

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR MANAGING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK SURVEY RESPONSES

5 FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention generally relates to a method and a system for managing customer feedback survey responses. For example, the feedback survey may be initiated with a customer for a service provided by a service provider.

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BACKGROUND

Conventionally, ratings (or feedback) for a service provider may be found in various mediums such as on the internet or in printed publications. Such ratings are supplied by previous customers based on their experience with, and their perception of, the service provider. For example, on the internet, ratings may typically be freely posted by anyone and on a voluntarily basis. As a potential customer searches for a suitable service provider, the potential customer would typically search the internet in an attempt to locate various service providers and any feedback/ratings provided by previous customers in order to obtain an indication of the quality of the service providers. The potential customer may then decide on which service provider to engage based on such feedback/ratings.

While the above conventional systems and methods of collecting feedback/ratings may provide some information to potential customers on past experiences with the service provider, the information provided may not fairly or accurately represent the quality of the service provider as a whole. For example, while there is typically no incentive to post a positive review of a service provider, people tend to be more motivated to post negative reviews of a service provider to vent their dissatisfaction and in some cases, with an intent to hurt the service provider's business as a way of retribution. Therefore, the feedback/ratings received for a service provider may be heavily biased/skewed towards a small group of people who were dissatisfied (whether reasonable or not) and do not fairly represent/indicate the quality of the service provider as a whole. In addition, since

the feedback/ratings may be freely posted by anyone anonymously, there is no mechanism to verify that each feedback/rating is posted by actual previous customers of the service provider. For example, negative ratings could be fraudulently posted by competitors who wish to damage the service provider's reputation. Accordingly, the
5 above conventional systems and methods do not provide a fair and reliable representation of the overall quality of the service provider.

On the other hand, service providers may have ratings or testimonials provided on their website from previous customers. However, such ratings/testimonials are usually
10 selectively posted on the website to portray a good image with the purpose of attracting new customers. For example, it is common that all ratings/testimonials provided on the website for a service provider are positive. In certain cases, the ratings/testimonials may even be fabricated by the service provider since there is no mechanism to verify their authenticity. Therefore, the ratings provided on the service provider's website are
15 generally not reliable and do not fairly indicate/represent the quality of the service provider as a whole.

A need therefore exists to provide a method and system for managing customer feedback survey responses that seek to address one or more of the above-
20 mentioned problems.

SUMMARY

According a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method for
25 managing customer feedback survey responses, the method comprising:

receiving, from a service provider, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer in relation to a service provided by the service provider, the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service; and

30 receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer, the feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals,

wherein the method is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider from being initiated based on a state of the feedback survey.

Preferably, the method further comprises:

prompting an action input from the service provider in reply to the response made by the customer for a predetermined survey interval for the service; and

5 accepting the response received for the predetermined survey interval in a database or initiating an investigation process to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the service provider,

10 wherein the method is configured to be in the lock state when said action input for the service provider is outstanding.

Preferably, the method is configured to return to an open state from the lock state, the open state being capable of accepting a new feedback survey for another service by the service provider, when the action input from the service provider for
15 the predetermined survey interval for the service is received.

Preferably, the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval or an investigate action for investigating the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey
20 interval, and wherein the feedback received is stored in the database when the action input received is the accept action, and the investigation process is initiated when the action input received is the investigate action.

Preferably, the predetermined survey interval is a final survey interval of the
25 feedback survey.

The plurality of stages of the service may comprise an initial stage of the service, an implementation stage of the service, and a final stage of the service, the final stage of the service being associated with the final survey interval of the feedback survey.

30 The initial stage of the service may relate to a pre-sales period for securing a sale of an item of goods and/or services to the customer, the implementation stage may relate to an execution period for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage may relate to a completion period after the sale has been fulfilled.

Preferably, the method comprises categorising the feedback received for each feedback survey initiated by the service provider in the database according to its status.

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Preferably, the status may comprise one of a pending status, a terminated status, a first complete status and a second complete status, the pending status for indicating that the feedback survey is pending, the terminated status for indicating that the feedback survey has been terminated before completion, the first complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the accept action, and the second complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the address action.

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Preferably, the method further comprises generating, upon request, a first type of feedback report of the service provider, the first type of feedback report is based on a predetermined number of the feedback received for the service provider having the first complete status.

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Preferably, the first type of feedback report comprises only the response received at the predetermined survey interval amongst the responses received at the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

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Preferably, the method further comprises generating, upon request, a second type of feedback report of the service provider, the second type of feedback report comprises all of the responses received at the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

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Preferably, the method further comprises linking the service provider to a company or an association, wherein the method is configured to terminate any feedback survey that is pending except for pending feedback survey having said action input outstanding or when the predetermined survey interval for the service provided by the service provider has been initiated which are maintained.

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According a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a system for managing customer feedback survey responses, the system comprising:

a feedback survey initialization module for receiving, from a service provider, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer in relation to a service provided by the service provider, the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service;

a feedback receiving module for receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer, the feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals; and

a database module for storing the feedback received from the customer, wherein the feedback survey initialization module is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider from being initiated based on a state of the feedback survey.

Preferably, the system further comprises:

an action module for prompting an action input from the service provider in reply to the response made by the customer for a predetermined survey interval for the service,

wherein the action module is operable to accept the response received for the predetermined survey interval in the database module or initiate an investigation process to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the service provider, and

wherein the feedback survey initialization module is configured to be in the lock state when said action input for the service provider is outstanding.

Preferably, the feedback survey initialization module is configured to return to an open state from the lock state, the open state being capable of accepting a new feedback survey for another service by the service provider, when the action input from the service provider for the predetermined survey interval for the service is received.

Preferably, the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval or an investigate action

for investigating the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval, and wherein the feedback received is stored in the database module when the action input received is the accept action, and the investigation process is initiated when the action input received is the investigate action.

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Preferably, the predetermined survey interval is a final survey interval of the feedback survey.

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The plurality of stages of the service may comprise an initial stage of the service, an implementation stage of the service, and a final stage of the service, the final stage of the service being associated with the final survey interval of the feedback survey.

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The initial stage of the service may relate to a pre-sales period for securing a sale of an item of goods and/or services to the customer, the implementation stage may relate to an execution period for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage may relate to a completion period after the sale has been fulfilled.

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Preferably, the system further comprises a categorising module for categorising the feedback received for each feedback survey initiated by the service provider in the database according to its status.

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Preferably, the status comprises one of a pending status, a terminated status, a first complete status and a second complete status, the pending status for indicating that the feedback survey is pending, the terminated status for indicating that the feedback survey has been terminated before completion, the first complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the accept action, and the second complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the address action.

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Preferably, the system further comprises a first feedback report generating module for generating, upon request, a first type of feedback report of the service provider, the first type of feedback report is based on a predetermined number of feedback received for the service provider having the first complete status.

Preferably, the first type of feedback report comprises only the response received for the predetermined survey interval amongst the responses received for the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

- 5 Preferably, the system further comprises a second feedback report generating module for generating, upon request, a second type of feedback report of the service provider, the second type of feedback report comprises all of the responses received for the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

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Preferably, the system further comprises a linking module for linking the service provider to a company or an association, wherein the method is configured to terminate any feedback survey that is pending except for pending feedback survey having said action input outstanding or when the predetermined survey interval for the service provided by the service provider has been initiated which are maintained.

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According a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a computer program product, embodied in a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium, comprising instructions executable by a computing processor to perform the method according to the above first aspect of the present invention.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- 25 Embodiments of the present disclosure will be better understood and readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from the following written description, by way of example only, and in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

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Fig. 1 depicts an exemplary system for managing customer feedback survey responses according to an example embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 depicts a flow diagram generally illustrating an exemplary method for managing customer feedback survey responses according to an example embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 3 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the main or broad functionality modules of the system according to an example of the present invention;

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Fig. 4 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the login module according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the sign up process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 6 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the company account creation/registration process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the service provider (e.g., professional) account creation process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 8 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the customer/client account creation/registration process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 9A illustrates an exemplary invitation email according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 9B depicts an exemplary login web page generated by the system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 10 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram in relation to the handling of the feedback surveys and the responses in the system according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 11A depicts an exemplary simple report according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 11B depicts an example detailed report according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Fig. 12 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the feedback survey creation process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 13A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the first survey interval according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 13B depicts an exemplary rating request sent to the customer for the first survey interval via mobile text messaging according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 15 Fig. 14A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the second survey interval according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 14B depicts an exemplary rating request sent to the customer for the second survey interval via mobile text messaging according to an embodiment of the present invention;

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Fig. 15A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the third survey interval according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 25 Fig. 15B depicts an example rating request sent to the customer for the third survey interval via mobile text messaging according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 30 Figs. 16A and 16B illustrate an example presentation of the details of the feedback survey for various stages;

Fig. 17 depicts an example email which may be sent to the customer at the completion of the first survey interval;

Fig. 18 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the first report type (e.g., simple report) generation process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Fig. 19 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram of the second report type (e.g., detailed report) generation process according to an embodiment of the present invention;

- 10 Fig. 20 depicts the feedback history/records for a service provider, along with their status, in an example of the present invention;

Fig. 21 depicts an exemplary scenario for illustrating the locking mechanism according to an example of the present invention;

- 15 Fig. 22 depicts a conventional computer system.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- 20 Example embodiments of the present invention seek to provide a method and a system for managing customer feedback survey responses in a manner that provides/enhances, for example, fairness and reliability. Details of the method and system according to exemplary embodiments of the present invention will be described below.

- 25 Some portions of the description which follows are explicitly or implicitly presented in terms of algorithms and functional or symbolic representations of operations on data within a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions and functional or symbolic representations are the means used by those skilled in the data processing arts to convey most effectively the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An
30 algorithm is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring physical manipulations of physical quantities, such as electrical, magnetic or optical signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, and as apparent from the following, it will be appreciated that throughout the present specification, discussions utilizing terms such as “scanning”, “calculating”, “determining”, “replacing”, “generating”, “initializing”, “outputting”, or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system (or
5 similar electronic device) that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical quantities within the computer system into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system or other information storage, transmission or display devices.

10 The present specification also discloses an apparatus (or a system) or a device for performing the operations of the methods. Such apparatus or device may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or may comprise other device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or
15 other apparatus. Various machines may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein. Alternatively, the construction of more specialized apparatus or device to perform the required method steps may be appropriate. As an example, the structure of a conventional general purpose computer will appear from the description below.

20 In addition, the present specification also implicitly discloses a computer program (including a mobile application for a mobile device), in that it would be apparent to the person skilled in the art that the individual steps of the method described herein may be put into effect by computer code. The computer program is not intended to be limited to any particular programming language and implementation thereof. It will be appreciated
25 that a variety of programming languages and coding thereof may be used to implement the teachings of the disclosure contained herein. Moreover, the computer program is not intended to be limited to any particular control flow. There are many other variants of the computer program that can use different control flows without departing from the spirit or scope of the disclosure.

30 Furthermore, one or more of the steps of the computer program may be performed in parallel rather than sequentially. Such a computer program may be stored on any computer readable storage medium. The computer readable storage medium may include storage devices such as magnetic or optical disks, memory chips, or other

storage devices suitable for interfacing with a computer or a mobile device. The computer program when loaded and executed on such a computer or mobile device effectively results in an apparatus or a device that implements the steps of the preferred method described herein.

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The present disclosure may also be implemented as hardware modules. More particular, in the hardware sense, a module is a functional hardware unit designed for use with other components or modules. For example, a module may be implemented using discrete electronic components, or it can form a portion of an entire electronic circuit such as an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC). Numerous other possibilities exist. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the system can also be implemented as a combination of hardware and software modules.

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Fig. 1 depicts an exemplary system 100 for managing customer feedback survey responses according to an example embodiment of the present invention. The system 100 comprises a feedback survey initialization module 104, a feedback receiving module 108, and a database module 112. The feedback survey initialization module 104 is configured for receiving, from a service provider 116, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer 120 in relation to a service provided by the service provider 116. The service provider 116 may be any person providing a service in relation an item of goods and/or services, such as a professional, a salesperson or a worker. For example and without limitation, the service provider may be a car salesperson, an insurance agent or a real estate agent, and the customer 120 may thus correspondingly be a person seeking to purchase a car, an insurance policy or a property.

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The feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service. For example, the service may comprise three stages such as an initial stage of the service (e.g., initial impressions of the service provider 116 before sales), an implementation stage of the service (e.g., comfort level with the service provider 116 during sales/delivery), and a final stage of the service (e.g., overall experience with the service provider after sales/delivery). For example, the initial stage of the service may relate to a pre-sales period 1608 for securing a sale of the item of goods and/or

services to the customer 120, the implementation stage may relate to an execution period 1604 for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage may relate to a completion period 1605 after the sale has been fulfilled (e.g., see Figs. 16A and 16B).

5 The feedback receiving module 108 is configured for receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer 120. The feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals. For example, each response may include ratings and/or remarks for the corresponding stage of the feedback survey. The database module 112 is configured for storing/maintaining the feedback
10 received from the customers 120. In particular, the database module 112 has stored therein an accessible/organised collection of the feedback received from the customers 120 and predetermined associated information such as details of the service, the survey, service provider 116 and the company or association 124 linked/tagged to the service provider 116.

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In the example embodiment, the feedback survey initialization module 104 is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider 116 from being initiated in the system 100 based on a state of the feedback survey. In this regard, in a preferred embodiment,
20 the system 100 further comprises an action module 128 for prompting an action input from the service provider 116 in reply to the response made by the customer 120 for a predetermined survey interval for the service. The predetermined survey interval is a selected/chosen survey interval (preferably a final survey interval) which the system 100 is configured to prompt for an action input from the service provider
25 116 in reply to the response made by the customer 120 for that selected/chosen survey interval. The action module 128 is operable to accept the response received for the predetermined survey interval in the database module 112 or initiate an investigation process (or find-out process) to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the
30 service provider 116. Due to the presence of the action module 128, the feedback survey initialization module 104 may be configured to be in the lock state when the action input for the service provider 116 is outstanding (i.e., the state of the feedback survey).

In an example embodiment, the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer 120 for the predetermined survey interval in the database module 112 or an investigate action for investigating the response made by the customer 120 for the predetermined survey interval. The response received is stored in the database module 112 when the action input received is the accept action, and the investigation process is initiated when the action input received is the investigate action. The response received will also be stored in the database module 112 when the action input received is the investigate action.

For example, if the service provider 116 is satisfied/agreeable to the response received for the predetermined survey interval, the service provider 116 may choose the accept action and the response received, along with the other response(s) received for the other survey interval(s) of the feedback survey, will be stored in the database module 112. As will be described in further detail later, feedback surveys completed with the accept action will be classified/categorised in the database module 112 as such and a first type of feedback report (e.g., a simple report for providing a snapshot or quick overview of recent experiences with the service provider 116) is configured to be generated based on such completed feedback surveys. In practice, at least in the first instance, customers 120 typically prefer a simple report for providing a quick snapshot or concise information on the service provider 116, instead of having to review detailed information (e.g., full feedback history) of the service provider 116. This minimises the time required to review the information and enable a quick decision on whether to engage (or continue to engage) the service provider 116. Accordingly, it may be prudent for the service provider 116 to maintain a good simple report (i.e., by choosing the accept action appropriately).

On the other hand, if the service provider 116 is dissatisfied/non-agreeable to the response received for the predetermined survey interval, the service provider 116 may choose the investigate action to find out the reason for the response received. As also will be described in further detail later, the feedback (i.e., all responses received for the feedback survey) will be stored in the database module 112 and feedback surveys completed with the investigate action will be classified/categorised

as such. Such completed feedback surveys will not be included in the simple report but will be present in a second type of feedback report which includes all feedback surveys for the service provider 116 (e.g., a detailed report containing full history of the feedback surveys for the service provider 116).

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Accordingly, while selecting the investigate action may prevent the feedback from being present in the simple report (thus maintaining a good simple report without or with minimal unfavourable/non-agreeable feedback), the feedback will still be recorded in the database module 112 and will appear in the detailed report when
10 generated upon request (thus providing a fair system in that unfavourable feedback will be recorded and not dismissed entirely). In particular, the simple report and the detailed report are publicly accessible. Therefore, this provides the service provider 116 with the flexibility to set an individually definable threshold on the feedback/ratings level he/she wishes to maintain in the simple report based on
15 his/her circumstances/objectives. In an embodiment, selecting the investigate action will result in the system 100 alerting the relevant parties, such as a supervisor of the service provider 116. Therefore, appropriate actions may be taken by the supervisor such as listening to the reason provided by the customer 120 and teaching/mentoring the service provider 116 to avoid the same problems/issues. In
20 another embodiment, the company 124 or the industry governing institution may set a minimum customer satisfaction standard (i.e., a definable threshold such as 3 or 4 out of 5 stars ratings) for the service provider 116 to achieve in relation to the simple report. Not achieving such a minimum customer satisfaction standard on a number of occasions may cause the company 124 to take disciplinary actions or the industry
25 governing institution to disallow the renewal of the service provider's practicing licence. Accordingly, the system 100 advantageously encourages accountability and promotes good service quality by the service provider 116.

The above-described locking feature/mechanism advantageously assists in
30 providing a fair and reliable way of managing customer feedback survey responses. For example, with the locking mechanism, the service provider 116 is required or is forced to make an action input in reply to a response made by the customer 120 for the predetermined survey interval, such as either accepting the response as it is (e.g., a positive or agreeable response) and the response will be stored in the

database module 112 or investigating the response (e.g., a negative or non-agreeable response) through the above-described investigation process. Otherwise, the system 100 (in particular, the feedback survey initialization module 104) is configured to be in the lock state which prevents any new feedback survey for another service provided by the particular service provider 116 from being initiated in the system 100. In this regard, not being able to register new feedback surveys would be undesirable for the service provider 116 for a number of reasons. For example, the supervisor or manager of the service provider 116 (or any party interested in the feedback of the service provider such as an industry governing institution) would be aware of this status and would likely approach or question the service provider 116 if the service provider 116 does not make the action input to resolve this. The longer the period of time that this status is maintained, the greater the likelihood that the supervisor or manager will approach or question the service provider 116. Furthermore, the performance of the service provider 116 may be viewed more poorly in the case where the quantity and rating of the feedback surveys received are a measure of the performance of the service provider 116.

The above exemplary factors would therefore pressure or encourage the service provider 116 to make an action input in order for the system 100 (in particular, the feedback survey initialization module 104) to return to an open state from the lock state where the system 100 will be capable of accepting new feedback survey(s) for other service(s) provided by the service provider 116. Once the action input is made, the feedback received (regardless of positive or negative) for that service provided by the service provider 116 will be recorded in the database module 112 and thus available to be published in a feedback report on the service provider 112. This therefore provides fairness and reliability since feedback received will be recorded in the database module 112 regardless of being positive or negative and the feedback are more current/up-to-date (since the service provider 112 is discouraged from holding back or delaying the release of any feedback).

In an embodiment, in addition to not being able to initiate any new feedback survey when the service provider 116 has outstanding action input(s), the system 100 is also not able to generate any feedback report on the service provider when requested. This serves to further pressure the service provider 116 to make the

above-mentioned action input in order for the system 100 to revert back to the open state since potential new customers may refrain from engaging the service provider 116 due to the unavailability of the service provider's feedback report.

5 It will be appreciated to a person skilled in the art that the system 100 described herein may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or may be implemented in a general purpose computer or other devices. For example, each of the above-described modules may be software modules realised by a computer program or a set of instructions executable by a computer processor 132 to perform the required
10 functions, or may be hardware modules being a functional hardware unit designed to perform the required functions. It will also be appreciated that a combination of hardware and software modules may be implemented in the system 100. Furthermore, it will be appreciated that the above-described modules, when implemented as software modules, may be stored in any computer readable storage medium or device 136, such as but
15 not limited to, magnetic or optical disks, memory chips, or other storage devices. The software modules may be stored in one or more of the storage mediums 136, as a whole or in parts, and the storage medium(s) 136 containing the software modules 136 may be positioned locally with the system 100 or may be located at remotely such as at a remote server (not shown) accessible by the system 100 via the
20 internet. For simplicity, the interconnections of the storage medium 136 and the processor 132 within the system 100 are not shown as they are well known in the art.

Fig. 2 depicts a flow diagram generally illustrating an exemplary method 200 for
25 managing customer feedback survey responses according to an example embodiment of the present invention. The method 200 corresponds to the system 100 as described above and thus details already described above may not be repeated for conciseness. The method 200 comprises a step 204 of receiving, from a service provider 116, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer 120
30 in relation to a service provided by the service provider 116 (the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service), and a step 208 of receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer 120 (the feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals). In particular, at step 220, the

method is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider 116 from being initiated based on a state of the feedback survey. In a preferred embodiment, the method further comprises a step 212 of prompting an action input from the service provider 116 in reply to the response made by the customer 120 for a predetermined survey interval for the service, and a step 216 of accepting the response received for the predetermined survey interval in a database or initiating an investigation process to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the service provider 116. In this case, in step 220, the method is configured to be in the lock state when the action input for the service provider is outstanding. It will be appreciated to a person skilled in the art that the above-described steps may be performed in another order as appropriate and are not limited to the order presented. Furthermore, the above steps are not intended to be construed to necessitate individual/separate steps and may be combined as or performed in one step where appropriate without deviating from the scope of the present invention.

For clarity and illustration purposes, the above exemplary embodiments will now be described in further detail with respect to specific examples according to embodiments of the present invention. However, it will be appreciated to a person skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to the specific examples, and certain aspects of the specific examples may be modified or varied as desired or appropriate while still falling within the scope of the exemplary embodiments as described in Figs. 1 and 2.

Fig. 3 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 300 of the main or broad functionality modules of the system 100 in an example according to an embodiment of the present invention. The system 100 in the example of Fig. 3 includes a login module 304 for a user such as a service provider 116 or a customer 120 to login to the system 100, a survey creation module 308 for creating a new feedback survey for a customer 120 in relation to a service provided by a service provider 116, and a feedback report generation module 312 for generating a feedback report on the service provider 116 based on feedback provided by previous customers 120 for the service provider 116 recorded in the system 100.

By way of example, Fig. 4 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 400 of the login module 304 in the case where the user is a service provider 116. In a first step 404, the login module 304 is operable to provide options for the service provider 116 to either login to an existing account in step 406 or to sign up for a new account in step 408. In step 406, the service provider 116 may login by entering the necessary security/login information (e.g., user ID and password) or to sign up for a new account in step 408. The sign up process 408 will be described in further details later with reference to Fig. 5. After the security information is entered by the service provider 116 to login, the security data associated with the service provider 116 stored in a database module 112 will be retrieved in step 410 and compared in step 412 with the security information entered. For example, the password entered is compared with the password stored in the database module 112 for the service provider 116. If there is a mismatch in step 412, the login module 304 is operable to deny access to the system 100 in step 414 and may proceed to assist the service provider 116 to recover his/her password in steps 416 to 420 in a manner known in the art and will not be described further herein. If there is a match in step 412, the login module 304 may proceed to check whether the account is suspended in step 424 and whether the subscription to use the system 100 is valid in step 428. In this regard, the system 100 may be administered by a third party and subscription and other usage fees may be collected by the third party. If the account is suspended, the login module 304 is configured to deny access to the system 100 in step 425. If the subscription is determined to be valid in step 428, the login module 304 may further check whether the service provider 116 is linked/tagged to a company or an association 124 in step 430. If the service provider 116 is tagged, the survey creation module 308 is enabled in step 432 for allowing new feedback survey(s) to be created by the service provider 116 for a customer 120. On the other hand, if either the subscription is determined to be invalid in step 428 or the service provider 116 is determined to be untagged/unlinked in step 430, the service provider 116 may still access the system 100 but the survey creation module 308 will be disabled in step 434. For example, the feedback survey initialization module 104 shown in Fig. 1 is operable to disable the survey creation module 308 in step 434 or enable the survey creation module 308 in step 432.

Fig. 5 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 500 of the sign up process stated in step 408 of Fig. 4 for creating/registering a new account in the system 100. In the example, a company account, a service provider (e.g., a professional) account or a customer/client account may be created. As shown in Fig. 5, the process may prompt the user whether he/she wishes to register a company, register as a professional, or register as a client in steps 504, 508, and 512, respectively. According to the input provided by the user, the process will proceed to the company account creation process 506, the professional account creation process 510, or the client account creation process 516. In the case of client registration, the process is configured to determine whether there are any active/pending survey(s) for the client in step 514. If there are active/pending survey(s), the client account creation process 516 will be allowed, otherwise, the client registration will be rejected in step 515.

Fig. 6 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 600 of the company account creation/registration process in step 506 mentioned in Fig. 5. As a first step 604, the process may prompt the user to enter the details of the company 124 he/she wishes to register with the system 100, such as the company name, the company address, and the industry in which the company 124 belongs to. In step 608, the process may determine whether the industry in which the company 124 belongs to exists in the system 100. If the industry does not exist in the system 100, the process proceeds to notify the system administrator in step 612 and ends the company account creation process since the industry is not covered. If the industry exists, the process prompts the user to supply details of an authorised person of the company (e.g., a director) in step 610, such as the authorised person's name, designation and contact details (e.g., email address and contact number). With the contact details of the authorised person, the system administrator may contact the authorised person primarily for verification purposes in step 616. Based on whether the verification is successful, the system administrator may then approve or deny the company account creation/registration in step 620. If approved, the process may send an email to the user confirming that the company account has been registered/created in the system 100 in step 624 and then activate the company account in step 628. If denied, the process may send an email to the user in step 632 informing him/her that the company account registration/creation has been rejected.

Fig. 7 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 700 of the service provider (e.g., professional) account creation process mentioned in step 510 of Fig. 5. As a first step 702, the process may prompt the professional to enter his/her details, such as his/her name, identification number, and address. The process may also request the professional 116 to enter the name of the industry in which he/she belongs to in step 704 and the name of company 124 to which he/she is working at in step 706. In step 708, the process is operable to determine whether the company 124 exists in the system 100. If the company 124 does not exist in the system 100, the process prompts the professional 116 whether he/she wishes to register the company 124 in the system 100. If yes, the company account creation/registration process 600 as described with reference to Fig. 6 will be initiated in step 712. Otherwise, the professional 116 may join as an associate of a group administered by the system administrator in step 714. In the step 718, the process may prompt the professional 116 to supply the details of his/her supervisor in the company 124, including name and contact details such as email address and telephone number. In step 720, the process may then prompt the professional 116 to enter the desired login details such as a user id and a password, and to accept the terms and conditions governing the use of the system 100. Thereafter, the process may verify the contact details provided by the professional 116 as shown in steps 724, 726, 728 and 730 in a manner known in the art and will not be described further herein. Upon successful verification, the process may then collect a subscription fee from the professional 116 in steps 732 and 734, and an invoice may then be generated and forwarded to the professional 116 in step 736 such as via post or email. Subsequently, the process may seek approval from the company 124 (i.e., the above-mentioned authorised person of the company 124) for the professional 116 to be linked/tagged to the company 124 in step 740. Upon approval by the company 124, the process may inform the professional 116 such as via post or email in step 744 and the professional 116 will be linked/tagged to the company 124 in the database module 112 in step 746. If disapproved by the company 124, the process may inform the professional 116 in step 748 and the professional 116 may select another company in step 750 to be linked/tagged with.

Fig. 8 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 800 of the customer/client account creation/registration process 516 mentioned in Fig. 5. As a first step 804, the process is configured to send an invitation email to the customer 120 inviting him/her to participate in the feedback survey and providing any desired information/explanation regarding the feedback survey. In a preferred embodiment, the invitation email is initiated by the service provider 116 and sent to his/her customer 120. The invitation email may also contain a link configured for directing the customer 120 to a login web page where the customer 120 may create a new customer account or login to an existing account. By creating/registering an account in the system 100, the customer 120 will be a registered customer and be able to view/retrieve the customer's current and previous transactions with various service providers 116 and participate in a public sharing facility (e.g., in a social media/sharing media such as FACEBOOK, TWITTER, and LINKEDIN). Preferably, when creating a customer account, the email address (i.e., user ID) of the customer 120 will be prefilled in the login web page and cannot be modified for security purposes. For example, this ensures that the only customer 120 which the service provider 116 sends the email to is able to create a customer account in the system 100. This also verifies that the customer 120 is the actual customer of the service provider 116 since the email address cannot be modified. Accordingly, to create a customer account, the customer 120 may be directed to a login web page by clicking a link contained in the email in step 806. The login web page comprises a field for the customer 120 to enter their desired account/login password and a field for the customer 120 to accept the terms and conditions governing the use of the system 100 in step 808.

Subsequently, the process may prompt the customer 120 whether he/she wishes the account to be linked to his/her social/sharing media account in step 812 such as FACEBOOK. By linking the account to a social media account of the customer 120, the above-mentioned public sharing facility is enabled which allows the survey feedback provided by the customer 120 to be automatically posted in the social media account. To link the account to a social media account, the process may prompt the customer 120 to enter their social media login information in step 814. Subsequently, the customer account will be activated in step 816 and ready for use by the customer 120.

In the example, if the customer 120 does not register for an account in the system 100 (i.e., an unregistered customer), the customer 120 may still participate in the feedback survey but would not be able to view/retrieve the customer's previous transactions with various service providers 116 and would not be able to participate in the public sharing facility.

By way of example only and without limitation, Fig. 9A illustrates an exemplary invitation email 900 which may be sent to the customer 120 as described above. As shown, the email 900 may include an introductory welcome message and information on the manner in which the feedback survey will be conducted. The email 900 may also include one or more links providing options for the customer 120 to login or to create a new customer account. For example, a first link 904 may be provided for the customer 120 to participate in the public sharing facility/mode (i.e., step 814 of Fig. 8), and a second link 908 may be provided for the customer 120 to participate in the private sharing facility/mode (i.e., step 808 of Fig. 8 without subsequently linking to a social media account). For illustration purposes only, Fig. 9B shows a login web page 950 generated by the system 100 for the customer 120 to login or create a new customer account. For example, an existing customer 120 may login by entering the registered email address and password in the email address field 952 and password field 954, respectively. Alternatively, the existing customer 120 may login using their social media login information such as their FACEBOOK login 958. For a new customer 120, he/she may create a new customer account by entering their desired login password in the password fields 960 or using their existing social media login 964 and agreeing to the terms and conditions to sign up. As can be seen from Fig. 9B, in the case of client registration, the email address field 962 is prefilled (with the email address provided by the service provider 116) and locked (i.e., cannot be modified).

In the above-described company account creation/registration process, service provider account creation/registration process, customer/client account creation/registration process, each party (i.e., the customer 120, the service provider 116 and the company 124) participating in the system 100 is verified in order to ensure reliability and accuracy. In particular, the company 124 is verified by a third

party system administrator, the service provider 116 is verified by the company 124, and the customer 120 is verified by the service provider 116. Therefore, the identity of the customers 120, the service providers 116 and the companies 124 participating in the system 100 can be trusted.

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As shown in Fig. 8, the system 100 in the example provides the flexibility for the customer 120 to choose between a private sharing facility/mode 802 and a public sharing facility/mode 810. If the customer 120 participates in the private sharing mode 802, the customer 120 would be non-identifiable in any feedback report generated on a service provider whom the customer 120 has provided a feedback. For example, only reduced details of the customer 120 would appear in the feedback report such that the customer 120 cannot be identified. For example, only the initials of the customer's 120 name and the street and/or names where the customer 120 resides would appear in the feedback report (e.g., see Figs. 11A and 11B). The private sharing mode 802 provides customer protection/confidentiality and is suitable for customers 120 who wish to provide feedback but do not wish their identity to appear in the feedback report for various reasons. For example, the customer 120 may not wish to make public that he/she has made the transaction (e.g., buying an investment property) or may simply wish to remain anonymous. In this regard, although the customer 120 may not be identifiable in the feedback report, the feedback is reliable (i.e., from an actual customer of the service provider 116) since the customer 120 has been verified by the service provider 116 as described above. Therefore, the system 100 advantageously enables customer confidentiality, yet feedback reliability.

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If the customer 120 participates in the public sharing mode 810, the customer's 120 feedback (if accepted by the service provider as described herein) would be automatically posted in the social media account of the customer 120 and the social media account of the service provider 116 (if available) for sharing with other connected members. As an illustrative example, a customer 120 may have purchased a car and a feedback (along with brief transaction details such as the car model, the service provider's name and the location of the company 124) is posted on the customer's 120 social media account which could be view by his/her connected friends. As a result, a friend of the customer 120 who may already have

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an interest in purchasing a car (without the customer's knowledge) may rely on the customer's 120 feedback as a trusted source (since they are friends) in deciding whether to engage the same service provider 116.

5 Fig. 10 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1000 in relation to the handling of the feedback surveys and the responses in the system 100 in the example. As a first step 1002, a request is made from a service provider 116 to initiate a new feedback survey with a customer 120 in relation to a service provided by the service provider to the customer 120. The feedback survey creation process
 10 will be described in detail later with reference to Fig. 12. Assuming that the prescribed conditions are met (e.g., valid account (step 424), valid subscription (step 428), and tagged to a company/association 124 (step 430)), an invitation email 900 will be sent to the customer 120 to invite the customer 120 to participate as described above with reference to Figs. 8 and 9. In step 1006, a first survey of a
 15 plurality of surveys 1004 will be sent to the customer 120, e.g., via a mobile text message or an email. As mentioned earlier, the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals (e.g., first, second, and third survey intervals 1006, 1008, 1016 shown in Fig. 10), each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service. In the example, the plurality of stages of the
 20 service comprises an initial stage of the service, an implementation stage of the service, and a final stage of the service. In particular, the initial stage of the service may relate to a pre-sales period for securing a sale of the item of goods and/or services to the customer 120, the implementation stage may relate to an execution period for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage may relate to a completion period
 25 after the sale has been fulfilled. The first, second and third survey intervals 1006, 1008, 1016 will be described in detail later with reference to Figs. 13, 14 and 15, respectively.

In the example, the predetermined survey interval is the third survey interval 1016
 30 (i.e., the final survey interval of the feedback survey). At step 1020, the action module 128 of the system 100 is operable to prompt an action input from the service provider 116 in reply to the response made by the customer 120 at the third survey interval 1016. Preferably, the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer 120 at the third survey interval 1016 or an

investigate action for investigating the response made by the customer at the third survey interval 1016. For example, the service provider 116 may select the investigate action to find out the reason for a negative response received and/or to avoid the feedback from being published in the first report type (e.g., the simple report) as described hereinbefore. When the action input received is the accept action, the feedback received is stored in the database module 112 in step 1022. Once stored in the database module 112, the feedback is made available for feedback report generating purposes and thus may be published upon request. On the other hand, when the action input received is the investigate action, the investigation process as described hereinbefore is initiated at step 1024.

In an embodiment, when the investigate action is selected, the system 100 is operable to request a prescribed fee from the service provider 116 in steps 1026, 1028 and 1030, in order to invoke the investigation process. Upon payment, the system 100 is operable to inform the system administrator of the service provider's 116 desire to participate in the investigation process. The system administrator may then take the appropriate actions to investigate or find out the reason for the response made by the customer 120 in step 1034 such as by contacting the customer 120. The result/outcome (e.g., the reason(s)) of the investigation process obtained in step 1036 may then be forwarded to the service provider 116 such as via email, facsimile or post. The result will also be stored in the database module 112 so that it can be retrieve and review by the supervisor and system administrator if desired.

In the example, two types of feedback reports for the service provider 116 are generated by the system 100, in particular, a first type (or a simple report) and a second type (or a detailed report). The simple report is configured to provide a quick snapshot and concise overview of the feedback received for the service provider 116 and an example of a simple report is shown in Fig. 11A. Preferably, the simple report shows only the response 1104 received for the predetermined survey interval (e.g., the third or final survey interval 1016) amongst the responses received for the plurality of survey intervals 1106, 1008, 1016. That is, the simple report only shows the response 1104 received for the third survey interval 1016 instead of all the responses received for all the survey intervals 1006, 1008, 1016. In addition, the

simple report is limited to a predetermined number of most recently completed feedback received (which has been completed with the accept action) for the service provider 116. In particular, feedback completed with the address action is not included in the simple report. For example, the predetermined number may be from 5 to 20 most recently completed feedbacks, and more preferably 10.

As described before, when the action input received is the accept action (i.e., the service provider 116 accepts the response made by the customer 120), a post may be generated based on the response received from the customer 120 and posted on a social media account (e.g., FACEBOOK) associated with the service provider 116 as shown in steps 1044 and 1046. In addition, a post may also be generated and posted on a social media account associated with the customer 120 as shown in steps 1048 and 1050. Accordingly, feedback posts may automatically appear in the social media account(s) of the customer 120 and/or the service provider 116. This is made possible by the locking mechanism described herein (which is initiated while awaiting for the service provider's 116 input at step 1020) since an accept action by the service provider 116 at step 1020 will also automatically trigger a post in the social media account(s).

On the other hand, a detailed report is configured to provide the full history of feedback surveys for the service provider 120, including pending survey(s), terminated survey(s), completed survey(s) with the accept action or completed survey(s) with the investigate action. For illustration purposes only, an example detailed report is shown in Fig. 11B. As shown, the detailed report presents all of the responses 1104, 1108, 1112 received for all the survey intervals of each completed feedback survey. The detailed report may be desired by a customer 120 who wishes to review further feedback received for the service provider 116 and in greater detail than those provided in the simple report. In an embodiment, the detailed report may require a payment from either the customer 120 or the service provider 116 while the simple report may be provided for free. The process for generating the simple and detailed reports will be described later with reference to Figs. 18 and 19.

Accordingly, the detailed report enables the customer 120 to review the full history of feedback surveys for the service provider 120, that is, past feedback received for

the service provider 116. In an embodiment, the detailed report may also include current feedback and/or future/subsequent feedback. For example, subsequent feedback surveys may be initiated with subsequent customers after the feedback survey for the current customer has been initiated or completed. Accordingly, since
5 all feedback surveys are stored in the database module 112, the detailed report may be generated at a point in the future for a previous customer 120 to include subsequent feedback for the service provider 116 (i.e., feedback received for the service provider 116 since they had their previous transaction) to enable the previous customer 120 to look forward and review feedback received for the service
10 provider 116 since they had their previous transaction. For example, this advantageously allows the customer 120 to determine whether the quality of the service provider 116 has been maintained, has improved or has deteriorated since their previous transaction.

15 In an embodiment, the past feedback relates to the feedback received before a predetermined number of most recently received feedback at a certain point in time, the current feedback relates to the predetermined number (or predetermined time period) of most recently received feedback at the certain point in time, and subsequent feedback relates to the feedback received after the certain point in time.

20 For example, the certain point in time may be with respect to the time when the feedback survey for a particular customer 120 has been initiated or completed. As an illustrative example, a customer 120 may request a detailed report of the service provider 116 at the certain point in time. At this stage, only the past and current feedback are available. The customer 120 may request an update of the detailed
25 report at some point in the future and subsequent feedback which have since been made by subsequent customers 120 will be made available in the detailed report thus enabling the customer 120 to look forward. In the same manner, the simple report may also include subsequent feedback for enabling the customer 120 to look forward.

30 The feedback survey creation process will now be described with reference to Fig. 12. Firstly, survey information and customer information are obtained in steps 1202 and 1204. Prior to initiating/creating the feedback survey for the service provided by the service provider 116, the system 100 is operable to determine whether there is

any action input outstanding (i.e., the action input described in step 1020 of Fig. 10) for the service provider 116 in step 1206. If there is any outstanding action input(s), the system 100 (in particular, the feedback survey initialization module 108 as described hereinbefore) is configured to in a lock state for preventing any new
5 feedback survey(s) for any service(s) provided by the particular service provider 116 to be initiated until all outstanding action input(s) at step 1020 shown in Fig. 10 are completed by the particular service provider 116 (step 1208).

As mentioned previously, the locking mechanism 1210 advantageously assists in
10 enabling a fair and reliable way of managing customer feedback survey responses. For example, with this locking mechanism 1210, the service provider 116 is required or is pressured/forced to make an action input in reply to a response made by the customer 120, such as either accepting the response (e.g., an agreeable response) and the feedback will be stored in the database module 112, or investigating the
15 response (e.g., an unfavourable or a negative response) through the above-described investigation process. If any action input is outstanding, the system 100 (in particular, the feedback survey initialization module 104) is configured to be in the lock state which prevents any new feedback survey for another service provided by the particular service provider 116 from being initiated. For example, the
20 supervisor or manager of the service provider 116 would be aware of the outstanding action input(s) and would likely approach or question the service provider 116 if the service provider 116 does not make the required action input(s) to resolve this. The longer the period of time that this status is maintained, the greater the likelihood that the supervisor or manager will approach or question the
25 service provider 116. Furthermore, the performance of the service provider 116 may be viewed more poorly in the case where the quantity and rating of the feedback surveys received are a measure of the performance of the service provider 116.

When it is determined that there is no outstanding action input at step 1206, the new
30 feedback survey request from the service provider 116 will be accepted. In step 1212, the process may also prompt the service provider 116 to select which type of feedback report (e.g., the above-mentioned first type (e.g., simple report) or second type (e.g., detailed report) of feedback report) to send to the customer 120. If a simple report is selected, a simple report of the service provider 116 will be

generated in steps 1214 and 1216. On the other hand, if a detailed report is selected, a detailed report of the service provider 116 will be generated as shown in steps 1218 and 1220. The first/simple and second/detailed types of report generation processes will be described in further detail later with reference to Figs.

5 18 and 19, respectively. A prescribed fee may be charged (either to the service provider 116 or the customer 120) by the system administrator for generating the first and/or second types of feedback report on the service provider 116 as shown in steps 1222, 1224, 1226 and 1228. The billing process is well known in the art and thus will not be described in detail herein. In step 1230, the feedback survey is
10 activated which results in an invitation email 900 (e.g., see Fig. 9) being sent to the customer 120 at step 1232 and the commencement of the first survey interval 1006 (i.e., the first feedback/rating request is sent to the customer 120 via mobile text messaging or email) in step 1234. In step 1236, a reference/report id may also be assigned to the feedback survey for referencing purposes.

15 Fig. 13A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1300 of the first survey interval 1006. As a first step 1302, a first feedback/rating request (S1) is sent to the customer 120. For illustration purposes only, Fig. 13B shows an example rating request sent to the customer 120 via mobile text messaging. For example only, the
20 rating may range from "0" to "5", with "1" meaning poor, "5" meaning excellent, and "0" meaning to exit the feedback survey. In steps 1304 and 1306, either the service provider 116 or the system administrator may terminate the feedback survey for various valid reasons such as customer 120 inadvertently provided a wrong feedback, bank loan disapproved, and so on. Upon termination, the feedback survey
25 will end and be recorded/categorised in the database module 112 as terminated. Upon receiving the rating (R1) from the customer 120 in step 1312, the rating received is analysed in step 1314 and an error message is sent to the customer 120 should the rating be outside the allowable range (e.g., outside "0" to "5"). After the rating is determined to be within the allowable range, the rating received is further
30 analysed to determine whether it is "0" in step 1316. If so, the feedback survey will be terminated. Otherwise, the rating is deemed to be of an acceptable value and is stored in the database module 112. In an embodiment, the rating received may be sent back to the customer 120 in step 1318 as a security measure to provide confirmation of the rating received by the system 100. In step 1320, various details

of the feedback survey are updated, such as the survey status, the rating received, and the timestamp indicating when the rating was received. This will be described further below and illustrated in Figs. 16A. The first survey interval 1006 is thus completed and the second survey interval 1008 may commence at step 1320.

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Fig. 14A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1400 of the second survey interval 1006. As a first step 1402, a second feedback/rating request (S2) is sent to the customer 120. For illustration purposes only, Fig. 14B shows an example rating request sent to the customer 120 via mobile text messaging. Similarly, the rating may range from "0" to "5", with "1" meaning poor, "5" meaning excellent, and "0" meaning to exit the survey. In steps 1404 and 1406, either the service provider 116 or the system administrator may terminate the feedback survey for various valid reasons as mentioned above. Upon termination, the feedback survey will end and be recorded/categorised in the database module 112 as terminated. Upon receiving the rating (R2) from the customer 120 in step 1412, the rating received is analysed in step 1414 and an error message is sent to the customer 120 should the rating be outside the allowable range. After the rating is determined to be within the allowable range, the rating received is further analysed to determine whether it is "0" in step 1416. If so, the feedback survey will be terminated. Otherwise, the rating is deemed to be of an acceptance value and is stored in the database module 112. As a security measure, the rating received may be sent back to the customer 120 in step 1418 to provide confirmation of the rating received by the system 100. In step 1420, the survey details are updated by the system 100. In step 1422, the system 100 is configured to provide an option for the service provider 116 to close the second survey interval 1006 to complete the second survey interval 1006. This may include the service provider 116 entering the final transaction details such as the final sale price and date of completion. In an embodiment, an authorised person of the company 124 reviews the final transaction details provided by the service provider 116 to ensure/validate that the final transaction details provided are accurate. If the final transaction details provided by the service provider 116 are determined to be accurate by the authorised person in step 1424, the feedback survey will proceed to the third survey interval 1016 as shown in Fig. 10.

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Fig. 15A illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1500 of the third survey interval 1016. As a first step 1502, a third feedback/rating request (S3) is sent to the customer 120. For illustration purposes only, Fig. 15B shows an example rating request sent to the customer 120 via mobile text messaging. Similarly, the rating may range from "0" to "5", with "1" meaning poor, "5" meaning excellent, and "0" meaning to exit the feedback survey. In steps 1504 and 1506, either the service provider 116 or the system administrator may terminate the feedback survey for various valid reasons as mentioned above. Upon termination, the feedback survey will end and be recorded/categorised in the database module 112 as terminated. Upon receiving the rating (R3) from the customer 120 in step 1512, the rating received is analysed in step 1514 and an error message is sent to the customer 120 should the value be outside the allowable range. After the rating is determined to be within the allowable range, the rating received is further analysed to determine whether it is "0" in step 1516. If so, the feedback survey will be terminated. Otherwise, the rating is deemed to be of an acceptable value and is stored in the database module 112. As a security measure, the rating received may be sent back to the customer 120 in step 1518 to provide confirmation of the rating received in the system 100. The survey details are updated by the system 100 and the action module 128 is then operable to prompt an action input from the service provider 116 as described with reference to Fig. 10 in step 1020.

In an embodiment, the system 100 is configured such that the feedback survey cannot be terminated by the service provider 116 once the rating for the predetermined survey interval (e.g., rating (R3) for the third survey interval 1016) has been received from the customer 120. This advantageously serves to avoid the service provider 116 from unfairly abusing the system 100 by, for example, terminating the response received at the predetermined interval if the response received is undesirable for the service provider 116. In another embodiment, the system 100 is configured such that the feedback survey cannot be terminated by the service provider 116 once feedback/rating request for the predetermined survey interval (e.g., third feedback/rating request (S3) for the third survey interval 1016) has been sent to customer 120. This advantageously serves to avoid the service provider 116 from unfairly abusing the system 100 by, for example, terminating the response received at the predetermined interval if an undesirable response is

expected to be received from the customer 120. In the case of the customer 120 being unresponsive to feedback survey, the system 100 or the system administrator may automatically terminate the feedback survey after a predetermined period of time.

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Figs. 16A and 16B illustrate an example presentation of the details of the feedback survey for various stages. Fig. 16A illustrates the stage at step 1322 of Fig. 13A after the rating (R1) for the first survey interval 1006 has been received and the survey details updated. For example, as shown, survey details being updated may include, the status being updated from the "Pre-Sales" stage 1602 to the "During-Sales" stage 1604, the timestamp 1606 for the "Pre-Sales" stage 1602 being updated to reflect the time/date which the first rating (R1) was received from the customer 120, and the status bar 1608 being updated from "To be Activated" to "Active". The timestamp 1610 which the second rating request (S2) was sent to the customer 120 is also shown in Fig. 16A under "During-Sales" stage 1604. Fig. 16B illustrates the stage at step 1422 of Fig. 14A after the rating (R2) for the second survey interval has been received and the survey details updated. For example, as shown, the rating (R2) received for the "During-Sales" stage 1604 has been updated as well as the timestamp 1610 to reflect the time/date which the second rating was received from the customer 120.

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In an embodiment, at the completion of each survey interval (i.e., once the response for the survey interval has been received), the system 100 is configured to send an email (or any other form of communication known in the art such as mobile text messaging and facsimile) containing the response(s) received and the above-described transaction details to the customer 120 for verification as a security measure. For illustration purposes only, Fig. 17 shows an example email which may be sent to the customer 120 at the completion of the first survey interval.

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Fig. 18 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1800 of the first report type (e.g., simple report) generation process of the system 100 in the example for a service provider 116. As a first step 1804, the feedback received for the service provider 116, starting from the most recent, is analysed to determine the status of the feedback. In this regard, each feedback received is categorised in the database

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module 112 according to its status. In an embodiment, the status includes one of a pending status, a terminated status, a first complete status and a second complete status. The pending status indicates that the feedback survey is pending and not yet completed, the terminated status indicates that the feedback survey has been
 5 terminated before completion, the first complete status indicates that the feedback survey has been completed with the accept action, and the second complete status indicates that the feedback survey has been completed with the address action.

As described hereinbefore, the simple report is limited to a predetermined number of
 10 most recently completed feedback received (which has been completed with the accept action, i.e., the first complete status) for the service provider 116. In particular, feedback completed with the address action (i.e., the second complete status) is not included in the simple report. In the example shown in Fig. 18, the predetermined number of most recently completed feedback received is set to 10 as
 15 shown in step 1820. Accordingly, the process iterates through previous feedback received (starting from the most recent record and moving the next record 1822, and so on until the predetermined number is reached) to determine whether the feedback has a terminated status (in step 1806), has a second complete status (in step 1808), has a pending status (in step 1810), has a first complete status (in step
 20 1812). If the feedback satisfies all the conditions in steps 1806 (i.e., not terminated status), 1808 (i.e., not second complete status), 1810 (i.e., not pending status) and 1812 (i.e., is of the first complete status), the feedback will be included in the simple report, along with simplified/reduced details of the customer 120 such as the initials of the customer's name (in step 1814) and the street name where the customer 120
 25 resides (in step 1816). Once the number of feedback obtained reaches the predetermined number in step 1820, the simple report drawn is presented in step 1820. Fig. 11A illustrates an example simple report is shown in Fig. 11A as described hereinbefore.

30 Fig. 19 illustrates an exemplary schematic flow diagram 1900 of the second report type (e.g., detailed report) generation process of the system 100 in the example for a service provider 116. As described hereinbefore, the detailed report is configured to provide the full history of the feedback survey for the service provider 116, and an example detail report (partial) is shown in Fig. 11B. For example, the detailed report

shows all of the responses 1104, 1108, 1112 received for all the survey intervals of each completed feedback survey. Accordingly, the process iterates through all previous survey feedback recorded for the service provider 116 (e.g., starting from the most recent record and moving the next record 1914 until the final record is reached) to obtain the feedback information for presenting in the detailed report. In the example, the feedback information may include the feedback received, the survey status (in step 1904), the simplified/reduced details of the customer such as the initials of the customer's name (in step 1906) and the street name where the customer resides (in step 1908). Once all the feedback records for the service provider 116 has been analysed in step 1912, the detailed report may be presented in step 1916.

As an example, Fig. 20 illustrates all the feedback records (for services no. 1 to 21) for a service provider 116, along with their status. In this example, if the customer 120 for a new service at no. 22 request for a simple report, the simple report generated will include the feedback for services at no. 20, 19, 17, 16, 15, 13, 11, 10, 8 and 7, assuming that the 10 most recent feedbacks are to be included in the simple report and all the completed status are completed with the accept action (i.e., first complete status). Services at no. 21, 18, 14 and 9 are not included as they are still pending, while the service at no. 12 has been terminated. To illustrate the dynamic property of the simple report, assume now that the service at no. 18 has been completed. Upon a refresh/update request by the customer 120, the simple report will change so as to include the feedback for the service at no. 18 since this feedback will now be part of the 10 most recently completed feedbacks and the feedback for service no. 7 will be removed since this feedback will no longer be part of the 10 most recently completed feedbacks. This advantageously ensures that the customer 120 will always be able to obtain the most up-to-date feedback report on the service provider 116 upon request. In an embodiment, once there is no longer any pending feedback survey for the predetermined number of most recent feedback surveys (excluding terminated status and second complete status), the simple report may be referred to be in a crystallised/finalised or static status since no further changes/updates will occur in the simple report. In an embodiment, once the simple report is finalised, the simple report will be time stamped and emailed to the customer 120 to inform them that the simple report has been finalised.

Fig. 21 depicts an exemplary scenario for illustrating the locking mechanism as described hereinbefore. In this exemplary scenario, assume that customers A, B, C and D engaged the services of the service provider 116 at different times, and customers B, C and D have provided their second response (R2) for the second survey interval 1008. In addition, customers C and D have provided their third response (R3) for the third survey interval 1016, and the service provider 116 has accepted the third response from customer C but has not yet accepted the third response for customer D (i.e., action input outstanding for customer D). Supposedly, a new client E now engages the service of the service provider 116 and the service provider 116 wishes to initiate a new feedback survey with the new client E. However, since the system 100 is in the lock state for the service provider 116 (due to the outstanding action input for customer D), the new feedback survey request would be denied by the system 100 until all outstanding action input has been received. This serves to pressure the service provider 116 to complete all action input regardless of whether the response received is positive or negative. Without this locking mechanism, the service provider 116 may simply ignore the action input request if the response received is negative in order to avoid the negative response from being recorded in the system. Therefore, the locking mechanism advantageously assists in enabling a fair and reliable way of managing customer feedback survey responses, as well as ensuring that any new clients will always have an up-to-date and accurate feedback report of the service provider 116.

As described hereinbefore, the service provider 116 is required to be linked/tagged to a company or an association 124 in order to participate in the system 100 and create new feedback surveys with customers 120. For example, a linking/tagging module 746 (see Fig. 7) may be provided for linking the service provider 116 to a company 124. In an embodiment, the linking module 746 is configured to terminate any feedback survey that is pending for the service provider 116 when the service provider 116 becomes untagged/unlinked from the company 124, except for the feedback survey(s) having outstanding action input (e.g., at R3) or where the predetermined survey interval (e.g., the third survey interval 1016) has been initiated (e.g., at S3). Such pending feedback survey(s) will be preserved and still requires an action input from the service provider 116 when the service provider 116 becomes

tagged/linked to a new company 124. Otherwise, the system 100 will be in the lock state for the service provider 116 even though he/she is now tagged to a new company 124. Furthermore, all completed feedback received for the service provider 116 is maintained in the database module 112. This advantageously prevents the service provider 116 from being able to exploit the system 100 by untagging to remove negative result(s) and retagging to start a fresh without the negative result(s), thus resulting in a fairer system. The above-described ability of the system 100 to maintain the pending feedback survey(s) having outstanding action input (e.g., at R3) is due to the presence of the locking mechanism as described herein. Without the locking mechanism, the service provider 116 may be able to exploit the system 100 by untagging from the company 124 to remove all pending survey feedbacks, including negative feedback obtained at the predetermined survey interval. This would unfairly result in the negative feedback not being recorded in the system 100.

In an embodiment, either the service provider 116 or the company 124 is able to untag from each other. However, the system 100 is configured such that the service provider 116 will be unable to commence any new feedback survey(s) until the service provider 116 is tagged to a new company. The service provider 116 may still login to the system 100 (but with reduced functionalities and viewing restrictions) and may complete any outstanding action input(s). For example, when the service provider 116 untags from a company 124, he/she will only have a restricted/partial view of the survey details completed while under the company 124, e.g., company privileged information such as sales history/records would not be viewable. Furthermore, if the service provider 116 joins and tags a new company, the new company will not be able to view the feedback surveys received for the service provider 116 when the service provider 116 was tagged to the previous company 124 for privacy concerns/protection. In the event that the service provider 116 re-joins the previous company 124, both the previous company 124 and the service provider 116 will have full access/view of the feedback surveys (and associated details) completed when the service provider 116 was previously with the company 124.

Accordingly, the system 100 and method 200 described herein according to embodiments of the present invention provide a fair and reliable manner of managing customer feedback survey responses. For example, each party (i.e., the customer 120, the service provider 116 and the company 124) participating in the system 100 and method 200 is verified in order to ensure reliability and accuracy. As described herein, the company 124 is verified by a third party system administrator, the service provider 116 is verified by the company 124, and the customer 120 is verified by the service provider 116. Furthermore, the transaction details entered by the service provider 116 are verified by the company 124 and the customer 120, and the survey feedback are returned to the customer 120 for verification. The fairness of the system 100 and method 200 described herein is provided by the locking mechanism as described herein. For example, with the locking mechanism, the service provider 116 is required or is forced to make an action input in reply to a response made by the customer 120 for the predetermined survey interval, such as either accepting the response as it is (e.g., a positive or agreeable response) and the response will be stored in the database module 112 or investigating the response (e.g., a negative or non-agreeable response) through the above-described investigation process. Otherwise, the system 100 (in particular, the feedback survey initialization module 104) is configured to be in the lock state which prevents any new feedback survey for another service provided by the particular service provider 116 from being initiated in the system 100. As mentioned hereinbefore, not being able to register new feedback surveys would be undesirable for the service provider 116 for a number of reasons. For example, the supervisor or manager of the service provider 116 (or any party interested in the feedback of the service provider such as an industry governing institution) would be aware of this status and would likely approach or question the service provider 116 if the service provider 116 does not make the action input to resolve this. The longer the period of time that this status is maintained, the greater the likelihood that the supervisor or manager will approach or question the service provider 116. Furthermore, the performance of the service provider 116 may be viewed more poorly in the case where the quantity and rating of the feedback surveys received are a measure of the performance of the service provider 116.

Furthermore, conventionally, a survey is provided to a customer after the end of a transaction with a service provider. Therefore, if problems/issues arise during the course of the transaction, there is no mechanism to detect or address this until after the end of the transaction when the feedback provided is negative and irreparable damages may have occurred. In contrast, according to embodiments of the present invention, a plurality of survey intervals is implemented for the service provided by the service provider 116, such as, an initial stage of the service may relate to a pre-sales period 1608 for securing a sale of the item of goods and/or services to the customer 120, an implementation stage may relate to an execution period 1604 for fulfilling the sale, and a final stage may relate to a completion period 1605 after the sale has been fulfilled (e.g., see Figs. 16A and 16B). It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that the present invention is not limited to three survey intervals and other number of survey intervals may be provided as desired/appropriate as long as there are multiple survey intervals. Accordingly, the system 100 according to embodiments of the present invention is advantageously able to detect problems/issues which may arise during the course of the transaction and provide the opportunity to take appropriate and prompt actions (e.g., by the service provider 116 or his supervisor) to address them (i.e., early intervention capabilities/mechanism).

The methods/processes of the example embodiments described herein may be implemented on a computer system 2200, schematically shown in Fig. 22. They may be implemented as software, such as a computer program being executed within the computer system 2200, and instructing the computer system 2200 to conduct the method of the example embodiment. The computer system 2200 comprises a computer module 2202, input modules such as a keyboard 2204 and mouse 2206 and a plurality of output devices such as a display 2208, and printer 2210. The computer module 2202 is connected to a computer network 2212 via a suitable transceiver device 2214, to enable access to e.g. the Internet or other network systems such as Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN). The computer module 2202 in the example includes a processor 2218, a Random Access Memory (RAM) 2220 and a Read Only Memory (ROM) 2222. The computer module 2202 also includes a number of Input/Output (I/O) interfaces, for example I/O interface 2224 to the display 2208, and I/O interface 2226 to the keyboard 2204.

The components of the computer module 2202 typically communicate via an interconnected bus 2228 and in a manner known to the person skilled in the relevant art.

- 5 The application program may be supplied to the user of the computer system 2200 encoded on a data storage medium such as a CD/DVD-ROM or flash memory carrier and read utilising a corresponding data storage medium drive of a data storage device 2230. The application program may also be supplied to the user of the computer system 2200 via a network such as the Internet, LAN, or WAN. The
10 application program is read and controlled in its execution by the processor 2218. Intermediate storage of program data may be accomplished using RAM 2220.

- In an embodiment, a computer program product is provided, embodied in a computer-readable storage medium 2230, comprising instructions executable by a
15 computer processor 2218 to perform the method 200 for managing customer feedback survey responses as described hereinbefore.

- It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present disclosure as shown in the specific
20 embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the disclosure as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A method for managing customer feedback survey responses, the method comprising:

- 5 receiving, from a service provider, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer in relation to a service provided by the service provider, the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service; and
- 10 receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer, the feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals, wherein the method is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider from being initiated based on a state of the feedback survey.

15 2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

- prompting an action input from the service provider in reply to the response made by the customer for a predetermined survey interval for the service; and
- 20 accepting the response received for the predetermined survey interval in a database or initiating an investigation process to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the service provider,
- wherein the method is configured to be in the lock state when said action input for the service provider is outstanding.

25 3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the method is configured to return to an open state from the lock state, the open state being capable of accepting a new feedback survey for another service by the service provider, when the action input from the service provider for the predetermined survey interval for the service is received.

30 4. The method according to claim 2 or 3, wherein the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval or an investigate action for investigating the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval, and wherein the

feedback received is stored in the database when the action input received is the accept action, and the investigation process is initiated when the action input received is the investigate action.

- 5 5. The method according to any one of claims 2 to 4, wherein the predetermined survey interval is a final survey interval of the feedback survey.
6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the plurality of stages of the service comprises an initial stage of the service, an implementation stage of the service, and a final stage of the service, the final stage of the service being associated with the final survey interval of the feedback survey.
- 10 7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the initial stage of the service relates to a pre-sales period for securing a sale of an item of goods and/or services to the customer, the implementation stage relates to an execution period for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage relates to a completion period after the sale has been fulfilled.
- 15 8. The method according to any one of claims 4 to 7, further comprising categorising the feedback received for each feedback survey initiated by the service provider in the database according to its status.
- 20 9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the status comprises one of a pending status, a terminated status, a first complete status and a second complete status, the pending status for indicating that the feedback survey is pending, the terminated status for indicating that the feedback survey has been terminated before completion, the first complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the accept action, and the second complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the address action.
- 25 10. The method according to claim 9, further comprising generating, upon request, a first type of feedback report of the service provider, the first type of feedback report is based on a predetermined number of the feedback received for the service provider having the first complete status.
- 30

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the first type of feedback report comprises only the response received at the predetermined survey interval amongst the responses received at the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

12. The method according to claim 9, further comprising generating, upon request, a second type of feedback report of the service provider, the second type of feedback report comprises all of the responses received at the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided by the service provider.

13. The method according to any one of claims 9 to 12, further comprising linking the service provider to a company or an association, wherein the method is configured to terminate any feedback survey that is pending except for pending feedback survey having said action input outstanding or when the predetermined survey interval for the service provided by the service provider has been initiated which are maintained.

14. A system for managing customer feedback survey responses, the system comprising:

a feedback survey initialization module for receiving, from a service provider, a request to initiate a feedback survey with a customer in relation to a service provided by the service provider, the feedback survey comprises a plurality of survey intervals, each survey interval being associated with a respective one of a plurality of stages of the service;

a feedback receiving module for receiving a feedback to the feedback survey from the customer, the feedback comprises responses received for the plurality of survey intervals; and

a database module for storing the feedback received from the customer, wherein the feedback survey initialization module is configured to be in a lock state for preventing a new feedback survey for another service provided by the service provider from being initiated based on a state of the feedback survey.

15. The system according to claim 14, further comprising:

an action module for prompting an action input from the service provider in reply to the response made by the customer for a predetermined survey interval for the service,

5 wherein the action module is operable to accept the response received for the predetermined survey interval in the database module or initiate an investigation process to investigate the response received for the predetermined survey interval based on the action input received from the service provider, and

wherein the feedback survey initialization module is configured to be in the lock state when said action input for the service provider is outstanding.

10

16. The system according to claim 15, wherein the feedback survey initialization module is configured to return to an open state from the lock state, the open state being capable of accepting a new feedback survey for another service by the service provider, when the action input from the service provider for the
15 predetermined survey interval for the service is received.

17. The system according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the action input comprises an accept action for accepting the response made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval or an investigate action for investigating the response
20 made by the customer for the predetermined survey interval, and wherein the feedback received is stored in the database module when the action input received is the accept action, and the investigation process is initiated when the action input received is the investigate action.

25 18. The system according to any one of claims 15 to 17, wherein the predetermined survey interval is a final survey interval of the feedback survey.

19. The system according to claim 18, wherein the plurality of stages of the service comprises an initial stage of the service, an implementation stage of the
30 service, and a final stage of the service, the final stage of the service being associated with the final survey interval of the feedback survey.

20. The system according to claim 19, wherein the initial stage of the service relates to a pre-sales period for securing a sale of an item of goods and/or services

to the customer, the implementation stage relates to an execution period for fulfilling the sale, and the final stage relates to a completion period after the sale has been fulfilled.

- 5 21. The system according to any one of claims 17 to 20, further comprising a categorising module for categorising the feedback received for each feedback survey initiated by the service provider in the database according to its status.
- 10 22. The system according to claim 22, wherein the status comprises one of a pending status, a terminated status, a first complete status and a second complete status, the pending status for indicating that the feedback survey is pending, the terminated status for indicating that the feedback survey has been terminated before completion, the first complete status for indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the accept action, and the second complete status for
15 indicating that the feedback survey has been completed with the address action.
- 20 23. The system according to claim 22, further comprising a first feedback report generating module for generating, upon request, a first type of feedback report of the service provider, the first type of feedback report is based on a predetermined
20 number of feedback received for the service provider having the first complete status.
- 25 24. The system according to claim 23, wherein the first type of feedback report comprises only the response received for the predetermined survey interval amongst the responses received for the plurality of survey intervals for each service
25 provided by the service provider.
- 30 25. The system according to claim 22, further comprising a second feedback report generating module for generating, upon request, a second type of feedback report of the service provider, the second type of feedback report comprises all of the responses received for the plurality of survey intervals for each service provided
30 by the service provider.

26. The system according to any one of claims 23 to 25, further comprising a linking module for linking the service provider to a company or an association, wherein the method is configured to terminate any feedback survey that is pending except for pending feedback survey having said action input outstanding or when
5 the predetermined survey interval for the service provided by the service provider has been initiated which are maintained.

27. A computer program product, embodied in a non-transitory computer-readable storage medium, comprising instructions executable by a computing
10 processor to perform the method of any one of claims 1 to 13.