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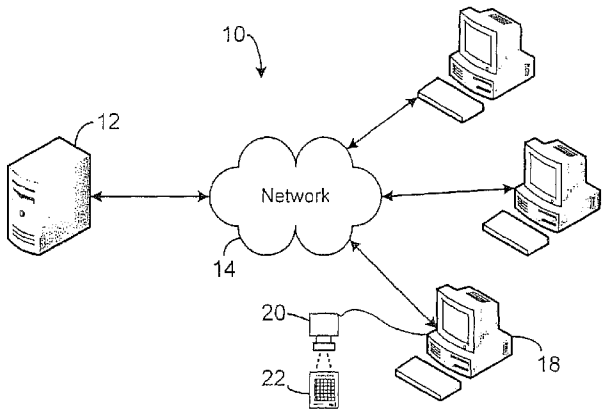
(54) Title: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR SECURING CHARITABLE GAME OF CHANCE CARDS AND TICKETS



(57) Abstract: A method relates to conducting a card based game of chance for a charity wherein a game is played at a plurality of remote play locations and the charity benefits from increased player participation. The method includes distributing game cards to purchasing players at a plurality of remote locations, the game cards containing game data related to the game of chance. At the remote locations and prior to initiation of the game, the game data of each individual game card is exchanged and validated with a central server location. Information is exchanged between the remote location and the central server location. The game of chance is conducted at the remote location and, for any purported winning cards, exchanging game data of such cards with the central server location and performing a post-game validation at the central server location of the purported winning cards.

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SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR SECURING CHARITABLE GAME OF CHANCE CARDS AND TICKETS

PRIORITY CLAIM

The present application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/847,626, filed September 27, 2006.

BACKGROUND

The present invention relates to lottery games and games of chance. More particularly, the present invention relates to a system and method of securing the paper products, such as cards and tickers, for charitable game of chance.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

The use of games of chance, such as Bingo and lottery-style games, to raise money for charitable endeavors is well known. A person or entity wishing to host such a charitable game typically purchases one or more prizes for the game and then sells the bingo card or other ticket to persons at the location who desire to play the game to potentially win the prizes. The host then controls the game play, such as drawing numbers for the Bingo game, and then validate winners as players present their winning card or ticket.

There are several difficulties confronting those wishing to host a charitable game. The potential prizes awarded to the players is typically limited to a percentage of what revenue the game is expected to produce from player entry fees. Thus, the limited size of potential winnings disadvantages charitable competitive versus casinos and other for-profit gaming endeavors.

Unfortunately, the charitable gaming is often prone to fraudulent activity. Those who are running the charitable game can easily "fix" the game to ensure the winning of a prize. Furthermore, the quantity and specific play areas of game cards given to a player may not be well validated such that a player may not have purchased the winning card, or that alterations might be made on the card.

Lastly, the charity game is typically run by a volunteer effort, and the volunteers might not be very savvy to the possible areas of fraud or overall implementation of the game. The use of volunteer labor can also mean that the charity game will be understaffed such that even if adequate tracking of the game

cards and tickets is possible, the limited personnel are unable to perform this function.

In view of these limitations, it is desirous to provide a system and method whereby charities have the ability to conduct a charitable game that has a large prize pool available to its players, while minimizing the risk for fraud. The system and method of implementing the charitable game should also be simple to implement and use in validating winning tickets without the need for a large number of skilled personnel. It is thus to such a system and method of securing the tickets and cards of a charitable game of chance that the present invention is primarily directed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Objects and advantages of the invention will be set forth in part in the following description, or may be obvious from the description, or may be learned through practice of the invention.

Briefly described, the present invention includes a system and method for securing charitable games of chance cards and tickets, such as bingo cards, including at least one game server and one or more remote terminals. In one embodiment, game cards have their data accessible to the game server and are distributed to the remote terminal locations. The game cards are then validated at the remote terminal through data exchange with the game server prior to the beginning of the game. A purported winning ticket is then scanned at the remote terminal and the winning game card data is verified at the game server, which can compare the known game card data with the game data to determine if the presented card is a winning game card.

In another embodiment, the remote terminal marks the cards during validation, such as printing a serial number or bar code on the game card. If the game results are known to the game server at the time of validation, the serial number or other marking data can indicate that the game card is a winning game card. Other embodiments and uses of the present invention are possible with a variety of games of chance, such as a lottery-style game, keno, and the like.

The present invention therefore allows a person or entity to host a game of chance to raise funds for a charitable endeavor with the ability to have a very large prize from the pooling of the funds from a plurality of locations hosting the same

charitable game. The secure game server and remote terminals minimize the risk of fraud at the various game-hosting locations, especially if the game results are known ahead of time such that the ticket validation process at the remote terminal will become aware of the winning ticket (and can mark same) at initial validation. Furthermore, the present system and method has a simple validation process and can easily use unskilled and minimally-trained personnel at the remote terminal to run the game at that location.

Other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent after review of the hereinafter set forth Brief Description of the Drawings, and Detailed Description of the Invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a system diagram of one embodiment of the system with a game server hosting the charitable game of chance for a plurality of remote terminals, each remote terminal has a ticket validation system.

Fig. 2 is a front view of one embodiment of a charity bingo card usable in the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a flowchart of one embodiment of a process for validation of the game card at the remote terminal in conjunction with the game server.

Fig. 4 is a flowchart of one embodiment of a process for validating game card data at the game server, the game card data sent from a remote terminal.

Fig. 5 is a flowchart of one embodiment of a process for validating a winning game card at a remote terminal in conjunction with the game server.

Fig. 6 is a flowchart of one embodiment of a process for validating winning game card data at the game server, the winning game card data sent from a remote terminal.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Reference will now be made to particular embodiments of the invention, one or more examples of which are illustrated in the figures. Each embodiment is presented by way of explanation of the invention, and not as a limitation of the invention. For example, features illustrated or described as part of one embodiment may be used with another embodiment to yield still a further embodiment.

The present invention is a system and method that allows a remote location to host a charitable game of chance that can pool the resources of numerous entities in hosting a single game of chance. This gives the charity the ability to have significant prizes that can even compete with for-profit gaming endeavors. The system 10 can use the existing mechanisms and systems for lottery ticket dispensation and validation, such as those implemented for State Lotteries by Scientific Games, Inc. These existing systems have high levels of secure data exchange, and already have devices for remote validation capabilities ordinarily used for lottery ticket dispensation.

As shown in the embodiment of Fig. 1, a system 10 includes at least one game server 12 hosting the charitable game of chance for plurality of remote terminals 18, and communicating with the remote terminals 18 through a network 14. Each remote terminal 18 has a ticket validation system (such as scanner 20) that can at least scan information from a game card 22. In one embodiment, the remote terminal 18 also can print information on the game card 22 when the game card is initially validated/activated. The remote terminal 18 can be smart or dumb, and have resident logic, processing, and communication ability as desired.

One embodiment of a charity bingo card 22 is shown Fig. 2, with an array of bingo spaces 24, and the numbers and layout of which are preferably known to the game server 12. The Bingo card 22 also includes a bar code 26 and a serial number 28. The serial number 28 can be preprinted at the time the game card is printed, prior to distribution to the gaming location, or in one embodiment, can be printed at validation at the remote terminal 18 as described below.

The game card 22 can have its full data accessible to the game server 12 so that when the game card 22 is validated at the remote terminal 18 through data exchange with the game server 12 prior to the beginning of a game, the game server 12 will know the specific location for the game card 22 and the array of number spaces on the game card 22. Thus, a purported winning game card 22 can then be scanned at the remote terminal 18 and the winning data is verified at the game server 12 by comparing the known game card data with the scanned game data to determine if the presented card is a winning game card.

In operation, the process for initial validation of the game card 22 at the remote terminal 18 prior to commencing the game occurs in conjunction with the

game server 12, as shown in the flowcharts of Figs. 3 & 4. In Fig. 3, the game card 22 is scanned and its data is sent to the game server 12, as shown at step 30, typically from scanning the bar code 26, and then a determination is made as to whether the card is a valid game card, as shown at decision 32. If the game card 22 is not valid, and error is output and the process is halted, as shown at termination 34. Otherwise, if the game card 22 is valid at decision 32, then the game card 22 is activated for one or more games. At this time, if so embodied, the serial number 28 can be printed on the game card 22 and can indicate whatever data about the game card 22 is desired, e.g. a winning card, particular location, type of game, hashing of the bar code, etc.

Fig. 4 is the process for validating game card data at the game server 12 receiving the game card data sent from the remote terminal 18 in Fig. 3. The game card data is received, as shown at step 40, and then a determination is made as to whether the game card data is valid, as shown at decision 42. If the game card data is not valid at decision 42, then an invalid game indication is returned to the remote terminal 18, as shown at step 44, and then the process returns to await further game card data. Otherwise, if valid game card data is presented at decision 42, then an indication of valid game card data is returned to the remote terminal 18, as shown at step 46, and then a determination is made as to whether to run the game for the activated cards, as shown at decision 48. If it is not time to run a game at decision 48, then the process returns to await new game card data at step 40. Otherwise, if it is time to run a game for the activated game cards 22, then the game is run, as shown at step 50, and the game data is sent to the remote terminal 18, as shown at step 52.

The flowchart of Fig. 5 illustrates one embodiment of a process for validating a winning game card 22 at a remote terminal 18 in conjunction with the game server 12. The purported winning game card is scanned (such by scanner 20) at the remote terminal 18 and the data is sent to the game server 12, as shown at step 60. A determination is then made as to whether validation data has been returned fro the game server 12 indicating that the game card 22 is winning. If the game card 22 is not indicated as a winner at decision 62, then the process returns an error indicating that the game card 22 is not a winner, as shown at terminaton

64. Otherwise, if the game card 22 is indicated as a winner at decision 62, then the remote terminal 18 indicates the winning status, as shown at step 66.

In conjunction with the process of Fig. 5, Fig. 6 is a flowchart of one embodiment of the process for validating the sent winning game card data at the game server 12, the winning game card data sent from one or more remote terminals 18. The game card data for the purported winning game card 22 is received, as shown at step 70, and then the game data for that game card is gathered, as shown in step 72. A determination is then made as to whether the game card data indicates a winning game card 22 based upon the known game card data for that game card 22 (which could have been captured a the remote terminal 18 at the time of initialization/activation, or could be known from initial manufacture of the game card 22) compared with the specific game results for that game card 22.

If the game card data does not match the game data at decision 74, a non-winning card indicator is returned to the remote terminal 18, as shown at step 76 and the process returns to await further winning card data for validation at step 70. Otherwise, if the game card data and game data match at decision 74, then an indicator stating that the game card 22 is winning is returned to the remote terminal 18, as shown at step 78, and then process returns to step 70 to await another game card data for validation.

In another embodiment, the remote terminal 18 marks the cards during validation, such as printing a serial number 28 on the game card 22 at the time of validation. If the system 10 is so embodied where the game results are known to the game server 12 at the time of game card 22 validation, the serial number 28 or other marking data can indicate that the game card 22 is a winning game card at the time of validation. In another embodiment, the bar code 26 can be associated with individual "products" or subsets of the group of Bingo cards or other products such that knowledge of the specific location where the products were sent, along with the knowledge of the remote terminal 18 specific location can be correlated as a security measure in game card initialization/activation.

It should be appreciated that certain changes can be made in the elements of the system and steps of the method of the invention without departing from the underlying spirit and scope of the invention.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for conducting a card based game of chance for a charity wherein a game is played at a plurality of remote play locations and the charity benefits from increased player participation, said method comprising:

distributing game cards to purchasing players at a plurality of remote locations, the game cards containing game data related to the game of chance;

at the remote locations and prior to initiation of the game, exchanging the game data of each individual game card with a central server location;

performing a pre-game validation of the game cards at the central server location and returning a valid or invalid card indication to the respective remote locations for each game card;

conducting the game of chance for the validated game cards at the plurality of remote locations; and

at the remote locations, for any purported winning cards, exchanging game data of such cards with the central server location and performing a post-game validation at the central server location of the purported winning cards.

2. The method as in claim 1, wherein the game cards are scanned at the remote locations and the card data is transmitted to the central server location, the pre-game validation step being based on the scanned and transmitted game card data.

3. The method as in claim 2, wherein the pre-game validation step compares the transmitted game card data to know game card data for the respective game cards.

4. The method as in claim 2, wherein game cards deemed to be valid in the pre-game validation are activated in the central server for subsequent play.

5. The method as in claim 1, wherein the pre-game validation further comprises applying an information mark to valid cards, the information mark containing information related to the individual game card.

6. The method as in claim 5, wherein the information mark comprises a serial number printed on the valid cards at the remote locations.

7. The method as in claim 1, wherein the pre-game validation further comprises recording the location of validated cards at the central server location.

8. The method as in claim 1, wherein the purported winning cards are scanned at the remote locations and the card data is transmitted to the central server location, the post-game validation comprising comparing the received game card data to known game card data for the respective cards.

9. The method as in claim 8, wherein the known game card data corresponds to the game card data received from the pre-game validation.

10. The method as in claim 9, wherein the pre-game validation further comprises recording the location of validated cards at the central server location, and the post-game validation comprises comparing the location of the purported winning game cards to the location recorded from the pre-game validation.

11. The method as in claim 1, further comprising transmitting an invalid winning game card to the respective remote locations for any purported winning game card deemed to be invalid in the post-game validation.

12. An apparatus system for simultaneously conducting a card based game of chance at a plurality of remote play locations for a charity wherein the charity benefits from increased player participation, said system comprising:

a plurality of game cards distributed to remote purchasing players at the plurality of remote locations;

a remote location terminal at each of the remote locations in communication with a central game server;

a pre-game validation system wherein said remotely distributed game cards are validated and activated by said central game server via said remote location terminals for subsequent play; and

a post-game validation system wherein any purported winning cards identified to said central game server by said remote location terminals are validated by said central game server as a winning card.

13. The system as in claim 12, wherein said pre-game validation system comprises a scanner at each of said remote location terminals whereby said remotely distributed game cards are scanned and game card data is transmitted to said central game server and compared to known game card data for said respective scanned game cards to validate said scanned game cards.

14. The system as in claim 13, wherein said remote location terminals further comprise a printer configured to apply an information mark to said validated game cards.

15. The system as in claim 14, wherein said information mark comprises a unique serial number that identifies said respective validated game card and remote location terminal where said game card was scanned.

16. The system as in claim 12, wherein said post-game validation system comprises a scanner at each of said remote location terminals whereby purported winning game cards are scanned and game card data is transmitted to said central game server and compared to known game card data for said respective scanned cards to validate said remotely scanned game card as a winning card.

17. The system as in claim 16, wherein said central game server compares said scanned game data from the purported winning game cards to scanned data from said pre-game validation system to validate the purported winning game cards.

18. The system as in claim 17, wherein said central game server compares the location of said remote location terminal of the purported winning game card to the location of said remote location terminal identified in said scanned data from said pre-game validation system.

19. The system as in claim 16, wherein said central game server compares said scanned game data from the purported winning game cards to stored data known from manufacture of said game cards.

20. An apparatus system for simultaneously conducting a card based game of chance at a plurality of remote play locations for a charity wherein the charity benefits from increased player participation, said system comprising:

a plurality of game cards distributed to remote purchasing players at the plurality of remote locations;

a remote location terminal at each of the remote locations in communication with a central game server;

means for conducting a pre-game validation wherein said remotely distributed game cards are validated and activated by said central game server via said remote location terminals for subsequent play; and

means for conducting a post-game validation wherein purported winning cards identified to said central game server by said remote location terminals are validated by said central game server as a winning card.

21. The system as in claim 20, wherein said pre-game validation means compares game card data transmitted from said remote location terminals to known game card data for said respective game cards to validate said game cards at said remote play locations.

22. The system as in claim 20, wherein said post-game validation means compares game card data for purported winning game cards transmitted from said remote location terminals to known game card data for said respective game cards to validate winning game cards.

23. The system as in claim 20, wherein said pre-game validation means compares game card data transmitted from said remote location terminals to known game card data for said respective game cards to validate said game cards at said remote play locations, and said post-game validation means compares game card data for purported winning game cards transmitted from said remote location terminals to game card data transmitted from said remote location terminals for said pre-game validation means to validate winning game cards.

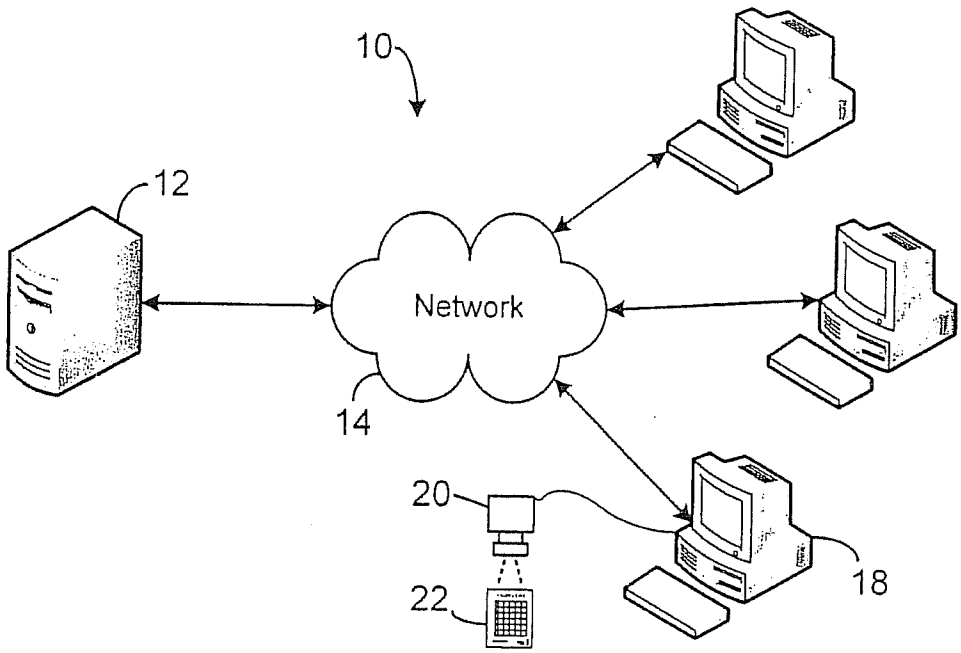
10
12
Network
14
20
22
18

Fig. 1

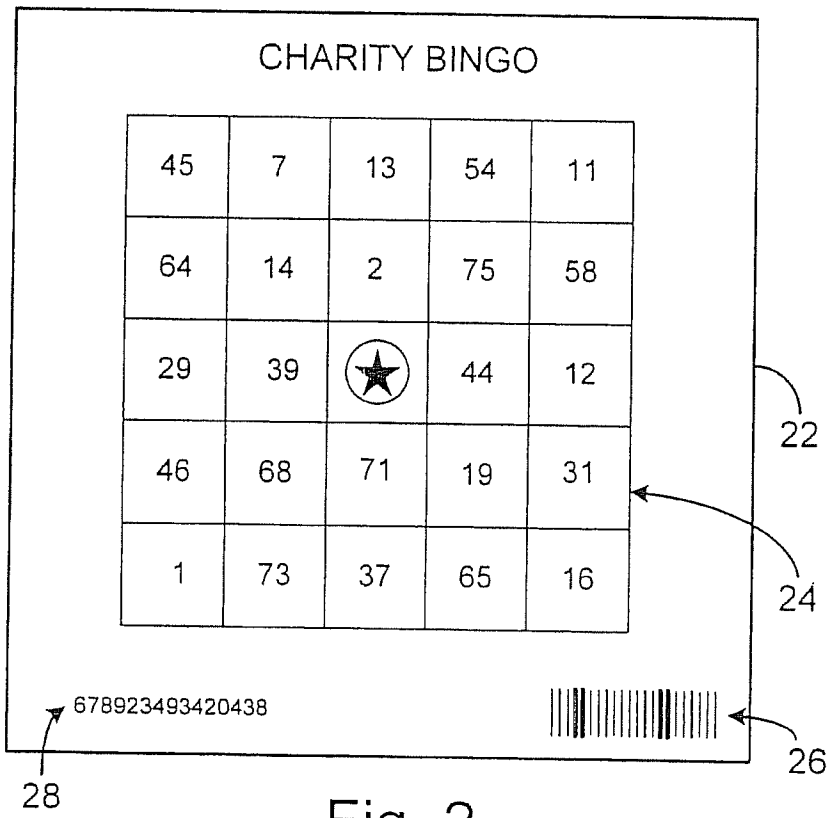
CHARITY BINGO
45 7 13 54 11
64 14 2 75 58
29 39 44 12
46 68 71 19 31
1 73 37 65 16
678923493420438
22
24
26
28

Fig. 2

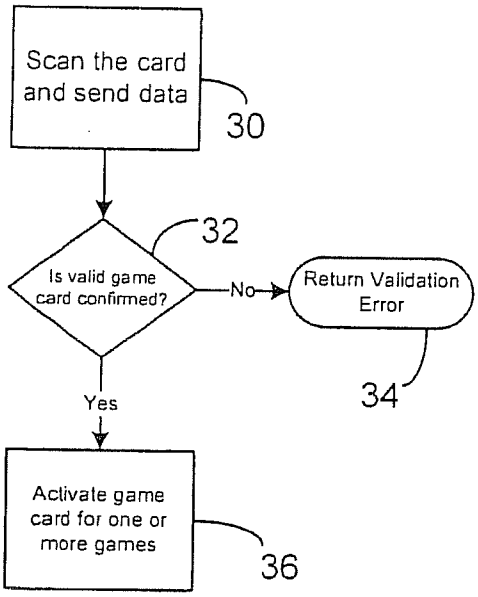
Scan the card and send data
30
Is valid game card confirmed?
32
No
Return Validation Error
34
Yes
Activate game card for one or more games
36

Fig. 3

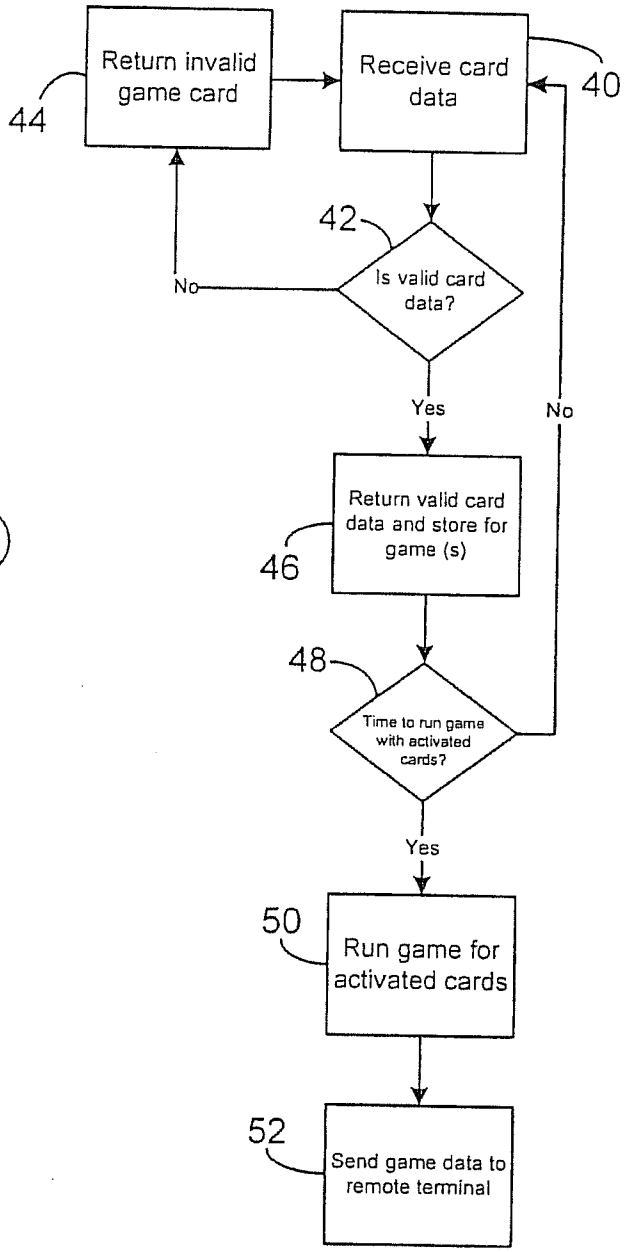
Return invalid game card
44
Receive card data
40
42
Is valid card data?
No
Yes
No
Return valid card data and store for game (s)
46
48
Time to run game with activated cards?
Yes
50
Run game for activated cards
52
Send game data to remote terminal

Fig. 4

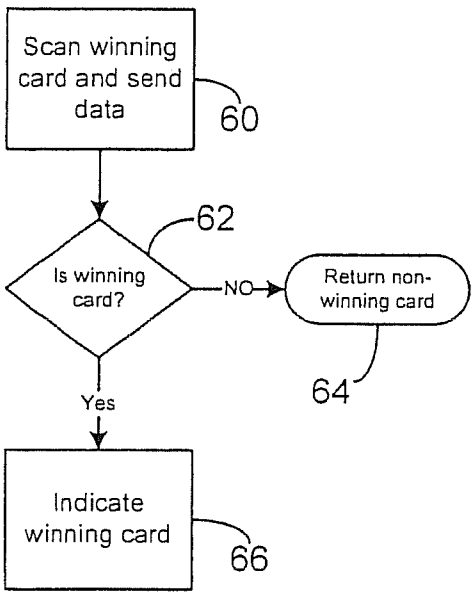
Scan winning card and send data
60
62
Is winning card?
NO
Return non-winning card
64
Yes
Indicate winning card
66

Fig. 5

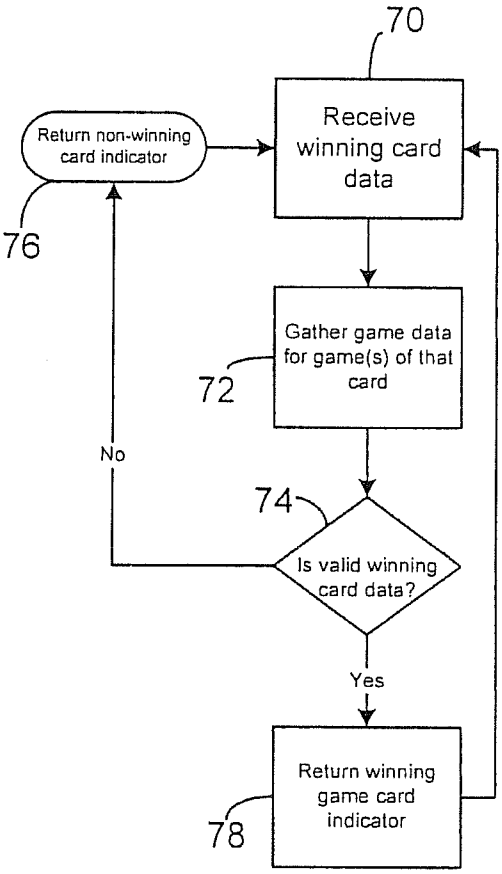
70
Receive winning card data
Return non-winning card indicator
76
Gather game data for game(s) of that card
72
No
74
Is valid winning card data?
Yes
Return winning game card indicator
78

Fig. 6

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2007/079475

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
INV. G07F17/32

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
G07F A63F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)
EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 6 280 325 B1 (FISK MICHAEL G [US]) 28 August 2001 (2001-08-28) the whole document	1-23
X	WO 02/098524 A (WOLFE WILLIAM W [US]) 12 December 2002 (2002-12-12) page 1, line 17 - page 2, line 22	1-23
A	US 2004/121834 A1 (LIBBY BUDD O [US] ET AL) 24 June 2004 (2004-06-24) the whole document	1-23

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
1 February 2008	11/02/2008

Name and mailing address of the ISA/	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31–70) 340–2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31–70) 340–3016	Van Dop, Erik

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No
PCT/US2007/079475

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 6280325 B1	28-08-2001	AU 4840600 A WO 0069535 A1	05-12-2000 23-11-2000
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