

AUTOMATED TICKET SALES AND DISPENSING SYSTEM

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to an automated cinema and events ticketing vending "concierge", "kiosk" or "booth" and event information and ticket sales system.

- 5 The present invention also relates to a system in which a plurality of booths are inter-networked and coupled to a database having therein information regarding particular movie screenings, events, goods and / or services.

10 The present invention also relates to a method of correlating the purchase of tickets for reserved seating events to the quality of seating choices and the availability of said choices at any specific moment of desired purchase.

The invention, further, relates to an apparatus for that purpose comprising free-standing booths which can be remote from all represented cinemas, theatres or event locations and remote from a central database correlating such sales to a continuously updated real-time database of seating and ticket availability.

- 15 The invention also relates, in particular, to a method of and an apparatus for the sale or dispensing of tickets to particular event movie screenings and/or events with or without reserved or assigned seating in connection with the display of segments of these productions or events, display of actual stage or field views from seat locations prospectively selected for purchase, and display of cinema, theatre or event location
20 environs, exterior, interior and points of architectural or historical interest amounting to a virtual theatre tour accessed and controlled by a prospective ticket purchaser via an interactive human interface. Other goods and / or services may also be sold or dispensed.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

25 To watch an event such as a movie, a patron has to go through the following series of separate actions at different locations and different point of time:

- Check the cinema listings for the show times and location.
- Check availability.
- Reserve tickets for the show either by going to the cinema personally, by
30 telephone fax or internet.
- Pay for the tickets at the cinema or by credit card authorisation over the telephone, fax or internet.
- Collect the tickets.

All the separate actions above can only be completed by the patron at the same

time by personally going to the cinema where the movie is shown.

Another problem arises when the patron wishes to review movies and events offered by different proprietors, such as different movies advertised by different movie chains. There does not currently exist a relatively convenient forum at which various
5 movies and events from different cinema operators and proprietors can easily be reviewed.

Some prior art attempts have been made at solving these problems. These are outlined below:

In the news and/or print media, movie and cinema listings are provided in
10 stagnant black and white newspaper listings; stagnant posters located mostly at the cinemas themselves and other locations such as along the corridors and platforms of the mass rapid transit ("MRT") system, at shopping centres, etc. However, these only provide the patron with information with regard movie and event listings but do not provide the patron with the capability to select, pay and collect the required tickets.

15 With movie hotlines, patrons may call via telephone to a centralised hotline to make reservations for a particular movie at a particular time and at a particular location. However, patrons often experience difficulties in getting through to the operator and experience time delays. Often a limited number of operators and available telephone lines restrict the possibility of the patron being able to successfully
20 get through to an operator within 5 minutes. This is especially true during peak periods, i.e. during the weekends/public holidays, movie screenings in the evenings, for popular blockbuster movies and at popular easily accessible cinemas. In addition, these hotlines are not opened 24 hours a day.

Some mobile phone operators provide a service to its subscribers which gives
25 the subscribers movie and cinema listing information. However the information given is not very different from checking for movie and cinema listings from the newspaper. This service does not ordinarily enable the consumer to check availability of seat at a particular cinema at a particular time, nor does this service enable the patron to collect the ticket immediately without having to have the consumer go personally to the
30 cinema one hour beforehand to pay for and collect the ticket(s).

The Internet is another medium. However access to a computer terminal is not always readily available and only one cinema chain in Singapore offers this medium. It is therefore difficult to review a number of different types of events offered by a wide variety of proprietors. Cinema chains would also need to regularly update their

website. This results in extra cost, which may need to be passed on to the patron in the form of higher ticket prices.

Other prior art arrangements have been disclosed in US 3,705,384, US 4,788,643, US 4,818,854, US 4,931,932, US 4,984,170, US 5,333,257, US 5,797,126 and US 5,239,480. The systems disclosed therein is considered to disclose the ability to promote events on behalf of multiple vendors, advertising for local retailers proximate the ticketing systems, block booking for premium customers, nor cross border reservations.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

Although the disclosure of the embodiment of the present invention relates more to a movie ticket purchase, it should be appreciated that the present invention has equal application to an 'item', being any good and / or service.

There is a need for a ticketing booth and system which encompasses the capability to achieve all five steps / actions as noted above as necessary before a potential consumer is actually able to purchase and obtain a desired item. At best, the actions described above are achievable by a patron in the prior art solutions in 3 separate steps necessarily demanding that the consumer do the following, i.e.

Action 1 Determine the desired item, such as movie and cinema listings, show times

Action 2 Check availability, reserve, pay

Action 3 Collection

In practice, the only exception to the above is where the consumer goes to the cinema personally to check the listings, availability and collect the tickets upon payment upfront. The present invention enables these actions to be combined effectively linking all the actions from the checking of the item and its listings, checking availability, make a decision to purchase the item, reserve the item, pay and collect a receipt for the item and all at one point of sale.

In this regard, the present invention provides a remotely located booth enabling at least one item, such as goods and / or services, to be reviewed, selected and / or purchased by a patron, said booth including:

visual display means for providing a medium by which the patron can review at least one of said at least one item in order for the patron to determine a brief description, location and time for collection of a desired item,

logic means coupled to the visual display means and which allows availability,

reservation and payment for the desired item to be made,

collection means coupled to the logic means for enabling the patron to collect a receipt of purchase of said desired item, and

memory means coupled to the logic means and for storing in digital format a
5 visual indication of the desired item thus enabling said review by the patron.

The present invention also provides a system comprising in combination a plurality of booths as disclosed above, a database for storing information used by the booths, and a network for enabling communication between the plurality of booths in real-time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

10 The present invention proposes a one-stop browse, selection, reservation, payment and collection alternative for the easy and convenient purchase, payment and collection of, for example, movie tickets (currently for movies but may expand to other types of tickets e.g. special concerts/events) for all cinemas across Singapore. This will be achieved via a multi-task, state-of-the-art integrated ticket booking system
15 which will link the major cinemas to a core database linking all the ticketing booths. The strategically located ticket booths have the capability to enable a consumer to:

- browse all cinema screenings nation-wide;
- complete the process of selecting the movie he wishes to watch;
- check the availability of seats for a particular movie at a specified screening
20 time at a cinema of his choice;
- proceed to make a ticket reservation;
- pay for the tickets via his credit/cash card; and
- collect the tickets at the ticket booth at a location and time convenient to the cinema patron.

25 All this without having to go to the cinema personally, or call or book via the Internet.

Technology required includes at least some of the following:

- Computer reservation system with real time linkage to the cinemas, showing seats sold, seat still available and allowing customers their preferred seat
30 selection.
- Ticketing system - for dispensing tickets (currently only for movies).
- Automatic Payment Machine (ATM) - machine that can be installed anywhere to do sales and marketing, electronic fund transfer, credit card authorisation, multi-media and networking.

- Interactive capability - delivers graphics, video and sound.
- Advertising capability - graphics etc. on the screen, on the tickets, the outside of the booths.
- Database - tracking of cinema patron information, cinema sales statistics etc. for management information / feedback tools from customer usage of the present system. Facility to include capability for historical information / data storage, customer profiling and flexibility to produce user-friendly reports for information collated.
- technology for access to internet/transmitting and receiving data via any telephone handset.
- Interactive Voice Response (IVR) - an emerging technology that will allow customers to purchase tickets over the phone without speaking to an operator.
- playback of digitised video clips etc stored in media storage capacity in hard-disk of CPU at kiosk or updated by central station.
- Programs used are similar to that of QuickTime.
- Advertising through use of advertising "banners" flashing at a section of the screen at all times during the entire program.
- provide map, transport details etc to get to the location of the event.
- Classification and information provided for entertainment hubs.
- Special offers linked with the purchase of tickets from vendors near the location of the event.
- Print-out of maps and access information for a location as described in point 3 above.
- Allows purchase of tickets for events hosted in other countries.
- On-screen instructions available in multi-language
- Excerpts from movies (previews) available.

The present invention is considered to have advantages, including at least some such as:

- 1) Advancement in technology related to ticketing and the entertainment industry.
- 2) Small premium to be paid for each ticket purchased through the present invention in return for the ease, convenience, reliability and time saving achieved from the One-Stop Ticketing System;

- 3) Industry wide links - initially contemplating joint coordinating effort between different chains of cinema operators. Cinema patrons will then no longer restricted by the existing competitive set-up of the cinema industry. The truism "Consumer is King" becomes very true. It is cheaper than each cinema chain developing a similar system on its own;
- 4) Greater exposure/points of sale achieved through strategic location of booths across the country. Enables greater reach compared to current cinema operator's set-up, thus increasing tickets sold or opportunities for tickets to be sold;
- 5) Changes the mindset of the typical cinema-goer by making it easier to choose the experience of movie-going over alternative forms of entertainment available;
- 6) Value added information - makes it easier to include movie-going as part of his schedule/lifestyle with. The present invention will provide details of retail outlets, restaurants, supermarkets, car parks and other facilities situated near the cinemas on-screen. This allows the movie-goer, the ultimate consumer, to plan and choose the include the experience of going to the cinema into his schedule/lifestyle because the conveniences needed to complete his "daily chores" can be found nearby. E.g. go to the bank before the movie and shop for groceries after the movie. Going to the movies becomes part of the routine rather than a luxury which is only available if there is spare time;
- 7) Advertising revenue from advertising for cinema operators, retail outlets, restaurants, supermarkets and other facilities situated near the cinemas from the on-screen advertisements. Advertising also on the backs of tickets dispensed and on the outside of the booths;
- 8) Increasing and improving exposure/patronage of surrounding retail outlets, restaurants to a particular cinema by promoting discounts etc for these outlets to improve sales/patronage during off-periods of the day;
- 9) Increased market size - The increased ease and convenience of purchasing tickets will increase the market size of the cinema-going population;
- 10) Management reporting tool/feedback for cinema owners through the historical statistics/data obtained from tracking customer's activity and usage of the booths kept in the present invention's database. Up-to-date information on cinema attendance from database allows cinema operators to forecast sales,

analyse market trends and develop new products and services to exploit opportunities from changes in customer preferences. Customers can be profiled on a periodic basis into various groups and segments for direct marketing campaigns for cinema owners and other advertisers.

5 The present invention was born out of the need for convenience. The existing solutions available to the average cinema-goer requires too many actions to be undertaken and completed at too many different locations and at too many different points in time. This coupled with the concept of time-saving which has become a primary consideration for many movie-goers has made convenience a key factor.

10 Presently there are numerous entertainment alternatives in the market place. Their availability, accessibility and cost will impact on movie-goers as a consumer's key entertainment choice to either; a) demote going to the movies to a lower rung in terms of a consumer's entertainment priority or b) remove going to the cinema altogether from a consumer's entertainment alternatives.

15 The present invention is dedicated to the wants and needs of the movie-goer and the would-be movie-goer's lifestyle. The ticketing solutions together with other value-added services and information available makes it difficult for a consumer to have an "excuse" not to go to the movies because of other more easily available entertainment alternatives or time constraints from daily routines.

20 The present invention is built upon the following secondary concepts, accessibility, reliability and ease, all of which are linked to convenience and saving time.

The following are at least some of the features considered unique:

- 1) Convenience - locations of the booths/accessibility of locations where the
25 booths are sited.
- 2) Time saving - one stop ticketing solution.
- 3) Easy user-friendly software - systematic, 2-language capability, step-by-step easy to understand instructions on touch screen software.
- 4) Reliability for:
 - 30 a) the consumer - the information which will be provided to consumers will be:
 - real time (this is especially important for checking seat availability)
 - up-to-date cinema listings across all cinemas for Singapore
 - payment capability

- guaranteed on the spot ticket collection (hence guaranteed seat for a movie) once selection is processed and payment collected.
 - b) the cinema operators - the in-built management reporting tool/feedback capability will enable the management of the present invention to provide cinema operators with reliable reports on e.g. the patronage of each of the cinemas in the chain, why certain cinemas are more popular than others in the chain with the aim of aiding the cinema owners to improve a particular cinema (e.g. improve seating comfort, improve audio/visual system etc) thereby increasing patronage.
 - c) the advertisers - reliable advertising capability/novel avenue to increase exposure to the public. The invention will have:
 - a wide range of advertising options (in terms of pricing, length of advertisement, when the advertisement will be displayed, intervals at which the advertisements are to be shown).
 - state-of-the-art moving images and graphics.
 - other services such as upgrading, maintenance of the advertisements; and
 - accurate run-time for paid advertising spots.
 - 5) Value added information to:
 - a) the consumer - details of retail outlets, restaurants, supermarkets, car parks and other facilities situation near the cinemas on-screen. Makes it easier to include movie-going as part of his schedule/lifestyle with.
 - b) the cinema operators - the in-built management reporting tool/feedback capability will enable the management of the invention to provide cinema operators with reliable reports.
 - c) the operators of retail outlets, restaurants, etc. near the cinema - to coordinate marketing strategies to increase patronage e.g. special discounts during off-peak periods of the day, sale of movie memorabilia of blockbuster movies showing at the nearby cinema.
- An embodiment of the present invention will be initially described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig 1a and 1b combine to illustrate a functional outline of the system of the present invention,

Fig 2 illustrates a connectivity schematic for the present system,

Fig 3 illustrates an example of a flowchart showing steps in the process of purchasing a ticket, and

Fig 4 illustrates an elevational view of one of the kiosks according to the present invention.

5 A number of alternative embodiments are also disclosed.

Note that the description of functions is illustrated in accordance with a corresponding 'command button'. A number of the functions are shown to have the same reference numeral as that illustrated in relation to other command buttons. Functions of the same reference numeral have the same operation and thus will not
10 be repetitively described in relation to each command button.

With reference to Figures 1a and 1b, the functions outlined can be described as below.

A. Button System - The component outline

The button system, whether on screen or via separate control and function
15 buttons includes the following:

1. Movie List 103 which accesses and displays listing of all covered movies under different categories (e.g. current movies 127, The Top Ten movies 128, categories of movies under thrillers, comedy 129 or coming attractions 130 etc.) and brings up function buttons below. Any desired movie can be highlighted by
20 touching its screen position. When a movie is highlighted, the buttons below giving the various options may be activated by subsequent touch.
2. Event/Game/Performance List 104, which accesses and displays listing of all covered events/games/performances and other events associated with the system of the present invention and brings up function buttons below. Any
25 desired event/game/performance can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When an event is highlighted, the buttons below giving the various options may be activated by subsequent touch.
3. Preview on Demand 105 is listed in association with each command button (except donation) and accesses and displays a digital full-motion video and
30 actual sound from and/or text and digitalised film posters, photos or colour graphics preview of the highlighted movie/event/game/performance associated with the command button sequence.
4. Dates 106 and Times 107 is again illustrated in association with a corresponding command button and accesses and displays data and time

listings for highlighted current or future movie/event. Touching to highlight a specific date and time allows activation of the "seating availability" function for current and advanced bookings immediately below.

5. With Seating Availability 108, touching this button accesses the most recent update of seating availability data for highlighted show/event. A central database (not shown) will update to all remote locations that are in addition to updates received by individual units each time the "purchase tickets" function is activated. Thus, it is envisaged that the central database, each proprietor and each remote "booth" accordance with the present invention will be networked to provide substantially real-time information regarding events status, such as seating availability. This seating availability is displayed via a seating layout chart. Any desired seat can be highlighted by touching the screen.

6. Movie/Event/Game/Performance location 109 accesses and displays listings of all covered locations for selected movie/event/game/performance and brings up the function button below. Any desired location can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When a location is highlighted, the buttons below may be activated by subsequent touch.

7. Location Details 110 accesses and displays map and text details of the location for the selected movie/event/game/performance. Information provided includes inter-alia: address, telephone numbers, description of sound and visual facilities at the location, transport information to the location, parking facilities etc.

8. Nearby Facilities 111 and Facilities Location 131 accesses and displays map and text details of the facilities available near the selected location. Information provided includes inter-alia: bank branches, automated teller machines (ATMs), entertainment outlets, retail outlets, supermarkets, food courts, restaurants, money-changers, parking facilities etc. Information criteria on the basis of providing relevant information giving added convenience to the lifestyle of the user.

- Touching to highlight a specific facility allows activation of the "Special events/offers by nearby facilities" function 112 immediately below.

9. Special Events/Offers by Nearby Facilities 112 accesses and displays listing of special events/offers provided by the facilities near the selected location. This may include discounts for services and products offered by the facilities for a

predetermined number of tickets purchased from this system.

10. Cinemas List 113 accesses and displays listing 133 of all covered cinemas and brings up the function buttons below. Any desired cinema can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When a cinema is highlighted, the buttons below giving the various options may be activated by subsequent touch.
11. Entertainment Hub List 114 accesses and displays listing 135 of all covered Entertainment Hubs by geographical location and brings up the function buttons below. Any desired Entertainment Hub location can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When a location is highlighted, the buttons below may be activated by subsequent touch.
12. Premium Service 115 is offered as an exclusive service provided to subscription/high usage members for purchase of tickets for Premium Events. Touching its screen position allows activation of the "Premium Service Access" function immediately below.
13. Premium Service Access 116 can be enabled for example by a Premium Service card which must be swiped, via password keyed in to the on-screen keypad/via separate numerical keypad or other suitable means to activate this function.
14. Premium Events 117 which accesses and displays listing of all covered premium events and brings up function buttons below. Premium events are events specially selected by the system provider whereby a number of seats have already been block-booked and fully-paid for by the system provider. These block-booked seats are reserved for Premium Service members. Any desired event can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When an event is highlighted, the buttons below may be activated by subsequent touch.
15. International Events 118 and / or Local Events 119 accesses and displays listing of all covered events according to countries. Premium Service allows cross-border bookings of pre-selected events.
16. With regard to Block-booked Seats Specially Reserved for Premium Service Customers 120, touching this button accesses the most recent update of seating availability data for highlighted premium events. This seating availability is displayed via a seating layout chart. Any desired seat can be highlighted by touching the screen.
17. Purchase Lottery/4D/TOTO tickets 121 is in effect a gaming and / or gambling

option and for example accesses and displays listing 142 of all covered Lottery/4D/TOTO draws and brings up the function button below. Any desired game and draw can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When a game and draw is highlighted, the button below may be activated by subsequent touch.

18. Punter's Selection of Draw Numbers 122 allows the input of draw numbers for participation in a highlighted draw, whether through the on-screen numerical keypad or via separate numerical keypad.

19. Donation to Charities 123 accesses and displays listing 143 of all covered charities and brings up the function buttons below. Any desired charity can be highlighted by touching its screen position. When a charity is highlighted, the buttons below may be activated by subsequent touch.

20. Charities History 124 accesses and displays an audio/video and/or text and photo history of the highlighted charity.

21. Language Options 102 accesses the different language options that the whole program will be conducted in.

22. At Purchase Tickets 125, Credit/cash/Smart card must be swiped or otherwise catered to activate this function. This is unavoidably required to allow sufficient time to check card acceptability and to access central station 132 for continuous updating of seating availability while this function is operating. Final step of "purchase highlighted seats" 149 will not be allowed until credit card is approved for an approximate amount. Actual amount will be approved prior to printing of tickets. If a credit card is denied, the purchase tickets function will immediately stop. A discreet message will be displayed and the system will return to attract mode.

If purchase is approved, the ticket and a transaction receipt is printed 126. Importantly, the ticket will be printed in a form suitably acceptable to each individual event proprietor. Thus it is envisaged that different indicia layouts are contemplated for the information printed on the ticket to comply with event proprietor needs.

B. Button System - The Process

1. Initially the kiosk will be in ATTRACT MODE 101, notifying a potential patron to "TOUCH ANY BUTTON TO START". In the ATTRACT MODE 101, the video display/interactive colour graphics can provide samples of various available productions, event/performance locations, lottery prizes, advertisements and

other information of interest to passersby.

2. When the patron in the ATTRACT MODE 101 selects the LANGUAGE OPTION command button 102, selection can be effected by touching "LANGUAGE 1 or LANGUAGE 2" (not shown). Upon selection, the rest of the program is conducted in the language selected.

3. Selection of a language accesses and displays the various command option buttons: MOVIES LIST 103; CINEMA LIST 113; EVENT/GAME LIST 104; ENTERTAINMENT HUBS LIST 114; PREMIUM SERVICE LIST 115; LOTTERY/4D/TOTO GAMES TICKETS 121 AND DONATION TO CHARITIES 123.

4. When the patron selects the MOVIES LIST function 103 ("TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT"), selection can be effected of the various movies classified under different categories ("CURRENT MOVIES" 127 ; "THE TOP TEN MOVIES" 128 ; "MOVIE CATEGORIES" 129 ; "COMING ATTRACTIONS" 130; "ALL MOVIES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER" etc (not shown)). It will be understood that many variations of the content shown is possible.

- a. Touching screen to highlight any desired category displays the movie listing window 148 in that category.

- b. Touching screen to highlight any desired movie displays the dates, times and cinema locations listing for that specific movie.

- c. Touching the PREVIEW button 105 accesses and displays a digital full-motion video and actual sound from and/or text and colour graphics preview of the desired movie.

- d. Touching the NEARBY FACILITIES command button 111 displays the NEARBY FACILITIES WINDOW 131.

- e. Touching screen to highlight a specific date, time and cinema location accesses the current seating availability data and displays the same via a seating layout chart which shows prices 108.

- f. Touching to highlight a desired available seat allows the desired seat to be booked by touch activating the "PURCHASE HIGHLIGHTED SEATS" button 149.

- g. If all highlighted seats are not available at the moment of touching the "PURCHASE HIGHLIGHTED SEATS" button, available seats are re-displayed 108 or an alternative selection of similar seating arrangements of available

seats *chosen* by the system and *temporarily reserved* for the user at central station will be offered 150. The user is prompted to select alternates.

- h. If all highlighted seats are available, system immediately blocks out highlighted seats at central station and confirms to purchaser that seats have been reserved 132. Dependent on goods or services being purchased, 132 may also confirm punter's draw numbers selection and eligibility for entry to draw, or accept charitable donation. The patron is then prompted to "PLEASE INSERT CREDIT/CASH/SMART CARD" for payment 125. The credit/cash/Smart card amount is checked for approval.
- 10 i. The ticket and transaction receipts are then printed 126.
5. Upon selection of the CINEMA LIST command button 113, a CINEMA LIST WINDOW 133 is opened instructing the patron to "TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT" and enabling the user to scroll through the listings of cinema locations.
- 15 a. Touching screen to highlight any desired cinema displays the location details window 109 for that specific cinema.
- b. Touching the NEARBY FACILITIES command button 111 displays the NEARBY FACILITIES WINDOW 131.
- c. Touching screen to highlight any desired cinema displays the current movies, show dates and times listing for that specific cinema.
- 20 d. Touching screen to highlight a specific movie, show date and time accesses the current seating availability data and displays the same via a seating layout chart which shows prices. ("TOUCH MOVIE LISTING 134, SHOW DATE AND TIME TO SELECT" 106, 107).
- 25 e. Thereafter, the selection sequence is as from point 4f above.
6. Touching the EVENT/GAME LIST command button 104 activates a similar process as that for MOVIE LIST 103 described in point 4 above but under this command, the information content relates to events/games/performances etc. other than movies.
- 30 7. When the user selects the ENTERTAINMENT HUBS LIST command button 114, the ENTERTAINMENT HUBS LIST WINDOW 135 is opened instructing the patron to "TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT" and enabling the user to scroll through the listings of pre-selected entertainment hub locations.
- a. Touching screen to highlight any desired hub location displays the FACILITIES

LIST WINDOW 136 for that specific location, instructing the patron to "TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT" to scroll through the listings of facilities for the type of facility that he requires more information on. For example, listings of banks 137, retail outlets 138 proximate to the booth currently in use, entertainment zones 139, or other categories 140. It is understood that the information listed can be varied or changed according to needs of the local businesses or patrons.

b. The "SPECIAL EVENTS/OFFERS BY NEARBY FACILITIES LISTING WINDOW" 112 pops-up automatically when a desired entertainment hub has been selected or the patron can choose this option.

c. The patron can also purchase movie tickets directly by touching the "NEARBY CINEMA LIST WINDOW" 141, enabling the user to scroll through the list of cinemas in the vicinity of the selected entertainment hub.

d. Thereafter, the selection sequence is as from point 5c above.

8. Upon selection of PREMIUM SERVICE LIST command button 115, the PREMIUM SERVICE ACCESS WINDOW 116 is opened instructing the user to "KEY IN PASSWORD AND/OR SWIPE PREMIUM CARD THROUGH SLOT" (not shown). If the access is approved, the PREMIUM EVENTS LIST WINDOW 117 is displayed, enabling the user to scroll through the listings of Premium Service events under different categories; INTERNATIONAL EVENTS 118 or LOCAL EVENTS 119.

a. Touching screen to highlight any desired category displays the event listing window in that category.

b. Thereafter, the selection sequence if as from point 4b above but for Premium Service events instead of movies.

9. Touching and activating the PURCHASE LOTTERY/4D/TOTO TICKETS command button 121 accesses and displays the GAME/DRAW LISTINGS WINDOW 142, instruction the user to "TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT" and enabling the user to scroll through the different games 145 and draws 146.

a. Touching screen to highlight any desired draw displays the PUNTER'S SELECTION OF DRAW NUMBERS WINDOW 122 for that specific draw, instructing the user to "KEY IN NUMBER SELECTION" for that specific draw.

b. If all numbers selected are accepted for that specific draw, the system 132 confirms to purchaser that numbers have been accepted. Final

credit/cash/Smart card amount is checked for approval 125.

c. The ticket and transaction receipt are then printed 126.

10. When the user selects the DONATION TO CHARITIES command button 123, the CHARITIES LISTINGS WINDOW 143 is opened instructing the patron to "TOUCH ANY LISTING TO SELECT" and enabling the user to scroll through the listing of charitable organisations accepting donations.

a. Touching screen to highlight any desired charitable organisation displays the DONATION AMOUNT WINDOW 144 instructing the user to "KEY IN DONATION AMOUNT" to that specific charity.

b. If the donation is accepted by that specific charity, final credit/cash/Smart card amount 125 is checked for approval.

c. The transaction receipt is then printed 126.

d. The user can also select the CHARITIES HISTORY WINDOW 124 for a brief summary of the charitable organisation's history, objectives and other relevant information.

C. The Components in the System of Invention

As can be seen from Fig 2, the basic elements in the concierge system of the invention comprise a central station 210 which can communicate with a plurality of cinema chains (212, 213 and 222), other event-generating facilities such as a sport's stadium and theatre as represented by 220 and 221, service providers such as lotteries (as represented by 211, 223 and 224), or the system database 219. The communication paths between the central station and the event-generating facilities and service providers are bi-directional, as represented at 225, 229, 230 and 231, although other suitable communication means is also contemplated within the present invention. Communication is preferably by Cellular Digital Packet Data (CDPD) wireless means (as shown at 230) although, possible also are telephone lines or wired communication means (as shown at 225 and 231).

The central station 210 also communicates (via CDPD) with one or more ticket sales kiosks represented by 214, 215 and 216, as shown at 226, or via telephone or optic links as shown at 227 and 228 respectively.

The function of the central station is to update media files and databases at the ticket vending kiosks 214, 215 and 216 as to current and future events, i.e. the particular movies, programs or plays which are to be shown, the dates and times of the shows, details as to the events and locations and current seating availability. The

central station also updates the files and databases at the ticket sales kiosks as to details of other services provided. The individual kiosks have various media storage capacity sufficient to accommodate graphic displays of scenes from the various events if desired or such scenes can be stored at the central station and called up by each
 5 individual kiosk as noted.

Furthermore, the central station is in real time communication with the cinemas, the stadium or other performance locations so as to be continuously updated as to available seating and with other service providers as to availability of services to be provided.

10 The central station is also in communication with charge centres as represented at 217 and 218 via the communications links at 228 to obtain clearance for a credit card, cash card or Smart card and any authorisation which might be required to accept a credit/cash/Smart card introduced into one of the ticket vending kiosks.

The central station, or other components of the overall system may individually
 15 and /or collectively communicate with other sources of information (not shown), for example local government, police or emergency services, internet, etc.

D. The Steps in the Operation of the System of Invention

When in operation (Fig 3), the central station can be provided, as represented at 340, to transmit available selections to the remote kiosks which at 341 can display
 20 the selections as to potential events and services, including preview excerpts for movies/events/games/performances at the individual kiosks, under patron control or automatically as a promotional display.

For the purchase of movie/event/performance tickets, the patron can then provide on-screen selection at 342 of a particular movie/event/performance or cinema
 25 or entertainment hub, thereby initiating dialogue with the central station as represented by 343 for display at kiosk of available seats 344, coupled with provisional selection of a seat and display of seat environment as indicated at 346. This process may be repeated as represented at 345 with selection of alternative seating possibilities 347 until the patron makes a final seat selection at 348. This seat
 30 selection is communicated to the central station at 343, as represented by 349 and a charge is made to a credit/cash/Smart card at 350 which has been inserted into the kiosk. When the charge is verified through the central station as represented by 351, the ticket and transaction receipt 355 is produced.

The patron can also provide on-screen selection at 342 of services including

Premium Service, donations to charity and selection of lottery game and draw numbers. This initiates remote dialogue with the central station at 343 for display at the kiosk of charities accepting donations and amount donated as represented at 352, or selection of draw numbers in the purchase lottery/4D/TOTO game tickets at 354.

- 5 Once the donation amount/recipient or game and draw details have been selected and confirmed by the patron, the selection is communicated to the central station at 353 and a charge is made to a credit/cash/Smart card at 350 which has been inserted into the kiosk. When the charge is verified through the central station as represented by 356 and 357, the ticket and transaction receipt 355 is produced.

10 **E. The Kiosk - its Components**

As can be seen from Fig 4, the remote stations can be referred to as 'booths' or 'kiosks'. Each of the kiosks comprises a housing 460 with a video-type or CCD screen 461 forming the display. Preferably, a touch-screen display is used so that the screen functions for selection of the various products and services of the kiosk, for selection of
 15 events, for seat selection, for entering donation amounts or draw numbers or for entering credit/cash/smart card Personal Identification Numbers (PIN). It is also used for signalling the apparatus that the patron's selection has concluded and the patron is awaiting charging and verification. The kiosk can, if desired, be provided with a numerical keypad 463 to assist in selection and/or inputting data such as Personal
 20 Identification Numbers (PIN) for credit/cash/smart card charge authorisation. The display 461 and numerical keypad 463 are connected to the computer or central processing unit (CPU) 464 in the kiosk housing.

The computer has a memory 465 and can be linked by a wireless communication unit 466 with the antennae 469 or to a modem for telephone or optical
 25 link communication 467 with the central station.

Essential to the kiosk shown in Fig 4 is a credit/cash/smart card reader 462 into which the patron can insert a credit/cash/smart card and which can read the inserted card and notify the central station through the kiosk computer of the card information for verification and charging.

30 Another essential component to the kiosk is the ticket or information carrier printer 468 which is also connected to the computer 464 and capable of printing the different types of tickets for the various products. The information on the information carrier can include a transaction receipt for funds charged, map and relevant details for a location or entertainment hub and seating information with a map or seating plan

showing the patron the selected seat.

Optional is a currency input unit 470 which can receive currency notes and coins, verify the validity thereof and store the currency for collection at a later date. The currency unit in 470 is likewise connected to the computer 464.

5 The computer 464 or the central station computer can be programmed with a system for automatically displaying "Location details" and "Special events/offers by Nearby Facilities" when a patron chooses a desired entertainment hub or cinema/event location. It can also automatically display a digital full-motion video and actual sound and/or text and digitalised film posters, photos or colour graphics
10 preview of the highlighted movie/event/game/ performance or a brief history and summary of the highlighted charity. These automatic display windows provide additional information for the patron to make an informed selection and can be programmed to revert to the previous screen after an interval for the patron to make his selection.

15 During the entire process of using the system, the computer 464 or the central station computer can also be programmed with a system for automatically displaying on-screen colour graphics advertising banners on a small section of the screen for all the displayed windows after the select "LANGUAGE OPTION COMMAND" option 102 of figure 1. This allows vendors to advertise their products or other special
20 offers/events available to the patron.

In addition, the computer 464 or the central station computer can also be programmed with a system for automatically displaying the command function button for "Donation to charities" on the touch screen display 461 whilst the patron is awaiting verification and charging of his selected transaction (which is all transactions other
25 than donating to charities). This allows the patron to access the system again to choose the charity and amount of donation.

Alternatives to the above disclosure are contemplated, including, but not exhaustively:

A. Convenience/Accessibility alternatives:

30 1) The Pocket Booth - A miniature hand held version of the publicly sited booths whereby all the functions of The Booth can be made available to our premium customers. It is envisaged that it will be connected to the main system at The Booth via any phones, a modem or the Internet. In the short term, we do not anticipate The Pocket Booth to dispense tickets but rather, tickets will be

delivered to the customer himself.

N.B. Access by The Pocket Booth user to the main system would be by dialling into a dedicated phone number using a user ID and password. This technology was just made available by PocketScience Inc. with a device whereby e-mail or internet access can be made by holding the device against the telephone handset to send and receive messages is made by JVC and Sharp. An alternative means of access to the dedicated phone number is through the use of specially-developed cellular phones whereby a Smart Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card is inserted into the phone. To use The Booth's service, the user simply keys in his Personal Identification Number (PIN) and follows the instructions that appear on the handset screen after he is logged onto the main system at The Booth. The Booth would need the technology to be able to send ticketing information to and from the customer.

2) The Premium Booth - The Booth management needs to introduce a premium service to our customers which will include, inter alia:

- a special premium customer icon/option (accessible at The Booth terminals by personal user ID and password) whereby premium customers can have priority to book seats that have been specially allocated to The Booth at film premiers or sneak previews or choice seats at each cinema (see below);
- negotiate with cinema operators where choice seats in each cinema for each screening are allocated to The Booth. The Booth will inform their premium customers (N.B. The Booth will keep a profile of its premium customers detailing their personal details, favourite types of movie, favourite actors/actresses/directors, favourite cinemas) of screenings and thereby enabling The Booth premium customers to have first choice/right of refusal to their favourite movies;
- The Booth newsletter which will detail up-and-coming attractions and other movie information both local and international; and
- delivery of tickets to the premium customer either at home or at work.

3) Other access alternatives - Although The Booth concept is primary, the management will also include (much further down the line if the management finds a need):

- hotline/centralised hotline bookings via Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

systems. IVR is an emerging technology that allows customers to buy tickets over the phone without speaking to an operator.

- Internet access

- 4) Ticketing capability for other entertainment options - plays, key/celebrity sports events, charity balls/Dinner & Dances, tickets special events held at popular night spots, international staging of musicals and plays, concerts.

B. Software alternatives

- 1) Donation option - The Booth aims to be able to allow customers to donate an amount of money to a list of charities.

- 2) Tracking patron information - to provide cinema operators with greater value added services in terms of management feedback/tools.

C. Ticket alternatives

- 1) Physical appearance of tickets not limited to paper, to include smart coded cards.

D. Hardware alternatives

- 1) Multi screens, i.e. one booth but with two touch screen terminals
2) Remote hand held booking device (The Pocket Booth)

E. Payment alternatives

- 1) Electronic payment, e.g. cash cards, credit cards
2) Booth pre-paid or smart cards
3) Booth credit cards

While this invention has been described fully and completely with special emphasis upon a preferred embodiment, it should be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practised otherwise than as specifically described herein.

CLAIMS

1. A remotely located booth enabling at least one item, such as goods and / or services, to be reviewed, selected and / or purchased by a patron, said booth including:

5 visual display means for providing a medium by which the patron can review at least one of said at least one item in order for the patron to determine a brief description, location and time for collection of a desired item,

logic means coupled to the visual display means and which allows availability, reservation and payment for the desired item to be made,

10 collection means coupled to the logic means for enabling the patron to collect a receipt of purchase of said desired item, and

memory means coupled to the logic means and for storing in digital format a visual indication of the desired item thus enabling said review by the patron.

2. A booth as claimed in claim 1, wherein the visual indication is a video clip.

15 3. A booth as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein advertising material is displayed on and substantially continuously in at least a small portion of visual display means.

4. A booth as claimed in claim 3, wherein the advertising material is a banner.

5. A booth as claimed in claim 3, wherein the advertising material relates to special offers provided by vendors proximate the booth and linked to the purchase of
20 the desired item

6. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the collection means includes a printer.

7. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the receipt of purchase is a ticket.

25 8. A booth as claimed in claim 7, wherein the ticket is a movie ticket, event or game ticket or a gaming ticket.



9. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the collection means provides a map for the patron to travel to collect the item.
10. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the collection means provides transport details for the patron to travel to collect the item.
- 5 11. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the logic means provides information regarding the location of the booth.
12. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the reservation can be made in association with a block booking for premium customers.
- 10 13. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the visual display means provides information for entertainment hubs, such as banks, retail outlets or entertainment zones.
14. A booth as claimed in claim 13, wherein the entertainment hubs are located proximate the location of the booth.
- 15 15. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the visual indication is an excerpt from a movie or movie preview.
16. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the memory means receives data from a communications link coupled to a remote database.
17. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the remote database is further coupled to at least one vendor offering said item for sale and / or review.
- 20 18. A booth as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims, wherein the data provided to the memory means is provided in real time.



19. A system comprising in combination a plurality of booths as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 18, a database for storing information used by the booths, and a network for enabling communication between the plurality of booths in real-time.

20. A system as claimed in claim 19, wherein at least one vendor is linked to
5 enable data communication between the at least one vendor and the network and / or at least one booth.

