, wherein the device receives an input of the product information by scanning or capturing one of the universal product code, the radio frequency identifier, the international standard book number, the picture of the product, the brand and model of the product, the quick response code, and signage located in the location of the first merchant.

39. The system of claim **18**, wherein the device receives an input of the product information by scanning or capturing at least one of the universal product code, the radio frequency identifier, the international standard book number, the picture of the product, the brand and model of the product, the quick response code, and signage located in the location of the first business.

40. The method of claim **27**, wherein the client device receives an input of the product information by scanning or capturing at least one of the universal product code, the radio frequency identifier, the international standard book number, the picture of the product, the brand and model of the product, the quick response code, and signage located in the location of the first business.

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