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A vending machine that dispenses custom printed fabric goods

Description

1. This description pertains to an invention that performs an automated process to dispense fabric goods with custom printed designs.
2. "Fabric goods" that can be dispensed by the machine means any sort of product made of a soft and pliable material and includes T-shirts, handphone pouches, and handkerchiefs. The application of this process, however, is not limited to these and this patent is intended to cover all possible uses.
3. "Custom printed design" or "graphic" means any sort of printable picture and includes photographs as well as artwork.
4. An "interface" may be a push-button interface, touch-screen interface, or any other sort of mechanism by which an automated system may be controlled.
5. The process by which the machine dispenses a custom-printed fabric product is as follows:
 - 5.1. A person intending to purchase a custom printed fabric product ("the user") makes payment for the product he wishes to purchase by inserting a set number of coins or notes into the machine.
 - 5.2. The user selects the custom printed design(s) that he wants printed on the product(s) from an interface. The graphic(s) may come from user-provided removable memory media (such as memory sticks or disks) or they may be preset graphics stored in the machine.
 - 5.3. Optionally, the user may have his photograph taken by a camera built into the machine and printed on the product(s) to be dispensed.
 - 5.4. If the machine is able to dispense multiple products, the user may select the product(s) desired from an interface.

Steps 1, 2, 3 & 4 do not have to be performed in order. Not all of the above steps have to be implemented for a machine to be covered under this patent: step 1 as well as at least one step out of steps 2, 3 & 4, must be implemented.

 - 5.5. The machine then prints the graphics required onto the fabric product selected. This may be done by:
 - 5.5.1. Using a printer that is able to print on fabric to print the graphic(s) directly on the product(s);
 - 5.5.2. Using a printer that is able to print on a heat transfer (also known as iron-on) sheet, the graphic(s) required are printed on such a sheet and then transferred onto the desired product(s).
 - 5.5.3. Any other method of transferring a graphic onto fabric material.
 - 5.6. The finished product(s) are then ejected from the machine and dispensed to the user.- 6. A labelled diagram of such a machine is attached to this document. The appearance of the machine as well as the placement of components is not of the essence; any machine which incorporates the previously described process is to be considered covered under this patent.



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Claims

This application seeks patent protection for a vending machine which is capable of performing an automated process of collecting payment, printing customized graphics selected from an automated interface onto a fabric product, and dispensing that product to a customer.