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Balsan et al.

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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
MANAGING SERVICES USING BEARER
TAGS**

(71) Applicant: **Nokia Technologies Oy**, Espoo (FI)

(72) Inventors: **Damien Balsan**, Belmont, MA (US);
Ajay Bam, Cambridge, MA (US)

(73) Assignee: **NOKIA TECHNOLOGIES OY**,
Espoo (FI)

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2215/7435 (2013.01)

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See application file for complete search history.

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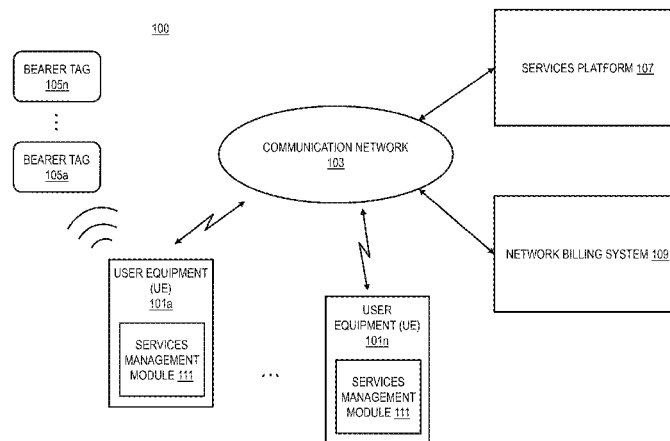
Primary Examiner — Qun Shen

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Ditthavong & Steiner,
P.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An approach is provided for managing one or more services
corresponding to a bearer tag (e.g., near field communica-
tion (NFC) tag, radio frequency identification (RFID) tag,
contactless card, or barcode). A request to manage a service
is initiated by reading service information from a bearer tag
corresponding to the one or more services. A services
platform initiates management of the one or more services
based on the service information according to a predeter-
mined or recurring billing arrangement.

19 Claims, 20 Drawing Sheets



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(2006.01)
(2012.01)

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FIG. 1

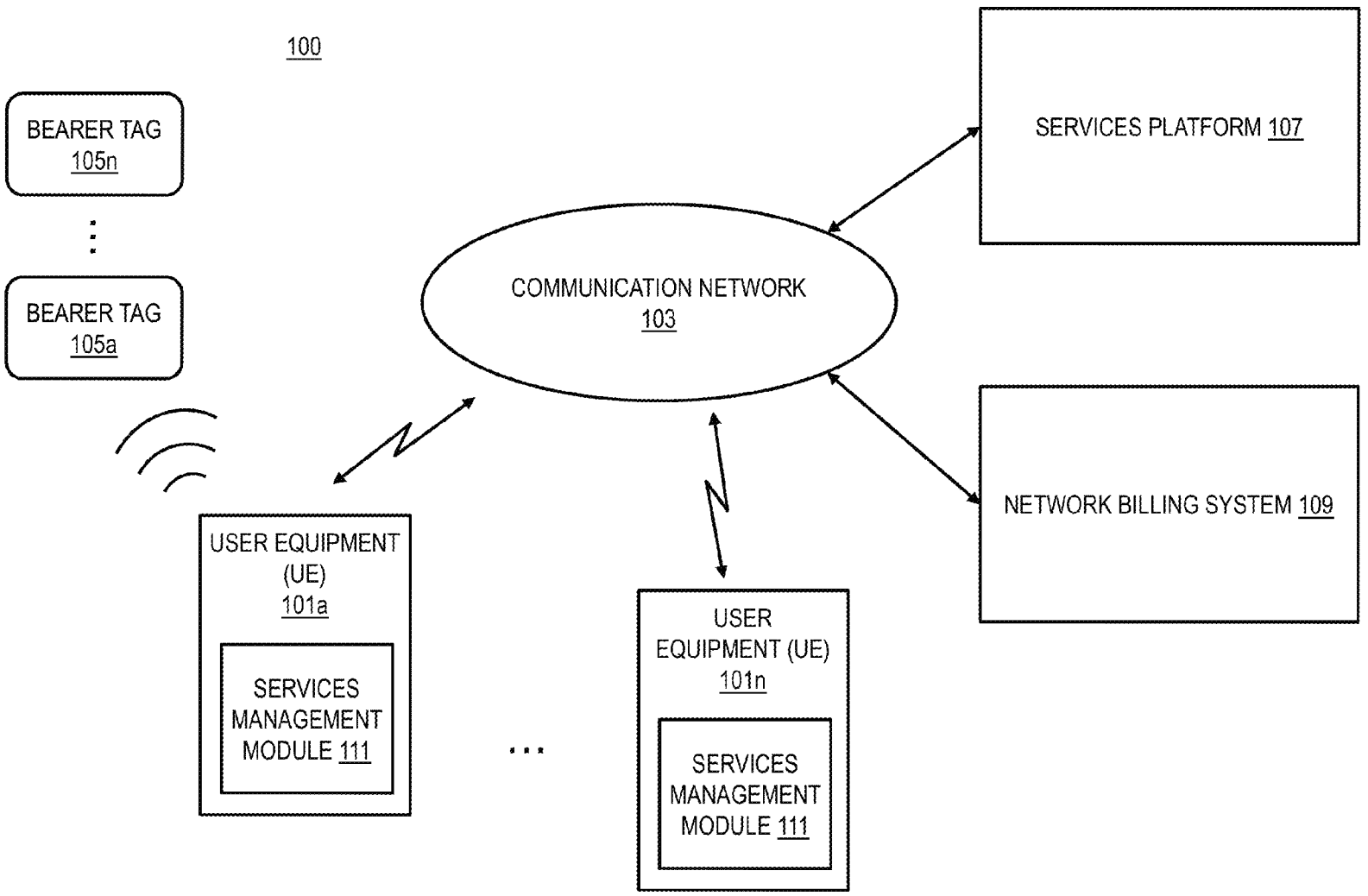


FIG. 2A

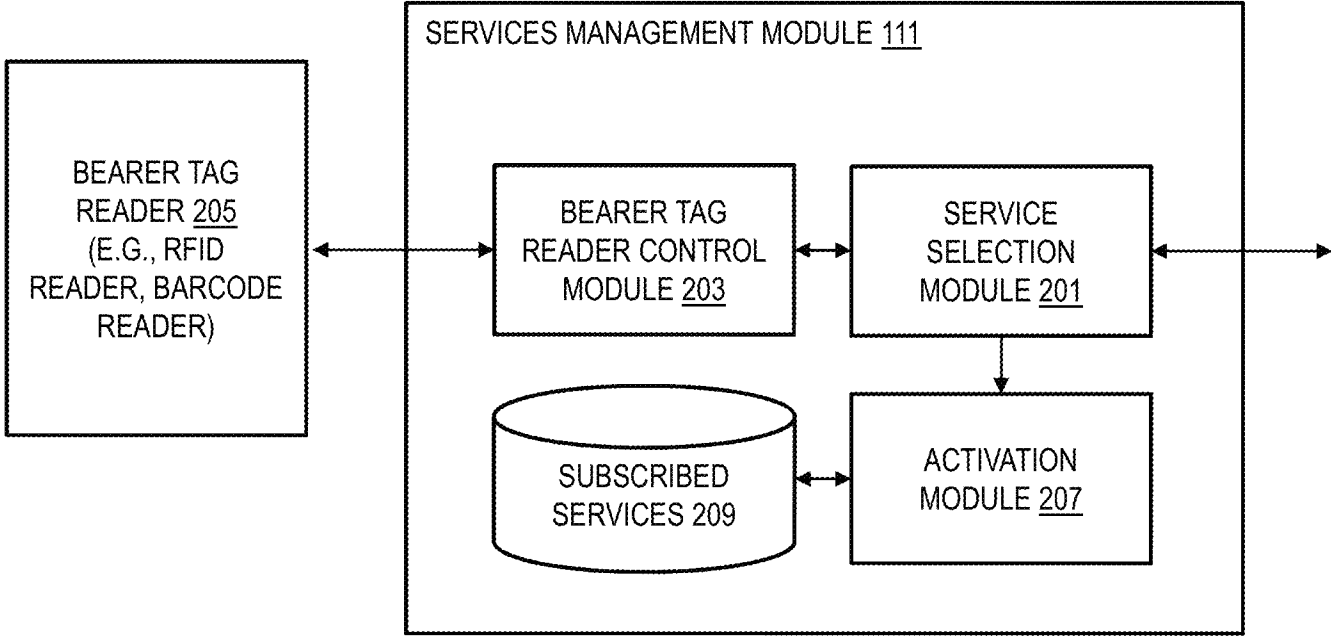


FIG. 2B

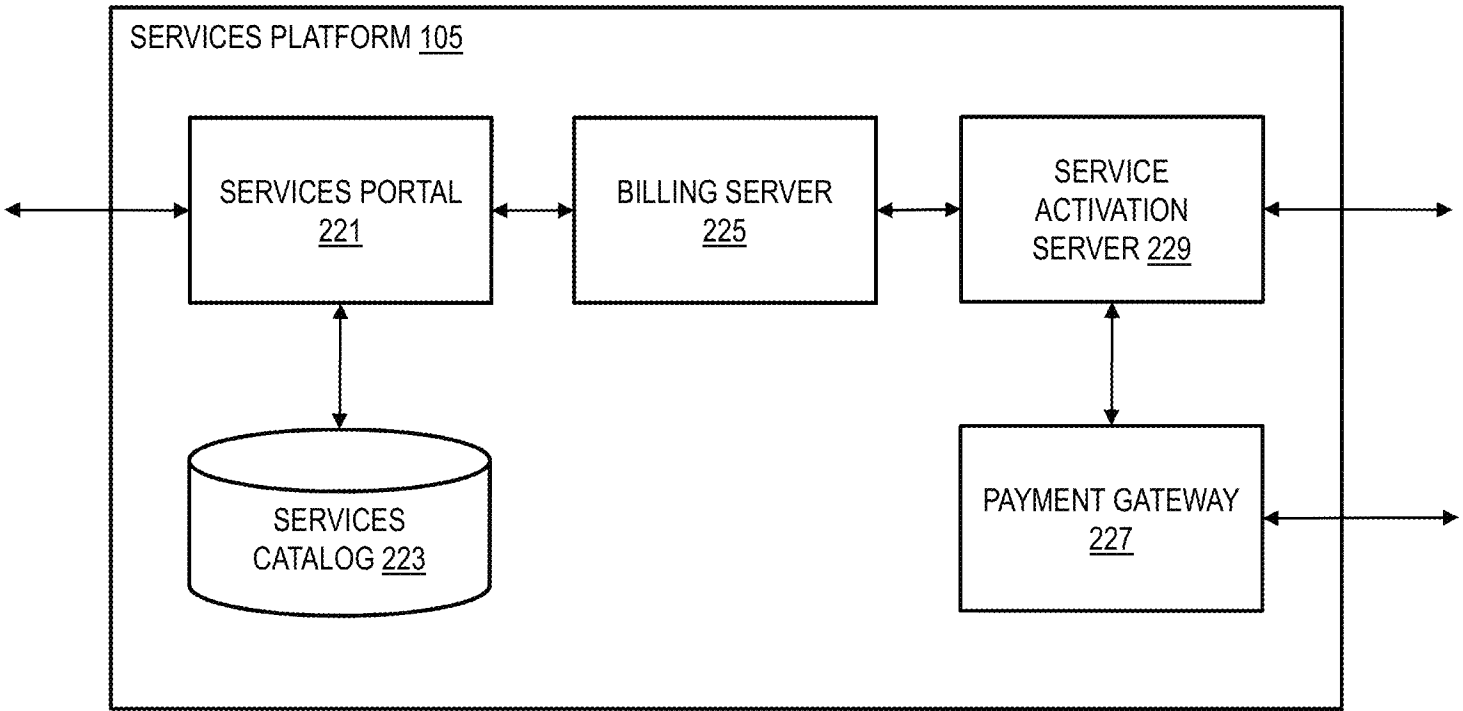


FIG. 3

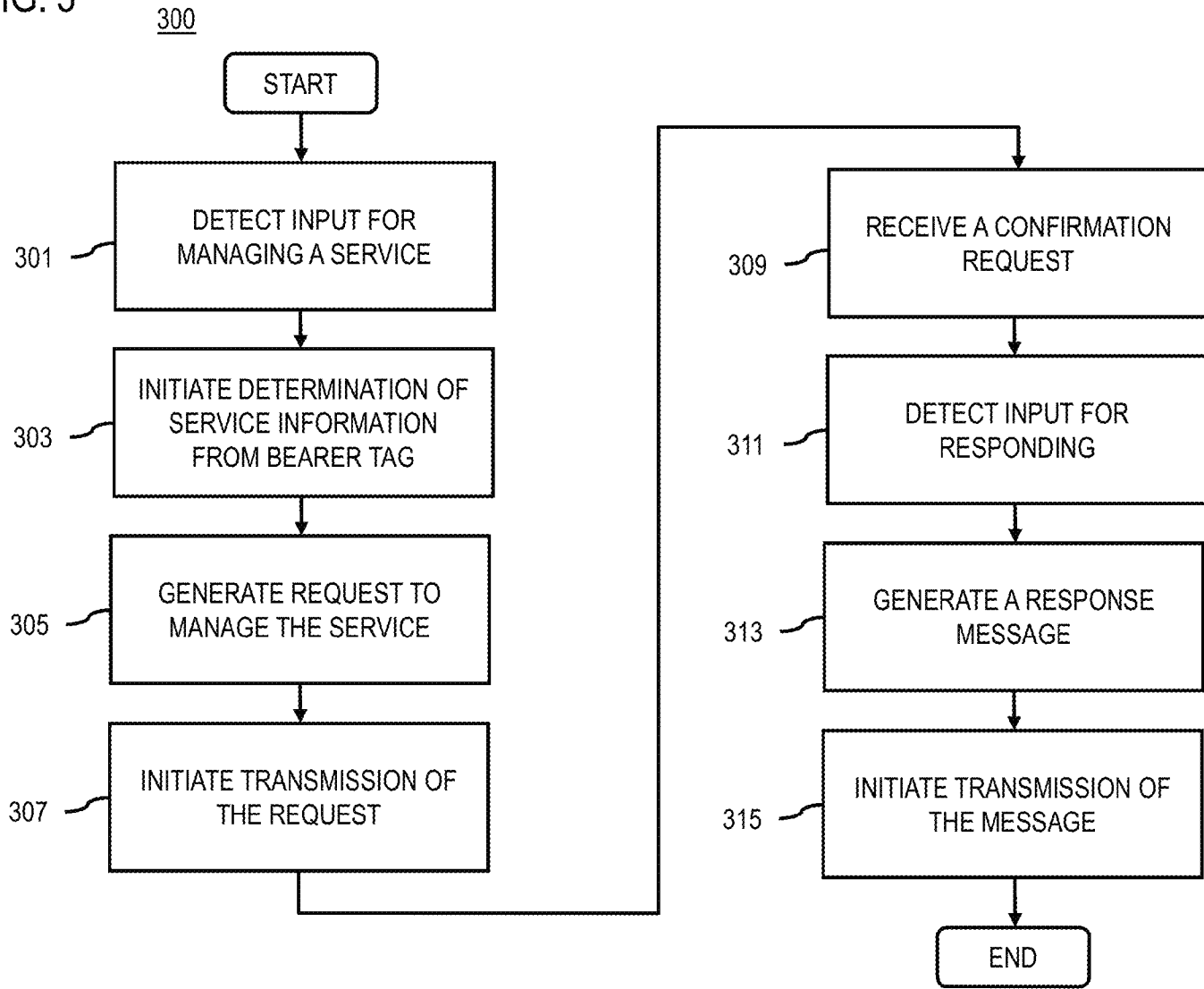


FIG. 4

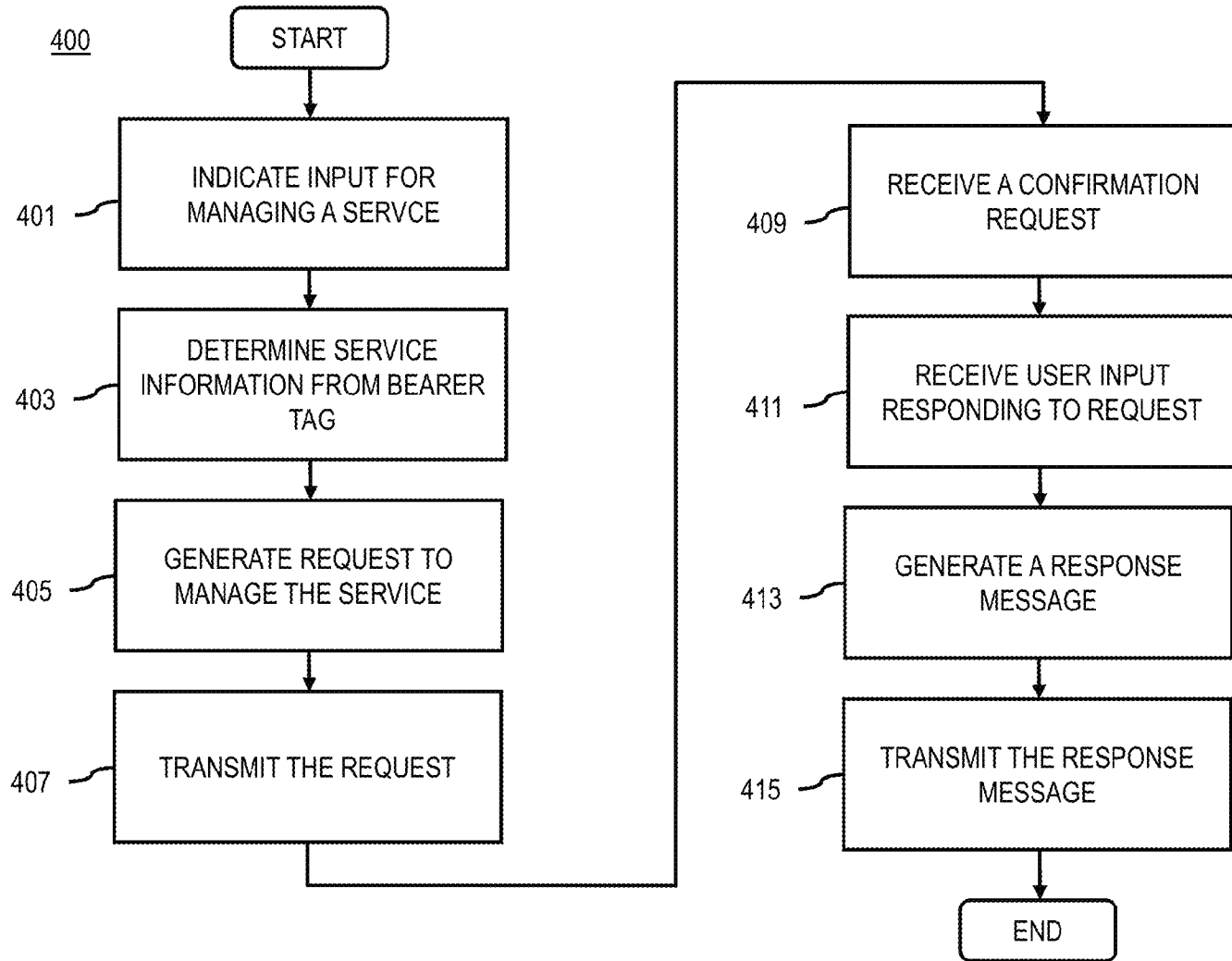


FIG. 5

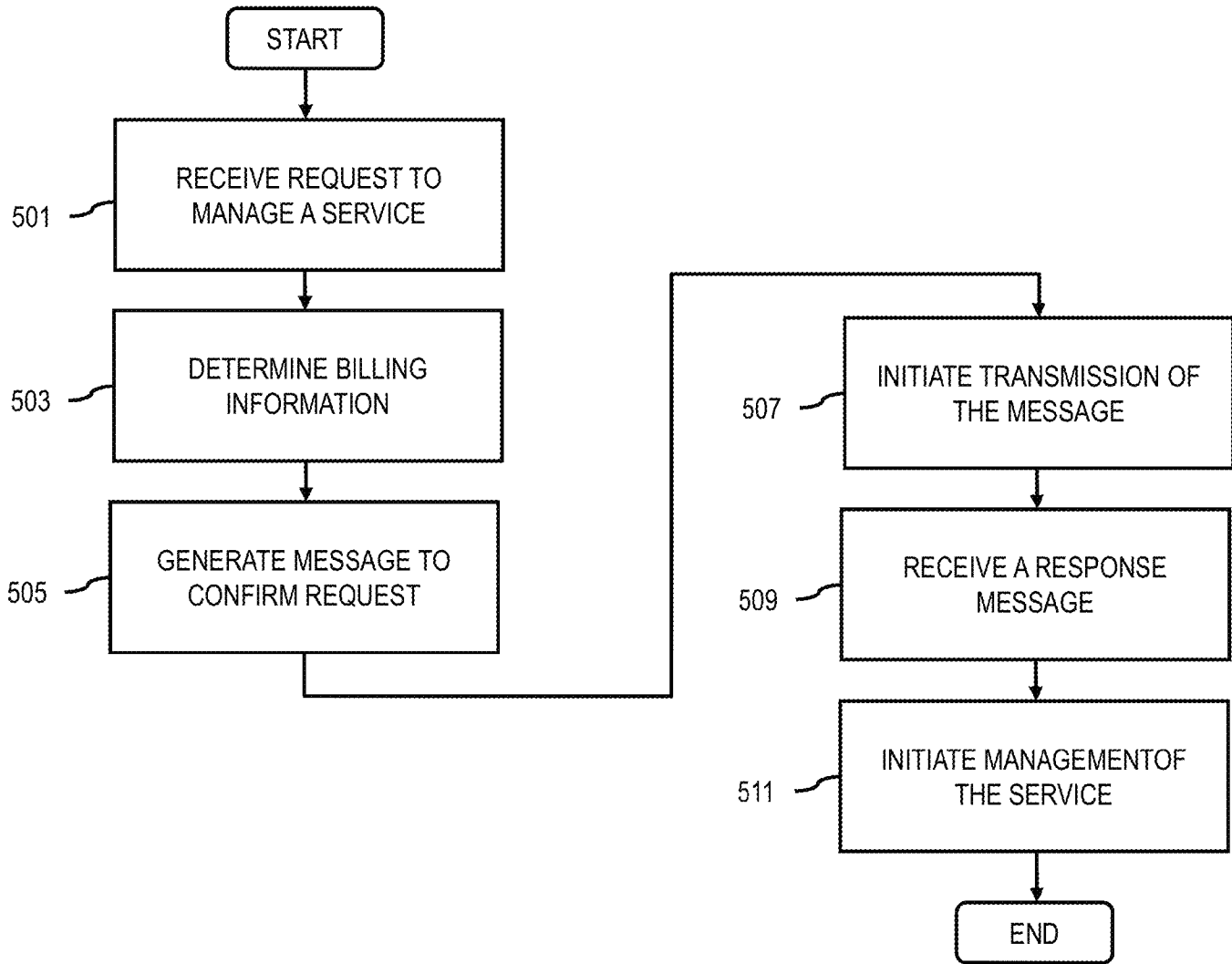


FIG. 6A



FIG. 6B

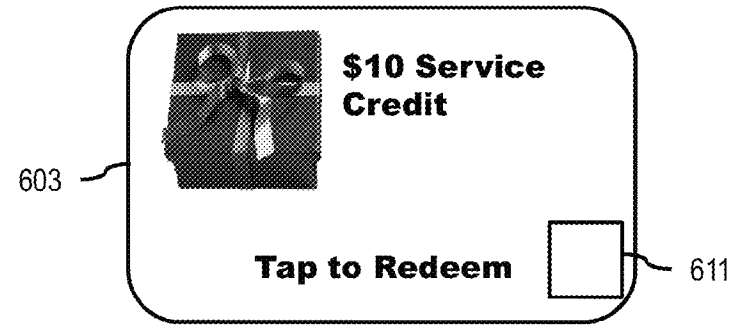


FIG. 6C

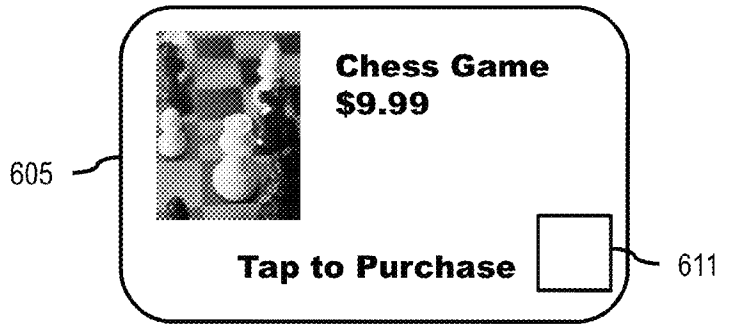


FIG. 6D

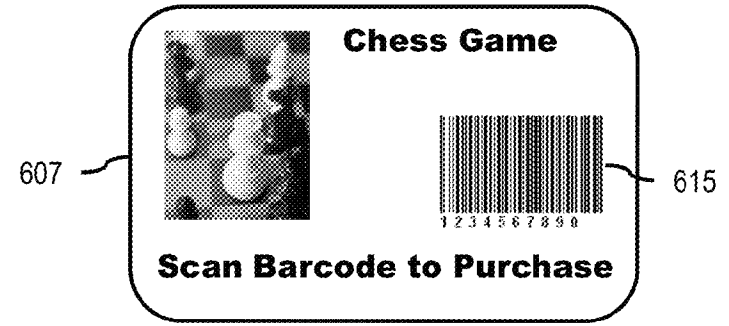
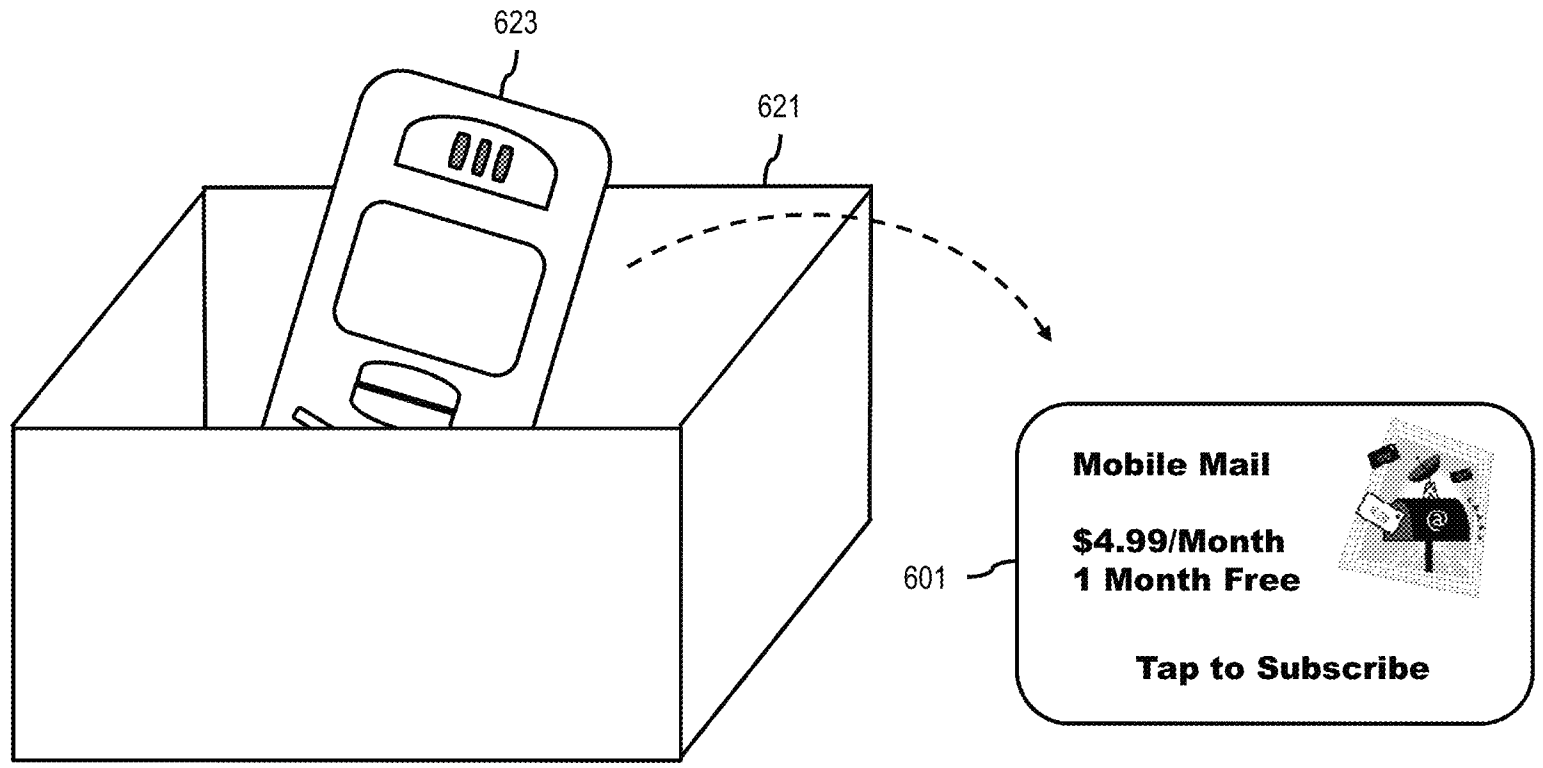


FIG. 6E



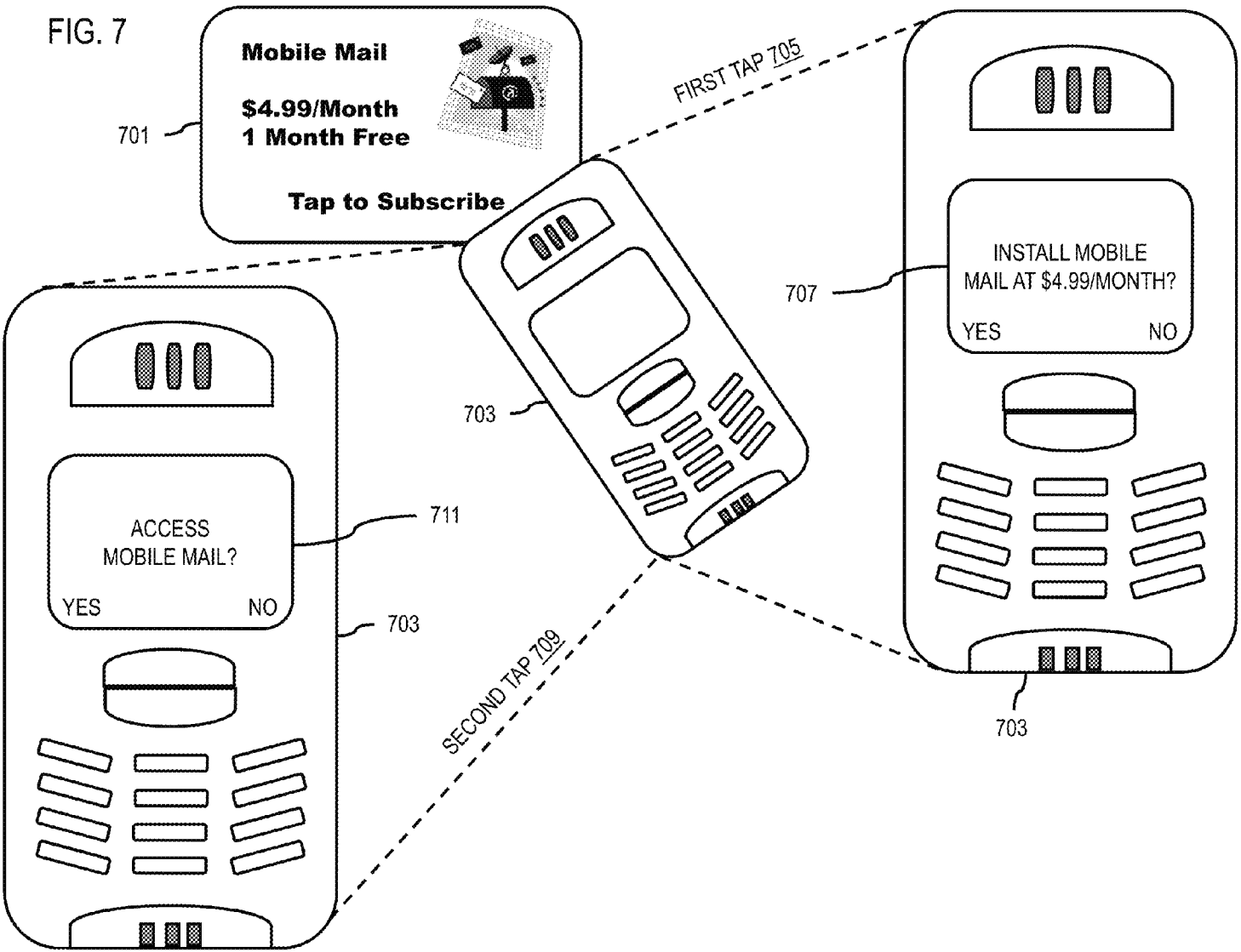


FIG. 8A

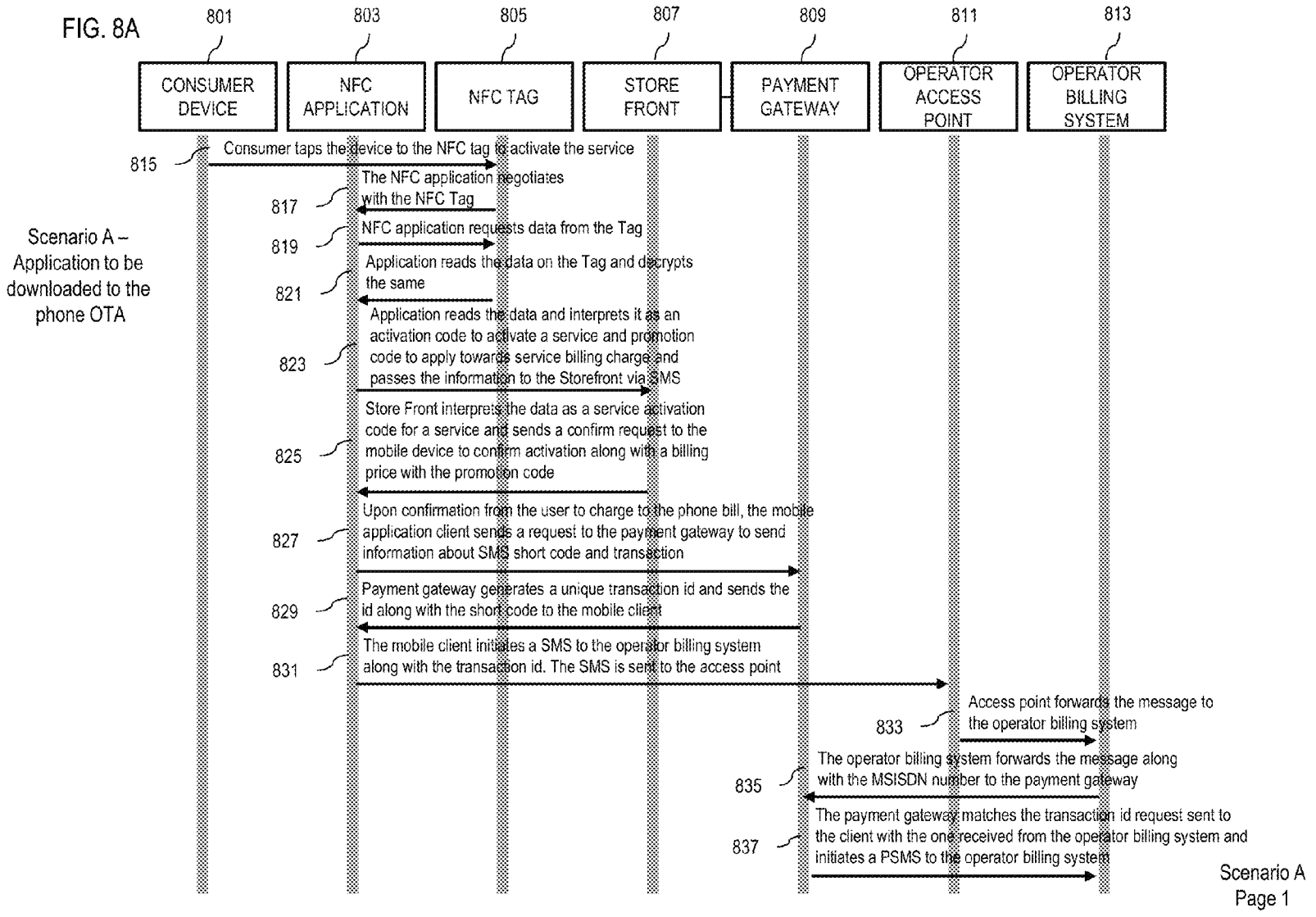
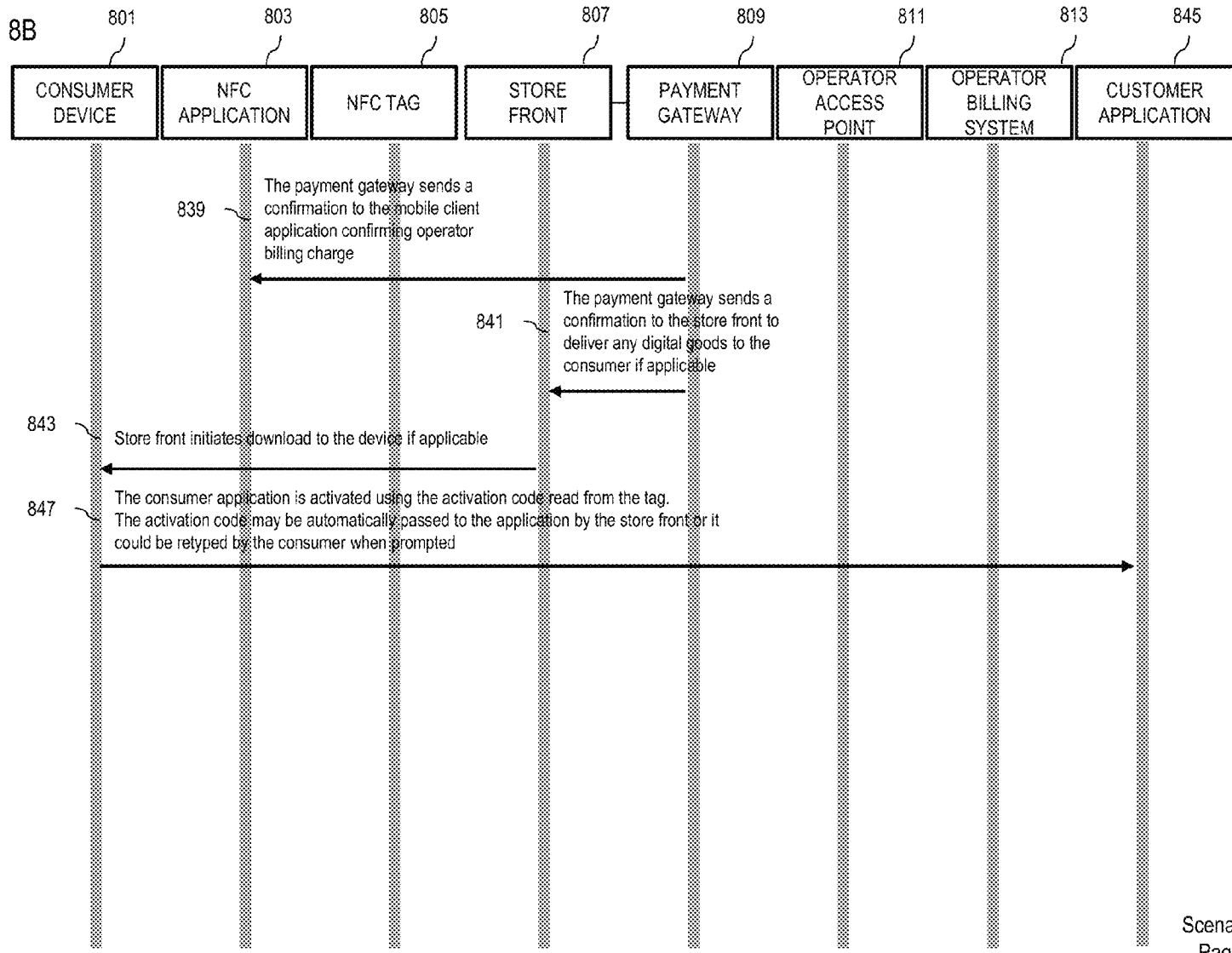


FIG. 8B



Scenario A
Page 2

FIG. 9A

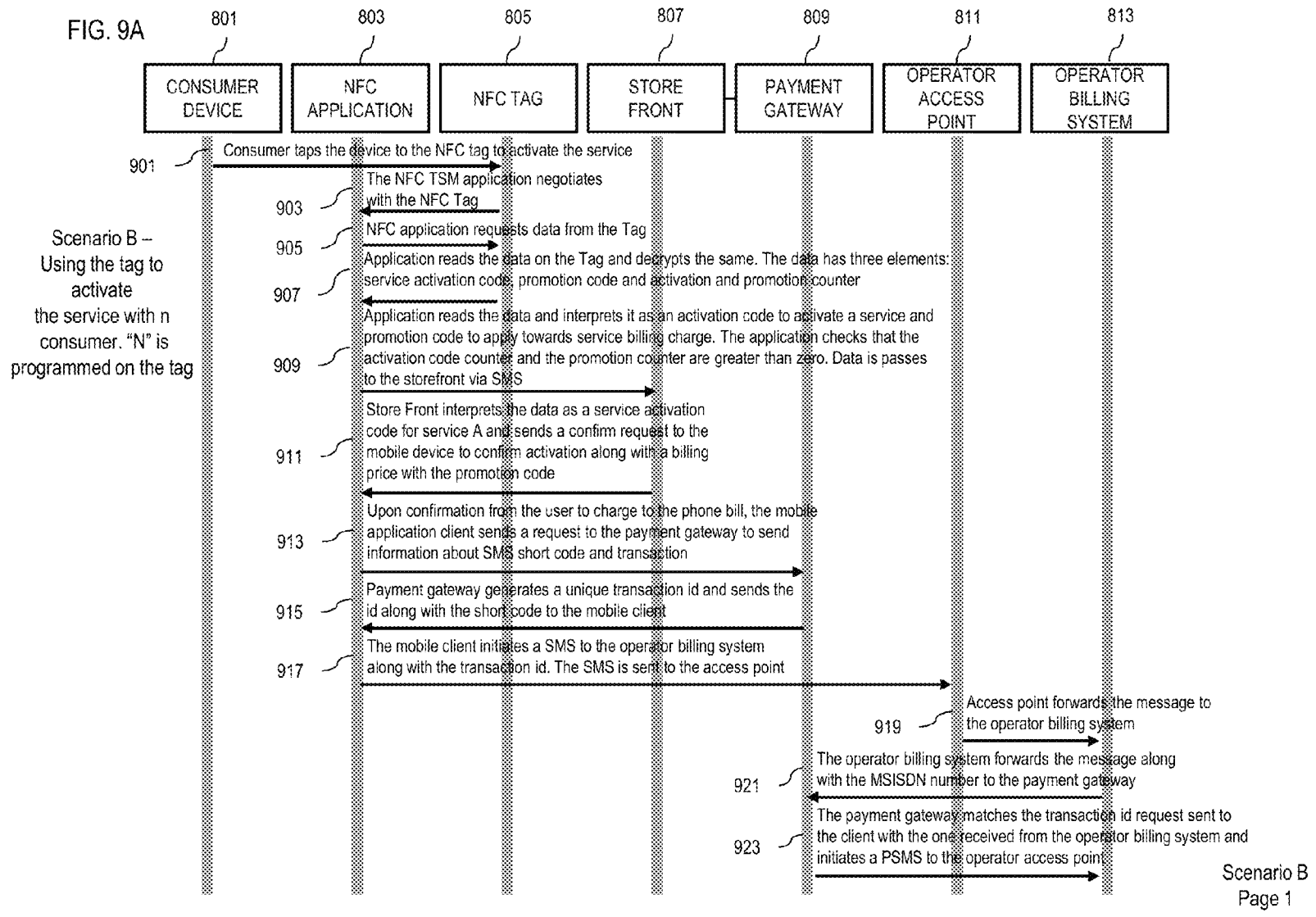
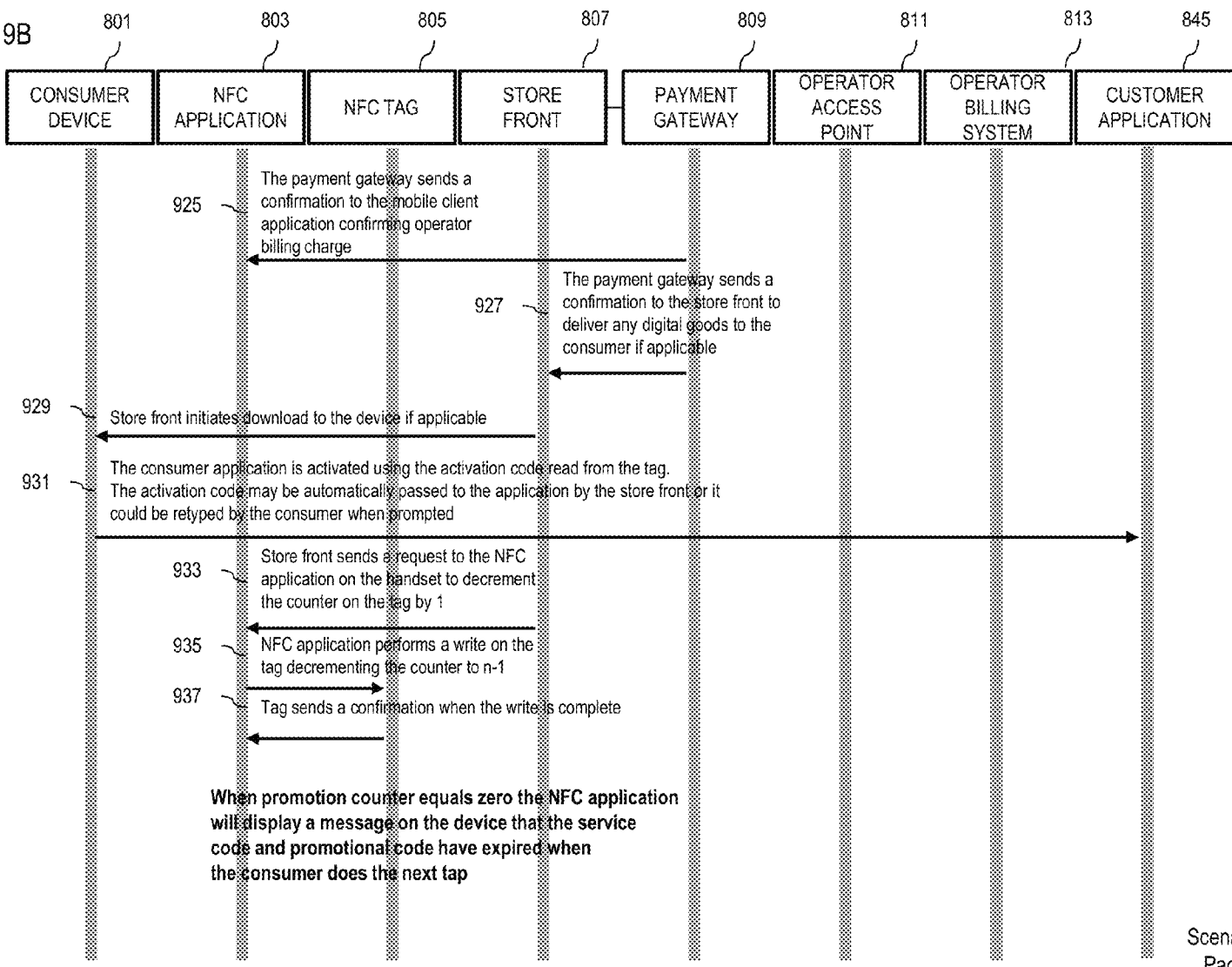
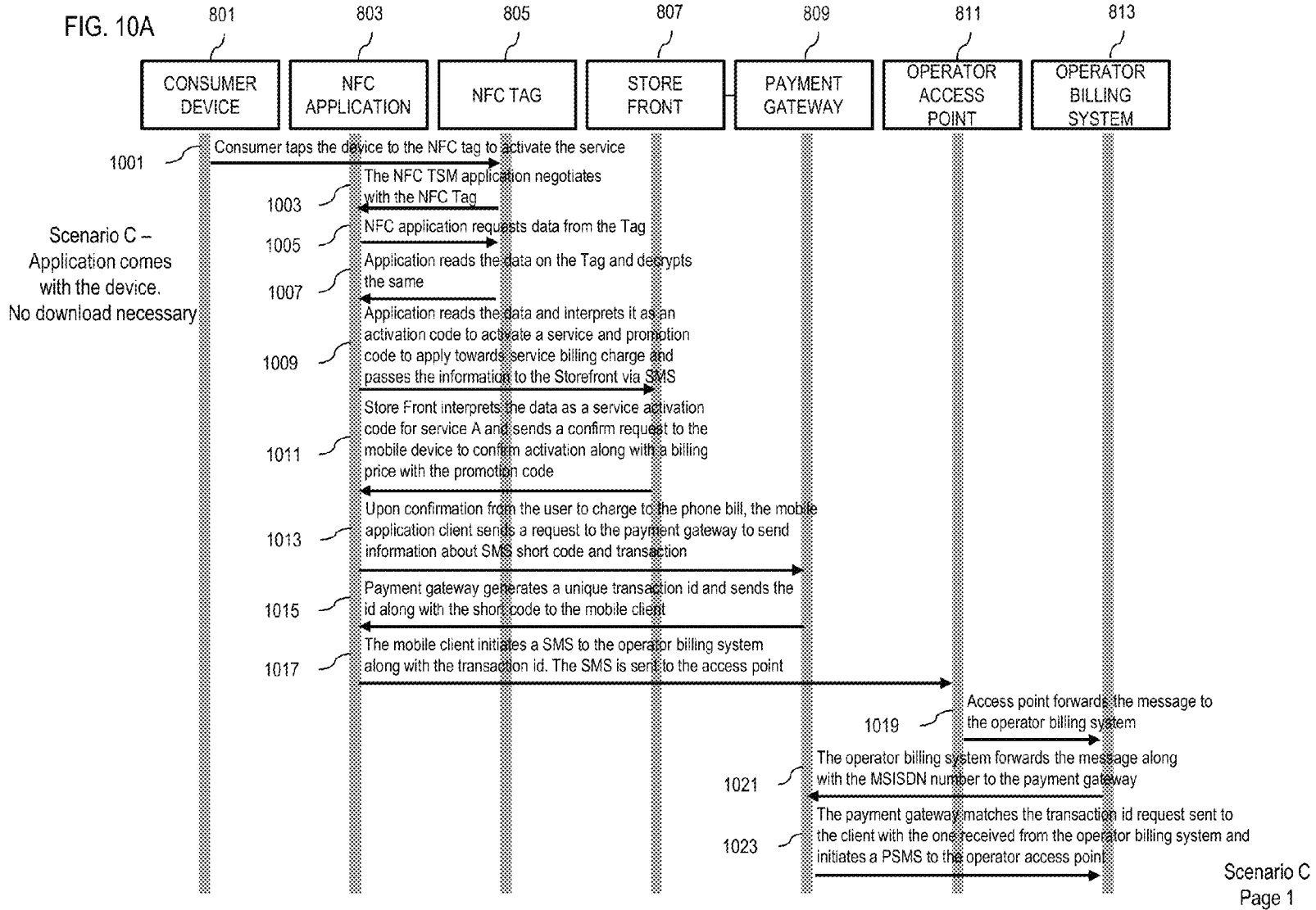


FIG. 9B



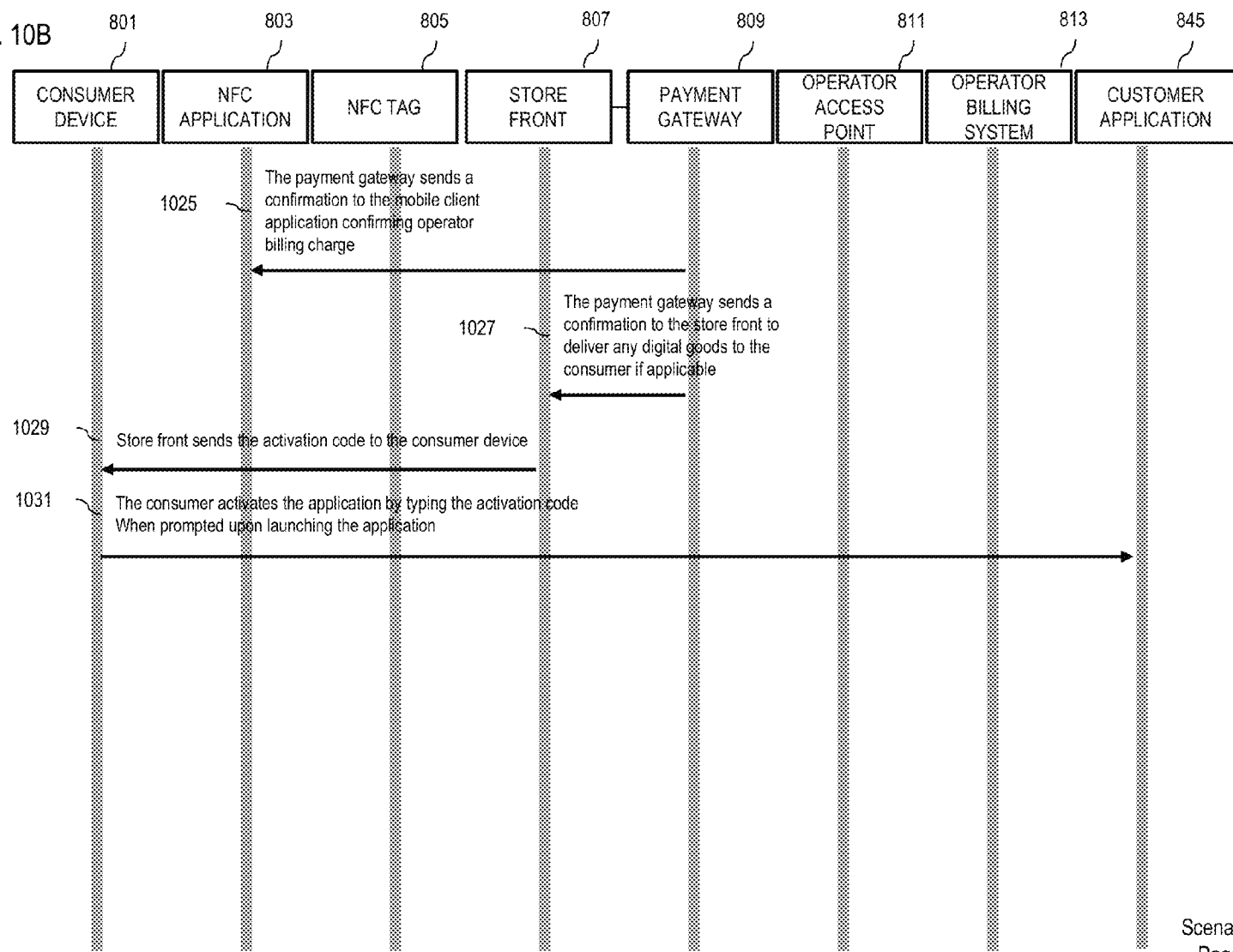
Scenario B
Page 2

FIG. 10A



Scenario C
Page 1

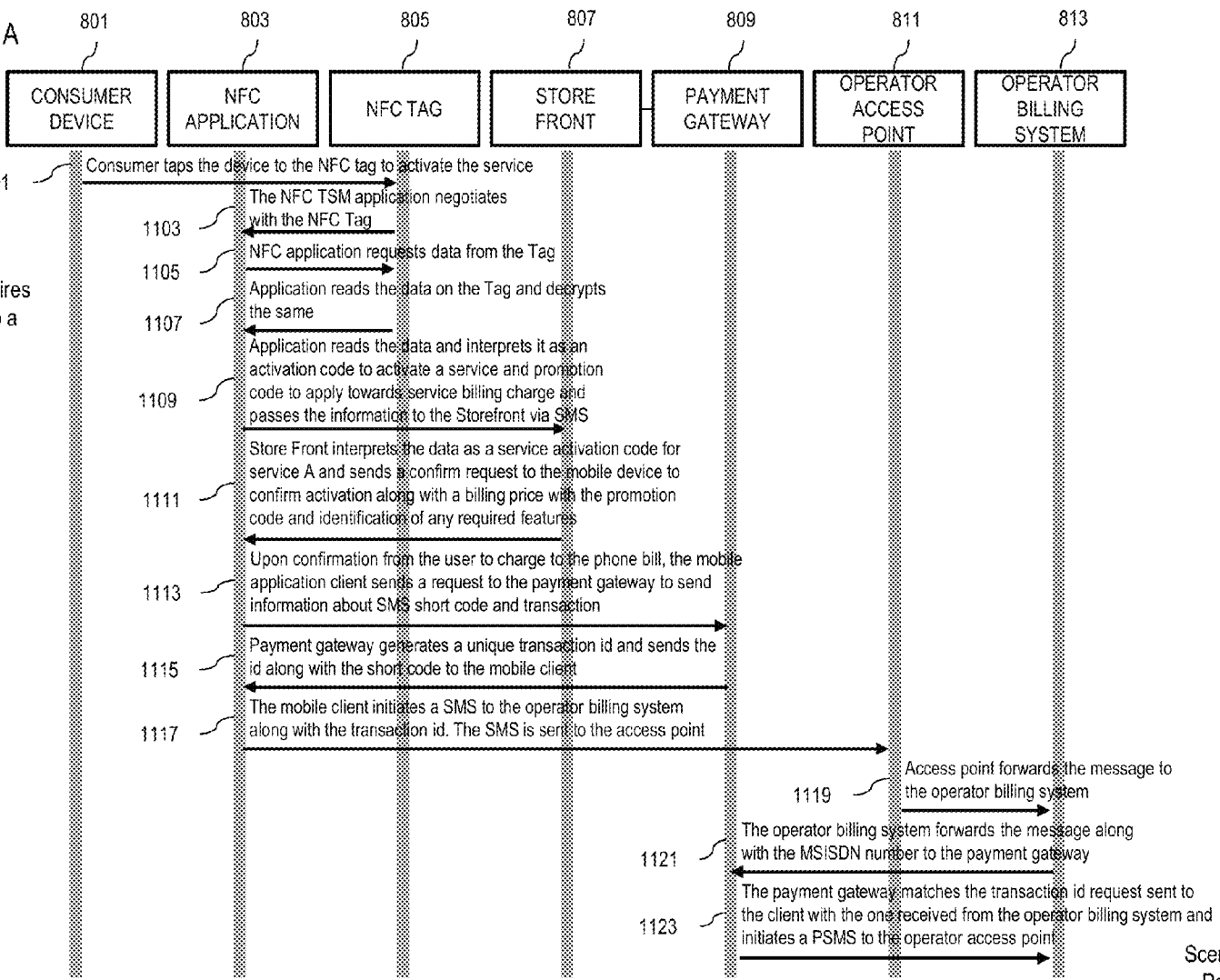
FIG. 10B



Scenario C
Page 2

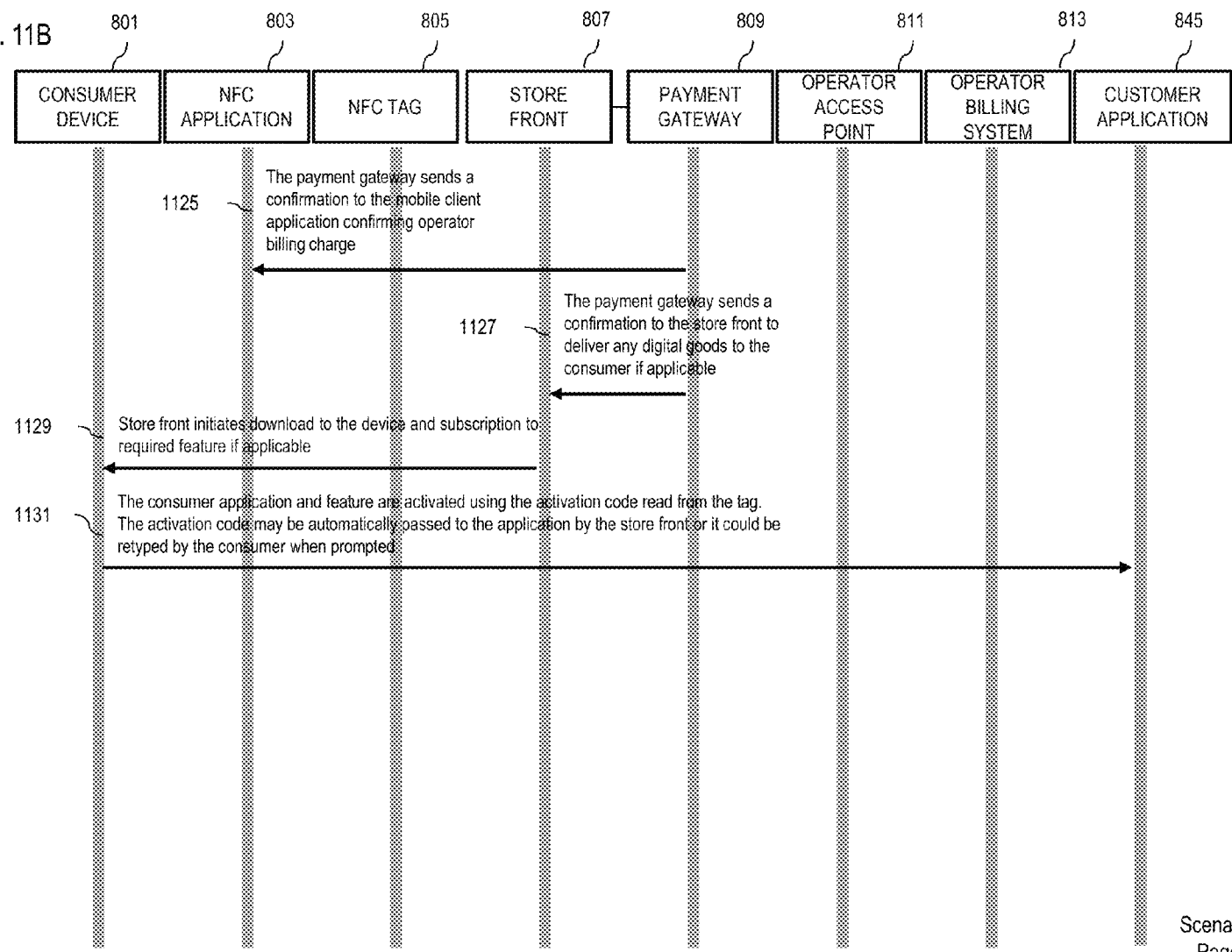
FIG. 11A

Scenario D --
Application requires
Subscription to a
feature.



Scenario D
Page 1

FIG. 11B



Scenario D
Page 2

FIG. 12

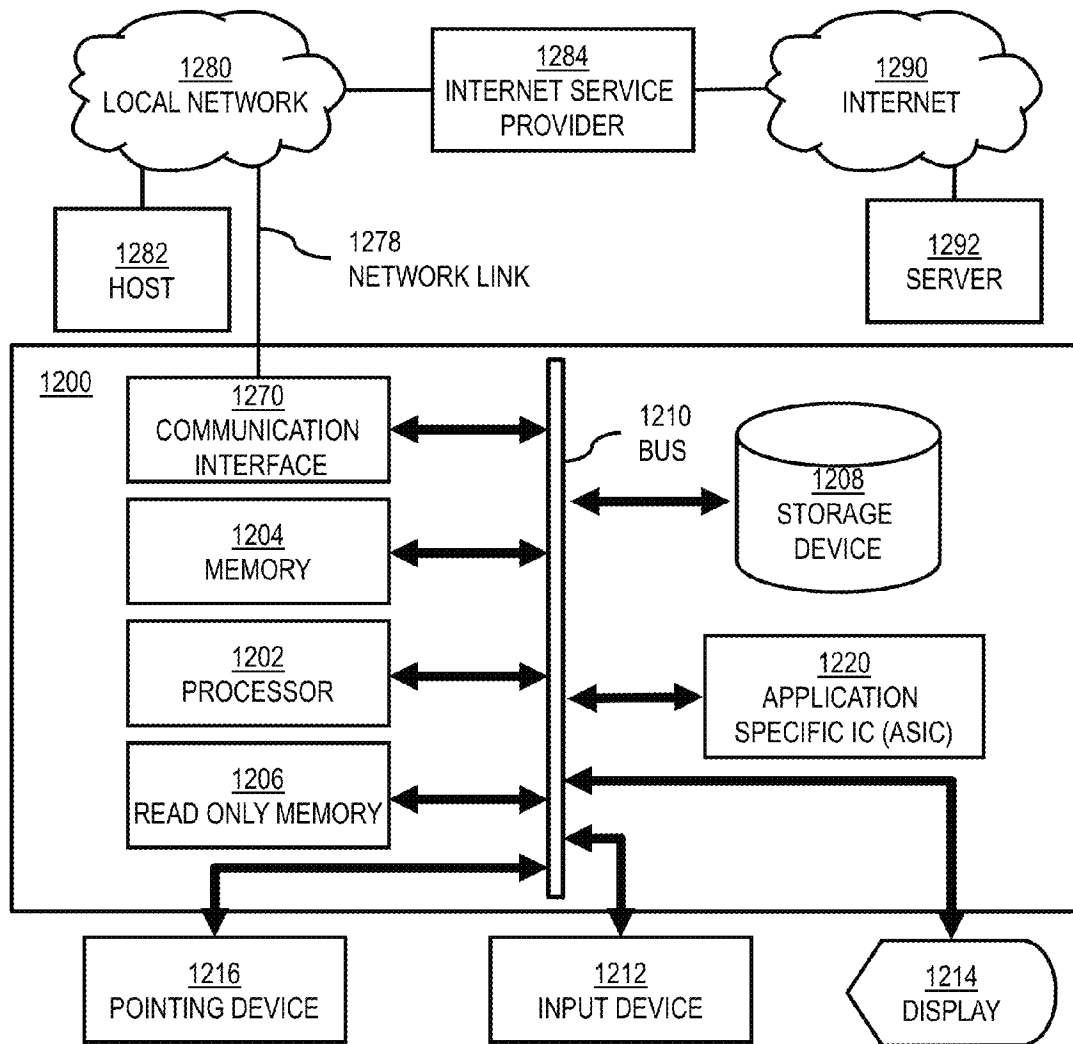


FIG. 13

1300

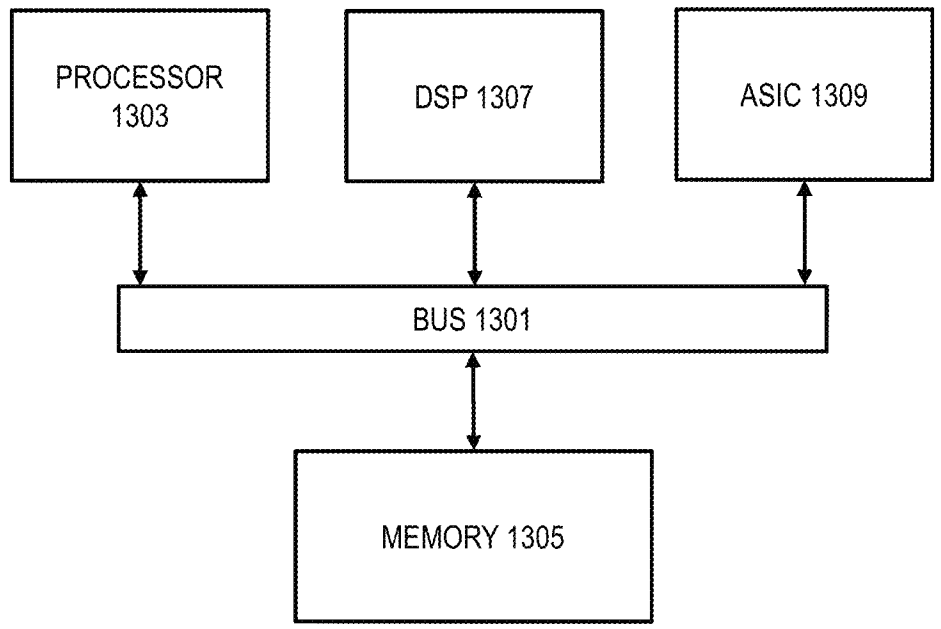
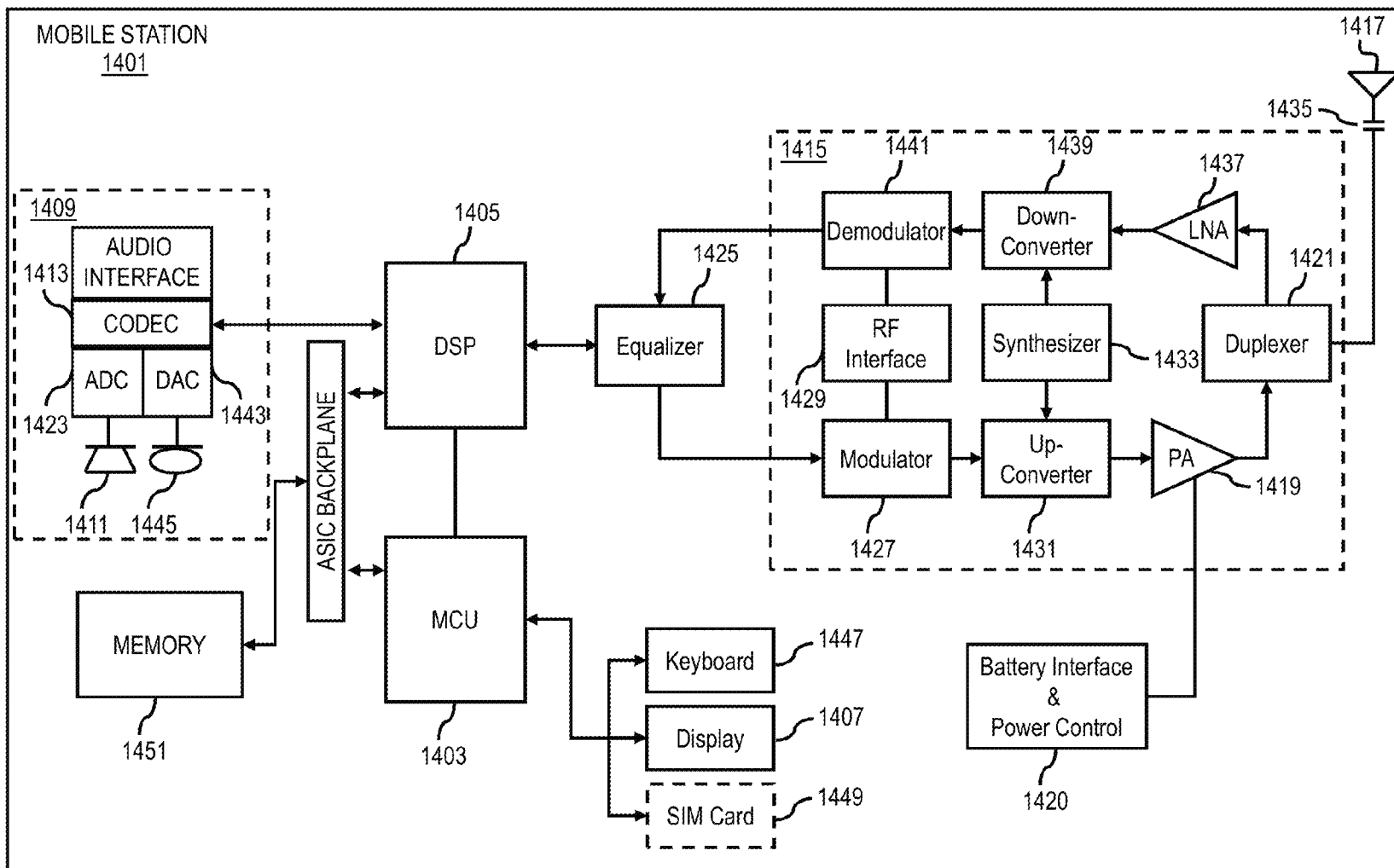


FIG. 14



METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MANAGING SERVICES USING BEARER TAGS

CROSS REFERENCE AND RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 12/395,512 filed Feb. 27, 2009, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

Wireless (e.g., cellular) service providers and device manufacturers are continually challenged to deliver value and convenience to consumers by, for example, providing compelling services, applications, and content. Beyond the sophisticated functions already included in many devices, service providers and device manufacturers are making a greater array of optional services (e.g., music, games, video, navigation, products, etc.) available to consumers. This increased variety, however, may conflict with the goal of delivering convenience to the consumer, in that generally it is more difficult for a consumer to manage (e.g., discover, select, access, purchase, activate, modify, bill, etc.) a large library of services. Therefore, to be competitive and to promote the greater discovery and use of available services, the service providers and manufacturers need to address the ever growing requirement for more approaches for efficient and convenient management of services.

SOME EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Therefore, there is a need for an approach for simple and automated management of services.

According to one embodiment, a computer-readable storage medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to initiate determination of service information related to one or more services from a bearer tag. The one or more processors are also caused to generate one or more service requests to manage the one or more services according to the service information. The one or more processors are further caused to initiate transmission of the one or more service requests to a services platform for management of the one or more services according to a billing arrangement.

According to another embodiment, an apparatus comprising a processor and a memory storing executable instructions that if executed cause the apparatus to initiate determination of service information related to one or more services from a bearer tag. The processor and the memory are also caused to generate one or more service requests to manage the one or more services according to the service information. The processor and the memory are further caused to initiate transmission of the one or more service requests to a services platform for management of the one or more services according to a billing arrangement.

According to yet another embodiment, a computer-readable storage medium carrying one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to receive a request from a user to manage one or more services corresponding to a bearer tag. The one or more processors are also caused to determine billing information for the one or more services. The one or more processors are further caused to generate a message requesting confirmation to manage the

one or more services, the message including billing information related to the one or more services. The one or more processors are further caused to initiate transmission of the message to the user. The one or more processors are further caused to receive a response message from the user. The one or more processors are further caused to initiate management of the one or more services according to the response message.

Still other aspects, features, and advantages of the invention are readily apparent from the following detailed description, simply by illustrating a number of particular embodiments and implementations, including the best mode contemplated for carrying out the invention. The invention is also capable of other and different embodiments, and its several details can be modified in various obvious respects, all without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the drawings and description are to be regarded as illustrative in nature, and not as restrictive.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The embodiments of the invention are illustrated by way of example, and not by way of limitation, in the figures of the accompanying drawings:

FIG. 1 is a diagram of a communication system capable of managing services using bearer tags, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIGS. 2A and 2B are diagrams of components of a services management module and components of a services platform, according to various exemplary embodiments;

FIG. 3 is a flowchart of a process for requesting the activation or modification a service corresponding to a bearer tag, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart of a process for managing services using a user equipment, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 5 is a flowchart of a process for activating or modifying a service corresponding to a bearer tag, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIGS. 6A-6E are diagrams of bearer tags and corresponding services, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 7 is a diagram of a user interface utilized in the processes of FIGS. 5 and 6, according to an exemplary embodiment;

FIGS. 8A and 8B are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for managing a service including an application download, according to various exemplary embodiments;

FIGS. 9A and 9B are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and process for managing a service including a limited number of activations, according to various exemplary embodiments;

FIGS. 10A and 10B are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for management a service including an application resident on a user equipment, according to various exemplary embodiments;

FIGS. 11A and 11B are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for management a service including an application that requires subscription to another feature, according to various exemplary embodiments;

FIG. 12 is a diagram of hardware that can be used to implement an embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 13 is a diagram of a chip set that can be used to implement an embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 14 is a diagram of a mobile station (e.g., handset) that can be used to implement an embodiment of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF EXAMPLE EMBODIMENTS

A software product and apparatus for managing one or more services using bearer tags are disclosed. As previously stated, the term “services” as used herein refers collectively to services, applications, and content in a network and/or user equipment. In the following description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the embodiments of the invention. It is apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the embodiments of the invention may be practiced without these specific details or with an equivalent arrangement. In other instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid unnecessarily obscuring the embodiments of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a diagram of a communication system capable of managing services using bearer tags, according to an exemplary embodiment. As shown in FIG. 1, a system 100 comprises one or more user equipment (UEs) (e.g., UEs 101a-101n) having connectivity to a communication network 103. The UEs 101a-101n are any type of fixed terminal, mobile terminal, or portable terminal including desktop computers, laptop computers, handsets, stations, units, devices, multimedia tablets, Internet nodes, communicators, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), mobile phones, mobile communication devices, digital camera/camcorders, audio/video players, positioning devices, game devices, televisions, and/or the like, or any combination thereof. It is also contemplated that the UEs 101a-101n can support any type of interface to the user (such as “wearable” circuitry, etc.). The UEs 101a-101n permit rapid management, like for example discovery, activation, accessing, modification, and set-up of one or more services, including services, applications, and content, or any combination thereof (referred to herein as “services”).

By way of example, the communication network 103 of system 100 includes one or more networks such as a data network (not shown), a wireless network (not shown), a telephony network (not shown), or any combination thereof. It is contemplated that the data network may be any local area network (LAN), metropolitan area network (MAN), wide area network (WAN), the Internet, or any other suitable packet-switched network, such as a commercially owned, proprietary packet-switched network, e.g., a proprietary cable or fiber-optic network. In addition, the wireless network may be, for example, a cellular network and may employ various technologies including enhanced data rates for global evolution (EDGE), general packet radio service (GPRS), global system for mobile communications (GSM), Internet protocol multimedia subsystem (IMS), universal mobile telecommunications system (UMTS), etc., as well as any other suitable wireless medium, e.g., microwave access (WiMAX), Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks, code division multiple access (CDMA), wireless fidelity (WiFi), satellite, mobile ad-hoc network (MANET), and the like.

The system 100 also includes bearer tags 105a-105n with each bearer tag 105 corresponding, for example, to one or more services. In exemplary embodiments, the bearer tag 105 is a near field communication (NFC) tag, radio frequency identification (RFID) tag, contactless card, barcode, or any combination thereof that contains information related to the one or more corresponding services. The service information contained in the bearer tag 105 may include, for

instance, one or more service codes to identify the one or more services represented by the bearer tag 105. It is contemplated that in other embodiments, the bearer tag 105 may contain additional service related information (e.g., expiration date, use restrictions, etc.). The bearer tags 105a-105n, for instance, are embedded in, attached to, or printed on any of a variety of materials capable of supporting the tag (e.g., packaging material, a sticker, a poster, a card, etc.). The UEs 101a-101n each include one or more readers capable of reading the bearer tags 105a-105n, e.g., a near field communication (NFC) reader, radio frequency identification (RFID) reader, contactless card reader, barcode reader, camera, and/or the like, or any combination thereof.

By way of example, NFC, RFID, contactless card, and similar technologies are short-range wireless communication technologies that enable the exchange of data between devices over short distances (e.g., the range for NFC is approximately 4 inches). In general, these technologies comprise two main components, a tag (e.g., attached to an object) and a reader (which can be implemented with the UEs 101a-101n). Communication between the reader and the tags occur wirelessly and may not require a line of sight between the devices. The tag (e.g., an RFID transponder) is, for instance, a small microchip that is attached to an antenna. The tags can vary in sizes, shapes, and forms and can be read through many types of materials.

Moreover, the tags may be passive tags or active tags. Passive tags are generally smaller, lighter, and less expensive than active tags. Passive tags are only activated when with the response range of a reader. The reader emits a low-power radio wave field that is used to power the tag so as to pass on any information that is contained on the chip. Active tags differ in that they incorporate their own power source to transmit rather than reflect radio frequency signals. Accordingly, active tags enable a broader range of functionality like programmable and read/write capabilities.

A reader typically contains a transmitter, receiver, control unit, and an antenna. The reader performs three primary functions: energizing the tag, demodulating and decoding the returned radio signal. In certain embodiments, a reader includes an additional interface to convert the returned radio signal to a form that can be passed to another system such as a computer or programmable logic controller.

A barcode reader relies on optical technology to read a barcode. Typically, the barcode reader’s photo sensors optically scan a barcode to convert the bars comprising a barcode image into one or more alphanumeric characters. These characters then represent the code. In certain embodiments, the barcode includes an additional checksum bar to ensure accurate decoding.

As shown in FIG. 1, the UEs 101a-101n have connectivity to a services platform 107 and a network billing system 109 through the communication network 103. In exemplary embodiments, the services platform 107 links the service information contained in the bearer tags 105a-105n with their corresponding services to activate, modify, or otherwise manage the services on the UEs 101a-101n. In certain embodiments, the services platform 107 also interacts with the network billing system 109 to coordinate payment and billing for the services. The network billing system 109 is owned by, for instance, a service provider (e.g., cellular service provider) through which the users of UEs 101a-101n have their communication (e.g., wireless) service. Accordingly, the user of UEs 101a-101n generally already has a billing relationship with the network billing system 109 and the associated service provider.

According to certain embodiments, the system **100** enables the management of one or more services. As seen in FIG. **1**, the UEs **101a-101n** include, for instance, a services management module **111** to manage the one or more services. It is contemplated that the term “management” of services as used herein refers to actions including discovering a service, selecting a service, activating a service, modifying a network, cancelling a service, paying for a service, and the like. Traditionally, a user searches for and discovers services by, for instance, paging through lists of available services on a UE **101**. This process can be complex and cumbersome (e.g., requires extensive typing on a mobile device), particularly when the UE **101**, for example, is a device limited input capabilities (e.g., a handset with a numeric keypad). After finding and selecting a desired service, the user must then provide payment information. Like the selection process, the payment process can also be inconvenient and taxing. The complexity and difficulty of manager services using traditional methods may discourage users from using a service they might otherwise subscribe.

To address this problem, a mechanism, e.g., services management module, is introduced to detect input from a user for managing (e.g., activating or modifying) a service corresponding to a bearer tag **105**. In exemplary embodiments, reading the service information from the bearer tag **105** quickly identifies the requested service. A request is generated to manage the service according to the service information from the bearer tag **105**, and is forwarded to the services platform **107** for processing according to a billing arrangement or a predetermined billing arrangement with, for instance, the carrier. For example, the billing arrangement is effected using mechanisms such as premium short message service (PSMS), wireless application protocol (WAP) billing service. The billing arrangement also may be configured to bill the user periodically (e.g., one a month) without additional action from the user.

Moreover, the process of managing a service may occur automatically, thereby enabling a user to initiate a service by, for instance, simply tapping or bringing a UE **101** close to a bearer tag **105** associated with the service. It is noted that a service that can be initiated quickly and billed through a single tap is likely to be more attractive to users, which can drive more users to the service.

By way of example, the UEs **101a-101n** communicate with the other devices on the communication network **103** (e.g., the services platform **107**) using standard protocols. In this context, a protocol includes a set of rules defining how the network nodes within the communication network **103** (e.g., UEs **101a-101n** and services platform **107**) interact with each other based on information sent over the communication links. The protocols are effective at different layers of operation within each node, from generating and receiving physical signals of various types, to selecting a link for transferring those signals, to the format of information indicated by those signals, to identifying which software application executing on a computer system sends or receives the information. The conceptually different layers of protocols for exchanging information over a network are described in the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) Reference Model. The OSI Reference Model is generally described in more detail in Section 1.1 of the reference book entitled “Interconnections Second Edition,” by Radia Perlman, published September 1999.

Communications between the network nodes are typically effected by exchanging discrete packets of data. Each packet typically comprises (1) header information associated with a particular protocol, and (2) payload information that follows

the header information and contains information that may be processed independently of that particular protocol. In some protocols, the packet includes (3) trailer information following the payload and indicating the end of the payload information. The header includes information such as the source of the packet, its destination, the length of the payload, and other properties used by the protocol. Often, the data in the payload for the particular protocol includes a header and payload for a different protocol associated with a different, higher layer of the OSI Reference Model. The header for a particular protocol typically indicates a type for the next protocol contained in its payload. The higher layer protocol is said to be encapsulated in the lower layer protocol. The headers included in a packet traversing multiple heterogeneous networks, such as the Internet, typically include a physical (layer 1) header, a data-link (layer 2) header, an internetwork (layer 3) header and a transport (layer 4) header, and various application headers (layer 5, layer 6 and layer 7) as defined by the OSI Reference Model.

FIGS. **2A** and **2B** are diagrams of components of a services management module and components of a services platform respectively, according to various exemplary embodiments. As shown in FIG. **2A**, the services management module **111** includes several sub-modules to manage services corresponding to bearer tags **105a-105n**. It is contemplated that the functions of the sub-modules may be combined or performed by other components or logic of the UE **101**. In exemplary embodiments, the services management module **111** includes a service selection module **201** for detecting a request from a user to manager a service corresponding to a bearer tag. The module **201** may, for instance, interact with a bearer tag reader control module **203** to detect the request. By way of example, the user request may be indicated by tapping the UE **101** one or more times on or near the bearer tag. The number of taps to initiate a request is configurable by the user, the service provider, or both. It is also contemplated that tapping includes bringing the UE at least sufficiently close enough to the bearer tag **105** so that the UE **101** can detect a return signal from the bearer tag **105**. A physical tap is not necessary. In addition or alternatively, the user can signal a request to manage a service by activating one or more buttons or menu options on the UE **101**, by causing the user UE **101** to read the bearer tag (e.g., cause the UE **101**'s barcode reader to scan a barcode), or by any combination thereof.

After detecting a service request, the service selection module **201**, for example, causes the reader tag control module **203** to interact with an external bearer tag reader **205** (e.g., RFID reader, barcode reader). More specifically, the module **203**, for instance, initiates the reader **205** to determine the service information contained in the bearer tag **105** and receives the raw data from reader **205** for processing by the service selection module **201**. In certain embodiments, the bearer tag reader is a component of the UE **101** (e.g., a handset with a built-in reader) in which the services management module **111** resides. In other embodiments, the reader may be an external peripheral attached to the UE **101** (e.g., a barcode scanner connected to a PDA).

The service selection module **201** then uses the service information to generate a service management request for transmission to the services platform **107**. The service management request, for instance, includes information such as the requested service and identification of the user. It is contemplated that the request may include other information needed to process to specific requests (e.g., quantity of product, duration of subscription, etc.).

In certain embodiments, the service selection module 201 is also configured to receive and process a request from the services platform 107 to confirm service management requests. By way of example, the confirmation request from the services platform 107 includes billing information, if any, associated with the requested management action. After confirmation and subsequent completion of any management action, the service selection module 201 interacts with the activation module 207 to activate the request service or implement any modifications. The activation module 207 has connectivity to a database 209 of subscribed services for storing service records and settings.

FIG. 2B is a diagram of the components of a services platform, according to an exemplary embodiment. As shown in FIG. 2B, the services platform 107 includes several components to manage services corresponding to bearer tags 105a-105n. It is contemplated that the functions of the components may be combined or performed by other components within the platform 107. In exemplary embodiments, the services platform 107 includes a services portal (e.g., store front) 221 for receiving service management requests and delivering services to the UEs 101a-101n. The services portal 221 has connectivity to a services catalog database 223 containing information to identify the services of the received request using the service information from the corresponding bearer tag 105. On receipt of a request the services portal 221 interacts with the database 223 and billing system (e.g., server) 225 to determine user information and/or the billing information (e.g., monthly fee, discounts, promotions, product cost, etc.) associated with the received service management request. The services portal 221 uses the billing information to generate a message requesting confirmation of the service management request from the user.

On receipt of the user confirmation, the services portal 221, for example, directs the payment gateway 227 to collect the fees associated with the request. In exemplary embodiments, the payment gateway 227 may interact with the network billing system 109 to collect payment using, for example: (1) direct billing to the user using the International Mobile Station Identity (IMSI) associated with the user's UE 101, wherein the user's phone bill is directly charged for any fees and the payment gateway 227 makes a billing request to the network billing system 109 to recover the fees based on the IMSI; (2) direct billing using a 3G/GPRS access point, wherein the user's phone bill is directly charged for any fees and the payment gateway 227 makes a billing request to the network billing system 109 to recover the fees based the network assigned ID (e.g., a Mobile Subscriber Integrated Digital Services Network (MSISDN) number); (3) direct billing using a wireless access protocol (WAP) access point, wherein the user's phone bill is directly charged for any fees and the payment gateway 227 makes a billing request to the network billing system 109 to recover the fees based the network assigned ID (e.g., MSISDN) (i.e., WAP direct billing); (4) direct billing using WAP, wherein the user accesses a WAP portal to authorize payment against the user's phone bill and the payment gateway 227 makes a billing request to the network billing system 109 to recover the fees (i.e., WAP online billing); (5) direct billing using premium short message service (SMS) MO billing wherein an SMS sent from the user's device triggers direct billing against the user's phone bill and wherein the network billing system 109 sends the collected fees to the payment gateway 227 based on the SMS transaction identification; and (6) direct billing using premium short message service (SMS) MT billing wherein an SMS sent to the user's device triggers

direct billing against the user's phone bill and wherein the network billing system 109 sends the collected fees to the payment gateway 227 based on the SMS transaction identification. In exemplary embodiments, the user, the service provider, or both can configure the payment mechanism used by the services platform 107.

After collecting the appropriate payment, the payment gateway 227 sends the payment or, in some cases, verification of the payment to the services portal 221. The services portal 221 then interacts with the service activation system 229 (which may be implemented as a server) to initiate activation or modification of a service according to the service management request.

FIG. 3 is a flowchart of a process for managing services, according to an exemplary embodiment. In one embodiment, the services management module 111 performs the process 300 and is implemented in, for instance, a chip set including a processor and a memory as shown FIG. 9. At 301, the module 111 detects input from a user for activating or modifying a service corresponding to a bearer tag 105. At the chip level, the module 111 detects the input by, for instance, receiving a signal via the bearer tag reader control module 203 that a bearer tag 105 has been detected. In certain embodiments, a user input is not needed to initiate certain services or features (e.g., activation of a service), and service management may proceed with no user input. The module 111 then initiates a determination of the service information contained within the bearer tag 105 by signaling the bearer tag reader 205 to read the bearer tag 105 (at 303). Based on the service information, the module 111 generates a service management request (e.g., subscribe to an E-mail service, purchase a song, cancel a subscription) (at 305) and initiates transmission of the request to the services platform 107 for completing the service management request according to a predetermined billing arrangement (at 307).

Next, the module 111 receives a message from the services platform 107 requesting confirmation of the service management of the service management actions that the services platform 107 will perform (at 309). On receipt of the request, the module 111 detects a user input indicating a response to the confirmation request (e.g., proceed with request, or cancel request) (at 311). The module 111 then generates a message containing the user's response to the confirmation request (at 313) and initiates transmission of the message to the services platform 107 (at 315).

FIG. 4 is a flowchart of a process for managing services using a user equipment, according to an exemplary embodiment. As discussed previously, exemplary embodiments include the services management module 111 within the UEs 101a-101n (e.g., hardware such as a wireless handset, laptop computer, etc.). The incorporation of the module 111 within the UEs 101a-101n extends the functions of the module 111 to the network or communication system 103 in which the UE 101 operates. Additionally, certain embodiments configure the UE 101 to include components (e.g., a bearer tag reader 205, wireless transmitter (not shown)) not included with the module 111. Consequently, the UE 101a, for example, is capable of directly reading the bearer tag 105 and transmitting messages over the communication network 103.

Process 400 begins with the UE 101 indicating a user input for managing a service corresponding to a bearer tag 105 (at 401). In certain embodiments, the user input is indicated by tapping a user equipment one or more times on or near the bearer tag 101, by activating one or more buttons or menu options on the UE 101 itself, by using the UE 101 to read the bearer tag 105, or by a combination thereof. It is

contemplated that the user, the service provider, or both may configured the number of taps, buttons, or menu options to indicate a service management request. It is also contemplated that in certain embodiments, a user input is not needed to initiate certain services or features (e.g., activation of a service), and service management may proceed with no user input. The UE 101a then reads service information contained in the bearer tag 105 using, for instance, an NFC reader, RFID reader, contactless card reader, a barcode reader, or any combination thereof (at 403). Based on the service information, the UE 101a generates a service management request message (at 405) and transmits the message, per at 407, to the services platform 107.

Like the process described with respect to the services management module 111, the UE 101a receives a message from the services platform 107 providing the associated billing information and requesting confirmation of the service action (at 409). Next, the UE 101a receives input from the user responding to the request (e.g., proceed with request or cancel request) (at 411), generates a response message based on the user input (at 413), and transmits the response message to the services platform 107 (at 415) for instructing the services platform 107.

In exemplary embodiments, the UE 101 may be configured to perform the process 400 to manage a service (e.g., initiate a service) using a “one tap” mode of operation. In this mode, a single tap (or other similar action) on a bearer tag 105 as described at 401 initiates the service management action (e.g., service activation). All other actions of the process 400, as well as any associated service enablement and billing actions, are completed automatically by the services platform 107 and network billing system 109 using previously stored information (e.g., account, billing, and payment information) related to the user. This information, for example, was collected from the user when the user initiated the wireless service. In this way, the user need not input any previously stored information when managing services under the process 400.

As discussed previously, the use of a one tap mode of operation for managing (e.g., activating, purchasing, subscribing, etc.) a service may improve overall convenience to the user when accessing the service. This added convenience may in turn encourage greater use of the service.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart of a process for managing a service corresponding to a bearer tag, according to an exemplary embodiment. In this example, the services platform 107 receives a request to manage (e.g., activate or modify) a service corresponding to a bearer tag 105 from the UE 101, at 501. The request, for instance, identifies the service according to the service information contained in the bearer tag 105 as well as the UE 101 making the request. In response, the services platform 107 identifies the requested service and associated billing information using, for example, the services catalog database 223 (at 503). The platform 107 then generates a message requesting that the user confirm service management request and billing information (at 505) and initiates a transmission of the request to the user (at 507).

In certain embodiments, the one or more services corresponding to a bearer tag 105 can be limited to certain geographical areas (e.g., Atlanta or New York City). In this case, the services platform 107 is also configured to validate the service management request based on location. The term “validate” refers to a process for ensuring that a UE 101 meets the conditions (e.g., location requirement) to manage a service. To validate the location information, the services platform 107 may obtain the location of the UE 101 by, for

instance, identifying the wireless communication cell in which the UE 101 is operating, using the global positioning satellite (GPS) receiver of the UE 101, or using other like location technologies. In one embodiment, the location restriction for a service may be classified alternatively or additionally by continent (i.e., a particular service is available only in North America or Europe). By way of example, the location restriction associated with a service is included in the bearer tag 105 as a location validation identifier as illustrated in Table 1. Table 1 also includes a validity date associated with each identifier. The validity date indicates the effective date or dates for the location restriction.

TABLE 1

Location Validation Identifier	Area	Continent	Validity Date
1-10000	Atlanta, GA	North America	2009
10001-20000	New York, NY	North America	2009
20001-30000	Washington, DC	North America	2009
30001-40000	Dallas, TX	North America	2009

In certain embodiments, it is contemplated that the services platform 107 may also use criteria other than location to validate a service management request originating from a bearer tag 105. For example, the services platform 107 can determine whether a service associated with a particular bearer tag 105 has already been activated or otherwise previously used. In one further embodiment, the services platform 107 can link a particular bearer tag 105 to a UE 101 by, for example, associating a bearer tag ID with the unique identifier corresponding to the UE 101 (e.g., international mobile equipment identity (IMEI)).

At 509, the services platform 107 receives a response message from the user. If the response confirms the service management request, the services platform 107 initiates the requested service management actions (at 511). In exemplary embodiments, the process of initiating the actions includes initiating the collection of appropriate payment for the service management request according to the methods of payment collection described with respect to the payment gateway 227 of FIG. 2B.

FIGS. 6A-6E are diagrams of bearer tags and corresponding services, according to an exemplary embodiment. As shown in FIGS. 6A-6D, the bearer tags 601-607, for example, correspond to a variety of services and may use different types of bearer tags. For instance, bearer tags 601-605 include a wireless tag 609 (e.g., NFC, RFID, or contactless card), whereas bearer tag 607 includes a barcode tag 611. Moreover, the bearer tag 601 corresponds to an E-mail subscription service, the bearer tag 603 corresponds to a service credit that can be immediately applied to a user’s phone bill, and bearer tags 605 and 607 correspond to the purchase a game (e.g., chess).

In one embodiment, the billing information for the service may be printed or displayed on the tag itself (e.g., bearer tags 601-605). In other embodiments (e.g., bearer tag 607), the billing information is not display on the tag. Instead, the tag 607 can be configured, for instance, to display the billing information when the tag is read.

In another embodiment, the bearer tag may be configured to activate any dependent features (e.g., a data plan) in addition to the requested service. For example, bearer tag 601 may be used to subscribe to an Mobile Mail e-mail service. In this example, the services platform 107 is configured to require a data plan when subscribing to the Mobile Mail service. On activation of the tag 601 by a UE 101, the

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services platform automatically initiates subscription to a data plan along with activating the service if the UE 101 does not already have a data plan.

Although the bearer tags are displayed in FIGS. 6A-6E as cards, it is contemplated that the bearer tags 601-607 may take any form capable of being embedded or printed with a bearer tag.

FIG. 6E is a diagram depicting a distribution method for a bearer tag, according to an exemplary embodiment. It is contemplated that the bearer tags 601-607 of FIG. 6A may be distributed using any suitable method (e.g., distribution within a user equipment box, with a monthly billing statement, in print advertisements, etc.). As shown in FIG. 6B, the Mobile Mail bearer tag 601 is included in the user equipment box 621 with the UE 623. For instance, the bearer tag 601 may be placed in the user equipment box 621 at the time of equipment purchase.

Table 2 summarizes the exemplary services and features associated with a bearer tag 105 in relation to the mechanism for distributing the bearer tag 105 and the dependent features already installed on the UE 101 as discussed with respect to FIGS. 6A and 6B. Scenario 1 includes a UE 101 preconfigured to include an application corresponding to a service (e.g., an E-mail application). The UE 101, however, does not have a data plan. In this scenario, a bearer tag 105 corresponding to, for instance, an E-mail service may be included in the equipment box to promote the use of a data plan with the service. The user initiates the service and the correspond-

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(WAP) billing page. This payment for be scheduled to automatically recur on a periodic basis (e.g., monthly) to maintain the service.

Scenario 3 includes a UE 101 that does not have an application corresponding to a service already installed on the device. The UE 101 also does not have a data plan feature already enabled. In this scenario, a bearer tag 105 that is distributed either in the equipment box or by other means may be used to initiate the service, download the corresponding application, and enable the dependent feature (e.g., a data plan). Under this scenario, the user may initiate payment for the service via, for example, an SMS short code or a WAP link.

Scenario 4 is similar to scenario 3 with the exception that the UE 101 already has the data plan feature provisioned on the device. In this case, the UE 101 may initiate a service and download of the corresponding application by the one tap method (i.e., single tapping the UE 101 on the bearer tag 105). A second or subsequent tap may then, for instance, initiate payment for the service or activate the service and any corresponding downloaded application.

Scenario 5 is similar to scenario 4 with the exception that the data plan already provisioned on the UE 101 is not adequate to take full advantage of the service (e.g., a premium video service require additional bandwidth). In this case, the user can initiate the service and upgrade to the recommended data plan feature using a bearer tag 105. The bearer tag 105, for example, may be sent to user by mail with the phone bill.

TABLE 2

	User has no data plan feature	User has data plan feature	User needs to upgrade data plan feature to use service
Application corresponding to service is already on the UE 101; Bearer tag is distributed in the box	Scenario (1): Bearer tag 105 is used to advertise a data plan while pushing for user activation of a service (e.g., E-mail) preloaded in phone with payment via PSMS.	Scenario (2): Bearer tag 105 is linked to a wireless application protocol (WAP) billing page to bill or PSMS to bill for service usage on a periodic basis (e.g., monthly).	
Application corresponding to service is not preloaded on the UE 101; Bearer tag is distributed in or out of the box	Scenario (3): Bearer tag 105 is used to trigger authorization to download an application corresponding to the service via an SMS short code. Payment may be made via a WAP link reversed billed by the carrier or service provider.	Scenario (4): Bearer tag 105 is used to point to a secure web link to download an application corresponding to the service via a single tap. A second or subsequent tap can be configured to initiate payment after the application is installed or to activate the service and any corresponding downloaded application.	Scenario (5): Bearer tag 105 is used to upgrade the data plan for better service (e.g., premium video service). The bearer tag 105 may be sent by mail with the phone bill as advertising material.

ing data plan via the bearer tag 105. Payment, for example, may then be made via a premium SMS (PSMS) message.

Scenario 2 is similar to scenario 1 with the exception that the UE 101 has already been provisioned with a data plan feature. This scenario, for instance, may be used to promote an E-mail service, instant messaging service, or games. In this case, the user merely has to activate and pay for the service using, for example, a wireless application protocol

FIG. 7 is a diagram of a user interface utilized in the processes of FIGS. 5 and 6, according to an exemplary embodiment. In an exemplary embodiment, a bearer tag 701 (e.g., containing an NFC tag) is inserted in to the phone packaging for easy access by the user. In this example, the bearer tag 701 corresponds to an E-mail subscription service costing \$4.99 per month with one month free on activation. The user of device 703 initiates a request to activate the

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E-mail service by tapping the device **703** on or near the bearer tag **701**. The device **703** reads the NFC tag and requests activation of the service via, for example, the services platform **107**. If this is a first tap **705** by the device **703** on the bearer tag **701**, the services platform **107** processes the request and activates the service according to a predetermined billing arrangement (e.g., bill the service directly to the user's phone bill). The services platform **107** displays a confirmation message **707** presenting the billing information and asking for the user's consent to proceed with the subscription. The user may respond yes to finalize the service activation and agree to the billing arrangement or no to cancel the request. If the tap is a second tap **709** (or subsequent tap), the service platform **107**, for instance, interprets the second tap **709** as a request to activate the service along with any corresponding application. Accordingly, the services platform **107** displays a message **711** requesting confirmation to access the service and the application. In this way, the user can use the bearer tag **701** to easily access the service following activation.

The described processes and arrangement advantageously, according to certain embodiments, provide a rapid and convenient mechanism for a user to identify and subscribe to services.

FIGS. **8-11** are time sequence diagrams that illustrate sequences of messages and processes of use case scenarios, according to various exemplary embodiments. A network process on the network is represented by a shaded vertical box. A message passed from one process to another is represented by horizontal arrows. A step performed by a process is indicated by the text.

The processes represented in FIGS. **8-11** are a consumer device **801**, an NFC application **803**, an NFC tag **805**, a store front **807**, a payment gateway **809**, an operator access point **811**, and an operator billing system **813**. The consumer device **801** is an example of a UE **101**. The NFC application **803** is an example of a service management module **111**. The NFC tag **805** is an example of a bearer tag **105**. The store front **807** is an example of the services portal **221**. The payment gateway **809** is an example of the payment gateway **227**. The operation access point **811** is an example of an access point to communication network **103**. The operator billing system **813** is an example of the network billing system **109**.

FIGS. **8A** and **8B** are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for managing a service including an application download, according to various exemplary embodiments. At **815**, the consumer device **801** is tapped on the NFC tag **805** to activate a service. In response, the NFC application **803** negotiates with the NFC tag **805** (at **817**) to request the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **819**). The NFC application **803** then reads and decrypts the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **821**).

In this example, the service information includes an activation code for a service and a promotion code to apply towards the service billing charge. At **823**, the NFC application **803** reads the service information and interprets it as an activation code and a promotion code, and sends the service information to the store front **807** via an SMS message.

On receipt of the message, the store front **807** interprets the service information as a service activation code for a service and sends a confirmation request to the consumer device **801** (at **825**). The confirmation message, for instance, contains the billing price for the service taking into account the promotion code.

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Upon confirmation from the user to activate the service and to apply the charges to the user's phone bill, the NFC application **803** sends a request to the payment gateway **809** to send information on the SMS short code and transaction details for the service (at **827**). Accordingly, the payment gateway **809** generates a unique transaction ID and sends the ID and the associated SMS short code to the NFC application **803** (at **829**). The NFC application **803** initiates payment for the service by initiating an SMS message containing the transaction ID addressed to the SMS short code corresponding to the operator billing system **813** (at **831**). The SMS is forwarded to the operator billing system **813** via the operator access point **811** (at **833**).

After receiving the SMS message, the operator billing system **813** forwards the message along with the MSISDN number corresponding to the consumer device **801** to the payment gateway **809** (at **835**). The payment gateway **809** matches the transaction ID sent to the client at **829** with the transaction ID received from the operator billing system **813**, and initiates a premium rate SMS (PSMS) message to the operator billing system **813** (at **837**). The payment gateway **807** also sends confirmation of the billing charge to the NFC application **803** (at **839**) and confirmation to the store front **807** to deliver any digital goods associated with the service (at **841**).

If applicable, the store front **807** initiates download of any application or other digital content to the consumer device **801** (at **843**). The downloaded application **845** is activated using the activation code read from the NFC tag **805**. The activation code may also be automatically passed to the NFC application **803** by the store front **807** or it may be manually entered by the consumer when prompted (at **847**).

FIGS. **9A** and **9B** are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and process for managing a service including a limited number of activations, according to various exemplary embodiments. At **901**, a consumer device **801** is tapped on the NFC tag **805** to activate a service. In response, the NFC application **803** negotiates with the NFC tag **805** (at **903**) to request the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **905**). The NFC application **803** then reads and decrypts the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **907**).

In this example, the service information includes three elements: a service activation code, promotion code, and a promotion counter. The promotion counter, for instance, limits the number of consumers who can activate the service. At **909**, the NFC application **803** reads the service information and interprets it as an activation code to activate a service, a promotion code, and a promotion counter. The NFC application **803** checks that the activation code counter and the promotion counter are greater than zero. If they are, the NFC application **803** passes the service information to the store front **807** via an SMS message.

On receipt of the message, the store front **807** interprets the service information as a service activation code for a service and sends a confirmation request to the consumer device **801** (at **911**). The confirmation message, for instance, contains the billing price for the service taking into account the promotion code.

Upon confirmation from the user to activate the service and to apply the charges to the user's phone bill, the NFC application **803** sends a request to the payment gateway **809** to send information on the SMS short code and transaction details for the service (at **913**). Accordingly, the payment gateway **809** generates a unique transaction ID and sends the ID and the associated SMS short code to the NFC application **803** (at **915**). The NFC application **803** initiates pay-

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ment for the service by initiating an SMS message containing the transaction ID addressed to the SMS short code corresponding to the operator billing system **813** (at **917**). The SMS is forwarded to the operator billing system **813** via the operator access point **811** (at **919**).

After receiving the SMS message, the operator billing system **813** forwards the message along with the MSISDN number corresponding to the consumer device **801** to the payment gateway **809** (at **921**). The payment gateway **809** matches the transaction ID sent to the client at **829** with the transaction ID received from the operator billing system **813**, and initiates a premium rate SMS (PSMS) message to the operator billing system **813** (at **923**). The payment gateway **807** also sends confirmation of the billing charge to the NFC application **803** (at **925**) and confirmation to the store front **807** to deliver any digital goods associated with the service (at **927**). If applicable, the store front **807** initiates download of any application or other digital content to the consumer device **801** (at **929**). The downloaded application **845** is activated using the activation code read from the NFC tag **805**. The activation code may also be automatically passed to the NFC application **803** by the store front **807** or it may be manually entered by the consumer when prompted (at **931**).

In addition, the store front **807** sends a request to the NFC application **803** on the consumer device **801** to decrement the promotion counter on the NFC tag **805** by one (at **933**). In response, the NFC application **803** performs a write operation on the NFC tag **805** to decrement to counter by one (at **935**). The NFC tag **805** sends a confirmation to the NFC application **803** when the write operation is complete (at **937**). When the promotion counter reaches zero the NFC application **803** displays a message on the device that the service code and promotion code have expired when the consumer next taps the NFC tag **805**.

FIGS. **10A** and **10B** are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for management a service including an application resident on a user equipment, according to various exemplary embodiments. At **1001**, a consumer device **801** is tapped on the NFC tag **805** to activate a service. In response, the NFC application **803** negotiates with the NFC tag **805** (at **1003**) to request the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **1005**). The NFC application **803** then reads and decrypts the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **1007**).

In this example, the service information includes an activation code for a service and a promotion code to apply towards the service billing charge. At **1009**, the NFC application **803** reads the service information and interprets it as an activation code and a promotion code, and sends the service information to the store front **807** via an SMS message.

On receipt of the message, the store front **807** interprets the service information as a service activation code for a service and sends a confirmation request to the consumer device **801** (at **1011**). The confirmation message, for instance, contains the billing price for the service taking into account the promotion code.

Upon confirmation from the user to activate the service and to apply the charges to the user's phone bill, the NFC application **803** sends a request to the payment gateway **809** to send information on the SMS short code and transaction details for the service (at **1013**). Accordingly, the payment gateway **809** generates a unique transaction ID and sends the ID and the associated SMS short code to the NFC application **803** (at **1015**). The NFC application **803** initiates payment for the service by initiating an SMS message

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containing the transaction ID addressed to the SMS short code corresponding to the operator billing system **813** (at **1017**). The SMS is forwarded to the operator billing system **813** via the operator access point **811** (at **1019**).

After receiving the SMS message, the operator billing system **813** forwards the message along with the MSISDN number corresponding to the consumer device **801** to the payment gateway **809** (at **1021**). The payment gateway **809** matches the transaction ID sent to the client at **829** with the transaction ID received from the operator billing system **813**, and initiates a premium rate SMS (PSMS) message to the operator billing system **813** (at **1023**). The payment gateway **807** also sends confirmation of the billing charge to the NFC application **803** (at **1025**) and confirmation to the store front **807** to deliver any digital goods associated with the service (at **1027**).

The store front determines that the application associated with the service is already installed on the consumer device **801** and sends the application activation code to the device **801** (at **1029**). The activation code may be automatically passed to the NFC application **803** by the store front **807** or it may be manually entered by the consumer when prompted (at **1031**).

FIGS. **11A** and **11B** are time sequence diagrams that illustrate a sequence of messages and processes for management a service including an application that requires subscription to another feature, according to various exemplary embodiments. At **1101**, a consumer device **801** is tapped on the NFC tag **805** to activate a service. In response, the NFC application **803** negotiates with the NFC tag **805** (at **1103**) to request the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **1105**). The NFC application **803** then reads and decrypts the service information from the NFC tag **805** (at **1107**).

In this example, the service information includes an activation code for a service and a promotion code to apply towards the service billing charge. At **1109**, the NFC application **803** reads the service information and interprets it as an activation code and a promotion code, and sends the service information to the store front **807** via an SMS message.

On receipt of the message, the store front **807** interprets the service information as a service activation code for a service and sends a confirmation request to the consumer device **801** (at **1111**). The confirmation message, for instance, contains the billing price for the service taking into account the promotion code. In addition, the confirmation message identifies any features that are required as part of the service. For example, an e-mail service requires subscription to a data plan. If the consumer device **801** does not already have the feature (e.g., data plan) already configured, the store front **807** includes the feature and associated billing information in the confirmation message.

Upon confirmation from the user to activate the service (and any additional features if applicable) and to apply the charges to the user's phone bill, the NFC application **803** sends a request to the payment gateway **809** to send information on the SMS short code and transaction details for the service (at **1113**). Accordingly, the payment gateway **809** generates a unique transaction ID and sends the ID and the associated SMS short code to the NFC application **803** (at **1115**). The NFC application **803** initiates payment for the service by initiating an SMS message containing the transaction ID addressed to the SMS short code corresponding to the operator billing system **813** (at **1117**). The SMS is forwarded to the operator billing system **813** via the operator access point **811** (at **1119**).

After receiving the SMS message, the operator billing system **813** forwards the message along with the MSISDN number corresponding to the consumer device **801** to the payment gateway **809** (at **1121**). The payment gateway **809** matches the transaction ID sent to the client at **829** with the transaction ID received from the operator billing system **813**, and initiates a premium rate SMS (PSMS) message to the operator billing system **813** (at **1123**). The payment gateway **807** also sends confirmation of the billing charge to the NFC application **803** (at **1125**) and confirmation to the store front **807** to deliver any digital goods associated with the service (at **1127**).

If applicable, the store front **807** initiates download of any application or other digital content to the consumer device **801**. The store front **807** also initiates subscription to any feature (e.g., data plan) require as part of the service (at **1129**). The downloaded application **845** is activated using the activation code read from the NFC tag **805**. The activation code may also be automatically passed to the NFC application **803** by the store front **807** or it may be manually entered by the consumer when prompted (at **1131**).

The processes described herein for managing services may be implemented via software, hardware (e.g., general processor, Digital Signal Processing (DSP) chip, an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC), Field Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGAs), etc.), firmware or a combination thereof. Such exemplary hardware for performing the described functions is detailed below.

FIG. **12** illustrates a computer system **1200** upon which an embodiment of the invention may be implemented. Computer system **1200** is programmed to carry out the inventive functions described herein and includes a communication mechanism such as a bus **1210** for passing information between other internal and external components of the computer system **1200**. Information (also called data) is represented as a physical expression of a measurable phenomenon, typically electric voltages, but including, in other embodiments, such phenomena as magnetic, electromagnetic, pressure, chemical, biological, molecular, atomic, sub-atomic and quantum interactions. For example, north and south magnetic fields, or a zero and non-zero electric voltage, represent two states (0, 1) of a binary digit (bit). Other phenomena can represent digits of a higher base. A superposition of multiple simultaneous quantum states before measurement represents a quantum bit (qubit). A sequence of one or more digits constitutes digital data that is used to represent a number or code for a character. In some embodiments, information called analog data is represented by a near continuum of measurable values within a particular range.

A bus **1210** includes one or more parallel conductors of information so that information is transferred quickly among devices coupled to the bus **1210**. One or more processors **1202** for processing information are coupled with the bus **1210**.

A processor **1202** performs a set of operations on information. The set of operations include bringing information in from the bus **1210** and placing information on the bus **1210**. The set of operations also typically include comparing two or more units of information, shifting positions of units of information, and combining two or more units of information, such as by addition or multiplication or logical operations like OR, exclusive OR (XOR), and AND. Each operation of the set of operations that can be performed by the processor is represented to the processor by information called instructions, such as an operation code of one or more digits. A sequence of operations to be executed by the

processor **1202**, such as a sequence of operation codes, constitute processor instructions, also called computer system instructions or, simply, computer instructions. Processors may be implemented as mechanical, electrical, magnetic, optical, chemical or quantum components, among others, alone or in combination.

Computer system **1200** also includes a memory **1204** coupled to bus **1210**. The memory **1204**, such as a random access memory (RAM) or other dynamic storage device, stores information including processor instructions. Dynamic memory allows information stored therein to be changed by the computer system **1200**. RAM allows a unit of information stored at a location called a memory address to be stored and retrieved independently of information at neighboring addresses. The memory **1204** is also used by the processor **1202** to store temporary values during execution of processor instructions. The computer system **1200** also includes a read only memory (ROM) **1206** or other static storage device coupled to the bus **1210** for storing static information, including instructions, that is not changed by the computer system **1200**. Some memory is composed of volatile storage that loses the information stored thereon when power is lost. Also coupled to bus **1210** is a non-volatile (persistent) storage device **1208**, such as a magnetic disk, optical disk or flash card, for storing information, including instructions, that persists even when the computer system **1200** is turned off or otherwise loses power.

Information, including instructions, is provided to the bus **1210** for use by the processor from an external input device **1212**, such as a keyboard containing alphanumeric keys operated by a human user, or a sensor. A sensor detects conditions in its vicinity and transforms those detections into physical expression compatible with the measurable phenomenon used to represent information in computer system **1200**. Other external devices coupled to bus **1210**, used primarily for interacting with humans, include a display device **1214**, such as a cathode ray tube (CRT) or a liquid crystal display (LCD), or plasma screen or printer for presenting text or images, and a pointing device **1216**, such as a mouse or a trackball or cursor direction keys, or motion sensor, for controlling a position of a small cursor image presented on the display **1214** and issuing commands associated with graphical elements presented on the display **1214**. In some embodiments, for example, in embodiments in which the computer system **1200** performs all functions automatically without human input, one or more of external input device **1212**, display device **1214** and pointing device **1216** is omitted.

In the illustrated embodiment, special purpose hardware, such as an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) **1220**, is coupled to bus **1210**. The special purpose hardware is configured to perform operations not performed by processor **1202** quickly enough for special purposes. Examples of application specific ICs include graphics accelerator cards for generating images for display **1214**, cryptographic boards for encrypting and decrypting messages sent over a network, speech recognition, and interfaces to special external devices, such as robotic arms and medical scanning equipment that repeatedly perform some complex sequence of operations that are more efficiently implemented in hardware.

Computer system **1200** also includes one or more instances of a communications interface **1270** coupled to bus **1210**. Communication interface **1270** provides a one-way or two-way communication coupling to a variety of external devices that operate with their own processors, such as printers, scanners and external disks. In general the coupling

is with a network link **1278** that is connected to a local network **1280** to which a variety of external devices with their own processors are connected. For example, communications interface **1270** may be a parallel port or a serial port or a universal serial bus (USB) port on a personal computer. In some embodiments, communications interface **1270** is an integrated services digital network (ISDN) card or a digital subscriber line (DSL) card or a telephone modem that provides an information communication connection to a corresponding type of telephone line. In some embodiments, a communication interface **1270** is a cable modem that converts signals on bus **1210** into signals for a communication connection over a coaxial cable or into optical signals for a communication connection over a fiber optic cable. As another example, communications interface **1270** may be a local area network (LAN) card to provide a data communication connection to a compatible LAN, such as Ethernet. Wireless links may also be implemented. For wireless links, the communications interface **1270** sends or receives or both sends and receives electrical, acoustic or electromagnetic signals, including infrared and optical signals, that carry information streams, such as digital data. For example, in wireless handheld devices, such as mobile telephones like cell phones, the communications interface **1270** includes a radio band electromagnetic transmitter and receiver called a radio transceiver.

The term computer-readable medium is used herein to refer to any medium that participates in providing information to processor **1202**, including instructions for execution. Such a medium may take many forms, including, but not limited to, non-volatile media, volatile media and transmission media. Non-volatile media include, for example, optical or magnetic disks, such as storage device **1208**. Volatile media include, for example, dynamic memory **1204**. Transmission media include, for example, coaxial cables, copper wire, fiber optic cables, and carrier waves that travel through space without wires or cables, such as acoustic waves and electromagnetic waves, including radio, optical and infrared waves. Signals include man-made transient variations in amplitude, frequency, phase, polarization or other physical properties transmitted through the transmission media. Common forms of computer-readable media include, for example, a floppy disk, a flexible disk, hard disk, magnetic tape, any other magnetic medium, a CD-ROM, CDRW, DVD, any other optical medium, punch cards, paper tape, optical mark sheets, any other physical medium with patterns of holes or other optically recognizable indicia, a RAM, a PROM, an EPROM, a FLASH-EPROM, any other memory chip or cartridge, a carrier wave, or any other medium from which a computer can read.

FIG. **13** illustrates a chip set **1300** upon which an embodiment of the invention may be implemented. Chip set **1300** is programmed to carry out the inventive functions described herein and includes, for instance, the processor and memory components described with respect to FIG. **12** incorporated in one or more physical packages. By way of example, a physical package includes an arrangement of one or more materials, components, and/or wires on a structural assembly (e.g., a baseboard) to provide one or more characteristics such as physical strength, conservation of size, and/or limitation of electrical interaction.

In one embodiment, the chip set **1300** includes a communication mechanism such as a bus **1301** for passing information among the components of the chip set **1300**. A processor **1303** has connectivity to the bus **1301** to execute instructions and process information stored in, for example, a memory **1305**. The processor **1303** may include one or

more processing cores with each core configured to perform independently. A multi-core processor enables multiprocessing within a single physical package. Examples of a multi-core processor include two, four, eight, or greater numbers of processing cores. Alternatively or in addition, the processor **1303** may include one or more microprocessors configured in tandem via the bus **1301** to enable independent execution of instructions, pipelining, and multithreading. The processor **1303** may also be accompanied with one or more specialized components to perform certain processing functions and tasks such as one or more digital signal processors (DSP) **1307**, or one or more application-specific integrated circuits (ASIC) **1309**. A DSP **1307** typically is configured to process real-world signals (e.g., sound) in real time independently of the processor **1303**. Similarly, an ASIC **1309** can be configured to performed specialized functions not easily performed by a general purposed processor. Other specialized components to aid in performing the inventive functions described herein include one or more field programmable gate arrays (FPGA) (not shown), one or more controllers (not shown), or one or more other special-purpose computer chips.

The processor **1303** and accompanying components have connectivity to the memory **1305** via the bus **1301**. The memory **1305** includes both dynamic memory (e.g., RAM, magnetic disk, writable optical disk, etc.) and static memory (e.g., ROM, CD-ROM, etc.) for storing executable instructions that when executed perform the inventive steps described herein. The memory **1305** also stores the data associated with or generated by the execution of the inventive steps.

FIG. **14** is a diagram of exemplary components of a mobile station (e.g., handset) capable of operating in the system of FIG. **1**, according to an exemplary embodiment. Generally, a radio receiver is often defined in terms of front-end and back-end characteristics. The front-end of the receiver encompasses all of the Radio Frequency (RF) circuitry whereas the back-end encompasses all of the base-band processing circuitry. Pertinent internal components of the telephone include a Main Control Unit (MCU) **1403**, a Digital Signal Processor (DSP) **1405**, and a receiver/transmitter unit including a microphone gain control unit and a speaker gain control unit. A main display unit **1407** provides a display to the user in support of various applications and mobile station functions. An audio function circuitry **1409** includes a microphone **1411** and microphone amplifier that amplifies the speech signal output from the microphone **1411**. The amplified speech signal output from the microphone **1411** is fed to a coder/decoder (CODEC) **1413**.

A radio section **1415** amplifies power and converts frequency in order to communicate with a base station, which is included in a mobile communication system, via antenna **1417**. The power amplifier (PA) **1419** and the transmitter/modulation circuitry are operationally responsive to the MCU **1403**, with an output from the PA **1419** coupled to the duplexer **1421** or circulator or antenna switch, as known in the art. The PA **1419** also couples to a battery interface and power control unit **1420**.

In use, a user of mobile station **1401** speaks into the microphone **1411** and his or her voice along with any detected background noise is converted into an analog voltage. The analog voltage is then converted into a digital signal through the Analog to Digital Converter (ADC) **1423**. The control unit **1403** routes the digital signal into the DSP **1405** for processing therein, such as speech encoding, channel encoding, encrypting, and interleaving. In the exemplary

embodiment, the processed voice signals are encoded, by units not separately shown, using a cellular transmission protocol such as global evolution (EDGE), general packet radio service (GPRS), global system for mobile communications (GSM), Internet protocol multimedia subsystem (IMS), universal mobile telecommunications system (UMTS), etc., as well as any other suitable wireless medium, e.g., microwave access (WiMAX), Long Term Evolution (LTE) networks, code division multiple access (CDMA), wireless fidelity (WiFi), satellite, and the like.

The encoded signals are then routed to an equalizer **1425** for compensation of any frequency-dependent impairments that occur during transmission through the air such as phase and amplitude distortion. After equalizing the bit stream, the modulator **1427** combines the signal with a RF signal generated in the RF interface **1429**. The modulator **1427** generates a sine wave by way of frequency or phase modulation. In order to prepare the signal for transmission, an up-converter **1431** combines the sine wave output from the modulator **1427** with another sine wave generated by a synthesizer **1433** to achieve the desired frequency of transmission. The signal is then sent through a PA **1419** to increase the signal to an appropriate power level. In practical systems, the PA **1419** acts as a variable gain amplifier whose gain is controlled by the DSP **1405** from information received from a network base station. The signal is then filtered within the duplexer **1421** and optionally sent to an antenna coupler **1435** to match impedances to provide maximum power transfer. Finally, the signal is transmitted via antenna **1417** to a local base station. An automatic gain control (AGC) can be supplied to control the gain of the final stages of the receiver. The signals may be forwarded from there to a remote telephone which may be another cellular telephone, other mobile phone or a land-line connected to a Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), or other telephony networks.

Voice signals transmitted to the mobile station **1401** are received via antenna **1417** and immediately amplified by a low noise amplifier (LNA) **1437**. A down-converter **1439** lowers the carrier frequency while the demodulator **1441** strips away the RF leaving only a digital bit stream. The signal then goes through the equalizer **1425** and is processed by the DSP **1405**. A Digital to Analog Converter (DAC) **1443** converts the signal and the resulting output is transmitted to the user through the speaker **1445**, all under control of a Main Control Unit (MCU) **1403**—which can be implemented as a Central Processing Unit (CPU) (not shown).

The MCU **1403** receives various signals including input signals from the keyboard **1447**. The MCU **1403** delivers a display command and a switch command to the display **1407** and to the speech output switching controller, respectively. Further, the MCU **1403** exchanges information with the DSP **1405** and can access an optionally incorporated SIM card **1449** and a memory **1451**. In addition, the MCU **1403** executes various control functions required of the station. The DSP **1405** may, depending upon the implementation, perform any of a variety of conventional digital processing functions on the voice signals. Additionally, DSP **1405** determines the background noise level of the local environment from the signals detected by microphone **1411** and sets the gain of microphone **1411** to a level selected to compensate for the natural tendency of the user of the mobile station **1401**.

The CODEC **1413** includes the ADC **1423** and DAC **1443**. The memory **1451** stores various data including call incoming tone data and is capable of storing other data including music data received via, e.g., the global Internet.

The software module could reside in RAM memory, flash memory, registers, or any other form of writable storage medium known in the art. The memory device **1451** may be, but not limited to, a single memory, CD, DVD, ROM, RAM, EEPROM, optical storage, or any other non-volatile storage medium capable of storing digital data.

An optionally incorporated SIM card **1449** carries, for instance, important information, such as the cellular phone number, the carrier supplying service, subscription details, and security information. The SIM card **1449** serves primarily to identify the mobile station **1401** on a radio network. The card **1449** also contains a memory for storing a personal telephone number registry, text messages, and user specific mobile station settings.

While the invention has been described in connection with a number of embodiments and implementations, the invention is not so limited but covers various obvious modifications and equivalent arrangements, which fall within the purview of the appended claims. Although features of the invention are expressed in certain combinations among the claims, it is contemplated that these features can be arranged in any combination and order.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:
 - detecting, by a user equipment, a tap of the user equipment on or near a bearer tag, wherein the user equipment is a mobile communication device;
 - in response to the tap, initiating, by the user equipment, a determination of service information, related to one or more services offered by one or more service providers independent from a mobile communication service provider that has a billing arrangement with a user account associated with the user equipment, from the bearer tag, wherein the service information includes one or more costs related to the one or more services;
 - generating, by the user equipment, one or more service management requests to manage the one or more services according to the service information; and
 - initiating, by the user equipment, a transmission of the one or more service management requests via a mobile communication network to a services platform communicating with the mobile communication service provider for managing the one or more services and the one or more costs according to the billing arrangement, wherein the one or more service management requests of the one or more services comprises a validation of the one or more service management requests based, at least in part, on:
 - a location restriction associated with geographic locations of the one or more services and the user equipment, and
 - at least one validity date associated with the one or more services indicating the effective date or dates for the location restriction.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the bearer tag is a near field communication (NFC) tag, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag, a barcode, a contactless card, or a combination thereof, and
 - wherein the one or more service management requests are generated and transmitted to the service platform without user intervention, when the tap is detected.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the billing arrangement is a predetermined billing arrangement or a recurring billing arrangement, and
 - wherein the one or more services are billed by the mobile communication service provider for the one or more

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service providers without user intervention, after the validation and service delivery.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the determination of the service information is initiated without user intervention, when the tap is detected.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a confirmation request from the services platform for management of the one or more services, the confirmation request including billing information related to the one or more services;

detecting another input from the user for responding to the confirmation request;

generating a message based on the input; and

initiating transmission of the message to the services platform.

6. An apparatus comprising a processor and a memory storing executable instructions that if executed cause the apparatus embedded in a user equipment to at least perform the following:

detect a tap of the user equipment on or near a bearer tag, wherein the user equipment is a mobile communication device;

in response to the tap, initiate a determination of service information, related to one or more services offered by one or more service providers independent from a mobile communication service provider that has a billing arrangement with a user account associated with the user equipment, from the bearer tag, wherein the service information includes one or more costs related to the one or more services;

generate one or more service management requests to manage the one or more services according to the service information; and

initiate a transmission of the one or more service management requests via a mobile communication network to a services platform communicating with the mobile communication service provider for managing the one or more services and the one or more costs according to the billing arrangement,

wherein the one or more service management requests of the one or more services comprises a validation of the one or more service management requests based, at least in part, on:

a location restriction associated with geographic locations of the one or more services and the user equipment, and

at least one validity date associated with the one or more services indicating the effective date or dates for the location restriction.

7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the bearer tag is a near field communication (NFC) tag, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag, a barcode, a contactless card, or a combination thereof, and

wherein the one or more service management requests are generated and transmitted to the service platform without user intervention, when the tap is detected.

8. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the billing arrangement is a predetermined billing arrangement or a recurring billing arrangement, and

wherein the one or more services are billed by the mobile communication service provider for the one or more service providers without user intervention, after the validation and service delivery.

9. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the determination of the service information is initiated without user intervention, when the tap is detected.

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10. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the apparatus is further caused to receive a confirmation request from the services platform for management of the service, to detect another input from the user for responding to the confirmation request, to generate a message based on the input, and to initiate transmission of the message to the services platform.

11. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the apparatus is a mobile phone further comprising:

user interface circuitry and user interface software configured to facilitate user control of at least some functions of the mobile phone through use of a display and configured to respond to user input; and

a display and display circuitry configured to display at least a portion of a user interface of the mobile phone, the display and display circuitry configured to facilitate user control of at least some functions of the mobile phone.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the mobile phone further comprises:

a bearer tag reader and bearer tag reader circuitry configured to read service information from a near field communication (NFC) tag, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag, a barcode, a contactless card, or a combination thereof.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the service information includes one or more discounts to the one or more costs related to the one or more services, and

wherein the one or more services are discounted and billed by the mobile communication service provider based on the one or more discounts and the billing arrangement for the one or more service providers without user intervention, after the validation and service delivery.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising: receiving a bill of one or more mobile communication services provided by the mobile communication service provider, wherein the bill includes the one or more costs.

15. A method comprising:

receiving, by an apparatus of a mobile communication service provider via a mobile communication network, a service management request from a user equipment to manage one or more services corresponding to a bearer tag, wherein the one or more services are offered by one or more service providers independent from the mobile communication service provider that has a billing arrangement with a user account associated with the user equipment;

validating, by the apparatus, the service management request to manage the one or more services against one or more service restrictions, wherein the one or more service restrictions include a location restriction, a date restriction, a prior-use restriction, a restriction on the number of uses, or a combination thereof;

determining, by the apparatus, one or more costs for the one or more services based, at least in part, on the billing arrangement;

generating, by the apparatus, a message requesting confirmation to manage the one or more services, the message including billing information including the one or more cost; and

initiating, by the apparatus, transmission of the message to the user equipment.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising: receiving, by the apparatus, a response message from the user equipment; and

initiating, by the apparatus, a management of the one or more services according to the response message.

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the bearer tag is a near field communication (NFC) tag, a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag, a barcode, a contactless card, or a combination thereof. 5

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the service management request includes one or more discounts related to the one or more services, and

wherein the one or more services are discounted and 10
billed by the mobile communication service provider based on the one or more discounts and the billing arrangement for the one or more service providers without user intervention, after the validation and service delivery. 15

19. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
including the one or more costs into a bill of one or more mobile communication services provided by the mobile communication service provider; and
initiating a transmission of the bill to the user equipment. 20

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