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(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR ORDERING GOODS, SERVICES AND CONTENT OVER AN INTERNETWORK

(57) Abstract

A billing system is provided that allows a consumer to order products from computers connected to the Internet, wherein the consumer is automatically billed for the ordered good or service by its telephone service provider. The billing system comprises a plug–in component (52, 52'), a billing server component (62, 62'), and in some embodiments, a merchant session gateway component (65). When a consumer orders a product over the Internet (20), the plug–in component (52) of the consumer's computer (42) establishes an Internet connection to a billing server (34) located elsewhere on the Internet (20) to order the product. In a first embodiment, the billing server component (62) of the billing server (34) transfers an encrypted version of the product to the plug–in component (52). The plug–in component (52) then disconnects from the Internet (20) and establishes a point–to–point (PPP) connection with the billing server (34). During the PPP connection, the billing server component (64) transfers an access key assigned to the order to the plug–in component (52) so that the plug–in component (52) may decrypt the product. The consumer is charged a unit rate or "drop–charge" for the product by the telephone service provider when the PPP connection is established using a premium telephone number assigned and administered by the telephone service provider. In a second embodiment, the consumer is charged a per minute rate for his of her time spent accessing the product, rather than a drop–charge.

