Claims

1. An apparatus for processing electronic payment transactions, the apparatus comprising:

a computer processor and a data storage device, the computer processor interposed between i) a merchant server associated with an electronic commerce site of a merchant and ii) a payment account server configured to route transaction requests over at least one of an automated clearing house (ACH) network and a payment card processing network, the data storage device comprising non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to:

receive, via the Internet from the merchant server, an order indication at a payment intermediary server, the order indication indicating an order by a customer for a product offered on the electronic commerce site, the electronic commerce site providing a description of the product, the order having an order value amount;

initiate, by an incoming payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network, a first transaction from an account associated with the customer to an intermediary account for the order value amount;

initiate, by an outgoing payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network, a second transaction from the intermediary account to an account associated with the merchant for a first portion of the order value amount, whereby a second portion of the order value amount remains in the intermediary account;

in response to a delivery of the product to the customer, cause a customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt for the customer to input an order feedback indication via the customer device, the order feedback indication including an indication of the quality of the product;

receive the order feedback indication from the customer device via the Internet, the order feedback indication including an image captured by the customer of the delivered product and indicating that the delivered product is not as described on the electronic commerce site as per the image;

in response to the order feedback indication, cause the customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt presenting a refund option for the customer to receive a partial refund amount from the second portion in lieu of a product return;

receive, from the customer device via the Internet, an indication of a selection of the refund option;

initiate, by the outgoing payment initiation module in response to the selection of the refund option, a third transaction from the intermediary account to the account associated with the customer for the partial refund amount; and

initiate, by the outgoing payment initiation module in response to the selection of the refund option, a fourth transaction of a remainder of the second portion of the order value amount to the account associated with the merchant.

2. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the data storage device further comprises a distribution determination module comprising non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to determine the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount.

3. An apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the distribution determination module comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to determine the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount based on a predefined ratio.

4. An apparatus for processing electronic payment transactions, the apparatus comprising:

a computer processor and a data storage device, the computer processor interposed between i) a merchant server associated with an electronic commerce site of a merchant and ii) a payment account server configured to route transaction requests over one of an automated clearing house (ACH) network and a payment card processing network, the data storage device comprising non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to:

receive, via the Internet from the merchant server, an order indication at a payment intermediary server, the order indication indicating an order by a customer for a product offered on the electronic commerce site, the electronic commerce site providing a description of the product, the order having an order value amount;

initiate, by an incoming payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network, a first transaction from a payment card account associated with the customer to an account associated with the merchant for a first portion of the order value amount;

in response to a delivery of the product to the customer, cause a customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt for the customer to input an order feedback indication via the customer device, the order feedback indication including an indication of the quality of the product;

receive the order feedback indication from the customer device via the Internet, the order feedback indication including an image captured by the customer of the delivered product and indicating that the delivered product is not as described on the electronic commerce site as per the image;

in response to the order feedback indication, cause the customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt presenting a refund option for the customer to receive a partial refund amount from a second portion in lieu of a product return;

receive, from the customer device via the Internet, an indication of a selection of the refund option;

initiate, by an outgoing payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network in response to the selection of the refund option, a second transaction from the account associated with the merchant to the account associated with the customer for the partial refund amount; and

initiate, by the outgoing payment initiation module in response to the selection of the refund option, a third transaction from the payment card account associated with the customer of a remainder of the second portion of the order value amount to the account associated with the merchant.

5. An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the data storage device further comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to place a holding transaction on the second portion of the order value amount.

6. An apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the data storage device further comprises a distribution determination module comprising non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to determine the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount.

7. An apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the distribution determination module comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to determine the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount based on a predefined ratio.

8. An apparatus according claim 6, wherein the distribution determination module comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to determine an allocation of the second portion between the merchant and the customer.

9. An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the distribution determination module comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to allocate the entire second portion to the merchant responsive to the order feedback indication indicating that the customer is satisfied with the order.

10. An apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the distribution determination module comprises non-transitory instructions executable by the computer processor to allocate at least a portion of the second portion to the customer based on a review or rating of the product.

11. An electronic payment method performed by an apparatus including a computer processor and a data storage device, the computer processor interposed between i) a merchant server associated with an electronic commerce site of a merchant and ii) a payment account server configured to route transaction requests over one of an automated clearing house (ACH) network and a payment card processing network, the method comprising:

receiving, by the apparatus, via the Internet from the merchant server, an order indication at a payment intermediary server, the order indication indicating an order by a customer for a product offered on the electronic commerce site, the electronic commerce site providing a description of the product, the order having an order value amount;

initiating, by the apparatus, by an incoming payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network, a first transaction from a payment card account associated with the customer to an account associated with the merchant for a first portion of the order value amount;

causing by the apparatus in response to a delivery of the product to the customer, a customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt for the customer to input an order feedback indication via the customer device, the order feedback indication including an indication of the quality of the product;

receiving, by the apparatus the order feedback indication from the customer device via the Internet, the order feedback indication including an image captured by the customer of the delivered product and indicating that the delivered product is not as described on the electronic commerce site as per the image;

in response to the order feedback indication, causing, by the apparatus, the customer device associated with the customer to display a prompt presenting a refund option for the customer to receive a partial refund amount from the second portion in lieu of a product return;

receiving, by the apparatus, from the customer device via the Internet, an indication of a selection of the refund option;

initiating, by the apparatus, by an outgoing payment initiation module programmed to transmit instructions to the payment account server that cause routing of transactions over the at least one of the ACH network and the payment card processing network in response to the selection of the refund option, a second transaction from the account associated with the merchant to the account associated with the customer for the partial refund amount; and

initiating, by the apparatus, by the outgoing payment initiation module in response to the selection of the refund option, a third transaction from the payment card account associated with the customer of a remainder of the second portion of the order value amount to the account associated with the merchant.

12. A method according to claim 11, further comprising placing, by the apparatus, a holding transaction on the second portion of the order value amount.

13. A method according to claim 11, further comprising determining, by the apparatus, the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the first portion and the second portion of the order value amount are determined based on a predefined ratio.

15. A method according to claim 11, comprising allocating, by the apparatus, the entire second portion to the merchant responsive to the order feedback indication indicating that the customer is satisfied with the order.

16. A method according to claim 11, comprising allocating by the apparatus, at least a portion of the second portion to the customer based on a review or rating of the product.

17. A non-transitory computer readable medium carrying computer executable instructions which, when executed on a computer processor, cause the computer processor to carry out a method according to claim 11.