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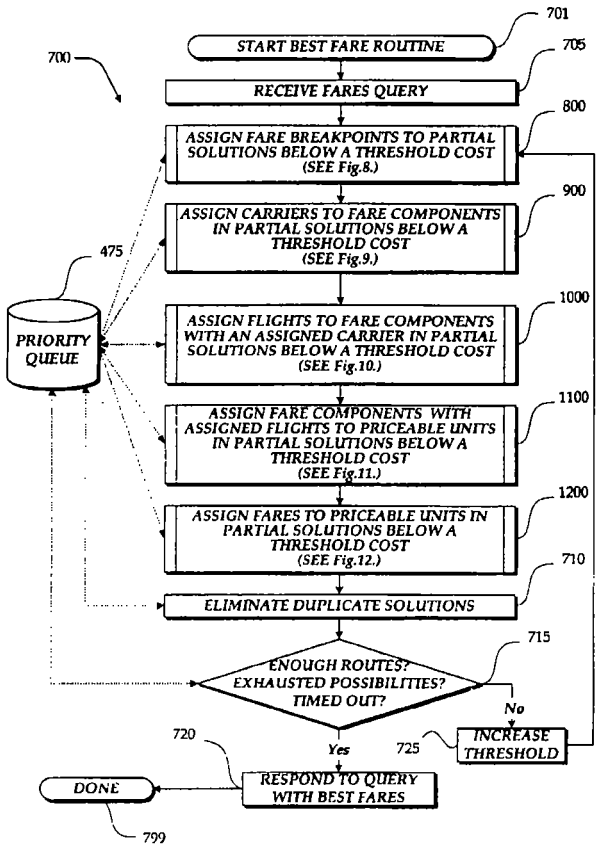
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(54) Title: OPTIMIZED SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FINDING BEST FARES



(57) Abstract: The present invention provides a method, apparatus and system for processing fare queries to find the best fares. In one embodiment a query server utilizes a branching and bounding based technique to implicitly enumerate possible solutions to arrive at best fare solutions. A fare query is received (705) and used to add (800) fare breakpoints to partial solution below a threshold cost. The fare components defined by the breakpoints are assigned (900) carriers and then assigned (1000) flights. The fare components with flight assignements are then grouped (110) to form priceable units, which are in turn assigned (1200) fares. Any partial solutions with identical trip information (except fare information) are then eliminated (710). A determination is made whether an ending scenario has been reached (715). If no ending scenario has been reached (715), the threshold cost in increased (725) and processing begins again. If an ending scenario has been reached (715), the lowest cost solutions are generated (720).

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