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Systems and methods for on demand and location-based offers

Abstract

A social media computing system is described. The social media computing system provides a social media platform to a plurality of users. Additionally, the social media computing system provides merchants the ability to provide targeted offers to users of the social media platform. As used herein, the word “merchants” also includes service providers. The offers relate to goods or services provided by the merchants. In some situations, the offers are transmitted by the social media computing system to user devices based on requests by the users. In other situations, the offers can be transmitted directly from the merchants to the user devices based on determined locations of the user devices.

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Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS (1) This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/962,298 filed Oct. 7, 2022, which is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/193,197 filed Nov. 16, 2018, which is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/990,099 filed Jan. 7, 2016, which claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 62/101,790 filed Jan. 9, 2015, each of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

(1) Social media platforms are becoming more and more popular. Users of various social media platforms utilize the platforms to message other users, to share pictures, to read the news, to play

games, to access media (e.g., photos, videos, music, etc.), and the like. As the popularity of social media platforms continues to grow, the use cases for the social media platforms continue to increase. The social media platform also presents new opportunities for merchants to reach a large customer base.

SUMMARY

(2) One embodiment relates to a method of providing on demand offers to a user via a social media platform. The social media platform is hosted by a social media computing system having a processor. The method includes receiving, by the processor, an offer request from a user via a user device. The user is a registered user of the social media platform. The offer request includes an identification of a product or service. The method further including querying, by the processor, an offer database of the social media computing system for a first matching offer. The method including transmitting, by the processor, the first matching offer to the user device. The method including receiving, by the processor, an indication that the user accepted the offer.

(3) Another embodiment relates to a method of temporarily permitting a merchant to send offers to a user of a social media platform based on a location of the user. The method including receiving, by a processor of a social media computing system, user location information from a user device. The user is a user of the social media platform. The method further including determining, by the processor, that the user is in proximity to a merchant. The method including enabling, by the processor, a merchant computing system associated with the merchant the ability to send messages to the user via the social media platform. The method including transmitting, by the processor, a message containing an offer from the merchant to the user, the offer relating to a product or service of the merchant.

(4) A further embodiment relates to a merchant offers system. The system includes a locator beacon network. The system further includes a network interface configured to communicate with a user device associated with a user and a merchant computing system associated with a merchant. The system includes memory and a processor. The processor is configured to receive user location information from the user device. The user is a user of a social media platform. The user location information is based on a determined position of the user device as identified through the locator beacon network. The processor is further configured to determine that the user is in proximity to the merchant. The processor is configured to enable the merchant computing system to send messages to the user via the social media platform. The processor is further configured to transmit a message containing an offer from the merchant computing system to the user device, the offer relating to a product or service of the merchant.

(5) Another embodiment relates to a social media system associated with a social media platform. The system includes a network interface, memory, and a processor. The processor is configured to receive an offer request from a user via a user device. The user is a registered user of the social media platform. The offer request includes an identification of a product or service. The processor is further configured to query an offer database of the social media computing system for a first matching offer. The processor is configured to transmit the first matching offer to the user device. The processor is further configured to receive an indication that the user accepted the offer.

(6) These and other features, together with the organization and manner of operation thereof, will become apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein like elements have like numerals throughout the several drawings described below.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

(1) FIG. 1 is a diagram of a computing system according to an exemplary embodiment.

- (2) FIG. 2 is a flow diagram of a method of sending an offer to a user of the social networking platform based on a user request is shown according to an example embodiment
- (3) FIGS. 3 through 10 show example user interfaces of a social media client during the method of FIG. 2.
- (4) FIG. 11 is a flow diagram of a method of permitting a merchant to send an offer to a user of a social media platform based on a location of the user according to an example embodiment.
- (5) FIGS. 12 through 18 show example user interfaces of a social media client during the method of FIG. 11.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- (6) Referring generally to the figures, a social media computing system is described. The social media computing system provides a social media platform to a plurality of users. Additionally, the social media computing system provides merchants the ability to provide targeted offers to users of the social media platform. As used herein, the word “merchants” also includes service providers. The offers relate to goods or services provided by the merchants. In some situations, the offers are transmitted by the social media computing system to user devices based on requests by the users. In other situations, the offers can be transmitted directly from the merchants to the user devices based on determined locations of the user devices.
- (7) Referring to FIG. 1, a diagram of a computing system 100 is shown according to an example embodiment. The computing system 100 includes a social media computing system 102. The social media computing system 102 provides a plurality of users 104 a social media platform. The users 104 access the social media platform via user devices 106. The user devices may include mobile devices, such as smartphones, tablet computers, PDAs, and the like. As described in further detail below, the social media computing system 102 also allows merchants 108 to send offers relating to goods and services provided by the merchants to the users 104. The offers may be selected and sent directly by the merchant 108 to the users 104 via the social media platform. Alternatively, the offers may be selected by the social media computing system 102 and sent to the users 104 via the social networking platform.
- (8) The social media computing system 102 includes a processor 110 and memory 112. In some arrangements, the social media computing system 102 includes a plurality of processors. The memory 112 stores programming modules that, when executed by the processor 110, control the operation of the social media computing system 102. The programming modules include social media logic that allows the social media computing system 102 to provide the social media platform to the plurality of users 104. The social media platform, for example, allows the users 104 to send and receive messages with contacts. For example, a first user of the social media platform that is a registered contact with a second user of the social media platform can send messages to the second user. The messages may include text, pictures, videos, audio, hyperlinks, and other content. In some arrangements, the social media platform prohibits non-contact users from sending messages between each other. The programming modules include offer logic. As described in further detail below, the offer logic allows the social media computing system 102 to store and distribute offers from merchants 108 to the users 104. In further arrangements, the programming modules include payment logic. The payment logic allows the users 104 to send payments (e.g., via credit card, via bank account, via mobile wallet, etc.) to other users and to the merchants 108.
- (9) The social media computing system 102 includes a network interface 114 that allows the social media computing system 102 to communicate data to and from other devices (e.g., user devices 106, the merchant computing system 116, etc.) via the network 118.
- (10) The social media computing system 102 includes an account database 120 and an offer database 122. The social media computing system 102 maintains various information related to user accounts in the account database 120. The account database 120 is where the social media computing system 102 stores information relating to usernames and passwords, user connections (e.g., which users are allowed to send messages to a given user), user contact information, user

preference information, and the like. The account database **120** may include payment information associated with various user accounts. The payment information includes credit card information or bank account information, which is used by the social media computing system **102** to transfer funds between users **104** and from users **104** to merchants **108**. In some arrangements, the account database **120** is split into multiple account databases. The offer database **122** is where the social media computing system **102** maintains current offers from the merchants **108**. The offers include an identification of a product or service and pricing information about the product or service. The pricing information may be a price, a discount (e.g., an amount of dollars off, a percentage discount, etc.), a quantity limit, and the like. In some arrangements, the pricing information also includes offer expiration information. In some arrangements, the offers include target demographics that should receive the offer (e.g., age, sex, location, user preferences, income level, user purchase history, user web browsing history, etc.).

(11) The user device **106** may be used by an individual user (e.g., a business owner or employee, a consumer, and so on) to create and interact with a social media platform. The user device **106** may, for example be, handheld computer, a cellular phone, smartphone, mobile handheld wireless e-mail device, a tablet computer, personal digital assistant, portable gaming devices, or another suitable device. The user device **106** includes a processor **124** and memory **126**. The memory **126** includes programming modules and logic that, when executed by the processor **124**, control the operation of the user device **106**. In some arrangements, the memory **126** includes a social media client **134** (e.g., a smartphone application that includes the necessary programming and circuitry that allows the user device **106** to interact with the social networking platform). The user device **106** includes a network interface **128**. The network interface **128** may be a wireless network interface that communicates with a wireless communication protocol (e.g., 802.11a/b/g/n, Bluetooth®, ZigBee®, CDMA, GSM, LTE, WiMax, etc.). The user device **106** includes a display **130** and an input **132**. In some arrangements, the display **130** and input **132** are integrated in a touchscreen display. The user device **106** may receive and display user interfaces including account information, transaction instructions, and so on. In some arrangements, the user interfaces may be used to initiate messages (i.e., the receiving of offers, the acceptance of offers, etc.) payments from the user's social media account.

(12) The social media client **132** includes program logic executable by the processor **124** to implement at least some or all of the functions described herein. As will be appreciated, the level of functionality that resides on the user device **106** as opposed to the social media computing system **102** may vary depending on the implementation. The social media client **132** may be a web browser that is configured to receive and display mobile web pages (e.g., web pages prompting the user to provide information to create an account, web pages displaying account balance information and past transactions, and so on) or an application executed by the user device **106**. As will be appreciated, the user may also use other devices (e.g., laptop or desktop computer system, not shown) to access the social networking platform.

(13) The social media client **132** may include, among other features, messaging logic **136** and account information **138**. The messaging logic **136** allows users **104** of the user devices **106** to communicate with other users of the social networking platform. The other users may include users **104** and the merchant **108**. The messaging function of the social media client **132** may also enable the users **104** to send payment to other users via messages. As described in further detail below, offers from the merchants **108** are communicated as messages. The account information **136** stores associations between the user **104** and other users of the social networking platform (e.g., friends or contacts).

(14) Still referring to FIG. 1, the merchant **108** maintains a merchant computing system **116**. The merchant computing system **116** includes a processor **140** and memory **142**. The memory **142** stores programming modules and logic that, when executed by the processor **140**, control the operation of the merchant computing system **116**. The merchant computing system **116** also

includes a network interface **144**. The network interface **144** allows the merchant computing system **116** to communicate data to and from the user devices **106** and the social media computing system **102** via the network **118**. The memory **142** includes offer logic that allows the merchant computing system **116** to send product or service offers to users **104** via the social media platform. The offers may be first transmitted for storage in the offer database **122** and for later distribution by the social media computing system **102**. Some merchants include locator beacons **146**. The locator beacons **146** broadcast unique identifiers that, when received by a user device **106**, allow the user device **106** to transmit its location as within the merchant **108** (i.e., within a brick and mortar location of the merchant **108**). A further description of the use of locator beacons **146** within merchants is described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/745,245, entitled “BEACON MALL EXPERIENCE,” filed on Jun. 19, 2015, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety and for all purposes.

(15) Referring to FIG. 2, a flow diagram of a method **200** of sending an offer to a user of the social networking platform based on a user request is shown according to an example embodiment. Method **200** is performed by the social media computing system **102** (e.g., by processor **110**). Method **200** begins when an offer request is received from a user at **202**. The offer request is received by the social media computing system **102** and from a user device **106** associated with the user. The request includes an identification of a product or service that the user would like to receive an offer on (i.e., the user would like to know if there are any special deals or merchant offers relating to the identified product or service). The product may be identified with a hashtag. For example, the user **104** may send a message saying “#shoes”. The message may include multiple keywords, such as “#shoes #leather”. In the example, the hashtag serves as a trigger for the social media computing system **102** to identify product offers related to the hashtagged word or keywords. The request also includes an identification of the user (e.g., a username associated with the user). In some arrangements, location information relating to the current location of the user device **106** being used by the user to send the request is received along with the request at **202**. The location information may relate to GPS location information of the user device **106** or location information based on a determined position of the user device as identified through the locator beacons **146** if a merchant **108**.

(16) The request may be transmitted as a chat message to a contact that is an offer client of the social media computing system **102**. For example, as shown in FIG. 3, an example user interface **300** of the offer feature as presented via the social media client **134** running on the user device **106**. The user can type in a request into the “send a chat” bar **302** and click the send button **304** to send an offer request to “Snapoffers.” In the arrangement shown in FIG. 3, the message receiving account “Snapoffers” is an account with the social media service that can receive messages from other users of the social media service. In some arrangements, the “Snapoffers” account is bot account that is automatically operated by the social media computing system **102** (e.g., all messages are received, analyzed, and automatically replied to by the social media computing system **102**). As shown in FIG. 4, an example user interface **400** of the offer feature shows that the user requested an offer for headphones by sending “#headphones” as a message to Snapoffers.

(17) Requestor information is determined at **204**. The requestor information is determined by the social media computing system **102**. In some arrangements, the requestor information is at least in part determined based on user information stored in the account database **120**. The requestor information may include user demographic information (e.g., age, sex, shopping habits, browsing history, income level, etc.). The requestor information may include prior purchase data (e.g., shopping history, preferred stores, preferred price ranges, etc.) and offer acceptance/rejection information. In some arrangements, the requestor information includes identifying the location of the user initiating the request based on the received location information received at **202**.

(18) The offer database is cross referenced for appropriate offers at **206**. The social media computing system **102** cross-references the offers database **122** with the identification of the

product or the requested product type (i.e., the hashtagged keyword or keywords as received at **202**) and the requestor information (as determined at **204**) to identify appropriate offers to send in response to the initial request. The offers in the offer database are offers from the merchants **108**. In some arrangements, the social media computing system **102** queries the offers database **122** for offers that match the information received with the offer request. In further arrangements, the social media computing system **102** limits offers to within a threshold distance of the requestor.

(19) A highest ranking offer is determined at **208**. The social media computing system **102** determines the best match, or highest ranking, offer based on the request and the requestor information. In some arrangements, more than one offer matches the request criteria. In such arrangements, the requestor information is used to identify the offer that most likely will satisfy the user's request. For example, if the user request was for a purse (e.g., the user sent a message to Snapoffers with the text “#purse”), and the user has a history of buying a first brand of purses and not a second brand of purses, offers relating to the first brand of purses may be ranked higher than offers relating to the second brand of purses. The multiple matches may also be prioritized at least in part based on a location of the merchant with respect to the location of the user. In some embodiments, the multiple matches may also be prioritized at least in part based on bids placed by the merchants. For example, for #purse, merchant A may place a bid of \$0.10 and merchant B may place a bid of \$0.12. The next time the text “#purse” is received, an offer may be selected based at least in part on which merchant placed the higher bid. For example, if Merchant A's offer is displayed, then Merchant A may pay the \$0.10 bid amount to the social media platform for displaying the offer. The bid may be placed for simply displaying the offer to the user, or may further require that the user actually accept the offer in order for the bid amount to be paid. In embodiments where the bid payment is contingent upon the user accepting the offer, the offer may further be selected based on the probability of the user accepting the offer. For example, if Merchant A places a bid that is much higher than the bid from Merchant B, but Merchant A's bid is contingent upon the user accepting the bid, and Merchant A's offers have performed poorly in the past, then Merchant B may be more likely to be selected.

(20) The highest ranking offer is transmitted to the user at **210**. The social media computing system **102** generates and transmits the offer to the user device **106**. The offer includes an identification of a product or service and a price of the product or service. In some arrangements, the offer identifies the merchant **108** offering the product or service. In further arrangements, the offer includes a hyperlink to a product page containing more information about the offered product or service (e.g., at a website of the merchant **108**). The offer includes a request for the user to accept or reject the offer. In some arrangements, the offer expires after a designated period of time (e.g., 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, etc.). For example, FIG. 5 shows an example user interface **500** in which an offer **502** is sent to a user via the social media client **134**. The offer **502** of FIG. 5 is for a pair of headphones in response to the users initial offer request. The offer **502** includes an identification of the merchant (“MERCH”), an identification of the price (“\$9.99”), an indication of the offer's expiration (“15 minutes”), and an invitation for the user to accept or reject the offer by replying to the message containing the offer. Referring again to FIG. 2, after transmitting the offer at **210**, the transmitted offer is marked as sent at **212**. The social media computing system **102** marks the offer as sent to the user in the offer database **122**. Marking the offer as sent ensures that the social media computing system **102** will not send that specific offer to the user again within a set time period.

(21) At **214**, the social media computing system **102** determines whether the offer was accepted or not. The offer is accepted if the user responds with an acceptance via the user device **106** (e.g., by sending a “yes” message as shown in user interface **600** of FIG. 6). In such situations, the social media computing system **102** receives the acceptance from the user device **106**. The offer is rejected if the user responds with a rejection via the user device **106** (e.g., by sending a “no” message) or by allowing the offer to expire. If the offer expires, the computing system **102** determines whether to send the next highest priority offer at **216**. In some arrangements, the next

highest priority message is sent if there are more than one possible offers matching the user's initial offer request and if the user indicated that multiple offers are to be delivered (e.g., by the user sending the request again, based on user preferences, etc.) after the previously sent offer message is rejected or expired. If the next offer is to be sent, method **200** returns to **206**. If a next offer is not to be sent or no next offer exists, method **200** ends.

(22) If the offer was accepted at **214**, payment approval must be received prior to moving forward with the offer. The social media computing system **102** receives payment approval from the user via the user device **106**. For example, as shown in FIGS. **7** through **9**, various user interfaces **700**, **800**, and **900** are shown that show the back and forth between the social media computing system **102** and the user **104** to provide payment approval. As shown in user interface **700**, the social media computing system **102** first sends a request to provide funds. The user can provide funds by entering a payment amount (e.g., \$9.99) and clicking a send funds button **802** on user interface **800**. The social media computing system **102** may respond to the sent funds with an indication that the funds were received, as shown in user interface **900**. The source of the funding may be a bank account or credit card account already associated with the user's social media platform account, which may be stored in the account database **120**. In other arrangements, the user can provide a new payment source (e.g., a bank account, a credit card account, a gift card number, etc.) via a follow-up message from the user device **106** to the social media computing system **102**.

(23) Payment is transmitted to merchant at **220**. The social media computing system **102** transmits payment to the merchant **108** to indicate that the user **104** purchased the item or service in the offer. Payment may be effectuated through a third party (e.g., a credit card processor, a financial institution, etc.).

(24) A transaction code is transmitted to the user at **222**. The social media computing system **102** generates and transmits the transaction code to the user device **106**. In some arrangements, the transaction code is generated by the merchant computing system **116** and is sent to the social media computing system **102** where the transaction code is forwarded to the user device **106**. In other arrangements, the transaction code is generated by the social media computing system **102** and is sent to both the user device **106** and the merchant computing system **116**. An exemplary transaction code is shown in user interface **1000** of FIG. **10**. The transaction code allows the user to claim the purchased product or services. The transaction code may be redeemed at a brick-and-mortar location of the merchant **108** or via the merchant's website. In arrangements where the transaction code is redeemed online, the user may enter the transaction code into a coupon code or discount code field of the checkout screen on the merchant's website. In such arrangements, the transmittal of the transaction code may include a hyperlink to the merchant's website. In other arrangements, the transaction code may be in the form of a barcode or a two-dimensional barcode (e.g., a QR code) that can be presented by the user (e.g., via the display **130** of the user device **106**, by printing the transaction code, etc.) such that the transaction code can be scanned at a point of sale system of the merchant **108**.

(25) In some arrangements, the social media computing system **102** can allow users **104** to maintain a list of accepted offers. The list may be called a shopping list. The social media computing system **102** can also create a shopping route and navigation instructions. For example, if a user has accepted a first offer for shoes at a first merchant, a second offer for pants at a second merchant, and a third offer for a coat at a third merchant, the social media computing system **102** can determine the optimal shopping route for the user to pick up the accepted offers in the least amount of time. The optimal route may be determined based on the user's location, the locations of the merchants, and traffic data. The optimal route is transmitted to the user device **106** associated with the user, where it can be followed via a navigation or maps program executed on or a navigation or maps website accessed by the user device **106**.

(26) Referring to FIG. **11**, a flow diagram of a method **1100** of permitting a merchant to send an offer to a user of a social media platform based on a location of the user according to an example

embodiment. Method **1100** is performed by the social media computing system **102** (e.g., by processor **110**). Method **1100** is similar to method **200**, however, method **1100** permits the merchant **108** to directly reach out to the user with product or service offers via the social media computing system **102**. Method **1100** begins when user location information is received at **1102**. The social media computing system **102** receives the location information from the user device. The user location information may relate to at least one beacon identifiers (e.g., from beacons **146**), GPS coordinates, cell tower location information, wireless network SSID information, or the like.

(27) The user is determined to be within a proximity of a merchant at **1104**. The social media computing system **102** determines that the user is within proximity of the merchant **108**. The proximity may be predetermined to be within a set distance from a location of the merchant **108** or within the location of the merchant **108**. In some arrangements, the location information may indicate that the user is in a certain area within a location of the merchant **108** (e.g., within the men's department of a department store).

(28) Direct communication between the merchant and the user via the social networking platform is temporarily enabled at **1106**. The social media computing system **102** enables the merchant **108** to send messages with offers to the user **106**. As described above, the social media platform may place restrictions on the messages that can be sent to the user **106**. For example, the user **106** may only receive messages from those other users that the user **106** has approved to be a contact.

Accordingly, by enabling direct communication between the merchant **108** and the user **106**, the social media computing system **102** allows the merchant **108** to send messages to the user **106** via the social media platform. The messages are routed through the social media computing system **102**. The messages from the merchant **108** may include offers for products or services provided by the merchant **108** (in a similar manner as described above with respect to method **200**). The primary difference between method **200** and method **1100**, however, is that the offers are selected directly by the merchant **108** and are transmitted by the merchant computing system **116** via the social media computing system **102**, which facilitates the messaging of the social media platform.

(29) For example, a set of user interfaces (**1200**, **1300**, **1400**, **1500**, **1600**, **1700**, and **1800**) are shown in FIGS. **12** through **18**, which demonstrate a back and forth message session that occurs while the merchant **108** is temporarily permitted to send offers to the user **104**. User interface **1200** shows an initial message from the merchant **108** to the user **104**. The message of interface **1200** lets the user **104** know that the user **104** can request offers directly from the merchant **108**. The user **104** responds in user interface **1300** with a message indicating that the user **104** is interested in shoes. Based on the request for offers for shoes, the merchant computing system **116** searches the offers of the merchant **108** for offers matching shoes and transmits a first offer. As shown in user interface **1500**, the user **104** rejects the first offer. In response to the rejection, the merchant computing system **116** transmits a second offer to the user **104** for a second pair of shoes. The user accepts the second offer in user interface **1700**. The merchant computing system **116** transmits an offer code (e.g., ABC123) to the user **104** in user interface **1800**. The offer code is later used by the user **104** to redeem the offer (e.g., in a similar manner as described above with respect to the method **200**).

(30) Updated user location information is received at **1108**. The updated user location information is received by the social media computing system **102** from the user device **106**. The updated user location information may be received on a regular bases (e.g., every set period of time, continuously, etc.). The updated user location information may relate to updated beacon identifiers, updated GPS coordinates, updated cell tower location information, updated wireless network SSID information, or the like. Based on the updated user location information, the social media computing system **102** determines whether the user is still within the designated proximity of the merchant at **1110**. If the user is still within the designated proximity, method **1100** returns to step **1108**. If the user is not with in the designated proximity, direct communication between the merchant and the user is disabled at **1112**. In some arrangements, a message is sent from the social

media computing system **102** to the merchant computing system **116** indicating that the user is no longer in or near the merchant's location.

(31) The embodiments of the present invention have been described with reference to drawings. The drawings illustrate certain details of specific embodiments that implement the systems and methods and programs of the present invention. However, describing the invention with drawings should not be construed as imposing on the invention any limitations that may be present in the drawings. The present invention contemplates methods, systems and program products on any machine-readable media for accomplishing its operations. The embodiments of the present invention may be implemented using an existing computer processor, or by a special purpose computer processor incorporated for this or another purpose or by a hardwired system.

(32) As noted above, embodiments within the scope of the present invention include program products comprising machine-readable media for carrying or having machine-executable instructions or data structures stored thereon. Such machine-readable media can be any available media that can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. By way of example, such machine-readable media can comprise RAM, ROM, EPROM, EEPROM, CD-ROM or other optical disk storage, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to carry or store desired program code in the form of machine-executable instructions or data structures and which can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer or other machine with a processor. Combinations of the above are also included within the scope of machine-readable media. Machine-executable instructions comprise, for example, instructions and data which cause a general purpose computer, special purpose computer, or special purpose processing machines to perform a certain function or group of functions.

(33) Embodiments of the present invention have been described in the general context of method steps which may be implemented in one embodiment by a program product including machine-executable instructions, such as program code, for example in the form of program modules executed by machines in networked environments. Generally, program modules include routines, programs, objects, components, data structures, etc. that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Machine-executable instructions, associated data structures, and program modules represent examples of program code for executing steps of the methods disclosed herein. The particular sequence of such executable instructions or associated data structures represent examples of corresponding acts for implementing the functions described in such steps.

(34) As previously indicated, embodiments of the present invention may be practiced in a networked environment using logical connections to one or more remote computers having processors. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that such network computing environments may encompass many types of computers, including personal computers, hand-held devices, multi-processor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, minicomputers, mainframe computers, and so on. Embodiments of the invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by local and remote processing devices that are linked (either by hardwired links, wireless links, or by a combination of hardwired or wireless links) through a communications network. In a distributed computing environment, program modules may be located in both local and remote memory storage devices.

(35) An example system for implementing the overall system or portions of the invention might include a general purpose computing computers in the form of computers, including a processing unit, a system memory, and a system bus that couples various system components including the system memory to the processing unit. The system memory may include read only memory (ROM) and random access memory (RAM). The computer may also include a magnetic hard disk drive for reading from and writing to a magnetic hard disk, a magnetic disk drive for reading from or writing to a removable magnetic disk, and an optical disk drive for reading from or writing to a removable optical disk such as a CD ROM or other optical media. The drives and their associated machine-

readable media provide nonvolatile storage of machine-executable instructions, data structures, program modules and other data for the computer. It should also be noted that the word “terminal” as used herein is intended to encompass computer input and output devices. Input devices, as described herein, include a keyboard, a keypad, a mouse, joystick or other input devices performing a similar function. The output devices, as described herein, include a computer monitor, printer, facsimile machine, or other output devices performing a similar function.

(36) Any foregoing references to currency or funds are intended to include fiat currencies, non-fiat currencies (e.g., precious metals), and math-based currencies (often referred to as cryptocurrencies). Examples of math-based currencies include Bitcoin, Litecoin, Dogecoin, and the like.

(37) It should be noted that although the diagrams herein may show a specific order and composition of method steps, it is understood that the order of these steps may differ from what is depicted. For example, two or more steps may be performed concurrently or with partial concurrence. Also, some method steps that are performed as discrete steps may be combined, steps being performed as a combined step may be separated into discrete steps, the sequence of certain processes may be reversed or otherwise varied, and the nature or number of discrete processes may be altered or varied. The order or sequence of any element or apparatus may be varied or substituted according to alternative embodiments. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of the present invention as defined in the appended claims. Such variations will depend on the software and hardware systems chosen and on designer choice. It is understood that all such variations are within the scope of the invention. Likewise, software and web implementations of the present invention could be accomplished with standard programming techniques with rule based logic and other logic to accomplish the various database searching steps, correlation steps, comparison steps and decision steps.

(38) The foregoing description of embodiments of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed, and modifications and variations are possible in light of the above teachings or may be acquired from practice of the invention. The embodiments were chosen and described in order to explain the principals of the invention and its practical application to enable one skilled in the art to utilize the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. Other substitutions, modifications, changes and omissions may be made in the design, operating conditions and arrangement of the embodiments without departing from the scope of the present invention as expressed in the appended claims.

Claims

1. A method of temporarily permitting a merchant to send offers to a user of a social media platform based on a location of the user, the method comprising: receiving, by a processor of a social media computing system, user location information indicating that a user device of the user is in proximity to a merchant location; removing, by the processor, a restriction of the social media computing system preventing the user from receiving messages from a merchant computing system associated with the merchant via the social media platform, removal of the restriction permitting the messages transmitted by the merchant computing system to be provided to the user device by the social media platform; and transmitting, by the processor, a message containing an offer from the merchant to the user, the offer relating to a product or service of the merchant.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving, by the processor, updated user location information.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising determining, by the processor that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant based on the updated user location information.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising, disabling, by the processor, the ability of the

merchant to send messages to the user via the social media platform in response to determining that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the user location information is determined based on a received locator beacon identifier positioned within or near the merchant.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising generating a transaction code that allows the user to claim a product or service from the merchant associated with an accepted offer.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the user location information is received from a user device.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising using the received user location information to determine that the user device is in proximity to the merchant location.

9. A merchant offers system comprising: a locator beacon network; a network interface configured to communicate with a user device associated with a user and a merchant computing system associated with a merchant; and one or more processors configured to: receive user location information indicating that a user device of the user is in proximity to a merchant location of the merchant, wherein the user is a user of a social media platform, wherein the user location information is based on a determined position of the user device as identified through the locator beacon network; remove a restriction of a social media computing system preventing the user from receiving messages from the merchant computing system via the social media platform, removal of the restriction permitting the messages transmitted by the merchant computing system to be provided to the user device by the social media platform; and transmit a message containing an offer from the merchant computing system to the user device, the offer relating to a product or service of the merchant.

10. The merchant offers system of claim 9, the one or more processors further configured to receive updated user location information from the user device.

11. The merchant offers system of claim 10, the one or more processors further configured to determine that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant based on the updated user location information.

12. The merchant offers system of claim 11, the one or more processors further configured to disable the ability of the merchant computing system to send messages to the user device via the social media platform in response to determining that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant.

13. The merchant offers system of claim 9, the one or more processors further configured to generate a transaction code that allows the user to claim a product or service from the merchant associated with an accepted offer.

14. The merchant offers system of claim 9, wherein the user location information is received from the user device.

15. A social media computing system configured to temporarily permit a merchant to send offers to a user of a social media platform based on a location of the user, the social media computing system comprising one or more processors configured to: receive user location information indicating a user device of the user is in proximity to a merchant, wherein the user is a user of the social media platform; remove a restriction of the social media computing system preventing the user from receiving messages from a merchant computing system associated with the merchant via the social media platform, removal of the restriction permitting the messages transmitted by the merchant computing system to be provided to the user device by the social media platform; and transmit a message containing an offer from the merchant to the user, the offer relating to a product or service of the merchant.

16. The social media computing system of claim 15, the one or more processors further configured to receive updated user location information from the user device.

17. The social media computing system of claim 16, the one or more processors further configured to determine that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant based on the updated user location information.

18. The social media computing system of claim 17, the one or more processors further configured to disable the ability of the merchant to send messages to the user via the social media platform in response to determining that the user is no longer in proximity to the merchant.
 19. The social media computing system of claim 15, wherein the user location information is determined based on a received locator beacon identifier positioned within or near the merchant.
 20. The social media computing system of claim 15, the one or more processors further configured to generate a transaction code that allows the user to claim a product or service from the merchant associated with an accepted offer.
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