

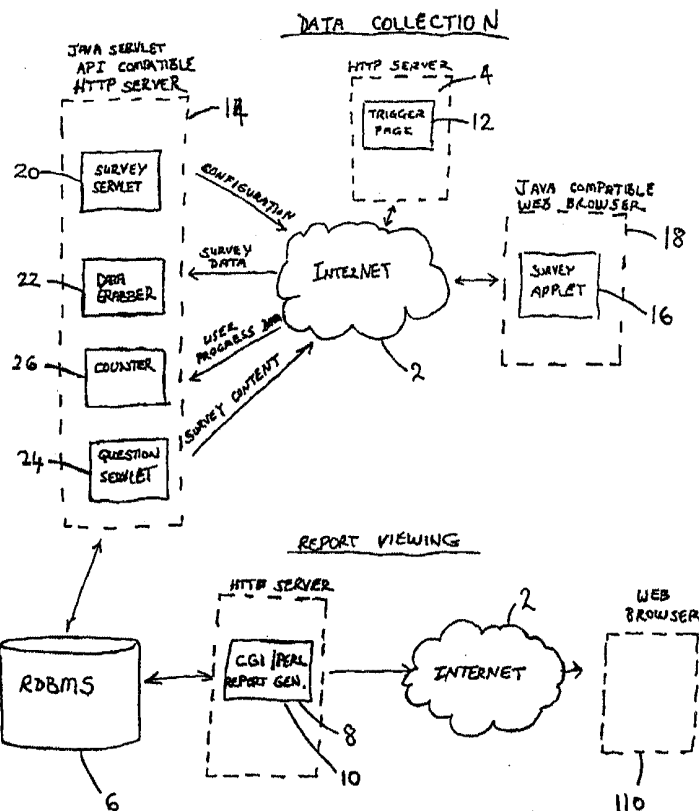
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(54) Title: COMPUTER NETWORK BASED SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COLLECTING AND REPORTING DATA

(57) Abstract

A computer network based system and method for collecting and reporting data, preferably market research data in real-time. Real-time feedback enables timely response to emerging issues, enhances training/feedback for support staff and gives the ability to promptly see problem areas through the users' eyes. The present invention collects and reports market research data. A software implemented data collection tool (16) deploys to a client (18) over a computer network (2) to elicit data from the user. The collection tool (16) returns the elicited data to a research database (6), which stores the elicited data. The research database (6) is accessible to one or more designated persons, typically a commissioner of the research work and/or someone with their authority.



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FOCUS/ALARM

COMPUTER NETWORK BASED SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR COLLECTING AND REPORTING DATA

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Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to computerized market research tools, and in particular to a computer network based system and method for collecting and reporting data, preferably market research data, such as survey data.

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Background of the Invention

As computer network technology, in particular Internet technology, has rapidly developed in recent years and businesses and other organizations have found or been presented with more effective ways to take advantage of this Internet technology, the World Wide Web has taken on ever increasing importance in the world of commerce. More and more organizations are using the Internet as a primary channel of communication, supplementing or even replacing traditional lines of communication such as face-to-face meetings, mail, fax and phone. A recent study by

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Forrester Research, Inc. estimates that Internet commerce will grow forty fold over a period of five years, from US\$8 billion in 1997 to US\$327 billion in goods and services by the year 2002.

Even now the Internet plays a very significant role as a distribution channel, a point of contact with customers, a marketing and advertising medium and a channel for services and support, and the significance of this role will only increase in the future. Concordant with this growing significance of commerce over the Internet, in order that organizations can maintain and improve on the standards of information they share via the Internet, there is a rapidly growing need for feedback on the organizations' Internet presence, and thus a need for tools which can quickly and efficiently collect and report relevant market research data characterizing and evaluating the organizations' Internet efforts.

Traditionally, market research has been conducted by way of a survey completed during an interview between a market researcher and a consumer, either face-to-face or over the telephone. As an alternative, the survey may be mailed on paper or on computer diskette to the consumer for them to complete and return. The survey contains a series of questions designed to elicit relevant information from the consumer, which can be collated and analyzed with answers to the survey from a number of other consumers to provide a characterization and/or an evaluation of particular facets of the organization, services or products of the entity for whom the survey is being conducted.

Many companies or businesses initially developed on line survey tools in-house. More recently, computerized survey tools have been provided, whereby survey or other market research information can be elicited over the Internet. One example of such a tool is 'SurveySez', which allows an organization to create their own HTML-based survey as a page or pages hosted on the SurveySez Internet Web Site. The organization then includes a link to the survey on their own Web site.

A second example is 'SurveySite', which uses a pop-up invitation implemented in Java which acts as a link to an HTML survey hosted at a separate site. A report is generated and

delivered to the organization commissioning the research at the end of the survey's life, e.g. after a pre-determined number of surveys have been responded to.

Another example is 'CLTRResearch', offering a survey in flat HTML. Similarly to 'SurveySite' a report is generated at the conclusion of the complete survey period. Yet
5 another example of an HTML survey with a report generated on completion is 'KB&P'. In the latter example, the respondents to the survey may either be visitors to a particular Web Site, as in the above examples, or previously registered participants.

A final example, which employs a very different methodology to the previous examples, is 'RelevantKnowledge'/Nielsen Group. A group of people (called a web panel or
10 research panel) agree in advance to have their Internet usage monitored, and then periodically a log of which Web Sites these people have visited is uploaded to a central collection point, and a report is generated.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a computer network based system and method for
15 collecting and reporting data, preferably market research data in real-time. Whatever the application to which the invention is applied, particularly where it is market research oriented, the real-time feedback it provides can enable timely response to emerging issues, can enhance training/feedback for support staff and can give the ability to promptly see problem areas through the users' eyes.

20 From one aspect, the invention provides a computer network based, preferably Internet based, system and method for collecting and reporting data, preferably market research data. A software implemented data collection tool is deployed to a client on the computer network (for example a Web browser) to elicit data from a user accessing the computer network through that client. The collection tool returns the elicited data to a
25 research database, which stores the elicited data. The research database is made accessible to one or more designated persons, typically a commissioner of the research work and/or someone with their authority.

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