A COMPUTER SYSTEM AND A COMPUTER IMPLEMENTED METHOD FOR PROVIDING PARAMETERIZED INCENTIVES TO A PAYMENT CARD USER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to systems and methods for incentivizing a payment card user and in particular to a computer system and a computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] It is a well followed practice that for incentivizing payment card users for payment card usage, issuers of the payment cards provide different kinds of reward points to the payment card users. The reward points may be merchant dedicated, such as turbo points for redemption at gas stations, or may be general reward points which may be redeemed in a number of ways. However, all the reward points earned by the payment card users follow a very linear relationship with respect to the number of purchase transactions or the amount spent during a purchase of a good and/or a service. Other factors, such as loyalty towards a merchant, kind of purchases, frequency of purchase, timely payment of dues and other general behavior are not considered while determination of reward points. Additionally, there are a number of methods in which a merchant can reward his/her loyal or special customers. Such methods include membership cards, special discounts, cashbacks and loyalty points etc. However, all of the merchant-related methods listed above and the rewards resulting from them are very merchant specific and there is no way the payment card user can use such rewards with another merchant for purchase of good and/or service with the other merchant.

[0003] In light of the discussion above, there is need for a computer system and a computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user that do not suffer from above mentioned deficiencies.

[0004] Any discussion of the background art throughout the specification should in no way be considered as an admission that such background art is prior art nor that such background art is widely known or forms part of the common general knowledge in the field.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] A computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, the computer implemented method comprising steps of receiving a

request from a first device, for augmenting reward points earned with respect to a payment transacted through a payment card number, the payment card number being received at the first device with respect to the payment to be made for purchase of a good and/or a service, augmenting the reward points and receiving a token corresponding to payment of a service charge, from the first device, the service charge being determined from a conversion function and one or more of an augmenting function and a payment amount.

[0006] In one embodiment of the invention, the augmenting function is selected from a group consisting of a multiplication of the reward points, an addition of additional reward points, mathematical functions that increase an overall amount of the reward points and combinations thereof.

[0007] In one embodiment of the invention, the augmenting function is independent of the payment amount.

[0008] In one embodiment of the invention, the computer implemented method further comprises a step of determining a service charge, wherein the request for augmentation comprises the augmenting function.

[0009] In one embodiment of the invention, the computer implemented method further comprises a step of transmitting the conversion function to the first device, in real time.

[0010] In one embodiment of the invention, the conversion function is a predetermined conversion function, historically available with the first device.

[0011] In one embodiment of the invention, the request for augmentation comprises a value of the service charge and the augmenting function is determined on the basis of the value of the service charge and the conversion function.

[0012] In one embodiment of the invention, the request for augmentation comprises an upper limit for the service charge.

[0013] In one embodiment of the invention, the first device is a Point of Sale (POS) terminal.

[0014] In one embodiment of the invention, the first device is an online payment gateway server.

[0015] According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a computer system for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, the computer system

comprising a memory unit configured to store machine readable instructions, a processor operably connected with the memory device, the processor obtaining the machine-readable instructions from the memory device, and being configured by the machine-readable instructions to receive a request from a first device, for augmenting reward points earned with respect to a payment transacted through a payment card number, the payment card number being received at the first device with respect to the payment to be made for purchase of a good and/or a service, augment the reward points and receive a token corresponding to payment of a service charge, from the first device, the service charge being determined from a conversion function and one or more of an augmenting function and a payment amount.

[0016] In one embodiment of the invention, the augmenting function is selected from a group consisting of a multiplication of the reward points, an addition of additional reward points, mathematical functions that increase an overall amount of the reward points and combinations thereof.

[0017] In one embodiment of the invention, the augmenting function is independent of the payment amount.

[0018] In one embodiment of the invention, the processor is further configured to determine a service charge, wherein the request for augmentation comprises the augmenting function.

[0019] In one embodiment of the invention, the processor is further configured to transmit the conversion function to the first device, in real time.

[0020] In one embodiment of the invention, the conversion function is a predetermined conversion function, historically available with the first device.

[0021] In one embodiment of the invention, the request for augmentation comprises a value of the service charge and the processor is further configured to determine the augmenting function on basis of the value of the service charge and the conversion function.

[0022] In one embodiment of the invention, the request for augmentation comprises an upper limit for the service charge

[0023] In one embodiment of the invention, the first device is a Point of Sale (POS) terminal.

[0024] In one embodiment of the invention, the first device is an online payment gateway server.

[0025] As used in this document, the term "payment card" refers to any suitable cashless payment device associated with a payment account. Thus the term includes physical cards such as a credit card, a debit card, a prepaid card and a charge card. The physical payment card may carry payment account information, for example it may comprise a Primary Account Number (PAN) of a payment card. Alternatively, the payment card may be implemented in software in an electronic device such as a user's mobile communication device (e.g. smartphone or tablet computer). For example, the payment card may be an app or service running on the communication device which allows the user to make a payment or a digital wallet service, using an associated payment account.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0026] At least one example of the invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0027] Fig. 1 illustrates an exemplary environment of computing devices to which the various embodiments described herein may be implemented;

[0028] Fig. 2 illustrates a computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0029] Fig. 3A illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving a request for augmentation of reward points, from a first device, and communicating a service charge to the first device, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0030] Fig. 3B illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving a conversion function at a first device, via an interchange network, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention;

[0031] Fig. 3C illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving the request from the first device, the request including a value of the service charge, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

[0032] Fig. 4 illustrates a computing device in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

[0033] It should be noted that the same numeral represents the same or similar elements throughout the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0034] Throughout this specification, unless the context requires otherwise, the words "comprise", "comprises" and "comprising" will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated step or element or group of steps or elements but not the exclusion of any other step or element or group of steps or elements.

[0035] Any one of the terms: "including" or "which includes" or "that includes" as used herein is also an open term that also means including at least the elements/features that follow the term, but not excluding others.

[0036] A merchant, having a brick and mortar outlet or an e-commerce store, generally would like to reward his/her customers for a number of reasons, such as for loyalty of the customer, promotions, special offers during certain festive seasons or just to stay ahead in competition with other merchants. It is common for the merchants to offer merchant specific loyalty points or membership cards etc. to their customers. However, in case the merchant wishes to offer rewards which are not merchant specific, the merchant may leverage a payment card service that the customer is associated with. It is generally a practice by issuing banks of a payment card to offer reward points to a payment card user. The merchant may request the issuing bank to augment the reward points earned by the payment card user during a purchase made at the merchant's brick and mortar outlet or the e-commerce store. In return the issuing bank may levy a service charge from the merchant.

[0037] The following embodiments have been described in this regard and have been explained with an exemplary environment of computing devices of figure 1 as a reference. It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to the exemplary environment as depicted in figure 1 and can be implemented in many other scenarios.

[0038] Figure 1 illustrates an exemplary environment 100 of computing devices to which the various embodiments described herein may be implemented. As shown in figure 1, the environment 100 comprises a Point of Sale (POS) terminal 102 associated with a merchant. The POS terminal 102 is connected to an acquirer server 114 through a first network 108. In various embodiments, the first network 108 is an Internet based network implemented through a number of protocols such as but not limited to 802.x, HSDPA and LTE etc. The acquirer server 114 (also known as an acquirer processor) is associated with an acquiring

bank with which the merchant holds an account. The merchant may also deal in goods and/or services online. The online marketing may be managed by a combination of a merchant commerce server 110 and a payment gateway server 112. The merchant commerce server 110 is envisaged to offer a number of e-commerce functionalities. The merchant commerce server 110 may provide basic functionalities of an online storefront, such as product displays, online ordering and shopping carts. Other functionalities may also include management and maintenance of inventory and accounting data. Additional functionalities may also include user and merchant profile management, dispatch systems for delivery of goods and/or services to the user and tracking of the delivery. It is therefore, envisaged that the merchant commerce server 110 also has web server capabilities and is responsible for generating web pages pertaining to goods and/or services offered by the merchant and transmitting the web pages to a client device 104 associated with a payment card user, through the first network 108. The payment gateway server 112 is capable of collecting authentication information (such as payment card number, OTP, name, CVV number etc.) pertaining to the payment card user, from the user client device 104, and communicating the authentication information to the acquirer server 108, securely, through the first network 108.

[0039] Further, the acquirer server 114 is connected to a payment server 118 associated with a payment card service, through an interchange network 116. In various embodiments, the interchange network 116 is an Internet based network configured to exchange transaction data between a plurality of gateway servers, associated with a plurality of respective banks and a plurality of payment servers associated with a payment card service. The interchange network 116 may necessitate that the communications between the plurality of gateway servers and the plurality of payment servers follow standard protocols and be secured using data encryption protocols, such as but not limited to, SSL or TLS. One example of a standard for exchange of transaction data is *ISO 8583: Financial transaction card originated messages — Interchange message specifications.*

[0040] Further, connected to the interchange network 116 is an issuer server 120 associated with an issuing bank, from which a payment card to the payment card user has been issued. The issuer server 120 is further connected with a storage device 122. The storage device 122 is configured to store details (such as name, address, account numbers and regulatory documentation such as Know You Customer (KYC) documentation, etc.) of a plurality of payment card users in association with their plurality of respective payment card numbers. KYC is a process by which commercial institutions such as banks and other businesses obtain

information about the identity and address of the customers. In case of financial institutions such as banks, insurers and export creditors, the KYC procedure is to be completed during enrolment do the customers, however for pre-existing accounts, the KYC procedure can be initiated at any time, for example with an advent of a new regulation. Commercial institutions are also required to periodically update their customers' KYC details. The main objective of the KYC procedure is to prevent banks from being misused, intentionally or unintentionally, by criminal elements for money laundering activities and for other businesses the KYC procedure can be regarded as an anti-corruption due diligence tool. Further, the storage device 122 stores reward points earned by each one of the plurality of payment card users.

[0041] However, as the state of the current industry is: some or most of the functions of the issuer server 120 may be carried out by a third party server 124. In that manner, it is envisaged that the third party server 124 is also connected with the interchange network 116 and has an access to the storage device 122. Depending upon whether the issuer bank follows in-house model, blended model or full service outsourcing model, division of functionalities between the issuer server 120 and the third party server 124 may vary accordingly. Various embodiments of the present invention may now be understood taking the exemplary environment 100 as a reference.

[0042] Typically, for any purchase, the issuer server 120 or the third party server 124, as the case may be, would issue certain reward points to the payment card user, in respect to the payment card number. These reward points get updated in the storage device 122. However, in certain cases the merchant may want to provide additional reward points to the payment card user, for a number of reasons, one of them being rewarding the payment card user for being loyal to the merchant. Moreover, in certain cases the merchant might not have a merchant specific loyalty and rewards program, or the payment card user may not be member of merchant's own rewards program. Other reasons could be size of the purchase, or special offers being offered by the merchant or many other promotional reasons. Since the reward points are actually awarded by the issuer server 120 or the third party server 124, the merchant may need to request the issuer server 120 or the third party server 124 to augment the reward points earned with respect to the payment card number.

[0043] Figure 2 illustrates a computer implemented method 200 for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The method begins at step 210, when a request is received at a second device, from

a first device, for augmenting reward points earned with respect to a payment transacted through a payment card number. In this regard the payment card number would have been received at the first device with respect to the payment to be made for purchase of a good and/or a service. The first device here may be the POS terminal 102, receiving the payment card number directly from the payment card swipe, if the purchase is being made at a brick and mortar store. However, in case of an online purchase, the first device may be the payment gateway server 112, receiving the payment card number from the client device 104. The client device 104 may be a mobile phone, or a tablet pc or a laptop or a desktop and the like. It is further envisaged here, that along with the payment card number, the payment card user may also have to provide additional details, such as a name, an account number, a CVV number and an OTP number etc., for authorization of the payment. Similarly, the second device may be the issuer server 120 or the third party server 124.

[0044] It is envisaged here that the augmentation may be in form of multiplication of the reward points earned or adding additional reward points earned or applying any other mathematical function that increases an overall amount of the reward points earned during the purchase or any other combinations of the above. In one embodiment of the invention, the request for augmentation comprises an augmenting function and the service charge is determined at the second device. Here again the augmenting function is envisaged to include multiplication of reward points, additional reward points to be added and the other mathematical function. The augmenting function may or may not depend upon a payment amount associated with the purchase of good and/or service. The service is to be determined from a conversion function and one or more of an augmenting function and a payment amount. In other words, the conversion function is envisaged to define a relationship between the payment amount, the augmenting function and the service charge.

[0045] In this scenario, the merchant may only communicate the augmenting function (such as 2X, 3X, 5X, additional 50 points or additional 100 points or combinations thereof etc.) without worrying about the service charge that the merchant is going to pay. In such and various other embodiments, the augmenting function is determined at the first device on a basis of a plurality of parameters. The plurality of parameters includes, but is not limited to:

a. Loyalty of the payment card user (for example frequency of his/her visits for every three-month period);

b. Ongoing promotions (being carried out by the merchant);

c. Acquisition of the payment card user from a competitor;

d. Customer retention (in case the frequency of visits is decreasing with respect to every three-month period);

e. Negotiation (Settled between the merchant and the payment card user); and

f. Goodwill of the payment card user.

[0046] However, there may be additional parameters which may be considered (especially during an online purchase), such as, but not limited to:

a. user identifier of the payment card user: this may be applicable where the payment card user is a special member of the payment card service or a frequent/certified customer of the merchant;

b. cookies: cookies would allow the merchant commerce server 110 to identify the client device 104;

c. coupon codes: coupon codes provided by the payment card user during offline or online purchase may also specify the additional reward points earned by the payment card user;

d. historical purchase data: historical purchase data would allow the merchant commerce server 110 to determine size and frequency with which the payment card user makes purchases from the merchant, the payment card user may then be awarded accordingly, in proportion with the size and the frequency;

e. source through which the payment card user has arrived at the merchant's site: special offers may be provided to the payment card user being routed from clicking a specific link on a different promotional website, for example;

f. communication channel being used by the payment card user: many merchants offer special rewards when the purchase is made from a standalone computer application of the merchant, rather through merchant's website;

g. construction and type of the user client device 104;

h. type of operating system being installed in the user client device;

i. type of payment card (such as debit, credit or an electronic wallet): many merchants are promoting use of electronic wallets under their special tie-ups with companies offering such electronic wallets;

j. type of payment service being offered by the payment server 118;

k. category of the payment card: there are a number of types of payment cards (both debit and credit), such as silver, gold, platinum and titanium etc. and special offers are offered depending upon the type of payment card (such as 2X multiplication for silver, additional 100 points for gold and additional 200 points for platinum etc.);

l. products and/or services being chosen by the payment card user for purchase;

m. time of purchase (in terms of hour of the day, day of the week, week of the month or month of the year etc.); and

n. other factors built into machine readable instruction being fed into the payment gateway server 112.

[0047] However, in various other scenarios, before communicating the augmenting function to the second device, the merchant may need to set some rules on the service charge to be paid.

[0048] Figure 3A illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving the request for augmentation of reward points, from the first device, and communicating the service charge to the first device, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. For example, there may be kept an upper limit on the service charge that the merchant may be willing to pay. In such scenarios the merchant may need to have knowledge of the conversion function. In one embodiment, the conversion function is a predetermined conversion function, historically available with the first device (the POS terminal 102 for offline purchases or the payment gateway server 112 for online purchase), in form of a document, a file or a database or Uniform Resource Locator (URL) or a standalone application.

[0049] The predetermined conversion function may have been historically provided by the second device to the first device accordingly. In various other embodiments, the conversion function may be a universally accepted industry standard. In this regard it is envisaged that the request for augmentation may also comprise an upper limit for the service charge. The

second device may then determine how much to augment the reward points depending upon one or more of the augmenting function, conversion function and the upper limit and determine a value of the service charge accordingly from the conversion function, and one or more of the payment amount and the augmenting function. The value of the service charge may then be communicated to the first device, through the payment server 118 and the acquirer server 114. In another embodiment, the first device may need to request the conversion function from the second device.

[0050] Figure 3B illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving the conversion function at the first device, via the interchange network 116, in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. The first device receives the conversion function from the second device, in real time, preferably through the acquirer server 114 and the payment server 118. However, the first device, especially, in case of the first device being the payment gateway server 112 may also be able to connect to the second device (issuer server 120 or the third party server 124), through an Application Program Interface (API) server (not shown). The merchant may then determine the augmenting function depending upon the conversion function or may choose to not provide the augmenting function. In case the merchant decides to provide the augmenting function, the augmenting function is then communicated to from the first device to the second device through the acquirer server 114 and the payment server 118. It is to be noted here that the second device then augments the reward points and determines the value of the service charge from the conversion function and one or more of the augmenting function, the payment amount and the upper limit (if applicable) and transmits the value of the service charge back to first device through the acquirer server 114 and the payment server 118.

[0051] However, in various other embodiments, the merchant may only be interested in offering rewards worth certain amount of the service charge to the payment card user. For example, for a purchase of $1000, the merchant may want to offer reward points worth $100 to the payment card user, without worrying about the conversion function. In such a scenario, the request comprises the value of the service charge and the augmenting function is determined at the second device on a basis of the value of the service charge and the conversion function.

[0052] Figure 3C illustrates an information flow diagram for receiving the request from the first device, the request including the value of the service charge, in accordance with an

embodiment of the present invention. The first device communicates the value of the service charge to the second device through the acquirer server 114 and the payment server 118. The value of the service charge may be communicated as a whole amount, for example, $100, or as a percentage of the payment amount, for example 10% of $1000. Therefore, in this scenario, it is envisaged that the value of the service charge, and not the augmenting function, is determined at the first device, on the basis of the plurality of parameters discussed above. The second device then determines the augmenting function from the value of the service charge and the conversion function. The second device may or not consider the payment amount while determining the augmenting function. Further, the second device applies the augmenting function to augment the reward points earned during the purchase.

[0053] At step 220, the second device augments the reward points and updates the same in the storage device 122. The augmenting of the reward points is then communicated and confirmed from the second device to the first device. Further, the second device may also communicate how much the reward points have been augmented and the value of the service charge applicable. The second device may also provide options to accept or decline the service charge. In case, the service charge is declined from the first device, the augmenting of the reward points is reversed and a value of the total reward points is adjusted as per the reward points originally earned during the purchase of the good and/or service.

[0054] At step 230, the second device receives a token from the first device. The token corresponds to payment of the service charge from the merchant to the issuing bank. In that manner it is envisaged that the token may be a string of one or more characters. In one embodiment, first two characters of the token may be for example "01" indicating that the payment of the service charge has been accepted, while "00" may indicate that the payment of the service charge has been declined. In various embodiments, the first two characters may be followed by, for example, one or more of a unique transaction identification, a date of the transaction, a time of the transaction and the value of the service charge etc. In various other embodiments, the token may be a mere acceptance or non-acceptance of the service charge and other details such as the transaction identification, the date and the time etc. are assigned by the second device. In various other embodiments, the service charge may be transferred from the acquiring bank to the issuing bank instantly or at a later time or date. In various other embodiments, during settlement of the payment amount, the issuing bank may deduct the service charge from the payment amount, before transferring the reduced payment amount to the acquiring bank.

[0055] Figure 4 illustrates a computing device 400 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In a preferred embodiment, the computing device 400 takes the form of the merchant commerce server 110, the payment gateway server 112, the acquirer server 114, the payment server 118, the issuer server 120 and the third party server 124 as described above. In this manner, the computing device 400 is adapted to comprise functionality for communication with the first network 108 and the interchange network 116. However, it should be noted that the client device 110 and the POS terminal 102, as shown in figure 1, may also be depicted as the computing device 400.

[0056] In this manner, the computing device may comprise differing technical integers, such as the display device 4020, one or more human interface devices 460 and the like. In other words, the technical integers of the computing device 400 as shown in figure 4 are exemplary only and variations, adaptations and the like may be made thereto within the purposive scope of the embodiments described herein and having regard for the particular application of the computing device 400.

[0057] In particular, the steps of the computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, as described in further detail above, may be implemented as computer program code instructions executable by the computing device 400. The computer program code instructions may be divided into one or more computer program code instruction libraries, such as dynamic link libraries (DLL), wherein each of the libraries performs a one or more steps of the computer implemented method. Additionally, a subset of the one or more of the libraries may perform graphical user interface tasks relating to the steps of the computer implemented method.

[0058] The device 400 comprises semiconductor memory 410 comprising volatile memory such as random access memory (RAM) or read only memory (ROM). The memory 400 may comprise either RAM or ROM or a combination of RAM and ROM. The device 400 comprises a computer program code storage medium reader 430 for reading the computer program code instructions from computer program code storage media 420. The storage media 420 may be optical media such as CD-ROM disks, magnetic media such as floppy disks and tape cassettes or flash media such as USB memory sticks.

[0059] The device further comprises I/O interface 440 for communicating with one or more peripheral devices. The I/O interface 440 may offer both serial and parallel interface connectivity. For example, the I/O interface 440 may comprise a Small Computer System

Interface (SCSI), Universal Serial Bus (USB) or similar I/O interface for interfacing with the storage medium reader 430. The I/O interface 440 may also communicate with the one or more human interface devices (HID) 460 such as keyboards, pointing devices, joysticks and the like. The I/O interface 440 may also comprise a computer to computer interface, such as a Recommended Standard 232 (RS-232) interface, for interfacing the device 400 with one or more personal computer (PC) devices 490. The I/O interface 440 may also comprise an audio interface for communicate audio signals to one or more audio devices 4050, such as a speaker or a buzzer.

[0060] The device 400 also comprises a network interface 470 for communicating with one or more computer networks 480. The network 480 may be a wired network, such as a wired Ethernet™ network or a wireless network, such as a Bluetooth™ network or IEEE 802.11 network. The network 480 may be a local area network (LAN), such as a home or office computer network, or a wide area network (WAN), such as the Internet or private WAN. The device 400 comprises an arithmetic logic unit or processor 4000 for performing the computer program code instructions. The processor 4000 may be a reduced instruction set computer (RISC) or complex instruction set computer (CISC) processor or the like. The device 400 further comprises a storage device 4030, such as a magnetic disk hard drive or a solid state disk drive.

[0061] Computer program code instructions may be loaded into the storage device 4030 from the storage media 420 using the storage medium reader 430 or from the network 480 using network interface 470. During the bootstrap phase, an operating system and one or more software applications are loaded from the storage device 4030 into the memory 410. During the fetch-decode-execute cycle, the processor 4000 fetches computer program code instructions from memory 410, decodes the instructions into machine code, executes the instructions and stores one or more intermediate results in memory 400. In this manner, the instructions stored in the memory 410, when retrieved and executed by the processor 4000, may configure the computing device 400 as a special-purpose machine that may perform the functions described herein.

[0062] The device 400 also comprises a video interface 4010 for conveying video signals to a display device 4020, such as a liquid crystal display (LCD), cathode-ray tube (CRT) or similar display device. The device 400 also comprises a communication bus subsystem 450 for interconnecting the various devices described above. The bus subsystem 450 may offer

parallel connectivity such as Industry Standard Architecture (ISA), conventional Peripheral Component Interconnect (PCI) and the like or serial connectivity such as PCI Express (PCIe), Serial Advanced Technology Attachment (Serial ATA) and the like.

[0063] In this manner, the embodiments of the present invention allow the merchant to provide parameterized multiplication to reward points earned by the payment card user during the purchase. These additional reward points may then be used at the same or any other merchant outlet. The cost of additional reward points awarded to the payment card user is borne by the merchant himself/herself.

[0064] It should be understood that the techniques of the present disclosure might be implemented using a variety of technologies. For example, the methods described herein may be implemented by a series of computer executable instructions residing on a suitable computer readable medium. Suitable computer readable media may include volatile (e.g. RAM) and/or non-volatile (e.g. ROM, disk) memory, carrier waves and transmission media. Exemplary carrier waves may take the form of electrical, electromagnetic or optical signals conveying digital data steams along a local network or a publically accessible network such as the Internet.

[0065] It should also be understood that, unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent from the following discussion, it is appreciated that throughout the description, discussions utilizing terms such as "controlling" or "obtaining" or "computing" or "storing" or "receiving" or "determining" or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic computing device, that processes and transforms data represented as physical (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system memories or registers or other such information storage, transmission or display devices.

[0066] It should be noted that where the terms “server”, “secure server” or similar terms are used herein, a communication device is described that may be used in a communication system, unless the context otherwise requires, and should not be construed to limit the present invention to any particular communication device type. Thus, a communication device may include, without limitation, a bridge, router, bridge-router (router), switch, node, or other communication device, which may or may not be secure.

[0067] It should also be noted that where a flowchart is used herein to demonstrate various aspects of the invention, it should not be construed to limit the present invention to any

particular logic flow or logic implementation. The described logic may be partitioned into different logic blocks (e.g., programs, modules, functions, or subroutines) without changing the overall results or otherwise departing from the true scope of the invention. Often, logic elements may be added, modified, omitted, performed in a different order, or implemented using different logic constructs (e.g., logic gates, looping primitives, conditional logic, and other logic constructs) without changing the overall results or otherwise departing from the true scope of the invention.

[0068] The terms and descriptions used herein are set forth by way of illustration only and are not meant as limitations. Examples and limitations disclosed herein are intended to be not limiting in any manner, and modifications may be made without departing from the spirit of the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art will recognize that many variations are possible within the spirit and scope of the disclosure, and their equivalents, in which all terms are to be understood in their broadest possible sense unless otherwise indicated.

[0069] Various modifications to these embodiments are apparent to those skilled in the art from the description and the accompanying drawings. The principles associated with the various embodiments described herein may be applied to other embodiments. Therefore, the description is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown along with the accompanying drawings but is to be providing broadest scope of consistent with the principles and the novel and inventive features disclosed or suggested herein. Accordingly, the disclosure is anticipated to hold on to all other such alternatives, modifications, and variations that fall within the scope of the present disclosure and appended claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A computer implemented method for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, the computer implemented method comprising steps of:

receiving a request from a first device, for augmenting reward points earned with respect to a payment transacted through a payment card number, the payment card number being received at the first device with respect to the payment to be made for purchase of a good and/or a service;

augmenting the reward points; and

receiving a token corresponding to payment of a service charge, from the first device, the service charge being determined from a conversion function and one or more of an augmenting function and a payment amount.

2. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the augmenting function is selected from a group consisting of a multiplication of the reward points, an addition of additional reward points, mathematical functions that increase an overall amount of the reward points and combinations thereof.

3. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the augmenting function is independent of the payment amount.

4. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a step of determining a service charge, wherein the request for augmentation comprises the augmenting function.

5. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a step of transmitting the conversion function to the first device, in real time.

6. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the conversion function is a predetermined conversion function, historically available with the first device.

7. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the request for augmentation comprises a value of the service charge and the augmenting function is determined on the basis of the value of the service charge and the conversion function.

8. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the request for augmentation comprises an upper limit for the service charge.

9. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first device is a Point of Sale (POS) terminal.

10. The computer implemented method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first device is an online payment gateway server.

11. A computer system for providing parameterized incentives to a payment card user, the computer system comprising:

a memory unit configured to store machine readable instructions;

a processor operably connected with the memory device, the processor obtaining the machine-readable instructions from the memory device, and being configured by the machine-readable instructions to:

receive a request from a first device, for augmenting reward points earned with respect to a payment transacted through a payment card number, the payment card number being received at the first device with respect to the payment to be made for purchase of a good and/or a service;

augment the reward points; and

receive a token corresponding to payment of a service charge, from the first device, the service charge being determined from a conversion function and one or more of an augmenting function and a payment amount.

12. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the augmenting function is selected from a group consisting of a multiplication of the reward points, an addition of additional reward points, mathematical functions that increase an overall amount of the reward points and combinations thereof.

13. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the augmenting function is independent of the payment amount.

14. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to determine a service charge, wherein the request for augmentation comprises the augmenting function.

15. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the processor is further configured to transmit the conversion function to the first device, in real time.

16. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the conversion function is a predetermined conversion function, historically available with the first device.

17. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the request for augmentation comprises a value of the service charge and the processor is further configured to determine the augmenting function on basis of the value of the service charge and the conversion function.

18. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the request for augmentation comprises an upper limit for the service charge

19. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the first device is a Point of Sale (POS) terminal.

20. The computer system as claimed in claim 11, wherein the first device is an online payment gateway server.