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Josep-Lluís Ferrer-Gomila, M. Francisca Hinarejos,
Llorenç Huguet-Rotger

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A Survey on Electronic Coupons

Josep-Lluís Ferrer-Gomila^a, M. Francisca Hinarejos^{a,*}, Llorenç Huguet-Rotger^a

^a*Department of Computer Science. Cra. de Valldemossa, km 7.5. Palma (Illes Balears).
University of Balearic Islands (UIB), Spain*

Abstract

Coupons are a highly effective marketing tool. With coupons, merchants can achieve customer loyalty or attract new customers, and customers can obtain benefits when purchasing goods or services. As the Internet becomes easier and faster to use, electronic coupons (e-coupons) are becoming an increasingly popular way of providing customers with discounts or gifts to incentivize the purchase of some products. Therefore, this use of coupons is considered to be a win-win application. This article analyzes the work of researchers toward solving the challenges associated with e-coupons in the area of promotional schemes. This work focuses on defining the actors and processes involved in the life cycle of e-coupons, as well as analyzing the security and functional requirements that proposed approaches meet. A very important part of the analysis reveals that the definition, features and requirements of e-coupons must be clearly defined to provide researchers with a tool enabling a homogeneous comparison of solutions. We also provide a critical review of previous solutions, in which we suggest their advantages and problems, and we discuss some open opportunities for researchers in the e-coupon field.

Keywords: electronic coupon, electronic commerce, promotional schemes, security, payment systems

1. Overview

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), "new technology, improved Internet access, and electronic pay and delivery systems have created a new means of trade – e-commerce – which has helped to reduce trade costs". The rise of e-commerce is unstoppable, and the figures show growth in turnover year after year. According to the WTO, in 2013, business-to-business e-commerce was valued at approximately \$15 trillion, and business-to-consumer e-commerce, at more than \$1 trillion WTO (2015). M-commerce transactions were expected to exceed \$115 billion in 2015 and reach \$142 billion in 2016 according to a report from Forrester Research Tode (2015). All the above has led to a situation in which many elements and processes related to trade conducted via conventional channels currently have electronic equivalents. Coupons constitute one of those elements and inexorably must have an equivalent in the digital world: e-coupons (or m-coupons when referring to m-commerce).

*Corresponding author. University of Balearic Islands (UIB), Spain
Email address: xisca.hinarejos@uib.es (M. Francisca Hinarejos)

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