FORM 1

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PATENTS ACT 1952

APPLICATION FOR A STANDARD PATENT

We, OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY. LTD.

of 1562-1568 CENTRE ROAD
SPRINGVALE VIC 3171

hereby apply for the grant of a standard patent for an invention entitled:

A MARKETING AID

which is described in the accompanying provisional specification

Our address for service is care of GRIFFITH HACK & CO., Patent Attorneys, 601 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004, Victoria, Australia.

DATED this 06th day of April 1990

OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY. LTD.

GRIFITIH HACK & CO.

TO: The Commissioner of Patents.
NOTICE OF ENTITLEMENT

I/We OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY. LTD.

of 1562-1568 CENTRE ROAD
SPRINGVALE VIC 3171
AUSTRALIA

being the applicant(s) in respect of an application for a patent for an invention entitled A MARKETING AID (Application No. 74129/91), state the following:

1. The nominated person(s) has/have, for the following reasons, gained entitlement from the actual inventor(s):

   1. Dale Stevenson and
   2. Bronsilav Paykin,
      both C/O Olympic Amusements Pty Ltd, of 1562-1568 Centre Road, Springvale, Victoria, 3171, Australia

      The nominated person would be entitled to any patent granted to the actual inventors in respect of the said invention.

2. The nominated person(s) is/are the applicant(s) of the provisional application(s) listed on the Patent Request.

DATE: 7 January 1994

OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY. LTD.

GRIFFITH HACK & CO.

Patent Attorney for and on behalf of the applicant(s)
A MARKETING AID

1. A marketing aid comprising:
   a dispensing means for dispensing a token having information encoded thereon;
   a reader for decoding the encoded information;
   a processor for determining if the decoded information corresponds to the award of a prize; and
   indicating means to advise of the award of a prize.

9. A marketing method comprising the steps of:
   dispensing a token from a dispensing means, the token having information encoded thereon;
   decoding the encoded information by a reader;
   processing the decoded information in a processor to determine whether it corresponds to the award of a prize; and
   indicating the award of a prize.
APPLICANT: OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY LTD

NUMBER:

FILING DATE:

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
The Patents Act 1952

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION FOR THE INVENTION ENTITLED:

"A MARKETING AID"

This invention is described in the following statement:

- 1 -
A MARKETING AID

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to the field of marketing, and relates particularly but not exclusively to an aid for use in the marketing of products or services.

Description of the Prior Art

In an effort to promote the goods or services of a particular trader many strategies have been developed over the years.

Perhaps the primary example of such techniques is advertising, which can take the form of media advertisements or advertisements placed in the market place. Media advertisements are commonly implemented in the print or television medium, while in the market place, still advertising depicting the goods or services is used, commonly in the form of displays, posters and such.

It is also known to promote goods and services by the provision of give-aways, such as may commonly be done with the introduction of new lines of goods or services. Give-aways can comprise samples of the goods or services, or as an adjunct product which may or may not be associated to the goods or services being promoted.

Similar to this strategy is the lucky draw, where a purchaser of the goods or services is entitled to a free gift, which is chosen at random from a number of gifts. Typically, the range of gifts made available in lucky draws will vary between a few major awards to many minor or trivial awards. In a similar way, mystery prize tokens can also be provided to the purchaser of the goods or services. These prize tokens can be of the scratch-and-see type, or have an instant prize concealed...
behind some sort of obscuring flap on a card or ticket. Further examples of a marketing technique is the running of competitions, wherein entries to the competition may be made following the purchase of goods or services; the entry form commonly being part of such goods, or only obtained following the purchase of the goods or services. The competition would normally be open to all persons purchasing the goods or services within some prescribed period and may result in the rewarding of a major prize or prizes together with a number of lesser prizes.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a method and apparatus which are useful as marketing aids, and being such as to cause excitement and interest amongst the users to whom the marketing is directed.

Summary of the Invention

Therefore, according to one aspect of the invention there is provided a marketing aid comprising:

- a dispensing means for dispensing a token having information encoded thereon;
- a reader for decoding the encoded information;
- a processor for determining if the decoded information corresponds to the award of a prize; and
- indicating means to advise of the award of a prize.

According to a further aspect of the invention there is provided a marketing method comprising the steps of:

- dispensing a token from a dispensing means, the token having information encoded thereon;
- decoding the encoded information by a reader;
- processing the decoded information in a
processor to determine whether it corresponds to the award of a prize; and
indicating the award of a prize.

Brief Description of the Drawings

In order that the invention may be more clearly understood, a preferred embodiment will now be described with reference to the examples shown in the accompanying drawings wherein:

- Figure 1 shows an overall block diagram of the embodiment;
- Figure 2 shows the examples of bar coding which could be used on tokens;
- Figure 3 shows an example of one display that is presented to a user of the system; and
- Figure 4 shows a further display.

Description of Preferred Embodiments

The present embodiment will be described with reference to a marketing aid for installation in a supermarket, or other retail outlet. It is to be understood that the invention is equally applicable to many situations other than the one specifically described.

In Figure 1, the marketing aid is shown as system 10. The system 10 comprises two general components, these being the issuing section 20 and the verifying section 30.

Within the issuing section 20 is provided a decision mechanism 22 which is connected to a card dispenser 24 via line 26.

The decision mechanism 22 serves the function of determining whether any would-be user of the system 10 is entitled to do so. In the present instance, the decision mechanism 22 can be associated with a checkout or register.
at the supermarket, and will entitle a person to be a user of the system 10 only if they have purchased goods to a value of above a predetermined amount, or if they have purchased a particular type of goods. It would also be possible to have no predetermined requirements as to entitlement, in which case the decision mechanism 22 could simply be a pushbutton which allows any person to be a user.

Once entitlement has been established, a signal representing this entitlement will be passed along line 26 to the card dispenser 24. Card dispenser 24 has the function of issuing encoded tokens, which, in this instance, take the form of bar coded cards which are either pre-printed and outputted from the card dispenser 24 in a predetermined sequence, or alternatively outputted in random order. The card dispenser 24 could alternatively print the cards itself based on a random or predetermined set of possibilities for the decoded information.

It is equally possible that the decision and dispensing functions of the issuing section 20 could be performed by a person at a checkout counter. In this instance, the encoded tokens must be pre-printed, and then selected at random by that person.

Figure 2 shows two examples of bar coding which might be suitable for applying to the cards. Each bar code represents a six digit number, although it is not particularly necessary to use this number of digits nor this format.

It will be usual that only one card will be issued per entitlement as determined by the decision mechanism 22. Once a card has been issued, it is then necessary for the user of the system 10 to provide the card to the verifying section 30 to establish whether the information encoded on the card entitles that user to the award of a prize.
Typically, the issuing section 20 and the verifying section 30 will be at different locations in the supermarket. If the issuing section 20 is at a checkout or register, there may therefore be a number of issuing sections 20 which are related to only one verifying section 30.

The verifying section 30 as shown in Figure 1, consists of a processor and memory 32, which contains all the software necessary to drive the peripheral devices attached to it, to determine the decoding of the information provided on a card, and to make the determination as to whether the information then corresponds to the award of a prize.

The verifying section can be operable by the person to whom one or more cards were issued, viz., the consumer, or by a designated operator.

One means of reading the cards is via bar code reader 34 which is connected to the processor and memory 32 via a serial port. The bar code reader 34 is an optical device which scans the bar code on any card in a known fashion until such time as the processor and memory 32 acknowledges that the particular card has been successfully read. It is necessary for an operator to retain a card once read so that the card is not presented on a further occasion.

Also attached to processor and memory 32 is a ticket printer 36 which is used to provide a receipt to a user of the system 10 regarding the outcome of the reading of any one card. Video monitor 38 operates in conjunction with ticket printer 36, and provides visual displays for the user of the system 10 as will be presently discussed.

Also attached to the processor and memory 32 is I/O card 40. The I/O card 40 is used for peripheral activities associated with the verifying section 30 such as reading switches, flashing lights, and the playing of sounds. It is possible to provide the verifying section
in a single cabinet which includes static displays suitable for advertising the system 10 as well as interfaces with the user whereby tickets from ticket printer 36 can be issued. The video monitor 38 can also be suitably mounted in such a cabinet so as to be easily seen.

As an alternative to the bar code reader 34, it is possible to implement the same function by a card read and accept mechanism 42, which would additionally provide for taking the card from the user. The mechanism 42 could have a static laser bar code reading section, which would read the card as it is passed into the mechanism through rollers. This has the advantage of flattening any bent cards thereby providing 100 percent readability. As an alternative, the card could be held fixed and read by a scanning laser bar code reader. The benefit of the mechanism 42 over the bar code reader 34 is that with the mechanism, the card is retained by the machine, and therefore cannot be used again by any user.

Once the mechanism 42 has read the card, it can dispose of each card to a waste hopper (not shown). The waste hopper would be required to be emptied routinely, and the cards therein either reused or destroyed. As the cards would be retained, it is also possible to verify any award of a prize as claimed by a user of the system 10, by locating the particular card and re-reading it.

Describing the function of the system 10 in more detail, once a card is read by either bar code reader 34 or the card read and accept mechanism 42, the information is passed to the processor and memory 32, which then decodes the bar code to produce the corresponding six digit number. The processor and memory 32 also contains a memory store which keeps a record of all valid six digit numbers, to which it compares the number as just read. If there is correspondence between the numbers as just read and one of the numbers stored, then there is to be the
The award of a prize is achieved by visual indication on the video monitor 38 as will presently be described, together with the issuance of a receipt on the ticket printer 36. Once the receipt has been printed, the user can take the receipt and present it to the relevant representative in order to claim their prize.

Considering now the function of the video monitor 38. In an inactive situation when not reading a card, the video monitor 38 can be caused to display advertisements, or present an image inviting users to insert a card for reading. Once a card is actually inserted into the verifying section 30, and the processor and memory 32 has established that a prize is to awarded, the processor and memory 32 causes the video monitor 38 to display a spinning wheel type representation as is shown on Figure 3. The arrow in the display is caused to spin in a particular fashion, the spinning not being related to the final stopping location. The spinning can be both clockwise and anti-clockwise, and of varying rate. The numbers 1 through 12 as shown on the display in Figure 3 represent 12 possible prizes. Before the spinning of the needle, the outcome is already known, however, by the spinning of the needle the user of the system 10 is caused to anticipate a result and become excited.

After a period of time, the needle will come to rest on a particular number, in this case the number 1, and other messages may be shown, such as the display "winner" as illustrated on Figure 3. The processor and memory 32 now causes the video monitor 38 to present a subsequent screen, this being a prize screen as shown in Figure 4. The prize screen is stored in the memory of the processor memory 32 and called up as appropriately required. In this case, the card read contained a six digit figure which corresponded to prize number 1 of the possible 12, which in turn corresponded to the prize being
a car.

In determining the configuration of the system 10, it is possible to vary the number of prizes awarded, and indeed to provide some of the results as indicated on the screen of Figure 3 to not award a prize at all. In this case, each user of the system 10 will be caused to have the arrow spun yet may not win a prize. On the other hand, as suggested by the embodiment described, if the card when read does not correspond to any of the predetermined prizes, then no such spin will take place, and the video monitor 38 will be caused to display that there in fact is no prize to be awarded.

In the determination of what prizes are to be awarded, it will most often be the case that there will be one major prize and a number of minor prizes. Therefore, the total number of cards contained within the card dispenser 24 will be distributed with encoded information according to the desired probability of winning each particular prize. That is, there may be many cards which do not result in the award of a prize when read by the verifying section 30, and only one card which will result in the award of a major prize, such as a car.

As a further possibility, it is possible to arrange for every card to provide for the award of a prize, although the minimum prizes could merely be an entry into a subsequent raffle.

All the prizes to be awarded could also be the products of one particular supplier of goods or services, for whom the system 10 is acting as a marketing aid. As indicated, the video monitor 38 could also provide for advertisements of the goods and services of this trader during the times that there is no reading of a card taking place.

The range of prizes available to the users of the system 10 can also be a function of a degree of entitlement as determined by the decision mechanism 22.
That is, if a would-be user purchases certain goods or services to a superior monetary value, only then may they be able to be dispensed a card which corresponds to certain of the major prizes.

In considering the security of the system 10, it is preferable that the tokens not be duplicatable, and in the present example, the bar codes should be printed in such a way as not to be easily photocopied.

The embodiment described presents a marketing aid which will be most useful in the promotion of the goods and services of traders, and which will appeal to potential customers of these traders. The system described can be applied in many situation including retail outlets of all types.

It is to be understood that the computer hardware, software and other associated devices described in conjunction with the embodiment could be readily implemented by a person skilled in the art without exercise of any inventive faculty.

It will be obvious to persons skilled in the art that numerous alterations and modifications can be made to the apparatus and methods other than those specifically described without departing from the basic concepts of convention. All such modifications are to be considered within the scope of the invention, the nature of which is to be determined from the foregoing description.
THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A marketing aid comprising:
   a dispensing means for dispensing a token having
   information encoded thereon;
   a reader for decoding the encoded information;
   a processor for determining if the decoded
   information corresponds to the award of a prize; and
   indicating means to advise of the award of a
   prize.

2. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 1, wherein
   the indicating means will also advise if there is no award
   of a prize.

3. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 1, including
   a decision mechanism so the dispensing means will dispense
   a token only in response to an entitlement to use the
   marketing aid.

4. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 3, wherein
   the entitlement is provided upon a consideration of a
   transaction involving a user of the marketing aid.

5. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 4, wherein
   the transaction may include the purchase of goods or
   services of above a total monetary value.

6. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 1, wherein
   the indicating means comprises a visual display and/or a
   receipt issuing device.

7. A marketing aid as claimed in any one of the
   preceding claims wherein there will be a plurality of
   tokens, each corresponding to one of a plurality of prizes.

8. A marketing aid as claimed in claim 4, wherein
   every entitlement will result in the award of a prize.

9. A marketing method comprising the steps of:
   dispensing a token from a dispensing means, the
   token having information encoded thereon;
   decoding the encoded information by a reader;
   processing the decoded information in a processor
   to determine whether it corresponds to the award of a
   prize; and
indicating the award of a prize.

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, comprising the further step of indicating that there is no award of a prize.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, comprising the further step of providing an entitlement decision to control the dispensing of a token in response to a predefined criteria being established.

12. A marketing aid as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8 substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the examples shown in the accompanying drawings.

13. A marketing method as claimed in claims 9, 10 or 11 substantially as herein described with reference to any one of the examples shown in the accompanying drawings.

DATED THIS 14TH DAY OF DECEMBER 1993

OLYMPIC AMUSEMENTS PTY LTD

By Its Patent Attorneys:

GRIFFITH HACK & CO.,

Fellows Institute of Patent Attorneys of Australia
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