

**“Electronic Transaction System for Facilitating the Supply of Goods to
Retailers and Method Therefor”**

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to an electronic transaction system for facilitating the supply of goods to retailers and method therefor. The invention is particularly suited to assisting small-scale retailers take advantage of the benefits of electronic transaction systems, and it is in this context that the invention will be discussed.

Background Art

10 The following discussion of the background of the invention is intended to facilitate an understanding of the invention. However, it should be appreciated that the discussion is not an acknowledgement or admission that any of the material referred to was published, known or part of the common general knowledge of the person skilled in the art in any jurisdiction as at the priority
15 date of the application.

Hawkers and operators of wet market stalls can obtain their goods from a number of different types of suppliers. One type of supplier is commonly referred to as the “Van sales” supplier.

20 A “Van sales” supplier typically hires a van and purchases supplies from a wholesaler for subsequent supply to the hawkers and/or wet market stall operators. However, the “Van sales” supplier has some significant disadvantages, such as:

- Premium prices may be paid for goods purchased from importers, which in turn results in slim profit margins for the supplier.

- Goods may only be purchased on a cash-only basis. This puts financial pressure on the supplier to also supply on a cash-only basis.

5 Competing with “Van sales” suppliers for the hawker and wet market stall operator’s business are mid-level suppliers. A mid-level supplier has overheads and employees and thus needs to compete by way of (i) price; (ii) terms of payment; (iii) service; and (iv) supply of additional items, such as a loan fridge or oven.

10 A mid-level supplier solicits business through van sales. Each van carries a limited range of stock that can be sold to hawkers and wet market stall operators on a cash basis. The van operator takes details of additional sales orders from the hawker or wet market stall operator for supply at a later date by the mid-level supplier. The problems with this arrangement for the mid-level supplier include:

15 • Through contacts made as a van operator, and with the training provided by the mid-level supplier, it is not uncommon for a van operator to become an independent “Van sales” supplier. Thus, mid-level suppliers often train their eventual competitors.

20 • Van operators often take advantage of the cash handling nature of the mid-level suppliers operations by:

• Lying as to the hawker’s or wet market stall operator’s payment for a short period of time (commonly referred to as “rolling”); and

25 • Providing unauthorised credit arrangements to a hawker or wet market stall operator.

- Communication with the hawker or wet market stall operator is by way of the van operator. This means that the integrity of the van operator determines whether information from a mid-level supplier in respect of special offer items, purchase incentives, order status, delivery schedule, audit trails and payment terms is passed on to the hawker or wet market stall operator.

One mechanism by which some of these problems may be overcome is by means of implementing an electronic transaction system. However, the take-up of such systems by hawkers and wet market stall operators is limited because:

- The electronic transaction system does not provide any perceived benefit to the hawker or wet market stall operator;
- The hawker or wet market stall operator may operate in a locality or in a manner, that makes communication with the hawker or wet market stall operator difficult;
- The mid-level supplier may seek to recover some of the costs of creating and maintaining the electronic transaction system from the hawker or wet market stall operator; and/or
- The electronic transaction system may be perceived as detrimental to the hawker or wet market stall operator as time will be needed to be spent learning the system and dealing with initial implementation problems. This is exacerbated by the fact that current technology either provides more functionality than the hawker or wet market stall operator requires, or provides too little functionality to be economically justifiable.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide an electronic transaction system that provides identifiable benefits to both retailers and

suppliers. Ideally, the electronic transaction system is also able to be used by mobile retailers.

Disclosure of the Invention

Throughout the specification, unless the context requires otherwise, the word
5 “comprise” or variations such as “comprises” or “comprising”, will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers but not the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers.

In accordance with a first aspect of the invention there is an electronic transaction system for facilitating the supply of goods to retailers comprising:

- 10 • a retailer terminal;
- a transaction server; and
- at least one third party terminal,

where at least one of the third party terminals, or the transaction server, is operated by a supplier of goods and where a retailer can place an order for
15 goods with a supplier using the retailer terminal, the retailer terminal then operable to forward the order to the appropriate supplier via the transaction server and where, on delivery of the goods to the retailer, the retailer confirms or rejects delivery of the goods using the retailer terminal, the retailer terminal in turn confirming delivery or rejection of the goods with the transaction server
20 and, in response, the transaction server forwards any communication messages destined for the retailer and generated by a third party terminal and forwarded to the transaction server for delivery, to the retailer terminal for display to the retailer. Communication between components may be by way of direct cable connection, PSTN, wireless connection or a combination of any
25 of the foregoing.

In this manner, the reliance on “van sales” to generate orders is broken as the retailer can communicate directly with the supplier.

Ideally, the at least one third party terminal is operated by manufacturers, suppliers and/or information providers (such as government agencies). This
5 increases the benefits of the system to the retailer, as information can be readily accessed from important people to their industry.

The retailer terminal may also be adapted to authenticate the identity of a delivery person who delivers the goods. In this manner, the retailer can associate a delivery with an order. This situation can be further improved by
10 displaying an electronic copy of the order upon authentication of the identity of the delivery person. In alternative arrangements, provision may be made for a retailer to accept partial delivery of goods.

Authentication of both the driver and the retailer may be by way of magnetic or smart card (either contact or contactless), biometric identifier or PIN, or a
15 combination of any of the foregoing. In the case of card identification, a proprietary card or a widely distributed card, such as a travel card, may be used.

Trace numbers may be used to allow for appropriate tracking of messages and responses, such as payment requests and meeting scheduling. To
20 further facilitate tracking of information a database may be used to store transaction information.

Storing transaction information provides a number of benefits, both to the retailer and third parties. Retailers can use the information stored to track consumer trends. This trend information can then be used to discontinue
25 standing orders for the supply of goods out of vogue and establish standing orders for goods presently in vogue. The same information can be used by manufacturers to make product related decisions on an aggregate basis.

The stored information, on an aggregate basis, can then be used by suppliers, manufacturers and government agencies alike for data mining purposes.

5 A special advantage for government agencies in storing the information is that the entire supply chain from manufacturer through to consumer can be tracked using the system. In cases of food poisoning or other product defects, this supply chain can be followed to facilitate recall of products or directing medical attention to those in need of same.

The system may also provide for ordering of goods from suppliers via a web-page in addition to by way of the retailer terminal.

10 The system may be further enhanced to provide financial functions to the retailer on either a real-time or batch transaction basis. For example, the retailer terminal may also integrate with an EFTPOS network to allow the retailer to use the retail terminal to process electronic payment transactions. In such an example, the operator of the transaction server may operate as a
15 merchant aggregator or as a financial acquirer of such transactions. Alternatively, the retailer terminal may be used to authorise payment of supplier invoices – authorisation being provided to the operator of the transaction server who can then organise either direct payment to the supplier or indirect payment to the supplier via their own financial accounts. If the
20 retailer does not authorise payment to suppliers, reminder messages may be issued to the retailer using the system at further times (as may be determined by the retailer). The supplier may also be informed that payment of the invoice will be delayed.

25 In either situation, the operator of the transaction server may seek to recoup some of their costs for establishing and maintaining the electronic network by way of fixed rental fees and costs for each transaction processed (percentage or fixed cost). However, to defray this cost at the retailer end, these costs may be shared by manufacturers or third party. Alternatively, a number of

retailers may share the same retailer terminal, customers of the retailer terminal able to select a button to access the appropriate retailer's accounts.

The system may also be adapted to handle stock control functions, such as standing orders on low quantities. The system may also be adapted to properly administer a loyalty program system.

The retailer terminal may be integrated with, or connect to, other devices such as printers, dedicated EFTPOS terminals, etc. The retailer terminal may provide configurable keys to access the various functions provided by the electronic system (such as by way of a touch screen).

Further aspects of the invention relate to a transaction server and retailer terminal as used in the electronic system described in the first aspect of the invention. A yet further aspect of the invention relates to a method of facilitating the supply of goods to retailers.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a schematic representation of a first embodiment of an electronic transaction system for facilitating the supply of goods to retailers.

Figure 2 is a schematic representation of a second embodiment of an electronic transaction system for facilitating the supply of goods to retailers.

Best Mode(s) for Carrying Out the Invention

In accordance with a first embodiment of the invention there is provided an electronic transaction system 10 for supplying goods 12 to retailers 14. The electronic transaction system 10 comprises:

- a retailer terminal 16;
- a transaction server 18;
- at least one third party 20; and
- a terminal 22 for each third party.

5 The retailer terminal 16 is designed as an anti-shock, water-proof, heat resistant device with a good ventilation system. The retailer terminal 16 includes a card reader 24, a keypad 26, an LCD display 28, a communications port 30, speaker 32 and memory 34. These features will be discussed in more detail below.

10 The transaction server 18 includes a processor 36, memory 38, a database 39 and a plurality of communication ports 40.

The third parties 20 may take the form of suppliers, manufacturers or information providers (such as governmental authorities). Each third party has their own terminal 22. Each terminal 22 includes an LCD display 42, a keypad
15 44 and a communications port 46.

Each retailer terminal 16 communicates with the transaction server 18 by way of communications ports 30, 40. Similarly, terminals 22 communicate with the transaction server by way of communications ports 40, 46. Communication may be by way of direct cable connection, via fixed PSTN or wireless
20 communications networks (not shown) or a combination of any of the foregoing.

The electronic transaction system 10 will now be described in the context of the following example.

A retailer 14 accesses their retailer terminal 16 and initiates a download to
25 memory 34 of the latest software needed to participate in the electronic

transaction system 10 being described. The retailer terminal 16 then communicates with the transaction server 18 to facilitate the download. Ideally, the software to be downloaded is stored on the transaction server 18, although it may be stored on an external server (not shown).

- 5 Once downloaded, the retailer 14 executes an ordering module of the software. Using the ordering module, the retailer 14 is able to place a first order for goods 12 with one or more third party suppliers 20, as appropriate. Once the order is finalised, the data 48 constituting the order is sent to the transaction server 18, via communication ports 30, 40, for routing to the
- 10 terminal 22 of the appropriate third party supplier 20.

Before routing the data 48 to the appropriate third party supplier 20, the data 48 is allocated a trace number and stored in database 39. The data 48, now including the trace number, is then routed to the appropriate third party supplier 20.

- 15 The third party supplier 20 receives the data 48 constituting the order via their terminal 22. The third party supplier 20 can then view the order to identify:
- the goods 12 ordered;
 - the date of requested delivery of such goods 12; and
 - such other information as the retailer 14 may wish to convey to
- 20 the third party supplier 20.

- The third party supplier 20 can then take such steps as required to prepare the retailer's 14 order for delivery. Once a retailer's 14 order has been prepared for delivery, a message 49 is sent to the transaction server 18. Message 49 includes details of the expected time/date of delivery, the delivery
- 25 person's identification details and the trace number of the order that the delivery relates to.

On receipt of the message 49, the transaction server 18 stores the information contained in the message 49 in database 39. Database 39 forms an association between the information contained in the message 49 and data 48 constituting an order by way of matching trace number values.

5 At the third party supplier's 20 end, the goods the subject of the order are then loaded on to a van 50, or other method of transportation, and transported to the retailer's 14 premises. At this time, the driver 52 of the van 50, ie. the delivery person, runs his identification card 54 through the card reader 24 of the retailer's 14 retailer terminal 16 and enters their personal password using
10 keypad 26. The retailer terminal 16 then communicates with the transaction server 18 and/or third party supplier's 20 terminal 22, as appropriate, to:

- a) authenticate the identity of the driver 52;
- b) identify the third party supplier 20 who employs the driver 52; and
- c) obtain the trace number for the order.

15 Ideally, this is achieved by an appropriate search of the database 39 for information received in a message 49 that has matching driver name/delivery person identification details and, from this reduced subset, the closest matching delivery time to the time that the transaction server 18 received the authentication/identification request.

20 Once this authentication/identification process has been successfully completed, the retailer 14 is required to run his identification card 54 through the card reader 24 of their retailer terminal 16 and enter their personal password using keypad 26. Authentication of the retailer's 14 identity may then either be performed by the retailer terminal 16 itself or in conjunction with
25 data stored separately in the database 39 of the transaction server 18.

Upon authentication of the retailer's 14 identity, the retailer terminal 16 communicates with the transaction server 18 and third party supplier's 20

terminal 22 to obtain the data 48 stored in database 39 constituting the order correlating to the obtained trace number. This data 48, appropriately formatted, is then displayed to the retailer 14 using LCD display 28.

5 The retailer 14 may then review the order data 48 in order to verify that the delivered goods 12 match the goods 12 specified in the order. Once verified, or if the retailer 14 is otherwise satisfied with the delivered goods 12, the retailer 14 presses the designated button on the keypad 26 of the retailer terminal 16 to confirm acceptance of the goods 12. If the retailer 14 is dissatisfied with the delivered goods 12 in any way, the retailer 14 presses the
10 designated button on the keypad 26 of the retailer terminal 16 to reject delivery of the goods 12. In both situations, the retailer terminal 16 generates a return message 55, including the trace number, to record acceptance or rejection of the goods 12 as appropriate.

The return message 55 is then communicated to the transaction server 18 for
15 on-forwarding to the third party supplier's 20 terminal 22. If the message indicates that the goods 12 were accepted, third party supplier's 20 terminal 22 generates an electronic invoice 57 for the accepted goods 12, which includes the trace number for the original order for such goods, and transmits the electronic invoice 57 to the transaction server 18. The transaction server
20 18 then stores the electronic invoice 57 in database 39. Again, database 39 forms an association between the information contained in the electronic invoice 57 and data 48 constituting an order by way of matching trace number values.

It should be noted that part of the order data 48 displayed for review includes
25 the terms of payment for the associated invoice.

In the time that elapses between the retailer 14 placing the order and delivery of that order, a number of third parties 20 may have sought to communicate with the retailer 14 (whether directly or as part of a larger group). For the sake of illustration in the present example:

- a third party manufacturer 20 wishes to inform all its retailers, including the retailer 14, of the details of a special promotion that it is offering for the next week with which the retailer 14 is to abide by.
- 5 • a first third party supplier 20 wishes to inform all of its retailers, including the retailer 14, of a special purchase offer relating to a particular good 12 or group of specified goods 12.
- 10 • a second third party supplier 20 wishes to inform the retailer 14 that an invoice for a previous delivery of goods 12 has now become due under the third party supplier's 20 terms of payment (as displayed to the retailer 14 upon acceptance of the delivered goods 12).
- 15 • A third party governmental agency 20 wishes to inform retailers of dates and times of upcoming seminars on a topic – the retailer 14 required to attend one of these seminars.

In each case, the respective third party 20 inputs the message to be sent using the keypad 44 of their terminal 22. The terminal 22 then operates to forward the message 56 to the transaction server 18 for storage in database 39 and forwarding resending to the retailer 14 at an appropriate time when
20 they next access the transaction server 18.

In the case of messages 56 such as the third example posed above, the message 56 also includes the trace number sent to the transaction server 18 with the electronic invoice 57 now due. In the case of messages 56 such as the fourth example posed above, the transaction server 18 allocates a trace
25 number 56 to such messages to track expected responses.

Continuing the example described above, upon communicating with the transaction server 18 to record acceptance or rejection of the goods 12, the

transaction server 18 initiates a reply by forwarding messages 56 intended for the retailer 14 to the retailer's 14 retailer terminal 16.

On forwarding a message 56 to an appropriate retailer terminal 16, the message 56 is marked as read in respect of that retailer terminal 16.

- 5 The retailer terminal 16, on receipt of such messages 56, activates the speaker 32 to provide an audible cue to the retailer 14 that they have been sent a message 56.

Each message 56 sent to the retailer terminal 16 is displayed, in turn, to the retailer 14 via LCD display 28. In respect of the messages described earlier in
10 this example:

- On receipt of the message 56 from the third party manufacturer 20, the retailer 14 need only record details of the promotion to ensure that they comply with the manufacturer's terms of promotion during the promotion period.
- 15 • On receipt of the message 56 from the first third party supplier 20, the retailer 14 may wish to take advantage of the special purchase offer. The retailer 14 then operates to place an order with the third party supplier 20 using the ordering module and process already described.
- 20 • On receipt of the message 56, which includes the trace number of the original order, from the second third party supplier 20, the retailer 14 is provided with two options. The first option is to pay the invoice immediately by pressing the designated payment button of the keypad 26. Upon pressing the designated button, a
25 payment message 60 is sent to the transaction server 18. The payment message 60 includes the trace number of the original order and constitutes authorisation for the transaction server 18

5 to make payment from the retailer 14 to the appropriate third party supplier 20. In this respect, the retailer 14 must have previously provided an authorisation to an operator 59 of the transaction server 18 to approve transactions on an account 62 the retailer 14 has with a financial institution 64.

10 In facilitating payment of an order, the transaction server 18 compares the trace number included in the payment message 60 against the trace number of unpaid electronic invoices 57 it has received (in order of receipt). Upon finding a match, the transaction server 18 identifies the amount payable under the electronic invoice 57 and the identity of the appropriate third party supplier 20. The transaction server 18 raises a transaction against the account 62 of the retailer 14 in favour of operator 59. Operator 59 then makes payment to the appropriate third party supplier 20 in accordance with the terms of supply. The transaction server 18 also then operates to mark the corresponding electronic invoice 57 as paid.

20 The second option is to have the message 56 reissue at a later stage. To effect this, the retailer terminal 16 forwards a delay message 62 to the transaction server 18. The delay message includes the trace number of the original order and the original message 56. On receiving the delay message 62, the transaction server 18:

- 25 • compares the message included in the delay message 62 against the stored messages 56 until a match is found. The matching stored message 56 is then marked as unread in respect of the retailer's 14 retailer terminal 16. This allows the message 56 to reissue as a reminder when the retailer next
30 accesses the transaction server 18.

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- compares the trace number included in the delay message 62 against the trace number of unpaid electronic invoices 57 it has received (in order of receipt). Upon finding a match, the transaction server 18 identifies the identity of the appropriate third party supplier 20. A delayed payment message 66 is then sent to the third party supplier's 20 terminal 22 to inform them that payment has not yet been authorised by the retailer 14.
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- On receipt of the message 56 from the third party governmental agency, the retailer 14 selects the time/date of the seminar they wish to attend. The retailer's 14 retailer terminal 16 then sends a seminar message 68 to the transaction server 18. The seminar message 68 includes the time/date of the seminar the retailer 14
- 15
- wishes to attend, any registration information as may have been requested in the message 56 and the trace number of the message 56. The seminar message 68 is then stored in database 39.
- 20
- At predetermined intervals, the transaction server 18 collates all seminar messages 68 received from retailers 14 having the same trace number. The information contained in the collated seminar messages 68 is then sent to the third party government agency 20 as a reply to the original message 56. Each seminar message 68 so collated is then deleted to ensure that duplicate replies are
- 25
- not sent.

In accordance with a second embodiment of the invention, where like numerals reference like parts, the system 10 is integrated with an EFTPOS network 100. As EFTPOS networks are known to the person skilled in the art, and off-the-shelf EFTPOS applications can be obtained from vendors such as ST Mobile Data of Singapore, the workings of the EFTPOS network 100 will

not be discussed in more detail here except where necessary to describe the integration of the EFTPOS network 100 with the system 10.

In this embodiment, the retailer terminal 16 operates in conjunction with an EFTPOS terminal 102 to process sales made by the retailer 14. Details of each EFTPOS transaction 104 are transmitted to the transaction server 18. In this manner, the transaction server 18 acts as a merchant aggregator for such EFTPOS transactions 104. The transaction server 18 operates to settle the EFTPOS transactions 104 with a financial institution 106 at predetermined periods.

In this arrangement, the cost of providing the retailer terminal 16 to the retailer 14, can be partly recouped from the retailer by way of an periodic hire payment and percentage of all retail transactions processed by the transaction server 18. Depending on the status a retailer has with the operator of the transaction server 18 or with a third party 20, the cost of providing the retailer terminal 16 to the retailer 14 may also be borne, in whole or in part, by the transaction server 18 or the third party 20.

It should be appreciated by the person skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to the examples described. In particular, the following additions and/or modifications can be made without departing from the scope of the invention:

- A widely distributed magnetic stripe card, such as a travel card, may be used as a means of providing authentication identification for both driver 52 and retailer 14. Alternatively, a proprietary magnetic stripe card may be issued to driver 52 and retailer 14 for identification purposes.
- Communications between retail terminals 16, terminals 22 and the transaction server 18 can be by a variety of protocols and may be protected by security procedures such as firewalls. For

instance, messages may be conveyed within the system using the SMS and/or Blackberry™ messaging protocols. In such situations, the transaction server 18 will be adapted to include means for storing and forwarding messages formatted in accordance with such messaging protocols. Further, such messages may utilise specific file formats.

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- Other forms of authentication may be used to that described above. For instance, biometric identification, such as retina scans and fingerprinting, may be used as well as both contact and contactless smart cards. Further, a combination of authentication procedures may be used other than that described in the example above.

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- The electronic transaction system 10 may be modified to provide a web page having the necessary functionality to allow retailers 14 to pre-order goods 12 in addition to their ability to order goods 12 using their retailer terminal 16. In this manner, a back-up system can be implemented in the case of failure of the retailer's 14 retailer terminal 16.

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- A retailer terminal 16 may be shared by more than one retailer 14. In situations where the retailer terminal 16 is also being used to handle EFTPOS transactions, the retailer terminal 16 needs to be adapted to facilitate payment by customers to the appropriate retailer 14.

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- The retailer terminal 16 may be adapted to record stock control details. In doing so, on sale of a good 12 the recorded inventory for that good 12 would be debited by the amount of items sold. On acceptance of a delivery of the good 12 from a third party supplier 20, the recorded inventory for that good 12 would be incremented by the quantity of that good 12 delivered. As an

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- 5 extension of this functionality, the retailer terminal 16 may be further adapted to record standing orders set by the retailer 14 and automatically issue an order, in accordance with the appropriate standing order, on the quantity of a good 12 falling below the amount set in the standing order.
- 10
- The retailer terminal 16 may be adapted to include an uninterrupted power supply. Alternatively or cumulatively, the retailer terminal may be adapted to draw power from, or otherwise communicate with, external devices such as POS terminals, printers, etc.
- 15
- The keypad 26 of the retailer terminal 16 may comprise a series of fixed designation buttons or buttons of configurable designation (as defined by the choices available). Alternatively, the keypad 26 may be omitted in favour of the LCD display 28 operating as a touch screen, the functions of the keypad then being operable by way of icons displayed on the touch screen.
- 20
- The retailer terminals 16 and terminals 22 may come pre-loaded with the software required to interact with the electronic transaction system. In such an arrangement, the pre-loaded software may facilitate automatic updating.
 - The terms of payment of an order need not be displayed on LCD display 28 on verification of the order.
 - Any method of transportation may be use to deliver the goods, including personal delivery by foot, bike, etc.
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- The transaction server 18 may actually be operated by a supplier. In such an arrangement the transaction server may be adapted to undertake the activities of terminal 22 or integrated with a

terminal 22. It is noted that in such an arrangement it is unlikely for third party suppliers 20 to form part of the electronic transaction system 10 due to commercial confidentiality reasons.

- 5 • The system 10 may be adapted to allow a retailer 14 to accept partial delivery of goods 12. In such an arrangement, changes may also need to be made to the electronic invoicing system 57 to allow more than one electronic invoice 57 to reference an original order while ensuring that duplicate invoices are not processed.
- 10 • Visual cues, in addition to or in place of, audible cues may be used to denote the receipt of a message 56.
- Communication may be effected over the Internet.
- 15 • When a delay message 62 is issued, the original message 56 to which the delay message 62 relates may be marked so as to be reissued to the merchant 14 after the expiry of a predetermined amount of time or at a time otherwise designated by the merchant 14 or transaction server 18.
- 20 • The method of obtaining and collating seminar messages may be attained by implementing a calendar type system similar to the meeting functionality provided by Microsoft Outlook™ and like programs.
- Retailer terminal 16 may also act as EFTPOS terminal 102.
- The retailer terminal 16 may be a computer operating software that provides the functionality described above.

- 5 • Back-up processing may be provided for by the retailer terminal 16 and/or transaction server 18. For instance, in situations where the driver 52 is not able to be automatically authenticated/identified, the driver 52 may be able to key into the retailer terminal 16 their relevant details. The retailer 14 can then confirm or reject delivery of the goods 12 as mentioned above. Additional back-up procedures as would be readily apparent to the person skilled in the art may be implemented to handle downtime in communication links.
- 10 • The system 10, when including EFTPOS functionality, may also extend to provide support for a loyalty program or CRM program. Such support would require the cumulation and accounting of loyalty points or rewards as well as mechanisms for redeeming such points or rewards. As loyalty systems and CRM programs are also considered within the realm of the person skilled in the art, such are also not discussed in detail here.
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- EFTPOS transactions 104 may be provided on a real-time or batch basis for settlement.
- EFTPOS transactions 104 may be recorded in database 39. Information stored in the database 39 can be queried or reported on to retailers 14 to facilitate taxation or accounting purposes, as well as marketing and stocking purposes. This can also allow for data mining to be performed on the stored transaction information, on an aggregate basis, by third parties 20.
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- 25 • Appropriate commercial checks as would be readily apparent to the person skilled in the art can also be implemented in the system 10. For example checks may be made on the credit limit a retailer 14 has with third party suppliers 20 prior to preparation of an order for goods 12. Similarly, checks may be performed by

the transaction server 18 to ensure that a retailer 14 has sufficient funds to pay an electronic invoice 57.

- In addition to displaying payment terms on delivery of an order, the retailer terminal 16 may also operate to display a current credit limit available to the retailer 14

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It should be further appreciated by the person skilled in the art that features and modifications discussed in the examples above, not being alternatives or substitutes, can be combined to form yet other embodiments that fall within the scope of the invention described. It should also be appreciated that while functionality may have been described as attributed to one entity of the system, in some instances such functionality may be handled by another entity or by the described entity in combination with another entity and that such arrangements, as would be obvious to the person skilled in the art, fall within the scope of the present invention.

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