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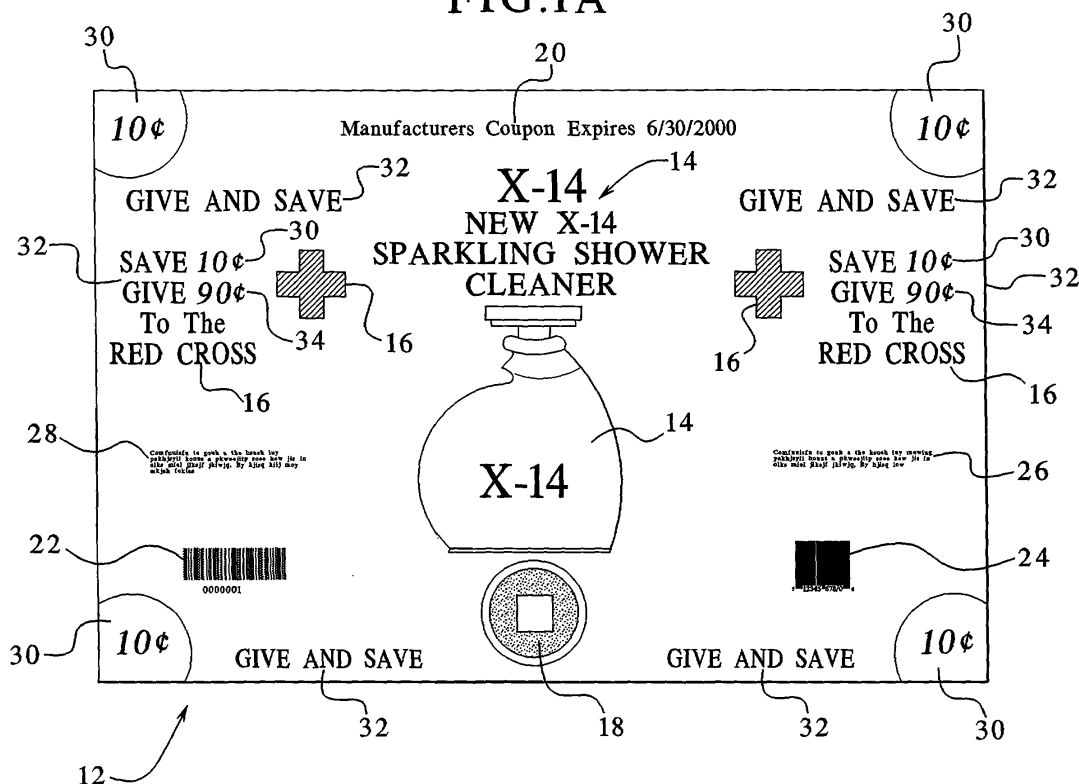
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(54) **Donative coupon for use in cause promotions and a system and method for administering such promotions**

(57) A donative coupon, used in a cause promotion, which utilizes a gift code to enable the coupon's total redemptive value to be split between a unique consumer discount and a contribution to a sponsoring cause. A system and method for processing the donative coupon of the present invention to capture an encoded address from the donative coupon gift code and link it to a data

table to capture promotion information. Such promotion information is used to calculate and direct the appropriate contribution to the sponsoring cause and to bill the sponsoring manufacturers accordingly. This captured promotion information is also used to analyze the promotion, including its effectiveness and other information.

FIG.1A



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Description

DESCRIPTION

[0001] The present invention relates in general to coupon-based product promotions, and in particular to coupon-based product promotions for cause promotions.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Numerous causes exist throughout the world. These causes face the daunting task of raising funds, often in competition with one another, as efficiently and effectively as possible with minimal administrative costs. To achieve these goals, these causes have employed various methods to solicit contributions. These methods enjoy varying degrees of success.

[0003] The area of coupon product promotions is a potentially lucrative funding source that has been left relatively unexploited. Since the mid-90's, manufacturers have been distributing product promotion coupons at a rate of over 200 billion per year, and consumers have been responding in kind, redeeming coupons at a rate of over 5 billion per year. This market has been left virtually unexploited for cause funding primarily because there are no effective methods for raising funds through promotional coupons.

[0004] In standard coupon product promotions, the customer selects a coupon for use and subsequently, redeems the coupon for the *full* face value of the coupon (or for some other special offering—*e.g.*, buy one, get one free). There is presently no commercially implemented method to direct a portion of this redemptive coupon value to a cause. Accordingly, a need exists for a donative instrument, that can be handled and processed similar to a regular promotional coupon, in which a majority of the redemptive value of the donative instrument is directed to a sponsoring cause.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention provides a coupon that can be used by causes to effectively derive contributions or donations from coupon product promotions. The present invention further provides a system and method for administering such cause promotions. The donative coupons of the present invention use a unique consumer discount value of ten cents (10¢) to distinguish themselves from other promotional coupons. This unique consumer discount value is encoded in the value code of the UPC on the coupon. It is also printed on the face of the coupon. This unique consumer discount value enables consumers to easily recognize these coupons as donative coupons and facilitates the segregation of these coupons, visually and mechanically, during processing. The donative coupon may also include other distinctive markings. The donative coupon may: (i) incorporate the logo of a sponsoring cause (*e.g.*, the

Red Cross); (ii) incorporate a unique donative coupon logo; and (iii) provide messages to the consumer explaining the charitable nature of the coupon.

[0006] The donative coupon of the present invention also includes a unique gift code which encodes a data table address. The data table address links to a data table which stores information pertinent to the promotion. The data table can store basic information or base code information, which includes an identification of the sponsoring cause, an identification of the sponsoring manufacturers and a designation of the donative value of the coupon. The data table can also store additional information or enhanced gift code information, which may include identification of the coupon distribution region, specific targeted household information or participating retailer information.

[0007] The present invention also provides a system and method for processing the donative coupons. The system and method of the present invention employs the highly developed and efficient technologies and infrastructure already in place for redeeming, handling and processing regular promotional coupons. This makes the use and handling of donative coupons consumer, retailer and manufacturer friendly. The system and method of the present invention splits the total redemptive value of the donative coupon into a consumer discount value that is credited to the consumer at the time of purchase and a donative value that is contributed to the cause sponsoring the promotion. A cause promotion management center scans each of the redeemed donative coupons to capture the encoded data table address and capture the information stored at that data table location. The cause promotion management center uses this captured information to determine the amount of donations and, accordingly, the amount of money the sponsoring manufacturers owe the sponsoring cause. The cause promotion management center also uses this captured information to analyze and report on various aspects of the promotion, including promotion effectiveness.

[0008] It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a donative coupon that may be redeemed according to standard coupon redemption practices with at least a portion of the coupon's value contributed to a cause.

[0009] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a system and method for processing such donative coupons.

[0010] Other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following detailed disclosure, taken in conjunction with the accompanying sheets of drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts or processes.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011]

Fig. 1A is a top plan view of a donative coupon of the present invention having a one-dimensional bar code gift code:

Fig. 1B is a top plan view of a donative coupon of the present invention having a two-dimensional bar code gift code;

Fig. 2 is an enlarged top plan view of a UPC code of the donative coupon illustrated in Figs. 1A and 1B;

Fig. 3A is an enlarged top plan view of a one-dimensional bar code gift code of the donative coupon illustrated in Fig. 1A;

Fig. 3B is an illustration of a master data table for use with a one-dimensional bar code gift code:

Fig. 4A is an enlarged top plan view of a two-dimensional bar code gift code of the donative coupon illustrated in Fig. 1B;

Fig. 4B is an illustration of a master data table for use with a two-dimensional bar code gift code;

Fig. 5 is a schematic illustration of the system and method of the present invention for administering cause promotions;

Fig. 5A is a schematic illustration of the process of establishing a cause promotion;

Fig. 5B is a schematic illustration of the method employed by a cause promotion clearinghouse in accordance with the present invention; and

Fig. 5C is an illustration of cause promotion management center host computer and a donative coupon processing station.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Donative Coupon Description

[0012] Referring now to the drawings and particularly to Figs. 1A and 1B, a donative coupon 12 of the present invention is shown. The donative coupon 12 is formed from an inexpensive material, such as paper, which acts as a substrate for a number of indicia, markings, identifiers and codes which identify the purpose and value of the coupon 12 and aid in processing the coupon 12. The donative coupon 12 includes product identifiers 14 which identify the promoted product. The donative coupon 12 also preferably includes sponsoring cause identifiers 16, which identify the cause sponsoring the promotion, and donative coupon identifiers 18, such as a logo, which signify that these coupons are unique donative coupons and not regular promotional coupons.

[0013] The donative coupon 12 may also include coupon expiration information 20, a retailer message 26, a consumer message 28, consumer discount value identifiers 30 and a number of promotional information statements 32. The retailer message 26 includes handling

and processing information for the retailers benefit. The consumer message 28 includes an explanation of the purpose and function of the cause promotion. The consumer discount value identifiers 30, some of which are included in the promotional information statements 32, designate the amount the consumer will save on his or her purchase when the coupon 12 is redeemed. This redeemed amount is the consumer discount value of the coupon 12. The promotional information statements 32 further identify the sponsoring cause and designate the amount of the coupon's total value which will be donated to the sponsoring cause. This donated amount is the donative value of the coupon 12 and is indicated on the coupon 12 by a donative value identifier 34. The statements, messages and logos depicted in Figs. 1A and 1B are preferable, but not required for the present invention, and may be modified or substituted as required by the specific promotion.

[0014] The donative coupon 12 also includes several codes. The donative coupon 12 includes a standard Universal Product Code (UPC) 24 and a gift code 22. The gift code 22, as explained below, may be coded using a one-dimensional bar code symbology, such as an Interleaf 2 of 5 code, (Fig. 1A) or may be coded using a two-dimensional bar code symbology, such as an Aztec code, (Fig. 1B).

[0015] The preferred consumer discount value of the present invention is ten cents (10¢). The ten cent (10¢) consumer discount value 30, seen visually by the consumer as the consumer discount value identifiers 30, corresponds to a code, called a value code 50 (Fig. 2), in the UPC 24. This "10" value code 50 provides the consumer a ten cent (10¢) discount when he or she redeems the coupon 12. A "10" value code 50 is preferred for the donative coupon 12 because it is the least frequently used coupon value and, under current UPC conventions, is the lowest value that can be accepted and processed by a retailer. It is preferable to use a value code 50 such as "10" that has a low population density among promotional coupons because such a low population density makes donative coupons 12 unique and, over time, consumers will identify unique ten cent (10¢) value coupons as being the special donative coupons 12 of the present invention. Although a donative coupon 12 having a value of ten cents (10¢) is desirable, it is foreseeable that another value may be selected based on a number of circumstances. The other unique donative coupon markings also help make the donative coupon 12 easily recognizable and distinguishable. Such markings include the donative coupon logo 18, the promotional information statements 32, the retailer message 26, the consumer message 28 and the sponsoring cause identifiers 16. These markings co-act to brand the donative coupons 12 as unique cause promotion coupons.

[0016] Referring to Fig. 2, the UPC 24 encodes standardized product and coupon information. The UPC 24 employs a conventional bar code symbology used by

manufacturers of consumer products. The first digit 44 of the UPC 24 is a number system character (NSC). All coupons have an NSC number "5" which indicates to the scanner that the item being scanned is a coupon rather than a product. The next five digit group 46 of the UPC 24 is known as the manufacturer identification number (MIN). The MIN 46 identifies the manufacturer of the promoted product. The next five digit group identifies two distinct pieces of information. The first three digits are the family code 48, and the final two digits are the previously discussed value code 50. The family code 48 identifies a "family" of products that the coupon can be redeemed for. The "family" of products may include different sizes, colors, flavors or other forms of the promoted product. The value code 50 designates the redemption value of the coupon to the consumer.

[0017] Upon scanning at checkout, the scanner reads the value code 50, and the retail store point-of-sale ("POS") system finds this code in a database of standardized UPC value codes. The POS system then discounts the consumer's purchase according to the located UPC value code data. The coupon value code 50 may correlate directly with the discount given to the consumer (e.g., the donative coupon value code of "10" gives the consumer a ten cent (10¢) discount on the purchase price) or, due to the inherent limitations of a two digit code system, the value code 50 may indirectly represent the coupon's value (e.g., a value code 50 of "88" represents a \$3.25 discount on the purchase price).

[0018] The final digit of the UPC 24 is a check digit 52. The check digit 52 verifies that the UPC 24 has been read properly by the scanner. The UPC 24 may also include an EAN-128 coupon extension code. An EAN-128 coupon extension code may encode additional product promotion information, including a promotion offer code, which links the coupon to a specific promotion, an expiration date code and specific household information about a targeted household.

[0019] The gift code 22 encodes a data table address. The data table address links to a data table which stores information pertinent to the promotion at that address. As depicted in Figs. 3A and 4A, respectively, the gift code 22 may be formatted as a base code 56 or as an enhanced gift code 120. The base code 56 utilizes a one-dimensional bar code symbology and can only encode a relatively small address, on the order of six to seven digits. As a result of the limited amount of permutations of six to seven digit addresses that can be generated, a promotion data table that is linked to a base code address can only store a minimal amount of information about a given cause promotion. Usually a base code data table only stores an identification of the sponsoring cause, an identification of the sponsoring manufacturer and a designation of the donative value of the coupon.

[0020] The enhanced gift code 120, on the other hand, utilizes a two-dimensional bar code symbology and can encode a significantly longer address, on the

order of twenty-six digits. An address code on the order of twenty-six digits can generate a substantial number of address permutations. As such, a promotion data table that is linked to an enhanced gift code 22 can store a significant amount of information about a given cause promotion, considerably more than a base code data table. An enhanced gift code data table can store all of the information included in a base code data table and any other information that the sponsoring cause or the sponsoring manufacturer believes is important, including identification of the region in which the coupons were distributed, specific targeted household information or participating retailer information.

[0021] Referring now to Fig. 3A, the base code 56 is preferably a seven digit one-dimensional bar code, which includes a six-digit visual code 68. The base code 56 is a non-representative code that encodes an address for a master base code data table 54 (Fig. 3B). The base code 56 is non-representative because the visual code 68 that the customer sees does not directly represent the values encoded within the code. In contrast, the value code 50 of the UPC 24 is a representative code because the value code that the consumer sees, "10," directly corresponds to a ten cent (10¢) discount. As discussed below, the base code 56 and the master base code data table 54 are generated by a cause promotion management center 78 when the promotion is established.

[0022] The first six digits encoded in the base code 56 encode an address 58 which is stored in the master base code data table 54 (Fig. 3B). The seventh digit encoded in the base code 56 is a check digit 60 for the base code 56. The base code 56 may be coded with any one of a number of one-dimensional bar code symbologies, including Interleaf 2 of 5 and Code 39. In the preferred embodiment, as depicted in Fig. 3A, an Interleaf 2 of 5 bar code symbology is used to code the base code 56. Interleaf 2 of 5 is desired because it requires relatively less stringent printing tolerances than other one-dimensional bar code symbologies and is readily auto discriminated.

[0023] Turning to Fig. 3B, the master base code data table 54 is a relational database and contains information identifying the cause sponsoring the promotion, as indicated in column 62, information identifying the manufacturer sponsoring the promotion, as indicated in column 64 and information indicating the donative value of the coupon 12, as indicated in column 66. The donative value indicated in the master base code data table 54 corresponds to the donative value identifiers 34 printed on the face of the coupon 12. The donative value listed in the master base code data table 54 is ultimately the amount of money that is contributed to the cause sponsoring the promotion. In this embodiment, the donative value of the coupon 12 is ninety cents (90¢) as illustrated in Fig. 1A and as indicated at address location 000001, block 66 in Fig. 3B. Since the total redemptive value of a donative coupon 12 is the total of the consumer dis-

count value (encoded in the UPC 24) and the donative value (encoded in the base code 56), the total redemptive value of the donative coupon 12 of the present embodiment is one dollar (\$1.00) (*i.e.*, 90¢ (donative value) + 10¢ (consumer discount value)).

[0024] Referring now to Fig. 4A, the enhanced gift code 120 is preferably a twenty-seven digit two-dimensional bar code. Similar to the base code 56, the enhanced gift code 120 is a non-representative code that encodes an address to a master enhanced gift code data table 122 (Fig. 4B). The enhanced gift code 120 and the master enhanced gift code data table 122, similar to the base code 56 and the master base code data table 54, are generated by the cause promotion management center 78 when the promotion is established.

[0025] The first twenty-six digits of the enhanced gift code 120 encode an address 124 which is stored in the master enhanced gift code data table 122 (Fig. 4B). The twenty-seventh digit encoded in the enhanced gift code 120 is a check digit 126 for the enhanced gift code 126. The enhanced gift code 120 may be coded with any one of a number of two-dimensional bar code symbologies. In the preferred embodiment, as depicted in Fig. 4A, an Aztec bar code symbology is used to code the enhanced gift code 120.

[0026] Turning to Fig. 4B, the master enhanced gift code data table 122 is also a relational database and contains all of the information in the master base code data table 54 plus any other information that any of the sponsoring entities want to collect, including information identifying the region in which the coupons 12 were distributed, as indicated in column 130, information about a targeted household, as indicated in column 132 and information about any retailer participating in the promotion, as indicated in column 134. As with the master base code data table 54, the donative value indicated in the master enhanced gift code data table 122 corresponds to the donative value identifier 34 printed on the face of the coupon 12.

[0027] The type of information that may be stored in the master enhanced gift code data table 122 for a given promotion is, to a certain extent, dependent on what type of coupon distribution method is used. For instance, if the donative coupons 12 are distributed by a free-standing insert ("FSI") in a Sunday newspaper, then the sponsoring entities can specify a coupon distribution region, but they cannot target individual households. As such, the master enhanced gift code data table 122 can store the FSI coupon distribution region in column 130, but since the promotion sponsors have no control over where the coupons eventually end up, they are unable to store specific household information in the master enhanced gift code data table 122 for that promotion.

[0028] If the entities sponsoring the promotion desire to target specific households, the donative coupons 12 can be distributed by direct mail. The list of targeted households can come from a number of sources and

can be based on a number of criteria. Often times, the sponsoring cause will have a database of previous donors, and this list can be used to form the targeted household list. For targeted household-type promotions, information about each individual targeted household is entered into the master enhanced gift code data table 122 as indicated in column 132. Such stored targeted household information is not limited to the name and address of the targeted household as depicted in Fig. 4B. Any information about the targeted household that the sponsoring entities know and desire to collect about a targeted household may be entered into this database. This database may even be linked to another database which contains even more information about a specific targeted household.

Promotion Establishment

[0029] Referring now to Figs. 5 and 5A, and specifically block 70, the first step in the cause promotion process is establishing a specific cause promotion. As shown in Fig. 5A, four entities are primarily responsible for creating a cause promotion, including a promotion marketer 72, a promotion sponsoring cause 74, at least one promotion sponsoring manufacturer 76 and the cause promotion management center 78. The cause promotion management center 78 and the promotion marketer 72 may be the same entity since they have certain overlapping functions. The promotion marketer 72 is the driving force in developing the cause promotion. The promotion marketer 72 may be an agent of the cause 74 sponsoring the promotion. The promotion marketer 72 and the sponsoring cause 74 enter an agreement at the outset which generally specifies the terms and conduct of the promotion. If the promotion sponsoring cause 74 (*e.g.*, Mothers Against Drunk Driving ("MADD")) desires the promotion to be linked to a special day (*e.g.*, Mothers' Day), this agreement will address such promotion conditions.

[0030] After an agreement is reached, the promotion marketer 72 contacts and solicits manufacturers 76 to sponsor the promotion. The promotion marketer 72 preferably contacts manufacturers that sell products related to the sponsoring cause or, if it is a promotion centered around a featured day, products related to the featured day. The agreement between the sponsoring cause 74 and the promotion marketer 72 may specify the type of manufacturers to solicit or refrain from soliciting. For instance, if MADD is sponsoring a featured day promotion highlighting Mothers' Day, it may only want sponsors that make and sell products appropriate for that day (*e.g.*, cosmetic manufacturers). It may want to refrain from soliciting sponsors that make and sell products considered inappropriate for that day (*e.g.*, hardware manufacturers) or that make and sell products that may appear to be contradictory with the goals of the sponsoring cause (*e.g.*, beer manufacturers).

[0031] One or more manufacturers may sponsor

these cause promotions, Once the promotion marketer 72 has identified manufacturers 76 to sponsor the promotion, the promotion marketer 72, the sponsoring cause 74 and the sponsoring manufacturers 76 agree to the final promotion terms and conditions, as indicated in block 80. Such terms may detail the products to be promoted, the advertising to be conducted, the distribution methods to be utilized and the specifications of the coupon and its supporting data tables. Selection of a distribution method at the outset is important because, as discussed above, the distribution method may be determinative as to what information may be collected from the redeemed coupons.

[0032] Under an agreement between the promotion marketer 72 and the cause promotion management center 78, the cause promotion management center 78 assists the promotion marketer 72 in developing the promotion donative coupons 12 and the supporting gift code master data table, either a base code data table 54 or an enhanced gift code data table 122. The cause promotion management center 78 must ensure that the format and content of the coupon gift codes 22 can be processed by the cause promotion management center 78 after redemption and that all of the appropriate supporting information has been entered into either a master base code data table 54 or a master enhanced gift code data table 122. Once the promotion marketer 72 and the cause promotion management center 78 have agreed to the content and format of the coupons 12 and the master gift code data table, either base code 54 or enhanced gift code 122, the donative coupons 10 are created and distributed to consumers as indicated in blocks 82 (Fig. 5A) and 84 (Fig. 5), respectively.

[0033] The donative coupons 12 may be distributed to consumers through numerous distribution methods. The coupons 12 may be distributed as FSI's, direct mail, on-package coupons, in-store coupons or through electronic or other methods of distribution. In most instances, FSI distribution of the donative coupons 12 is the most effective. FSI's, compared to other distribution methods, are cheaper on a per person basis and reach the most people. Studies show that FSI's reach over 55 million households. FSI's also have inherent marketing value even if the consumer does not redeem the coupon. FSI's still expose the consumer to the advertisement incorporating the coupon, and FSI's are less invasive than other forms of advertising, such as telemarketing. Donative coupons 12 may be distributed as FSI's in the normal Sunday newspapers, along with most of the other promotional coupons, or if the promotion is featuring a particular day (e.g., Mothers' Day or Memorial Day) which is on a weekend, the promotion sponsors may do a midweek FSI distribution so that consumers have the donative coupons 12 before the featured day.

[0034] FSI's, although preferred, are not ideal for every promotion. FSI's, because of their random distribution, are not extremely effective at targeting specific households and consequently are not extremely effective

for retrieving household demographic information for the promotion sponsors. Often the sponsoring cause or the sponsoring manufacturer want to obtain data on the demographics of the people redeeming their coupons and buying their products. To capture consumer information, promotion sponsors must use a more focused method of coupon distribution in which the promotion sponsors can focus the promotion towards specific households, such as direct mail or emerging electronic distribution methods (e.g., Internet coupons).

Donative Coupon Redemption and Processing

[0035] A certain percentage of consumers will redeem the distributed donative coupons 12, as indicated in block 86. At a participating retail store, the coupon redeeming consumer selects the promoted product for purchasing and brings it to the check-out station. The consumer presents the selected product and the donative coupon 12 to the sales clerk for purchase. The sales clerk scans the UPC of the selected product and the UPC 24 of the donative coupon 12 as indicated in block 88. The POS system captures the information encoded in these UPC codes. The in store POS system recognizes the "10" value code 50 of the donative coupon 12 and, as indicated in block 90, appropriately discounts the consumer's purchase by ten cents (10¢). To the consumer and the retailer this transaction is no different than any other consumer purchase with a regular coupon. The system and method of the present invention use as much of the existing coupon processing technologies and infrastructure as possible. Such use of pre-existing technologies and infrastructure makes the system and method of the present invention more acceptable and easier to implement for consumers, retailers and others involved in processing redeemed donative coupons 12.

[0036] After POS scanning, the donative coupon 12 is processed in the retail store identically to other promotional coupons. This usually includes logging and time-stamping the coupons to create an audit trail, bundling the coupons for forwarding to the retail headquarters and other standard administrative tasks. On a periodic basis, preferably daily after the retail store has completed its end of the day processing, each individual retail store forwards its coupon bundles to the retail headquarters. At the retail headquarters, along with other various other administrative tasks, the forwarded coupons from all of the retailers stores are consolidated and forwarded to a designated retail clearinghouse, a third party agent of the retailer, for clearing.

[0037] The retail clearinghouse, as indicated in block 92, processes the received coupons to determine the total amount of money each sponsoring manufacturer owes the retailer. The total amount of money the sponsoring manufacturer owes the retailer includes two amounts: (1) reimbursement for the money the retailer credited to the consumer on the coupons the retailer re-

deemed on the manufacturer's behalf; and (2) a handling fee for each coupon the retailer redeemed and processed on the manufacturer's behalf. To determine the amount that each manufacturer must reimburse the retailer for redeeming the manufacturer's coupons, the retail clearinghouse scans the UPC's of the coupons received from the retail headquarters. For each manufacturer and each promotion sponsored by that manufacturer, the retail clearinghouse scans the UPC's of the applicable coupons to capture the value code information from each coupon. The retail clearinghouse then adds all of these captured values together to determine the amount of money that the manufacturer owes (and needs to reimburse) the retailer for redeeming the coupons.

[0038] Donative coupons 12 provide the retailer with a substantial benefit in this regard. When a retailer redeems a coupon on a manufacturer's behalf, the retailer, in essence, is loaning the manufacturer the amount of money discounted from the customer's purchase. The retailer, as such, carries this discount on its books until the manufacturer, or the manufacturer's agent, reimburses the retailer for the coupon discount. The period between the time the retailer gives the discount and the time the retailer is reimbursed for it is often referred to as a "float." Retailers generally wish to minimize the amount of money they have to float, and the amount of time they have to float it. With the donative coupons 12 of the present invention, the float is minimized because only ten cents (10¢) of each coupon's value is given to the consumer as a discount. The donative value of the coupon 12, ninety cents (90¢) in the described embodiment, is not carried by the retailer. Therefore, the donative coupon 12 substantially reduces the amount that the retailer has to float.

[0039] The second amount that the retail clearinghouse determines is the handling fee. The present industry standard is to pay an eight cent (8¢) per coupon handling fee. The total handling fee is determined by counting the number of coupons the retailer handled for each promotion and multiplying that number times the agreed upon coupon handling fee. As indicated in block 94, once these amounts are calculated, the retail clearinghouse pays the retailer the determined coupon reimbursement amount and the calculated handling fee for each promotion. The retail clearinghouse then sends the coupons, sorted by manufacturer, to the manufacturer's agent indicated on the coupon. In some cases, the retail clearinghouse and the manufacturer's agent may be the same entity.

[0040] As indicated in block 96, upon receipt, the manufacturer's agent audits the retailer's coupon shipments. All manufacturers use a separate manufacturer's agent to obtain independent verification of the retail clearinghouse's coupon counts and payment calculations. The manufacturer's agent performs this verification by scanning all of the UPC's of the forwarded coupons and performing the necessary calculations. During

this coupon scan, any ten cent (10¢) value coupons are flagged as donative coupons 12 and segregated for forwarding to the coupon promotion management center 78 for further processing. Most of the regular, non-donative coupons are destroyed at this point. The manufacturer's agent may also provide other important services to the manufacturer. The manufacturer's agent may provide coupon misredemption identification services and may perform promotion analysis and reporting services for the manufacturer. This analysis and reporting may cover various aspects of the promotion, such as overall promotion effectiveness, demographic analysis of the coupon redeemers, geographic analysis of the coupon redeemers, etc. Once the manufacturer's agent has processed the forwarded coupons and reconciled its counts and calculations with the retail clearinghouse's counts and calculations, the manufacturer's agent, adjusting for any discrepancies, reimburses the retail clearinghouse for its coupon redemption payment to the retailer, as indicated in block 98, and bills the sponsoring manufacturers accordingly.

[0041] The segregated donative coupons 12 are bundled and forwarded to the cause promotion management center 78 for further processing as indicated in blocks 100 (Fig. 5B) and 102 (Fig. 5). The manufacturer's agent and the cause clearinghouse may be the same entity. The manufacturer's agent, the retail clearinghouse and the cause clearinghouse may also be the same entity. Whether these entities are the same or separate entities is entirely dependent on the retailer and the manufacturer and how they wish to structure the administrative and clearing operations of the promotion.

[0042] As indicated in blocks 102 (Fig. 5), 104 and 108 (Fig. 5B), the cause promotion management center 78 processes the received donative coupons 12 and provides promotional support for the sponsoring cause and manufacturer 74 and 76. Upon receipt of the segregated coupons from the respective manufacturer's agents, the cause promotion management center 78 divides the coupons 12 by promotion and sends groups of same promotion coupons 12 to one or more of several donative coupon processing stations 150 (Fig. 5C). Referring to Fig. 5C, each donative coupon processing station 150 includes a processing station computer 152, which has a monitor 154 and input devices 156 connected to it, a one-dimensional bar code scanner 158 and a two-dimensional bar code scanner 160. The one-dimensional and two-dimensional bar code scanners 158 and 160 communicate with the processing station computer 152. The processing station computer 152 also communicates with a host computer 162. The host computer 162 is connected to all of the processing station computers 152 and stores all of the promotion master database files, including all of the master base code data tables 54 in an aggregated database 164 and all of the master enhanced gift code data tables 122 in an aggregated database 166. When a promotion's coupons are to be processed, the appropriate master base code data table

54 or master enhanced gift code data table 122 is downloaded from the host computer 162 to the respective processing station computer 152. These downloaded files are saved on the processing station computer 152, as is appropriate, as either a master base code data table 54 or a master enhanced gift code data table 122.

[0043] The operator of the donative coupon processing station 150 scans the gift codes 22 of the received same promotion donative coupons 12 at his or her station. The operator uses either the one-dimensional bar code scanner 158 or the two-dimensional bar code scanner 160, depending on the type of gift code 22 used on the coupon 12. The scanner 158 or 160 reads the address encoded in the gift code 22 and locates the address in the master code data table 54 or 122 loaded on the processing station computer 152. The information stored at that address 58 or 124 is displayed on the monitor 154 and stored to a promotion captured data table 170. The operator scans all of the donative coupons 12 given to him or her in the same manner until finished. Once finished, the promotion captured data table 170 has a complete record of all the data captured from the donative coupons 12. The promotion captured data table is uploaded to an aggregated promotion captured data table 172 on the host computer 162. At this point, the processed donative coupons 12 can be destroyed.

[0044] Referring again to Fig. 5B, the cause promotion management center 78 uses the information captured in the aggregated promotion captured data table 172 on the host computer 162 to provide a number of services to the sponsoring cause and sponsoring manufacturers. From the information in the captured data table 172, the cause promotion management center 178 generates a donation collection report, as indicated by block 112, for every cause 74 sponsoring an active promotion. The cause promotion management center 78 also uses this information, as indicated in block 110, to calculate the amount owed to the sponsoring cause 74 and pay them accordingly, minus any fees due to the cause promotion management center 78. The cause promotion management center 78 uses this information to also bill the manufacturer 76 sponsoring the promotion, as indicated in block 114. This information may also be used to analyze the promotion and generate reports for the sponsoring manufacturer 76, as indicated in block 116. These analyses and reports may address anything that the manufacturer 76 wants to analyze, including the effectiveness of the donative promotion or a demographic breakdown of the consumers that redeemed the coupons.

[0045] It should be understood that modifications and variations may be effected without departing from the scope of the novel concepts of the present invention. It should also be understood that this application is only limited by the scope of the claims.

Claims

1. A donative coupon for use in cause promotions, said coupon comprising:
 - a substrate; and
 - a gift code applied to the substrate, wherein the gift code encodes an address of a promotion code data table containing pertinent promotion information, wherein a coupon donative value is stored in the promotion code data table.
2. The donative coupon of Claim 1, which further includes a consumer discount value and a UPC wherein the consumer discount value is encoded in the UPC.
3. The donative coupon of Claim 2, in which the consumer discount value is a unique value.
4. The donative coupon of Claim 3, in which the unique consumer discount value is ten cents.
5. The donative coupon of Claim 4, in which the donative value of the coupon and the unique consumer discount value of the coupon equal a total redemptive value of the coupon.
6. The donative coupon of Claim 5, in which a promotional information statement is indicia on the coupon which indicates the donative value and the consumer discount value of the coupon.
7. The donative coupon of Claim 1, in which the gift code is encoded using a one-dimensional bar code symbology.
8. The donative coupon of Claim 7, in which the one-dimensional bar code symbology used is Interleaf 2 of 5.
9. The donative coupon of Claim 7, in which the promotional code data table contains information about the cause sponsoring the promotion.
10. The donative coupon of Claim 7, in which the promotional code data table contains information about a manufacturer sponsoring the promotion.
11. The donative coupon of Claim 1, in which the gift code is encoded using a two-dimensional bar code symbology.
12. The donative coupon of Claim 11, in which the two-dimensional bar code symbology used is Aztec.
13. The donative coupon of Claim 11, in which the promotional code data table contains information about

- a targeted household.
14. The donative coupon of Claim 11, in which the promotional code data table contains information about a coupon distribution region.
 15. The donative coupon of Claim 11, in which the promotional code data table contains information about a participating retailer.
 16. The donative coupon of Claim 1, in which a donative coupon logo is indicia on the coupon.
 17. The donative coupon of Claim 1, in which a consumer message is indicia on the coupon.
 18. The donative coupon of Claim 1, in which a retailer message is indicia on the coupon.
 19. A donative coupon for use in cause promotions, said coupon comprising:
 - a total redemptive value including a donative value and a consumer discount value;
 - a gift code which encodes an address of a promotion code data table containing the coupon donative value and information about a cause sponsoring a promotion and about a manufacturer sponsoring the promotion; and
 - a UPC which encodes the consumer discount value.
 20. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which the consumer discount value is a unique value.
 21. The donative coupon of Claim 20, in which the unique consumer discount value is ten cents.
 22. The donative coupon of Claim 21, in which a promotional information statement is printed on the coupon which indicates the donative value and the unique consumer discount value of the coupon.
 23. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which the gift code is encoded using a one-dimensional bar code symbology.
 24. The donative coupon of Claim 23, in which the one-dimensional bar code symbology used is Interleaf 2 of 5.
 25. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which the gift code is encoded using a two-dimensional bar code symbology.
 26. The donative coupon of Claim 25, in which the two-dimensional bar code symbology used is Aztec.
 27. The donative coupon of Claim 25, in which the promotional code data table contains Information about a targeted household.
 28. The donative coupon of Claim 25, in which the promotional code data table contains information about a coupon distribution region.
 29. The donative coupon of Claim 25, in which the promotional code data table contains information about a participating retailer.
 30. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which a donative coupon logo is indicia on the coupon.
 31. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which a consumer message is indicia on the coupon.
 32. The donative coupon of Claim 19, in which a retailer message is indicia on the coupon.
 33. A method for administering a cause promotion, comprising the steps of:
 - identifying a cause to sponsor the promotion;
 - identifying a manufacturer to sponsor the promotion;
 - creating donative coupons for the promotion having a gift code which encodes an address of a promotion code data table containing pertinent promotion information, wherein a coupon donative value is stored in the promotion code data table;
 - distributing the donative coupons to consumers;
 - upon redemption, processing the donative coupons to capture the address encoded in the gift code to retrieve the donative value stored in the promotion data table;
 - using the retrieved donative value of the coupon to calculate the amount of money to be contributed to the sponsoring cause;
 - paying the sponsoring cause the calculated amount; and
 - billing the sponsoring manufacturer for the amount paid to the sponsoring cause.
 34. The method of Claim 33, which further includes the steps of:
 - storing information about a targeted household in the promotional code data table; and
 - upon redemption, using the captured address to retrieve the targeted household information stored in the promotion data table.
 35. The method of Claim 33, which further includes the steps of:

storing information about a coupon distribution region in the promotional code data table; and upon redemption, using the captured address to retrieve the coupon distribution region information stored in the promotion data table.

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36. The method of Claim 33, which further includes the steps of:

storing information about a participating retailer in the promotional code data table; and upon redemption, using the captured address to retrieve the participating retailer information stored in the promotion data table.

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37. The method of Claim 33, which further includes the step of analyzing the retrieved promotion code data table information.

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38. The method of Claim 37, which further includes the step of reporting the promotion analysis to the sponsoring manufacturer.

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39. The method of Claim 37, in which the step of analyzing the retrieved promotion code data table information includes analyzing the overall effectiveness of the promotion.

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40. The method of Claim 37, in which the step of analyzing the retrieved promotion code data table information includes analyzing the demographic makeup of the consumers redeeming the donative coupons.

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41. The method of Claim 33, which further includes the steps of printing a UPC on the donative coupon and encoding a consumer discount value therein.

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42. The method of Claim 41, which further includes the step of scanning the UPC code of the donative coupon at the time of purchase to discount the consumer's purchase price by the amount of the consumer discount value encoded in the UPC code.

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43. A method for processing donative coupons of a cause promotion, comprising the steps of:

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establishing a promotion code data table storing pertinent promotion information, wherein the pertinent information is addressed and includes a coupon donative value for each coupon;

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receiving donative coupons having a gift code which encodes an address for the promotion data table;

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scanning the gift code of the donative coupon to retrieve the address encoded therein:

locating the retrieved address in the promotion code data table and capturing the information stored at the retrieved address location; and

saving the captured information to a promotion captured data table.

44. The method of Claim 43, in which the step of storing pertinent promotion information in a promotion code data table includes storing information about a targeted household.

45. The method of Claim 43, in which the step of storing pertinent promotion information in a promotion code data table includes storing information about a coupon distribution region.

46. The method of Claim 43, in which the step of storing pertinent promotion information in a promotion code data table includes storing information about a participating retailer.

47. The method of Claim 43, in which the step of scanning the gift code of the donative coupon is done on a one-dimensional bar code scanner.

48. The method of Claim 43, in which the step of scanning the gift code of the donative coupon is done on a two-dimensional bar code scanner.

49. The method of Claim 43, which further includes the step of uploading the promotion captured data table to a host computer.

50. The method of Claim 43, which further includes the step of analyzing the promotion captured data table.

51. The method of Claim 50, which further includes the step of reporting the promotion analysis to the sponsoring manufacturer.

52. The method of Claim 50, in which the step of analyzing the promotion captured data table includes analyzing the overall effectiveness of the promotion.

53. The method of Claim 50, in which the step of analyzing the promotion captured data table includes analyzing the demographic makeup of the consumers redeeming the donative coupons.

FIG.1A

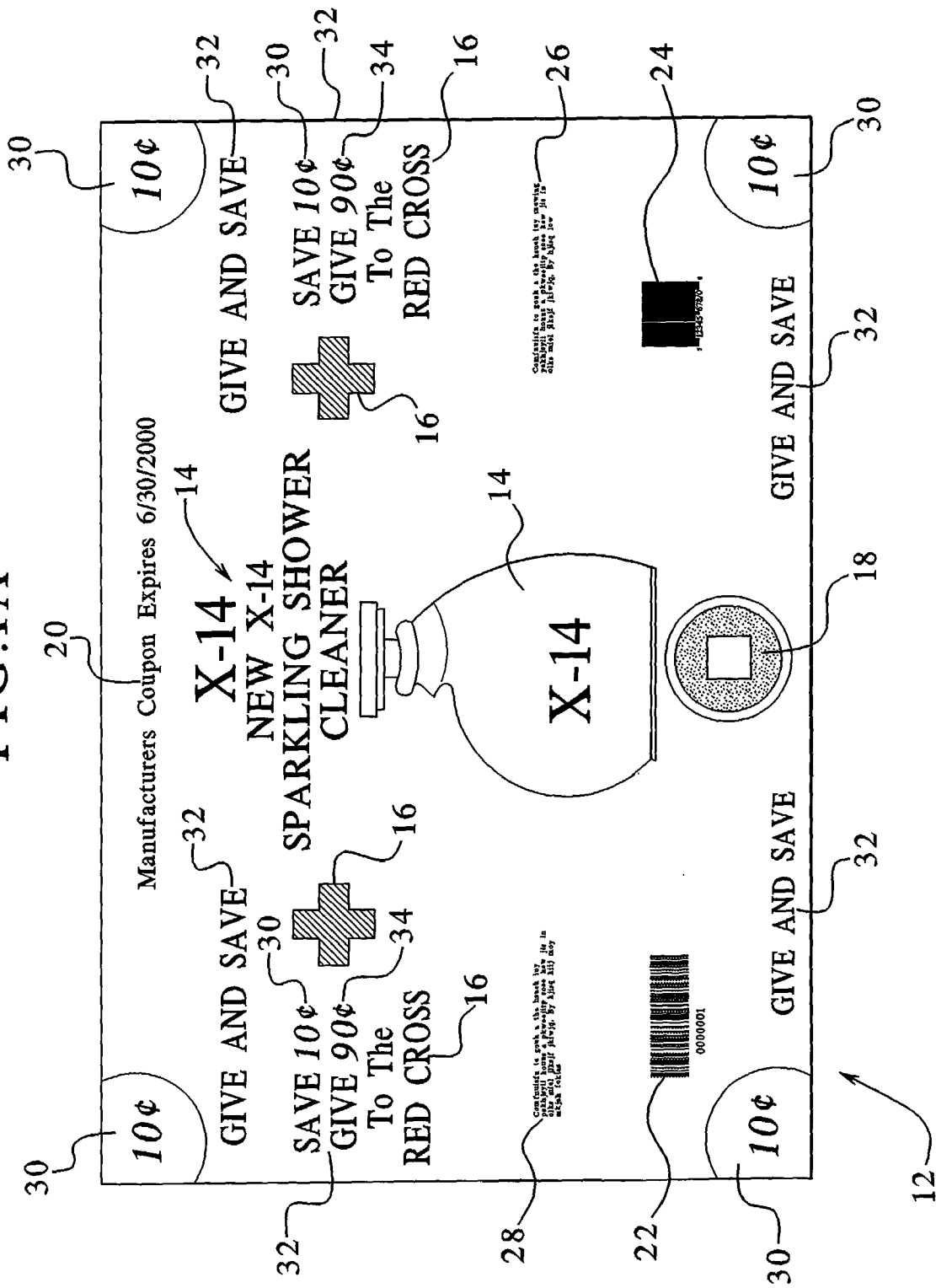


FIG. 1B

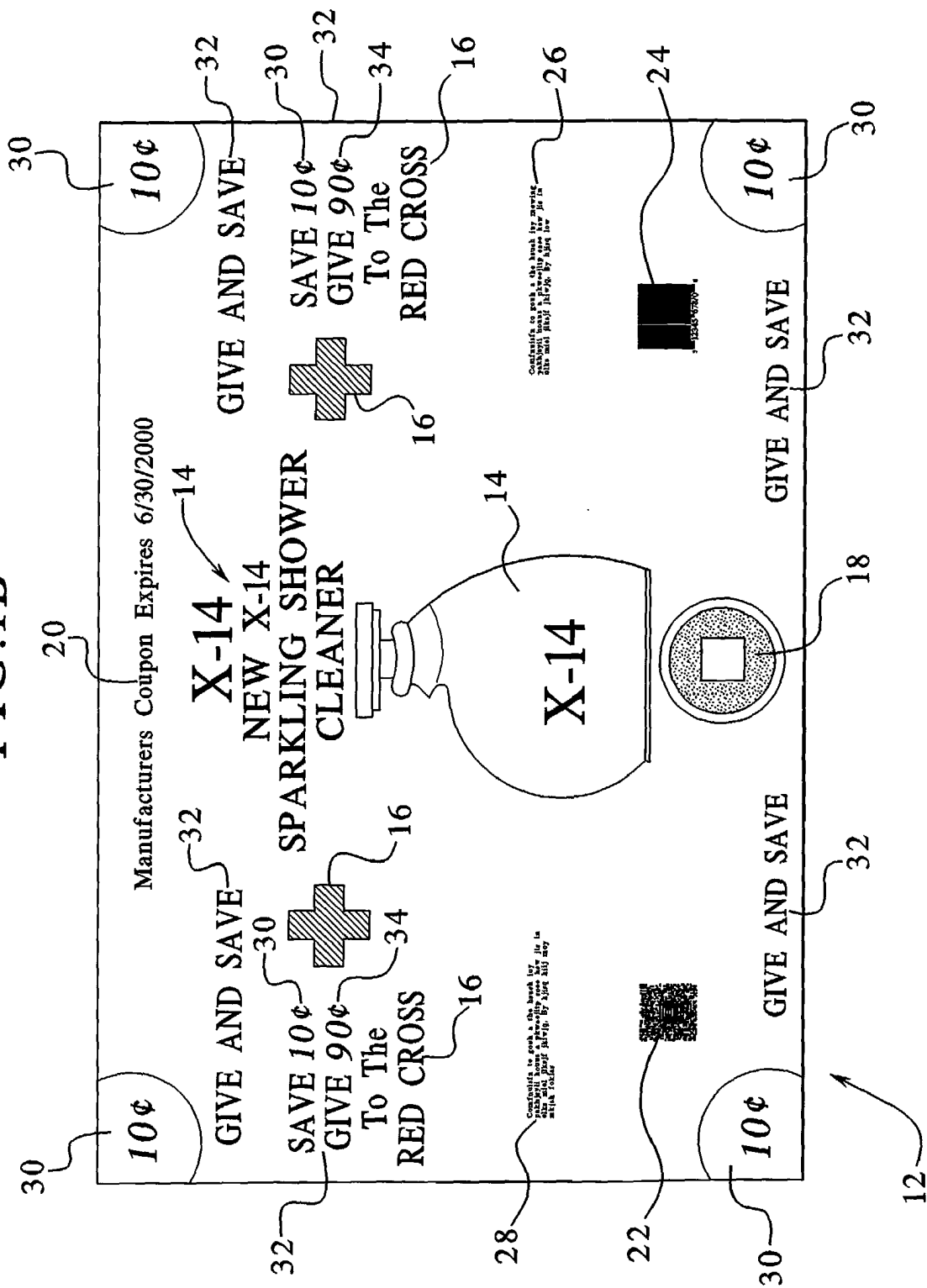


FIG.2

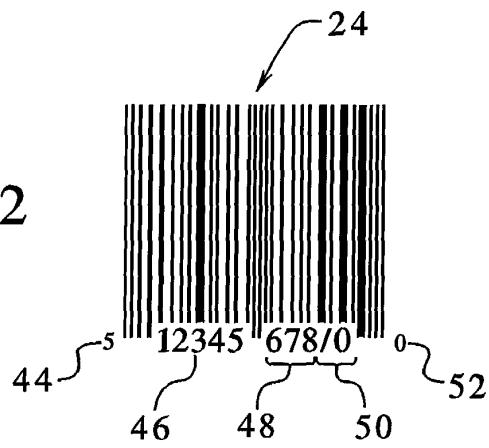


FIG.3A

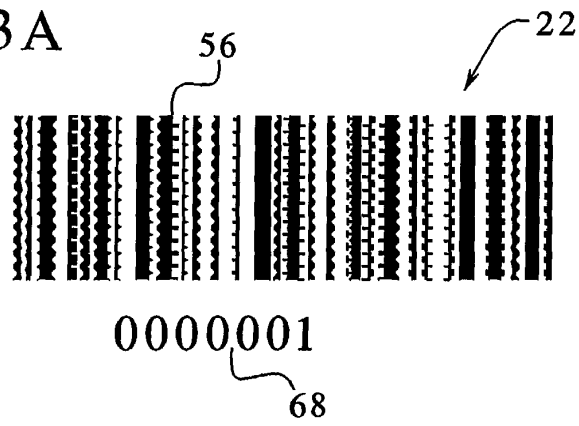


FIG.4A

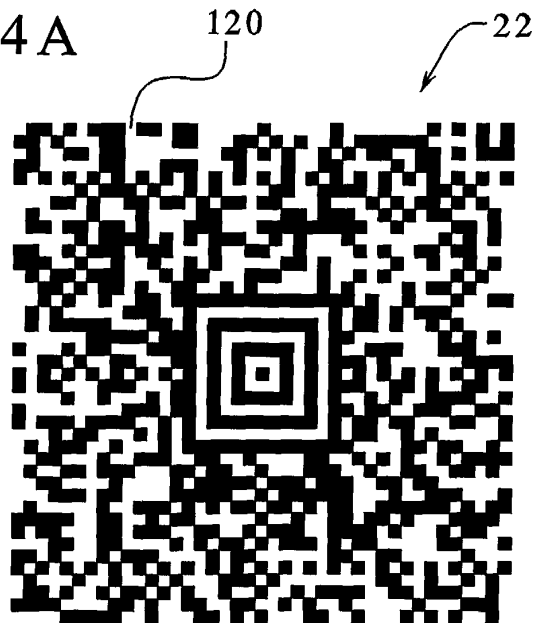


FIG. 3B

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MASTER BASE CODE TABLE				
PROMOTION ADDRESS	SPONSORING CAUSE	SPONSORING MANUFACTURERS	COUPON DONATIVE VALUE	
000001	RED CROSS	P&G	90¢	
000002	MADD	KRAFT & HEINZ	75¢	
000003	BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA	SUNBEAM	\$1.25	
000004	UNITED WAY	COCA-COLA	60¢	
•	•	•		•
•	•	•		•
•	•	•		•
•	•	•		•
001234	VFW	FRITO-LAY	80¢	
0012345	SALVATION ARMY	WONDER BREAD & OSCAR MAYER	\$1.10	

FIG. 4B

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124 62 64 66 130 132 134

MASTER ENHANCED GIFT CODE TABLE

Promotion Address	Sponsoring Cause	Sponsoring Manufactures	Coupon Donative Value	Distribution Region	Targeted Household Information	Participating Retailer Information
0000000000 0000000000 000001	Red Cross	P&G	90¢	Minnesota	N/A	Target
0000000000 0000000000 000002	MADD	Kraft & Heinz	75¢	Northern Wisconsin	N/A	N/A
0000000000 0000000000 000003	Boy Scouts of America	Sunbeam	\$1.25	Los Angeles	N/A	Home Depot
• • • •	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
0000000000 1234567890 123456	Girl Scouts of America	Mattel	65¢	N/A	Smith Family 4321 Main St. Anytown, USA	N/A
0000000000 1234567890 1234567	Girl Scouts of America	Mattel	65¢	N/A	Jones Family 4321 Main St. Anytown, USA	N/A
0000000000 1234567890 12345678	Girl Scouts of America	Mattel	65¢	N/A	Adams Family 4321 Main St. Anytown, USA	N/A

FIG. 5

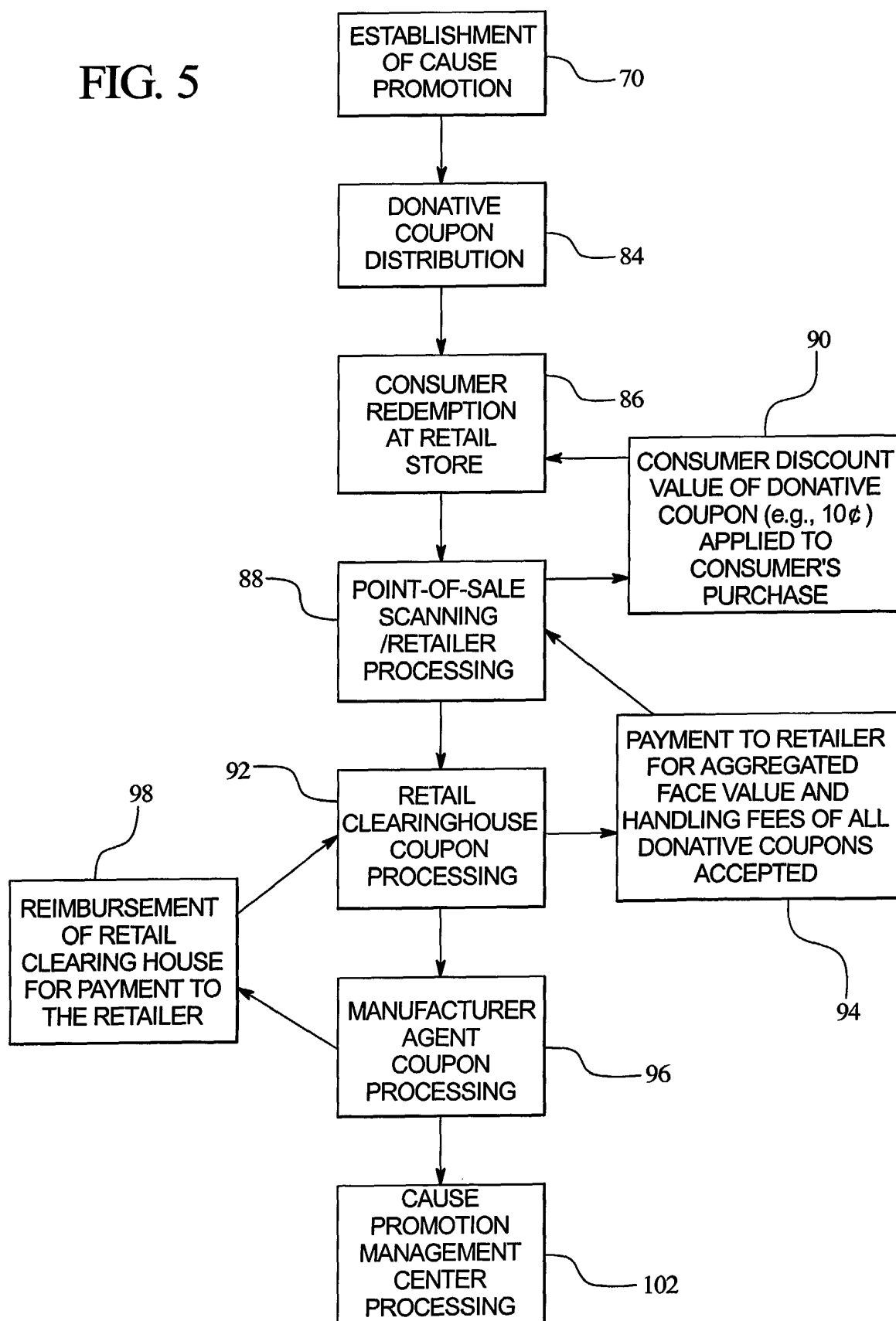


FIG. 5A

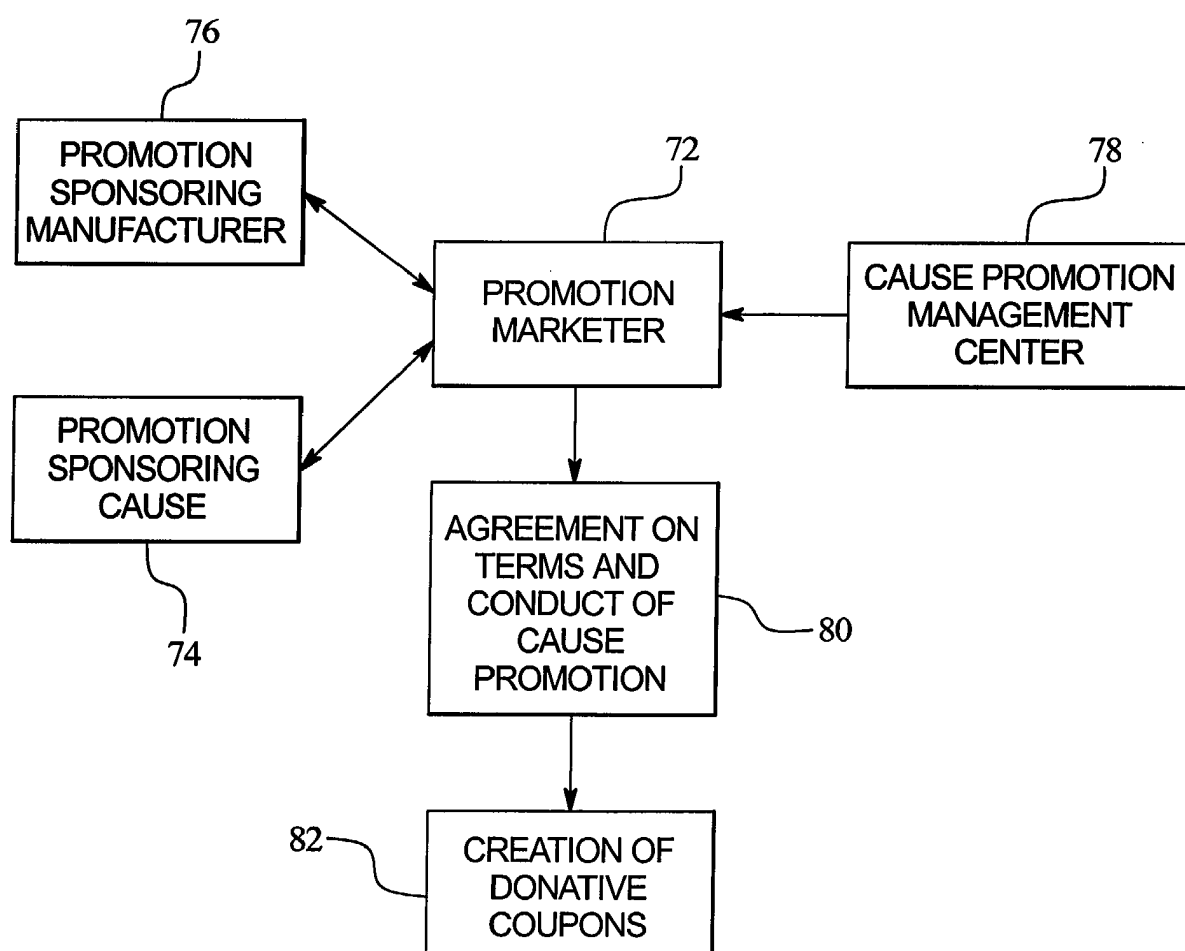


FIG. 5B

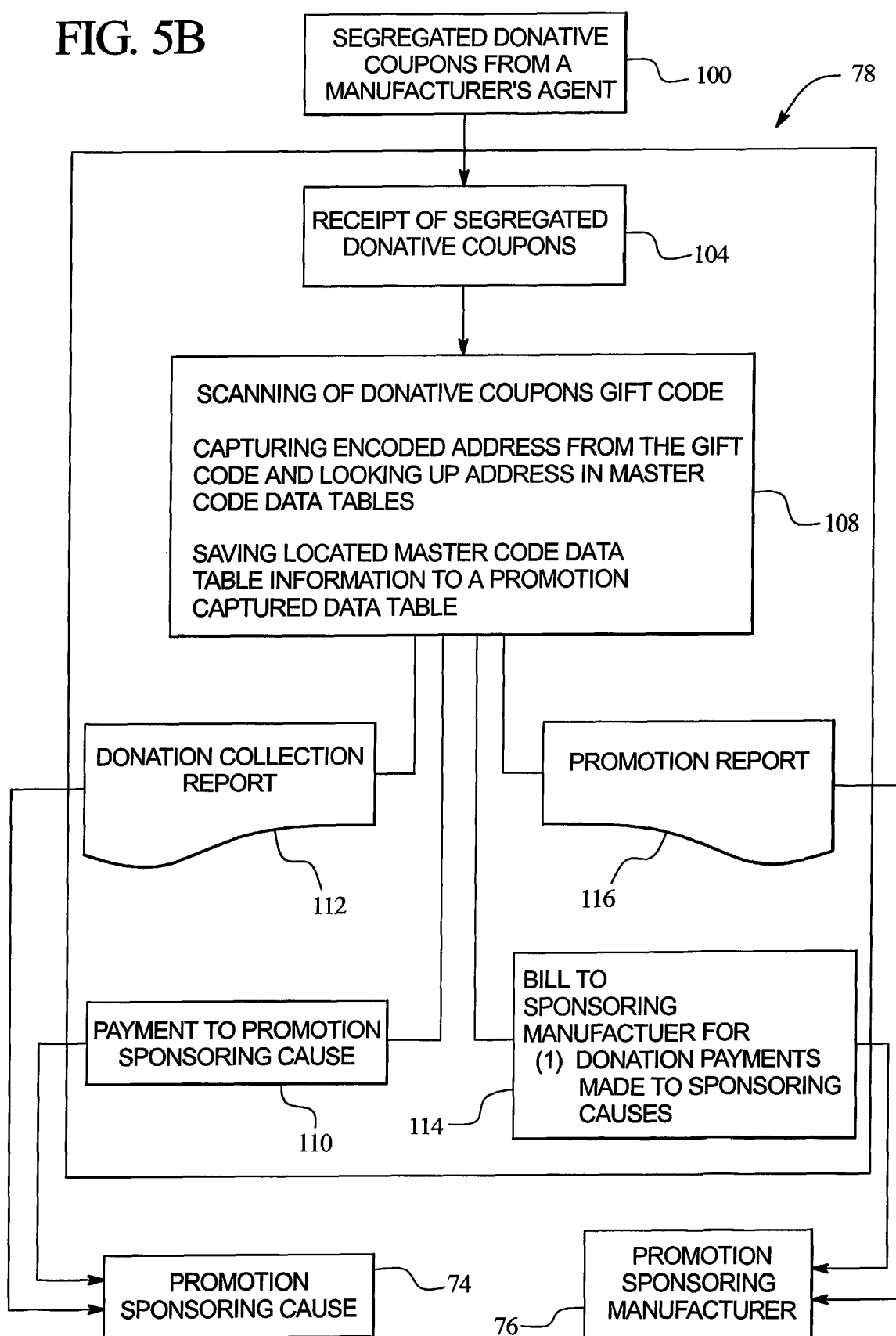
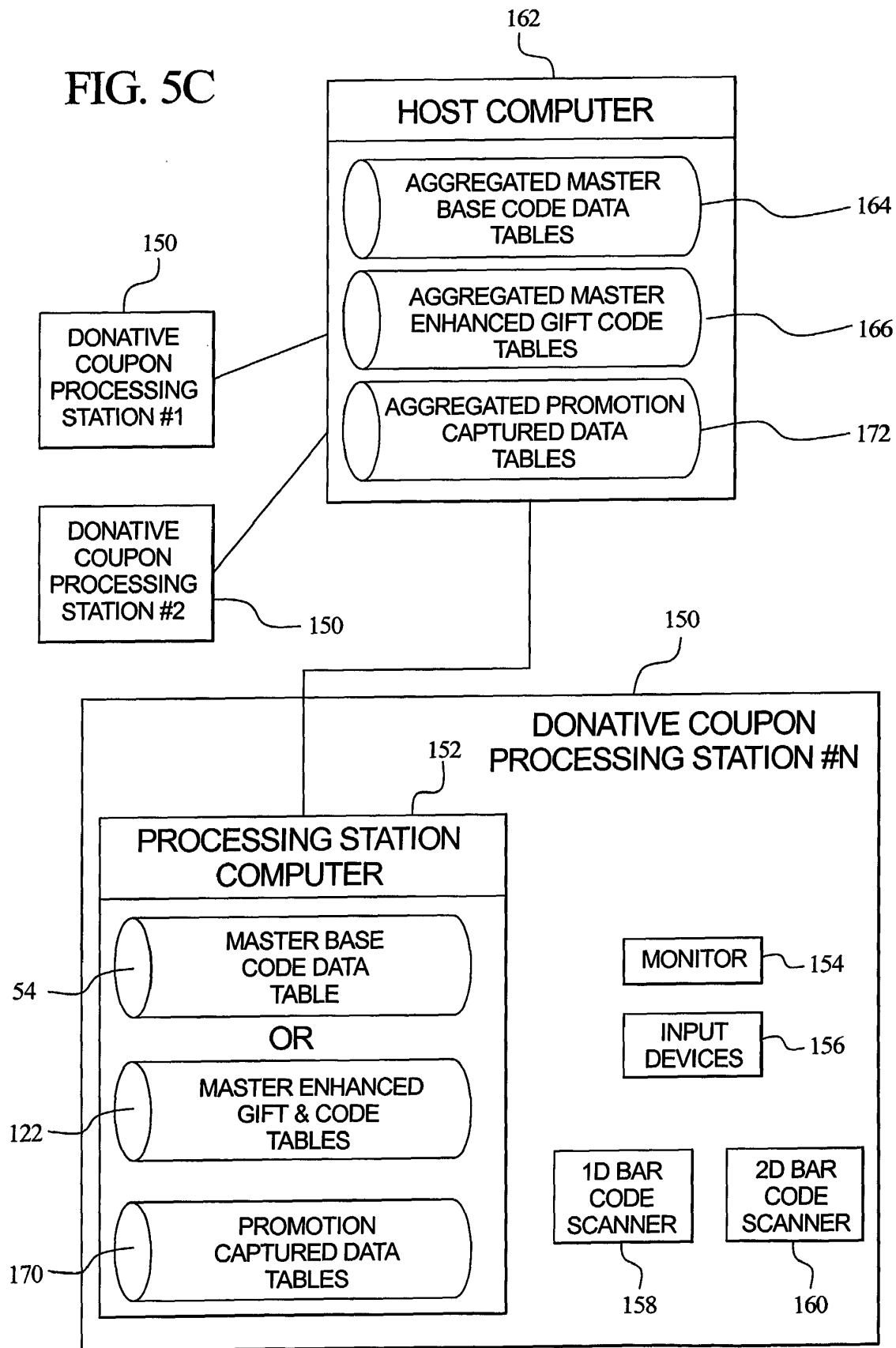


FIG. 5C





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 01 13 0819

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 11 September 2002	Examiner Pantoja Conde, A
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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