

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date  
29 January 2009 (29.01.2009)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
**WO 2009/014757 A1**

(51) International Patent Classification:  
A63F 9/24 (2006.01)

(74) Agents: ROHDE, Ronald et al.; 2200 Geng Road, Palo Alto, California 94303 (US).

(21) International Application Number:  
PCT/US2008/009095

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(22) International Filing Date: 25 July 2008 (25.07.2008)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:  
60/952,236 26 July 2007 (26.07.2007) US  
11/897,266 28 August 2007 (28.08.2007) US  
61/072,133 28 March 2008 (28.03.2008) US

(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): LIMBO, INC. [US/US]; 270 East Lane, Burlingame, California 94010 (US).

(72) Inventor; and

(75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): LINNER, Jonathon [US/US]; C/O Limbo Inc., 270 East Lane, Burlingame, California 94010 (US).

Published:  
— with international search report

(54) Title: SYSTEMS, MEDIA AND METHODS FOR DETERMINING A WINNER OF A MULTIPLAYER GAME

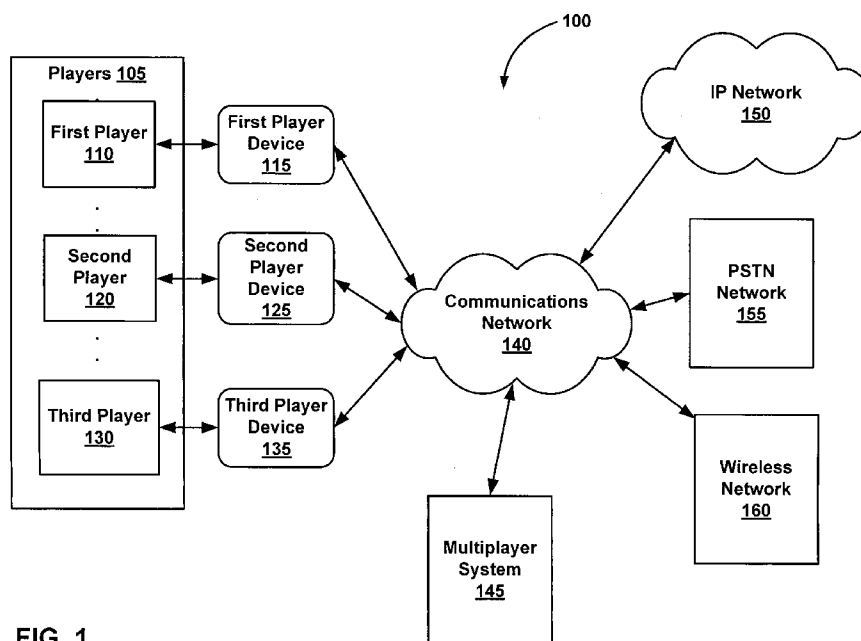


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: The present invention provides systems, media and methods for determining a winner of a prize in a multiplayer game. A first player grab command is received from a first player device. A second player grab command is received from a second player device. A winner of the prize is determined based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command.

WO 2009/014757 A1

**SYSTEMS, MEDIA AND METHODS FOR DETERMINING****A WINNER OF A MULTIPLAYER GAME****CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

**[0001]** This application claims the benefit of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 60/952,236 filed on July 26, 2007, entitled "Grab Game," U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 11/602,917 filed on November 20, 2006, entitled "Systems and Methods for Using Points with a Networked Event," U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 11/897,266 filed on August 28, 2007, entitled "Systems and Methods for Third Party Sponsorship of a Network Event," and U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 61/072,133 filed on March 28, 2008, entitled "An Interactive Online Interface for Establishing Connections in a Social Network."

The disclosures of all the above U.S. patent applications are incorporated by reference herein.

**FIELD OF INVENTION**

**[0002]** The present invention relates generally to games, and more particularly to multiplayer games.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The present invention provides systems, media and methods for determining a winner of a prize. The prize may be represented as a virtual object. In some embodiments, the prize may be a prize for winning a multiplayer game. In a first aspect, a method for determining a winner of a prize is provided. A first player grab command is received from a first player device. A second player grab command is received from a second player device. A winner of the prize is determined based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command.

[0004] In a second aspect, a method for determining a winner of a prize based on a first time period and a second time period is disclosed. A first player grab command is received from a first player device. The first time period is associated with the first player based on the first player grab command. A second player grab command is received from a second player device. The second time period is associated with the second player based on the second player grab command. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first time period and the second time period.

[0005] In a third aspect, a method for determining a winner of a prize based on a first player attribute and a second player attribute is disclosed. A first player grab command is received from a first player. The first player attribute is determined. A second player grab command is received from a second player. The second player attribute is determined. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute.

[0006] In a fourth aspect, a method for summing a first time attribute and a second time attribute is given. The first time attribute is determined based on a first player grab

command for a prize from a first player of a first team. The second time attribute is determined based on a second player grab command for the prize from a second player of the first team. The first time attribute and the second time attribute from the first and second players of the first team are summed, thereby forming a first team time attribute.

**[0007]** In a fifth aspect, a method for determining a winner of an object is disclosed. A grab command is received from a first player to grab the object through one of at least two modes. Grab commands from the first player are disabled. A first interval is determined for the first player to hold the object. A grab command is received from a second player to grab the object during the first interval through one of at least two modes. Communication of an attribute of the second player to the first player is suppressed during the first interval. A second interval for the second player to hold the object is determined. Grab commands from the first player is enabled following the first interval. A grab command is received from a third player to grab the object through one of at least two modes. An attribute of the third player is displayed to the first player. The winner of the object is determined based on the first interval and the second interval.

**[0008]** In a sixth aspect, a computer-readable storage medium is disclosed, having embodied thereon instructions being executable by a computer processor to perform a method for determining a winner of a prize. A first player grab command is received from a first player. A first player attribute is determined. A second player grab command from a second player is received. A second player attribute is determined. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute.

[0009] In a seventh aspect, a multiplayer system is provided, having a database, a web server coupled to the database, and a computer-readable storage medium coupled to the database and the web server. The database is for storing information concerning a plurality of players. The plurality of players includes a first player and a second player. The web server is configured to receive grab commands from a plurality of player devices. The plurality of player devices includes a first player device and a second player device. The computer-readable storage medium includes a program configured to be executable by a computer processor to perform a method for determining a winner of a prize. The computer-readable medium is configured to perform a method of determining a winner of a prize based on a first player attribute and a second player attribute, as described herein.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is an exemplary networking environment for determining a winner of an object in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an exemplary system in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a flowchart of an exemplary process for determining a winner of a prize.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a flowchart of an exemplary process for determining a winner of a prize based on a first time period and a second time period.

[0014] FIG. 5 is a flowchart of an exemplary process for summing a first time attribute and a second time attribute.

[0015] FIG. 6 is a flowchart of a method summing a first time attribute and a second time attribute.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a flowchart of a method for determining a winner of an object based on a first interval and a second interval.

[0017] FIG. 8 is an exemplary screenshot of a multiplayer game in a first mode.

[0018] FIG. 9 is another exemplary screenshot of a multiplayer game in a first mode.

[0019] FIG. 10 is a set of exemplary screenshots of a multiplayer game in a second mode.

[0020] FIG. 11 is an exemplary webpage having a multiplayer game.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

**[0021]** The present invention provides systems, computer-readable storage media, and methods for determining a winner of a prize. The prize may be represented as a virtual object. The prize may be a product, including a good or service. In some exemplary embodiments, a first player initiates game play (i.e., a network event) and “grabs” a prize by transmitting a grab command over a device. Upon grabbing the prize, the first player is in possession of the prize, or holding the prize. The device may be a radio, a cell phone, a personal digital device, a computer, a laptop, a television, a communication device, and any combination thereof. A second player may transmit a grab command over another device to grab the prize from the first player. Upon grabbing the prize, the second player is holding the prize. The prize may be grabbed by any number of players from each other until game play ends. Then, a determination is made as to which player is the winner of the prize.

**[0022]** The winner or winners can be determined any number of ways. A winner can be the person who held onto the prize the longest. In some embodiments, holding the prize the longest refers to the player who held the prize for the longest cumulative time period throughout the game. In other embodiments, this refers to the player who held the prize the longest single time period before another player grabbed the prize from them. Alternatively, the winners may be the top ten players (or any number of players) who held onto the prize the longest.

**[0023]** In further embodiments, the winners may be determined by calculating the length of time each team member held onto the prize. The team players who held the prize the longest, in the aggregate, may be determined as the winners. In some

embodiments, the winner is the player who is holding onto the prize when game play ends.

**[0024]** The term “grab command” as used throughout this paper refers to any request. In various embodiments, a “grab command” refers to a request or action by a player to claim, seize, obtain, hold or take possession of an object through a communications network. A non-exhaustive exemplary list of a “grab command” includes an entry of text, an entry of a message, a digital entry, a mouse click, a mouse double click, a key press, a selection of an icon, a selection from a list of items, a selection of an area of a screen using a click and drag, a user input, an entry using a mobile browser, an entry using mobile text messaging, an instant message, a keystroke, an acknowledgment, a communication, a phone key press, an instigation of a grab, a phone call, a response to a text, a response to a message, a response to a question (such as a trivia question or a challenge question), a selection of a response to a multiple choice question, a click of a grab button, a trigger, any means to communicate, and any combination thereof.

**[0025]** A “time period” as used throughout this paper can include one of a player’s actual time holding an object, a random holding time assigned to the player, a random time interval assigned to the player, a total time or accumulated time that a player holds an object during game play based on one or more grab commands, a sum of time intervals when a player held an object or a prize, and any combination thereof.

**[0026]** A “network event” as used throughout this paper is an event, which may be accessed by users via various networks, such as the Internet, public switched telephone networks (PSTN), plain old telephone system (POTS), and wireless networks. In one

embodiment, the network event comprises a contest, game, competition, or sweepstakes, such as a reverse auction for a product. Further description of exemplary embodiments of network events, as well as the use of points, is described in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 11/602,917 filed on November 20, 2006, entitled "Systems and Methods for Using Points with a Networked Event," which is incorporated herein by reference.

Further description of network events can be found in U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 11/897,266 filed on August 28, 2007, entitled "Systems and Methods for Third Party Sponsorship of a Network Event," which is also incorporated by reference.

[0027] "Duration" as used throughout this paper refers to time duration of a time period, a time interval, a random time interval, an event, a network event, a grab command, a game, and any combination thereof.

[0028] Instructions for implementing the methods set forth herein can be stored on computer-readable storage media. The instructions can be retrieved and executed by a processor. Various examples of instructions include software, program code, and firmware. Some examples of storage media comprise memory devices and integrated circuits. The instructions are operational when executed by the processor to direct the processor to operate in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. One skilled in the art is familiar with instructions, processor(s) and computer-readable storage media.

[0029] FIG. 1 shows an exemplary networking environment **100** for determining a winner of an object, in accordance with some embodiments of the present invention. The networking environment **100** is configured to allow a plurality of players **105** to engage in game play utilizing a plurality of player devices. In the example shown in FIG.

1, the plurality of players **105** includes a first player **110** having a first player device **115**, a second player **120** having a second player device **125**, and a third player **130** having a third player device **135**. One skilled in the art can appreciate that the present invention is not limited to having three players and three player devices. Any number of players can utilize any number of player devices in accordance with the embodiments of the present invention.

[0030] FIG. **1** further shows that the first player device **115**, the second player device **125**, and the third player device **135** can communicate via a communications network **140** to the multiplayer system **145**. In some embodiments, the communications network **140** can be any network that supports a transmission of communications, such as grab commands. In some embodiments, the communications network **140** can be any network that supports a network event.

[0031] In some embodiments, the communications network **140** is coupled to another network (e.g., an IP network **150**, a PSTN network **155**, and/or a wireless network **160**). Although FIG. **1** shows that the IP network **150**, the PSTN network **155**, and the wireless network **160** as separate networks that are coupled to the communications network **140**, one skilled in the art can appreciate that any network, including one or more of the IP network **150**, the PSTN network **155**, a POTS network (not shown) and the wireless network **160**, can be included in the communications network **140**. In other words, FIG. **1** is for exemplary purposes only, and a communications network **140** can include or be coupled to any other network.

[0032] Furthermore, although FIG. **1** does not depict it explicitly, one skilled in the art will recognize that any of the player devices (the first player device **115**, the second

player device 125, and the third player device 135) can communicate with the multiplayer system 145 through any network shown in FIG. 1, so long as a particular player device is configured to communicate with a given network. Thus, if the first player device 115 is a laptop computer, then one skilled in the art will appreciate that it can communicate to the multiplayer system 145 through the IP network 150. Also, the IP network 150 may be included or coupled to the communications network 140. The present invention is not limited to any particular network configuration, nor is it restricted by the exemplary embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0033] In some embodiments, the multiplayer system 145 is configured to receive grab commands from the plurality of players 105 in at least two modes. In some embodiments, the two modes can refer to two different ways of sending grab commands. In some embodiments, the two modes can be transmission modes for sending grab commands from the plurality of players 105 to the multiplayer system 145. For example, the multiplayer system 145 can be configured to receive grab commands from the plurality of players 105 in both an IP mode and a wireless mode. The first player 110 can send a first player grab command from his first player device 115 (such as a laptop) through an IP network 150, in order to play a multiplayer game provided by the multiplayer system 145. The first player 110 may experience the multiplayer game as a web-based game. The first player 110 may send his first player grab command by clicking on a grab button on a web page using a key or a mouse of his laptop via a web browser. That same multiplayer game can also be played by the second player 120, who sends a second player grab command from his second player device 125 (e.g., a cell phone) via mobile text messaging. Grab commands can be sent using different

interactive platforms, including but not limited to, voice calls, web, mobile text messaging, mobile browsers, email, instant messenger, downloadable applications for either a personal computer or a mobile-connected device and television, and any combination thereof.

[0034] In some embodiments, the third player **130** may send a third player grab command to the multiplayer system **145** through his third player device **135**, which in his case is a landline phone utilizing the PSTN network **155**. The third player **130** can send his third player grab command by a voice call, during which he can enter a code or a message through touch tone via his third player device **135** to the multiplayer system **145**.

[0035] Referring to FIG. 2, an exemplary multiplayer system **145** includes a database **205**, a web server **210**, and computer-readable storage media (CRM) **215**. In some embodiments, the multiplayer system **145** is configured to determine a winner of a prize in a multiplayer game. The database **205** is configured for storing information concerning a plurality of players. The plurality of players includes at least a first player and a second player. The web server **210** is coupled to the database and is configured to receive grab commands from the plurality of players via the plurality of player devices. One skilled in the art can appreciate that the invention is not limited to the use of web servers for multiplayer systems. The invention encompasses the use of any server configured to receive grab commands from a plurality of players in the multiplayer system **145** over a network.

[0036] The computer-readable storage media **215** is coupled to both the database **205** and the web server **210**. The computer-readable storage media **215** may be configured to include instructions and/or to perform instructions having embodied thereon that, when

executed by a processor **220** or computing device, perform a method for determining the winner of the object. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the computer-readable storage media **215** may be configured to include instructions/or to perform instructions for one or more methods disclosed herein.

**[0037]** A first player grab command is received from the first player. The first player attribute is determined. A second player grab command is received from the second player. The second player attribute is determined. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute. In some embodiments, a player attribute is a time period and such a determination includes determining which of the first player attribute and the second player attribute has a longer duration. In some embodiments, a player attribute is a number and the determination includes determining which of the first player attribute and the second player attribute is a larger number. In some embodiments, the multiplayer system **145** can include the processor **220**. In further embodiments, the multiplayer system **145** can include a random number generator (not shown) which will be later discussed in greater detail.

**[0038]** As mentioned previously, the multiplayer system **145** is configured to receive grab commands from a plurality of player devices belonging to a plurality of players, and the players can transmit the grab commands in one of multiple transmission modes. One skilled in the art can appreciate that FIG. **2** is exemplary only, and the invention is not limited to the components and modules of the multiplayer system **145** as shown in FIG. **2**. Further, components and modules of the multiplayer system **145** can be combined and still practice the invention.

[0039] FIG. 3 shows a method 300 for determining a winner of a prize. In step 305, a first player grab command is received from a first player device. As discussed previously, in some embodiments of the invention, the first player grab command can be transmitted through a variety of transmission modes, such as wireless transmission, IP transmission, and PSTN transmission. A second player grab command is received from a second player device in step 310. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command in step 315. In some embodiments, the winner of the prize is established by determining which of the first player grab command and the second player grab command is a last grab command received. For example, if a first player grab command is the last grab command received by a multiplayer system during game play, then the first player is determined to be the winner of the prize.

[0040] The step 315 may further include calculating a time period that a player held the prize. In most cases, a player holds a prize if his grab command is successfully received by the multiplayer system. In some embodiments, the method 300 compares the time periods that the players held the prize. In exemplary embodiments, the player that held the prize the longest is determined to be the winner of the prize.

[0041] In some embodiments, step 315 includes calculating a number of grab commands of the prize that a player made. The method 300 may compare the number of grab commands of the prize that a player made against the number of grab commands that each of the other players made. In exemplary embodiments, the player that successfully made the highest number of grab commands is determined to be the winner

of the prize. Alternatively, the player who made the lowest of grab commands is determined to be the winner of the prize.

[0042] In further embodiments, the step 315 includes calculating a number of players that a player grabbed the prize from. The method 300 may compare the number of players from whom a player grabbed the prize against a similar number belonging to the other players of the game. For example, during game play, the first player may have successfully grabbed the prize from two other players, whereas the second player may have successfully grabbed the prize from three other players. All the remaining players in this example only grabbed from one other player. In this scenario, the second player is determined by the method 300 to be the winner, for having successfully grabbed the prize from the highest number of players (three) in comparison to all the other players.

[0043] The method 300 allows for determining a location and an identity of the first player, and displaying the location and the identity of the first player to the second player. In some embodiments, the location of the first player is shown on a graphical map or a location map associated with a web-based multiplayer game. For example, the identity of the first player and a pointer to a location on the map may be displayed to the second player to indicate both the identity and location of the first player. In some embodiments, the method 300 allows displaying a first ad message and a second ad message on the graphical map to the players of the game. The first ad message may be a textual message about the prize (e.g., "Grab the Prize!"), and the second ad message may be a pictorial message (e.g., a picture of the prize). In some embodiments, the method 300 allows displaying a first ad message associated with a grab button and a second ad message on the graphical map to the players of the game.

[0044] The method 300 can include terminating game play based on any number of factors, such as elapsed time session of a game, a reaching of a threshold, and any combination thereof. The threshold can be of any type, such as a threshold of a maximum number of available grab commands that will be received from the players during game play, or a threshold of a minimum number or maximum number of players allowed for game play.

[0045] Turning now to FIG. 4, a method 400 for determining a winner of a prize is shown. A first player grab command is received from a first player device in step 405. In step 410, a first time period is associated with the first player based on the first player grab command. The first time period may represent a time period during which the first player is holding the prize. In step 415, a second player grab command is received from a second player device. A second time period is associated with the second player in step 420. The second time period may represent a time period during which the second player is holding the prize. The winner of the prize is based on the first time period and the second time period in step 425.

[0046] In some embodiments, step 425 includes determining which of the first time period and the second time period has a longer duration. For example, if the first time period belonging to the first player has a longer duration than the second time period belonging to the second player, and the method 400 determines the winner of the prize as being the player having a longer duration for a time period, then the first player wins the prize. Alternatively, the step 425 determines which of the first time period and the second time period has a shorter duration.

[0047] The method 400 may also include incrementing the first time period by one or more first player time interval(s) when the first player held the prize. The first player time interval can be initiated when a subsequent first player grab command is received from the first player device. The method may further include incrementing the second time period by a second player time interval when the second player held the prize. The second player interval may be initiated when a subsequent second player grab command is received from the second player device.

[0048] The method 400 may also include limiting a total number of grab commands that may be received from a player device to a predetermined maximum number. For example, a game may include receiving a maximum of ten grab commands per player device. Up to ten time intervals may be calculated for each player. The winner of the prize is determined based on which player has the longest time period that has accumulated based on a sum of the ten or fewer time intervals during which the respective player held the prize. In some embodiments, the method 400 can include limiting a total number of players to a predetermined number. In other embodiments, the method 400 can include limiting players based on geography, network carrier, device, mode and any combination thereof.

[0049] Referring now to FIG. 5, a method 500 for determining a winner of a prize based on attributes is shown. A first player grab command is received from a first player in step 505. In step 510, a first player attribute is determined. A second player grab command is received from a second player in step 515. In step 520, a second player attribute is determined. The winner of the prize is determined based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute in step 525.

**[0050]** An attribute of a player as used throughout this paper can be any trait, characteristic or feature of a player of the network event. A non-exhaustive list of an attribute of a player includes a time attribute, a numerical attribute, a player profile attribute, data regarding the player, a number of grab commands attribute, a time period, a reward point attribute, an identity attribute, a mode attribute, a location attribute, a grab command attribute, and any combination thereof. A first player attribute is an attribute of the first player. Similarly, a second player attribute is an attribute of the second player.

**[0051]** The method **500** can also include awarding reward points to the first player based on the first player grab command, and awarding reward points to the second player based on the second player grab command. The awarded reward points can be added to an accumulated reward point attribute of the appropriate player. Thus, if the game allows for five reward points to be awarded per grab command received from a player, and the multiplayer system receives three grab commands from the first player, then the system awards fifteen reward points to the first player which are added to the first player's existing reward point attribute based on this game play.

**[0052]** In some exemplary embodiments, determining a first player attribute at step 510 for the first player attribute includes generating a random number or a random time interval, which is added to the time period associated with the first player. Alternatively, the random time interval based on a grab command can be added to an actual time period that the first player or a first team of players held an object or prize during game play. Likewise, a second player attribute may include a random number or random time interval that is generated and added to the time period associated with the second player or team of players.

[0053] In one exemplary embodiment, a threshold may be set for a minimum holding time (e.g., one second). If a first player's actual time period during which he held the object was less than a minimum holding time (e.g., less than one second), then a random number generator can produce a random time interval. In one embodiment, the random time interval ranges from one second to five seconds, but one skilled in the art will appreciate that the random time interval can be of any range of time. The random time interval can be added to the first player's actual time period. However, if the first player's actual time period is more than a minimum holding time (such as three seconds), then the method 500 allows for the first player's actual time that the first player held the object to be added to the first player's accumulated time period, and the random generator does not produce a random time interval when a player's actual time is used. In various embodiments, the threshold is set at about 0.1, 0.5, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 20, 30, or more seconds.

[0054] In some embodiments, the first player attribute includes a first player time period comprising a sum of time intervals when the first player held the prize. Time intervals can be initiated by a receipt of a grab command from a player. For first player time intervals of a first player, such time intervals can be terminated by at least one of duration, an event associated with a player other than the first player, and a grab command from a player other than the first player.

[0055] In some embodiments, the method 500 can also include displaying the second player attribute to the first player. For instance, if the second player attribute is a combination of a location attribute and an identity attribute of the second player, then both the location attribute and the identity attribute of the second player can be viewed by

the first player in some exemplary embodiments of the method 500. The location attribute of the second player may indicate any portion of a location of the second player, such as the city and state that the second player claimed as his residence in his profile. The location attribute can be shown as the actual location of the second player on a graphical map of a web page showing the multiplayer game.

[0056] In exemplary embodiments, the method 500 can include a third player grab command from a third player. A third player attribute is determined. At least one of the second player attribute and the third player attribute is displayed to the first player. In some embodiments, both the second player attribute and the third player attribute include a location attribute. Thus, the first player may view the location of one or both of the second player and the third player in some embodiments. In other embodiments, the method 500 allows for suppressing at least one location attribute of the second player and the third player, such that the first player cannot view the location of at least one of the other two players.

[0057] The present invention also allows for the method 500 to include displaying available grabs to the first player. Available grabs refers to a number of grab commands that the multiplayer system will receive from a player or players during a game. In some embodiments, the available grabs are represented by a counter that decrements each time a grab command is received by the multiplayer system. For example, if the counter reaches zero for the first player, the multiplayer system will not receive any more grabs from the first player. However, the game may continue for other players. Alternatively, a zero counter may indicate that the game has ended for all players.

[0058] In further embodiments of the invention, the method 500 may include displaying a first player attribute to the first player. For instance, if the first player attribute is a time period reflecting a time period that the player has held the prize during the game, then the first player may view this during game play and at the end of game play.

[0059] Referring now to FIG. 6, a method 600 for summing a first time attribute and a second time attribute is provided. A first time attribute is determined based on a first player grab command for a prize in step 605. The first player grab command is made by a first player of a first team. In step 610, a second time attribute is determined based on a second player grab command for the prize. The second player grab command is made by a second player of the first team. The first time attribute and the second time attribute are summed to form a first team time attribute in step 615. One skilled in the art will recognize that time attributes, such as the first time attribute, the second time attribute and the first team time attribute, may change as a result of additional grabs from one or more players on the first team.

[0060] In some embodiments, the method 600 further includes determining a third time attribute based on a first player grab command for the prize from a first player of a second team. A fourth time attribute can also be determined based on a second player grab command for the prize from a second player of the second team. The third and fourth time attributes, respectively, of the first and second players, respectively, of the second team can be added together to form a second team time attribute. Then, a winner of the prize is determined based on the first team time attribute and the second team time attribute.

[0061] In some embodiments, the determination is made based on which of the team time attributes has a longer duration. In other embodiments, such a determination is made based on which team time attribute had a longer grab average duration. In other words, each team time attribute is divided by the number of grab commands the team players within a particular team made, to arrive at the grab average duration or time of a particular team.

[0062] It will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that the present invention allows for the method 600 to include limiting a total number of grab commands received from teams during game play, limiting a total number of grab commands received from one or more team player(s) during game play, limiting at least one of a total number of players per team and a total number of teams for a game, and any combination thereof.

[0063] Turning now to FIG. 7, a method 700 for determining a winner of a prize or an object based on a first interval and a second interval is disclosed. In step 705, a grab command is received from a first player to grab the object through one of at least two modes. In some exemplary embodiments, the at least two modes include transmission modes. The present invention is not limited to any transmission mode, but a non-exhaustive list of transmission modes includes a PSTN transmission mode, an Internet Protocol transmission mode, and a wireless transmission mode. The present invention allows for the multiplayer system to accept grab commands in any number of modes that can be conveyed through a communications network.

[0064] Furthermore, in some exemplary embodiments, the multiplayer system allows for a single player to send grab commands via two or more modes. For example, a first player may send a grab command in the form of text messages on his mobile phone

(using a wireless mode, since the mobile phone transmits and receives via a wireless network). The first player may send subsequent grab command in the form of grab button clicks through an IP network via his laptop (using an IP mode).

**[0065]** Still referring to the method **700**, after receiving the first player grab command, the first player's subsequent grab commands are disabled in step **710**. In step **715**, a first interval is determined for the first player to hold the object. A grab command is received from a second player to grab the object through one of the at least two modes at step **720**. In step **725**, communication of an attribute of the second player to the first player is suppressed during the first interval. In other words, the first player does not see attributes of the second player during the first interval. Although the second player may have sent a grab command during the first interval, information regarding the second player is not provided to the first player, thereby allowing the first player to mistakenly believe that he is the only one who sent a grab command during the first interval. In other words, the method **700** allows for a first player to believe that he is the only one who has sent a grab command to the multiplayer system during the first interval, when in reality multiple players may have also sent grab commands during that first interval. By suppressing information about the second player from the first player, the first player continues to believe that the game is being played in a serial manner (where only one player can send a grab command at a given time), when in fact the game can be played in a parallel manner (where more than one player can send grab commands at a given time).

**[0066]** A second interval for the second player to hold the object is determined at step **730**. In step **735**, grab commands for the first player are enabled following the first interval. In other words, the first player can begin sending grab commands to the

multiplayer system after the first interval has ended. A grab command is received from a third player to grab the object through one of at least two modes at step 740. In step 745, an attribute of the third player is displayed to the first player. That is, the first player may not be given any information about the second player, but the first player may be shown an attribute of the third player instead. A winner of the object is determined based on the first interval and the second interval at step 750.

[0067] Referring now to FIG. 8, an exemplary screenshot of a multiplayer game 800 based on a multiplayer system is shown. In some embodiments, the multiplayer game 800 is configured to receive grab commands from one of at least two modes. FIG. 8 shows a first mode of the multiplayer game. The multiplayer game 800 can be known as a grab game. In the exemplary figure, the primary objective of the multiplayer game 800 is to “grab” an iPod Touch. The iPod Touch is an exemplary prize which can be represented as a virtual object of the multiplayer game 800.

[0068] The multiplayer game 800 allows for one or more ad messages to be shown to players during and/or after game play. Ad messages can be text, media, multimedia, image, and any combination thereof. In FIG. 8, three ad messages relating to the prize are shown. A first ad message 805 is provided to invite players to grab the prize. A second ad message 810 is shown when a player successfully grabs the prize. A third ad message 815 in the form of a picture of the prize can also be shown to players. The third ad message 815 can depict the prize as a virtual object to be won by the players during game play.

[0069] In some exemplary embodiments, players can send grab commands by clicking on the grab button 820. An additional ad message (not shown) can be placed on

the grab button, such as the word “grab” next to a photo of the prize. When a player’s grab command (in the form of a grab button click) is received by the multiplayer system, a player’s time period can increase. In some embodiments, the player’s time period of accumulated “grab time” is shown by a time period timer **825**.

**[0070]** Some embodiments include issuing audible cues to inform players of various events or information regarding a game. For instance, an audible cue can be issued to tell a player a variety of aspects of the game, such as how many available grabs are left, when the grab button is enabled or disabled, when another player has grabbed the prize, how long the game has lasted, how long the game will continue, how long is a player’s time period (such as the player’s accumulated “grab time” for holding the prize based on one or more grab commands), when a new player has joined the game, when a player has left the game, game tips, and audible advertisements of the prize. One skilled in the art will understand that this list is a non-exhaustive, exemplary list and any aspect of the game can be described in an audible cue to one or more players of the game.

**[0071]** Still referring to FIG. 8, a first player who is viewing the game in the form of this screenshot can see that his “grab time” during game play has been 1 minute and 4 seconds. The first player can also see that there are 25 minutes of game play left based on a game play timer **830**. Further, 733 of 750 available grab commands can be received from one or more players by the multiplayer system during game play, and this is shown to the first player as an available grab counter **835**. In alternative embodiments, the first player can see that 733 available grab commands must be received by the multiplayer system from one or more of the players engaged in game play in order for the game to end. A game may run for a predetermined time deadline. The predetermined time

deadline can be of any duration, including but not limited to a duration of days, hours, weeks, minutes, and any combination thereof. For example, if the game is to run for two days, two or more players can engage in game play at any time during the two days. The multiplayer system may allow each player to issue a maximum number of grab commands during the game. The multiplayer system can also keep track of the number of grab commands received from each player, and it can report the number of available grab commands remaining for each player. In some embodiments, once the system receives the maximum number of grab commands from a given player, no more grab commands are available to that player. Referring back to the example of when the predetermined time deadline is two days, the game can continue for the entire two days while the multiplayer system accepts grab commands from other players who have not reached their maximum number of grab commands. The maximum number of available grab commands may be the same for all players or may vary among the players. The maximum number of available grab commands can be defined by any duration, such as the maximum number of available grab commands for a given player for an hour, for a day, or for any other time period. The game ends when the predetermined time deadline expires, and the game can end regardless of whether a given player has sent all his or her available grab commands to the multiplayer system.

**[0072]** A location map **840** is provided to the first player. The location map **840** may be a geographic map (as shown in FIG. **8**) or a location map of a fantasy game (as shown in FIG. **9**, which will be described later herein). The location map **840** is configured to show one or more locations of a plurality of players, including the location of the first player. The location map **840** is further configured to show at least one

location of at least one player who currently holds the prize following a receipt of the player's grab command by the multiplayer system.

[0073] Still referring to FIG. 8, the screenshot of the multiplayer game 800 shows the first player that a second player (or in some cases a third player) has recently grabbed the prize based on the second text ad message 810. The first player can also view one or more attributes of a second player. An image attribute of the second player is shown to the first player. In this case, the second player has selected an image 845 to associate with his profile. An identity attribute of the second player is also shown to the first player as the second player's username 850. Further, a location attribute 855 of the second player can be displayed to the first player. The location attribute of the second player is the state of Oklahoma, which is abbreviated as OK in the exemplary FIG. 8. The location attribute of the second player can also be graphically displayed to the first player on the location map 840. In this case, the location of the second player (Oklahoma) is shown by a highlighted portion 860 of the location map 840.

[0074] In some embodiments, players can send grab commands by entering text in a text box 865. In FIG. 8, the exemplary text box 865 is shown with the words "Enter your shout here . . ." which thus invites a first player to enter text that can be seen by other players during game play. In some embodiments, when a first player enters text into the text box 865 and hits an enter key or a return key, this acts as a grab command by a player.

[0075] Following a receipt of a grab command by the first player by the multiplayer system, the first player then holds the prize. When this happens, in some embodiments, attributes relating to the second player are no longer displayed to the first player. Instead,

the multiplayer game **800** indicates that the first player just grabbed the prize by a second ad text message **810**. Further, the first player's location attribute is shown to him in text and/or on the location map **840**. While the first player holds the prize, text in the grab button **820** may change (e.g., from "Grab!" to "You got it!"). Further, in some embodiments, while the first player holds the prize, his first player time period (e.g., total "grab time") may not be displayed. Instead, the text "Wait and see" may appear instead or the first player time period may be otherwise hidden from the first player. The first player may not know the length of a time interval that was added to his time period until after another player has grabbed the prize away from the first player. At that time, the first player's updated time period or total grab time may be displayed to him. During the time period that the first player holds the prize, the grab button **820** may be grayed out, altered, or the color may be changed by the multiplayer system to indicate the first player that the grab button **820** is disabled. Text in the grab button **820** (e.g., "You got it!") may also be used to indicate to the first player that the grab button **820** is disabled.

[0076] Referring now to FIG. 9, an exemplary screenshot of the multiplayer game **900** is shown. Like numbered elements throughout this paper refer to like elements. In FIG. 9, the location map **940** comprises a map of a fantasy location (e.g., Gotham City, a make-believe location based on a fictional comic book series). In other words, the multiplayer system can display a location map that depicts a location that is real, fantasy, virtual, and any combination thereof.

[0077] Now turning to FIG. 10, an exemplary set of text messages **1000** is provided. The set of text messages **1000** includes a player's text message **1005** to the multiplayer system, as well as a reply text message **1010** from the multiplayer system sent to the

player in response to the player's text message **1005**. In some embodiments, players can play the multiplayer game by using their mobile phones. Specifically, players can send text messages to the multiplayer system. Such text messages are grab commands for players. In some embodiments, one or more players can play a multiplayer game via a first mode (using their computers to play the multiplayer game via a webpage, as shown in exemplary FIGs. **8** and **9**) and via a second mode (using cellular phones through text messaging, as shown in exemplary FIG. **10**). In the player's text message **1005**, he sends his grab command to 5551212. His grab command includes text (or a short code) of CAMERA. In some embodiments, the word sent in the player's text message **1005** refers to the prize of the game. In this example, the prize of the game is that of a camera. In response, the multiplayer system will send him a reply text message **1010** indicating that the player held the prize for a given time period (e.g., 5 minutes and 26 seconds) until another player (e.g., joeuser) grabbed the prize away from the player. The reply text message **1010** also invites the player to text message the multiplayer system again with a grab command in a certain format. In this specific example, the reply text message **1010** invites the player to text message again to 5551212 with the word CAMERA, as a grab command. The reply text message **1010** may also show the total time period that the player has held the prize. In this example, the player has held the prize for 21 minutes and 7 seconds. In some embodiments, the reply text message **1010** can include hints regarding the game, tips for the game, information regarding prizes, ads, browser links, and any combination thereof. The reply text message **910** may include a game response generated by the multiplayer system, in response to a grab command from one or more players. A non-exhaustive list of examples for the reply text message **1010** is shown in

Table 1. Some of the text messages listed in the table also illustrate various embodiments of the invention. For instance, the text message “You've used all your free grabs ((freebids)d) in the Grab game for (prize)s. You can't continue playing as your operator does not yet allow fee-based games” illustrates an embodiment where a player has a defined number of total allowed grabs for a game involving one or more prizes. In other words, the word “(prize)s” in a reply text message can be replaced by the multiplayer system with a specific identification of one or more prizes. One or more reply text messages, as well as any combination of the reply text messages in Table 1, can be sent to a player by the multiplayer system.

<b>Table 1:</b> Examples of Reply Text Messages
LIMBO: You had (prize)s for (grabtime)s when someone grabbed it! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Oh Grab! Someone just grabbed %(prize)s.
LIMBO: Oh Grab! Someone just grabbed (prize)s. Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Don't you hate that? You had (prize)s for (grabtime)s then lost it! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
Grrrrr! Some dirty grabber just grabbed (prize)s from you! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You held (prize)s for (grabtime)s & then lost it! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Pick pockets! Someone just grabbed (prize)s. Reply (keyword)s to grab it back.

<b>Table 1:</b> Examples of Reply Text Messages
Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Stop Thief! You had (prize)s for (grabtime)s then lost it! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Call the cops! Some dirty grab-bag just grabbed (prize)s from you! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: They did it again! Some muppet just grabbed (prize)s from you! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Time to get grabbing - someone just grabbed (prize)s from you! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. Your Grabtime: (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Oh no! You maxed out your (max_grabs_per_hour)d Grab limit for the hour in the (gamename)s game. Reply PLAY for more games or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Bummer! You maxed out your Grab limit for the (gamename)s game. Reply PLAY for a list of games or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You've already grabbed %(max_grabs_per_day)d times today, our limit for the %(gamename)s Limbo game. Try again tomorrow! Reply PLAY for a list of games.
LIMBO: Sorry, you are too young to be eligible to play in this game. Check the game rules at <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a> for details.
LIMBO: Sorry, but the Grab game for (prize)s is not available to (operatorname)s customers. To find other games reply PLAY or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Sorry, but the Grab game for (prize)s is not available to Canadian customers. To find other games reply PLAY or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You've used all your free grabs ((freebids)d) in the Grab game for (prize)s. You

<b>Table 1:</b> Examples of Reply Text Messages
can't continue playing as your operator does not yet allow fee-based games.
LIMBO: Sorry, the Grab game for (prize)s has finished. For a list of live games reply PLAY. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO HELP: reply - PLAY for auctions, STATUS see how you're doing, LOOT for balance, STOP to cancel membership. Standard text rates apply. T&C's: <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO HELP: From your cell phone, send a text message with the word STATUS to 41414 to see how you are doing!
LIMBO: Welcome to Limbo Grab. Please reply to this message and enter a Screen Name. For example, if you're name is Rob, enter Rob, then hit send.
LIMBO: Sorry, the Grab game for (prize)s has not started yet, try again at (starttimetext)s. Can't wait? Reply PLAY for live games or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a> .
LIMBO: Welcome! To grab (prize)s please reply YES & join Limbo. All Grab messages are FREE! <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Grabnifico! You Grabbed (prize)s. Keep it the longest & you could win it. For more games, text PLAY to 41414. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Graberific! (prize)s is in your hands - hold on tight! You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Grabmaster Flash! You Grabbed %(prize)s again. You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Grabtastic! You now have (prize)s! Run! You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Who's the Grabdaddy? You Grabbed (prize)s! You've kept it a total of

<b>Table 1:</b> Examples of Reply Text Messages
(totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Goodness Grabcious - you did it again! (prize)s is in your Grabby little hands. You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Mind Grabbling! You Grabbed (prize)s again. You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Grabnificent! You now have (prize)s! Run! You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Holy Grab! You Grabbed (prize)s! You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Great balls of Grab - you did it again! (prize)s is in your Grabby little hands. You've kept it a total of (totaltime)s. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You had (prize)s for (grabtime)s when someone grabbed it! Reply (keyword)s to grab it back. You have kept it a total of (totaltime)s so far. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Hey! You already have (prize)s. Keep it the longest & you could win it. For more games, text PLAY to 41414 or visit <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a> .
LIMBO: You grabbed (prize)s AGAIN. You're crafty! You're currently the leader. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You sly dogg! You've grabbed (prize)s yet AGAIN. You're currently the leader. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: Cheeky devil! You grabbed (prize)s AGAIN. You're currently the leader. <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>
LIMBO: You've kept (prize)s a total of (totaltime)s. Grab it back! <a href="http://www.limbo.com">www.limbo.com</a>

**Table 1:** Examples of Reply Text Messages

LIMBO: You currently have (prize)s and you've kept it a total of (totaltime)s.

[www.limbo.com](http://www.limbo.com)

[0078] Further, one or more of the exemplary reply text messages shown in Table 1 can be sent via email online to one or more players of a game. An exemplary email from the multiplayer system to a player includes the following text in the body of the email:

“You had the Prize for 5 seconds when joeuser grabbed it. You have kept it a total of 34 seconds.

What are you waiting for? Go grab it back. Visit [www.limbo.com/grab](http://www.limbo.com/grab) or text AIR to 41414 from your mobile phone.

Tell us what you think of our new Grab game, and what prizes you'd like to win – contact us here.

Happy Grabbing!”

Also, in various embodiments, one or more of email tag messages can accompany or be combined with one or more reply text messages, to form messages that can be sent via email, instant messages, text messages, and any combination thereof. For example, one or more email tag messages can be appended to a signature portion of an email.

Exemplary email tag messages are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Examples of Email Tag Messages

What are you waiting for? Go grab it back! Visit [www.limbo.com/grab](http://www.limbo.com/grab) or text

(keyword)s from your mobile phone.
Tell us what you think of our new Grab game, and what prizes you'd like to win - contact us <a href="http://www.limbo.com/scp/company/contactus">www.limbo.com/scp/company/contactus</a> . Happy Grabbing!
Want to stop getting emails from Limbo? (sniffle) OK. <a href="#">Click here.</a>

[0079] Turning now to FIG. 11, an exemplary webpage 1100 is shown, which includes a multiplayer game 1110 that is generated by the multiplayer system of the present invention. Like numbered elements throughout this paper refer to like elements. The webpage 1100 also includes a shout box 1120, which is coupled to the multiplayer game 1110 as shown on the exemplary webpage 1100 and is configured to allow players to send messages to other players through the multiplayer game 1110. In other words, if a player types in text in the text box 865, then that text will appear in the shout box 1120. An additional shout box 1130 can also be provided to the player.

[0080] The embodiments discussed herein are illustrative of the present invention. As these embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to illustrations, various modifications or adaptations of the methods and/or specific structures described may become apparent to those skilled in the art. All such modifications, adaptations, or variations that rely upon the teachings of the present invention, and through which these teachings have advanced the art, are considered to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Hence, these descriptions and drawings should not be considered in a limiting sense, as it is understood that the present invention is in no way limited to only the embodiments illustrated.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for determining a winner of a prize, comprising:
  - receiving a first player grab command from a first player device;
  - receiving a second player grab command from a second player device; and
  - determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises determining which of the first player grab command and the second player grab command is a last grab command received.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises determining a first mode of the first player grab command and a second mode of the second player grab command.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises calculating a time period that a player holds an object.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises calculating a number of grab commands of the prize that a player made.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises calculating a number of players that a player grabbed the prize from.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a location and an identity of the first player; and

displaying the location and the identity of the first player to the second player.

8. A method for determining a winner of a prize, comprising:

receiving a first player grab command from a first player device;

associating a first time period with the first player based on the first player grab command;

receiving a second player grab command from a second player device;

associating a second time period with the second player based on the second player grab command; and

determining the winner of the prize based on the first time period and the second time period.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first time period and the second time period further comprises determining which of the first time period and the second time period has a longer duration.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player grab command and the second player grab command further comprises calculating a time period that a player holds an object.
11. The method of claim 10, further comprising incrementing the first time period by a first player time interval, wherein the first player time interval includes time during which the first player holds the object, and the first player time interval is initiated when a subsequent first player grab command is received from the first player device.
12. A method for determining a winner of a prize, comprising:
- receiving a first player grab command from a first player;
  - determining a first player attribute;
  - receiving a second player grab command from a second player;
  - determining a second player attribute; and
  - determining the winner of the prize based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein the first player attribute is one of a time attribute, a numerical attribute, a number of grab commands attribute, a first player time period, a

reward point attribute, an identity attribute, a mode attribute, a location attribute, a grab command attribute, and any combination thereof.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the second player attribute one of a time attribute, a numerical attribute, a number of grab commands attribute, a second player time period, a reward point attribute, an identity attribute, a mode attribute, a location attribute, a grab command attribute, and any combination thereof.

15. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

awarding reward points by the first player based on the first player grab command; and

awarding reward points by the second player based on the second player grab command.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the first player attribute includes a first player time period and the second player attribute includes a second player time period.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

generating at least one random time interval; and

incrementing the at least one of the first time period and the second time period by the at least one random time interval.

18. The method of claim 12, wherein the first player attribute includes a first player time period comprising a sum of time intervals when the first player held the prize.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein at least one of the time intervals is initiated by a receipt of a first player grab command.
20. The method of claim 18, wherein at least one of the time intervals terminates based on one of duration and an event associated with a player other than the first player.
21. The method of claim 18, wherein at least one of the time intervals terminates by a receipt of a grab command from a player other than the first player.
22. The method of claim 12, further comprising displaying the second player attribute to the first player.
23. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
- receiving a third player grab command from a third player;
  - determining a third player attribute; and
  - displaying at least one of the second player attribute and the third player attribute to the first player.
24. The method of claim 22, wherein the second player attribute comprises a location attribute of the second player.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

receiving a third player grab command from a third player;

determining a location attribute of the third player; and

displaying at least one of the location attribute of the second player and the

location attribute of the third player to the first player.

26. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

receiving a third player grab command from a third player;

determining a location attribute of the third player; and

suppressing at least one of the location attribute of the second player and the

location attribute of the third player from the first player.

27. A method for forming a first team attribute, comprising:

determining the first time attribute based on a first player grab command for a prize from a first player of a first team;

determining the second time attribute based on a second player grab command for the prize from a second player of the first team; and

summing the first time attribute and the second time attribute from the first and second players of the first team, to form a first team time attribute.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

determining a third time attribute based on a first player grab command for the prize from a first player of a second team;

determining a fourth time attribute based on a second player grab command for the prize from a second player of the second team;

summing the first time attribute and the second time attribute from the first and second players of the second team, to form a second team time attribute; and

determining a winner of the prize based on the first team time attribute and the second team time attribute.

29. A method for determining a winner of an object, comprising:

receiving a grab command from a first player to grab the object through one of at least two modes;

disabling grab commands from the first player;

determining a first interval for the first player to hold the object;

receiving a grab command from a second player to grab the object through one of at least two modes during the first interval;

suppressing communication of an attribute of the second player to the first player during the first interval;

determining a second interval for the second player to hold the object;

enabling grab commands for the first player following the first interval;

receiving a grab command from a third player to grab the object through one of at least two modes;

displaying an attribute of the third player to the first player; and

determining the winner of the object based on the first interval and the second interval.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein determining a first interval for the first player to hold the object includes generating a random number.

31. A computer-readable storage medium having embodied thereon instructions, the instructions being executable by a computer processor to perform a method for determining a winner of a prize, the method comprising:

receiving a first player grab command from a first player;

determining a first player attribute;

receiving a second player grab command from a second player;

determining a second player attribute; and

determining the winner of the prize based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute.

32. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 31, wherein the first player attribute and the second player attributes are time attributes.

33. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 32, wherein the method further comprises:

generating at least one random number; and

incrementing at least one of the first player time attribute and the second player time attribute using at least one generated random number.

34. A multiplayer system, comprising:

a database configured for storing information concerning a plurality of players, the plurality of players including a first player and a second player;

a web server coupled to the database and configured to receive grab commands from a plurality of player devices, the plurality of player devices including a first player device of the first player and a second player device of the second player; and

a computer-readable storage medium coupled to the database and the web server, the computer-readable storage medium having embodied thereon instructions, the instructions being executable by a computer processor to perform a method for determining a winner of a prize, the method comprising:

receiving a first player grab command from the first player device;

determining a first player attribute;

receiving a second player grab command from the second player device;

determining a second player attribute; and

determining the winner of the prize based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute.

35. The multiplayer system of claim 34, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute further comprises

determining which of the first player attribute and the second player attribute has a longer duration.

36. The multiplayer system of claim 34, wherein the determining the winner of the prize based on the first player attribute and the second player attribute further comprises determining which of the first player attribute and the second player attribute includes a larger number.

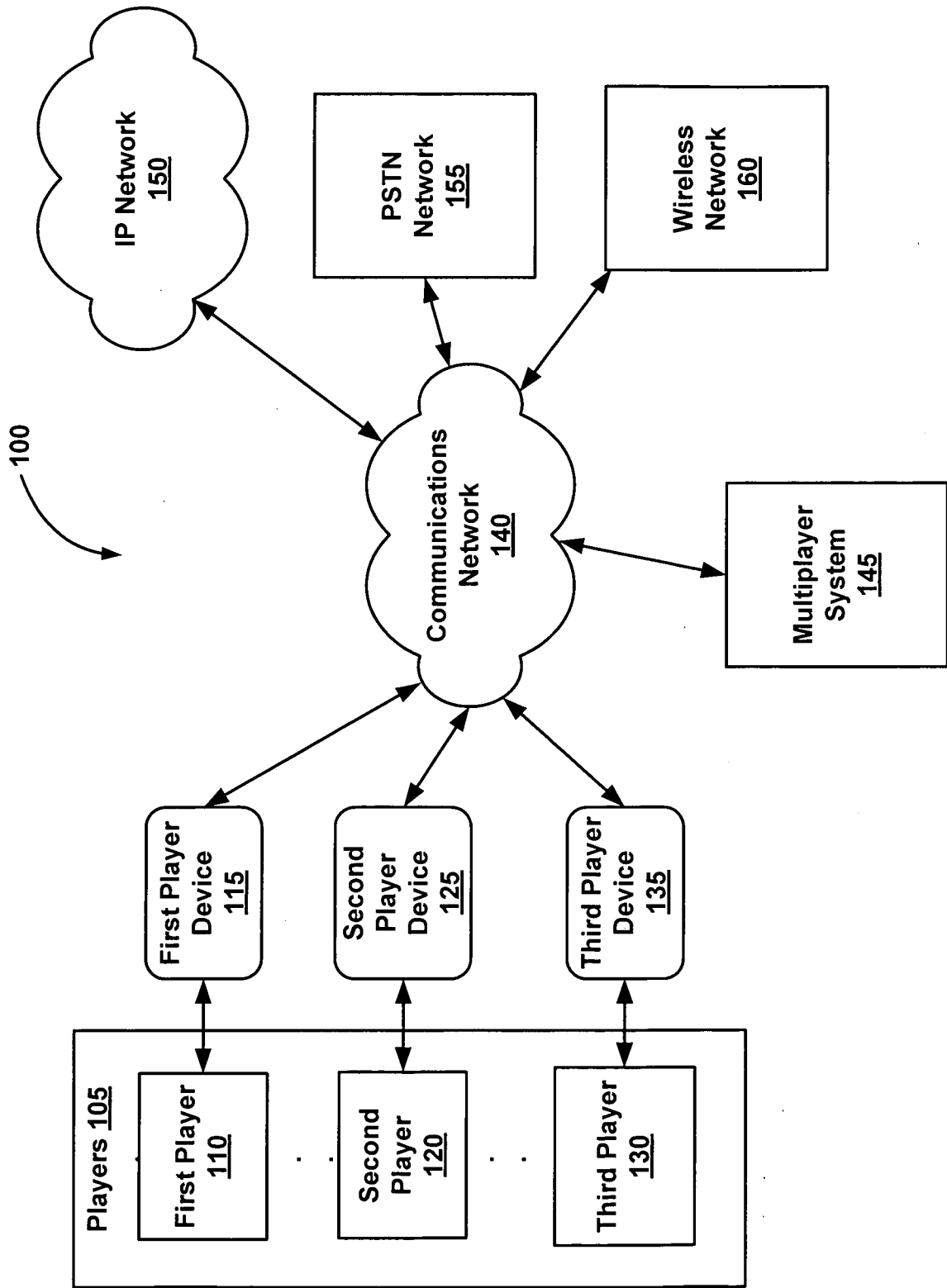


FIG. 1

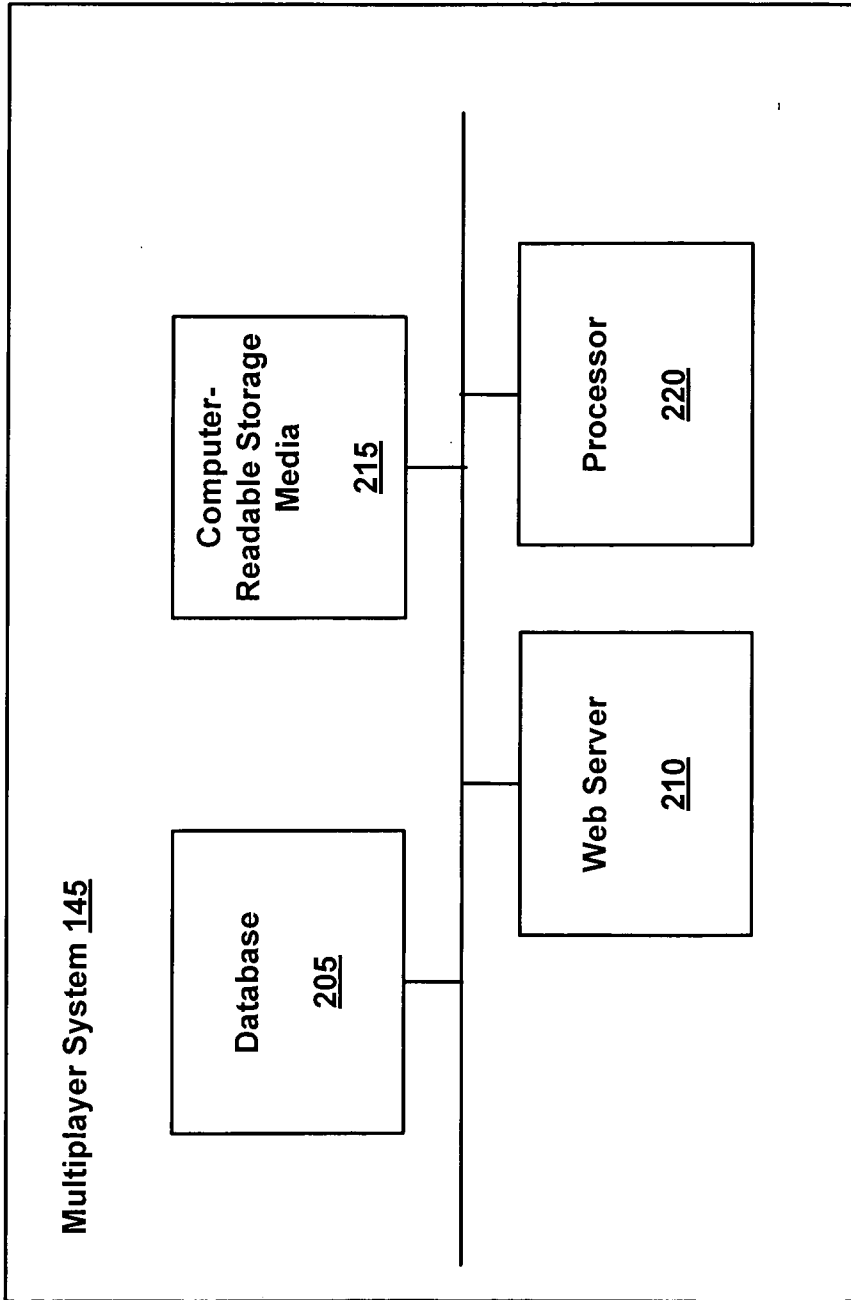


FIG. 2

3/11

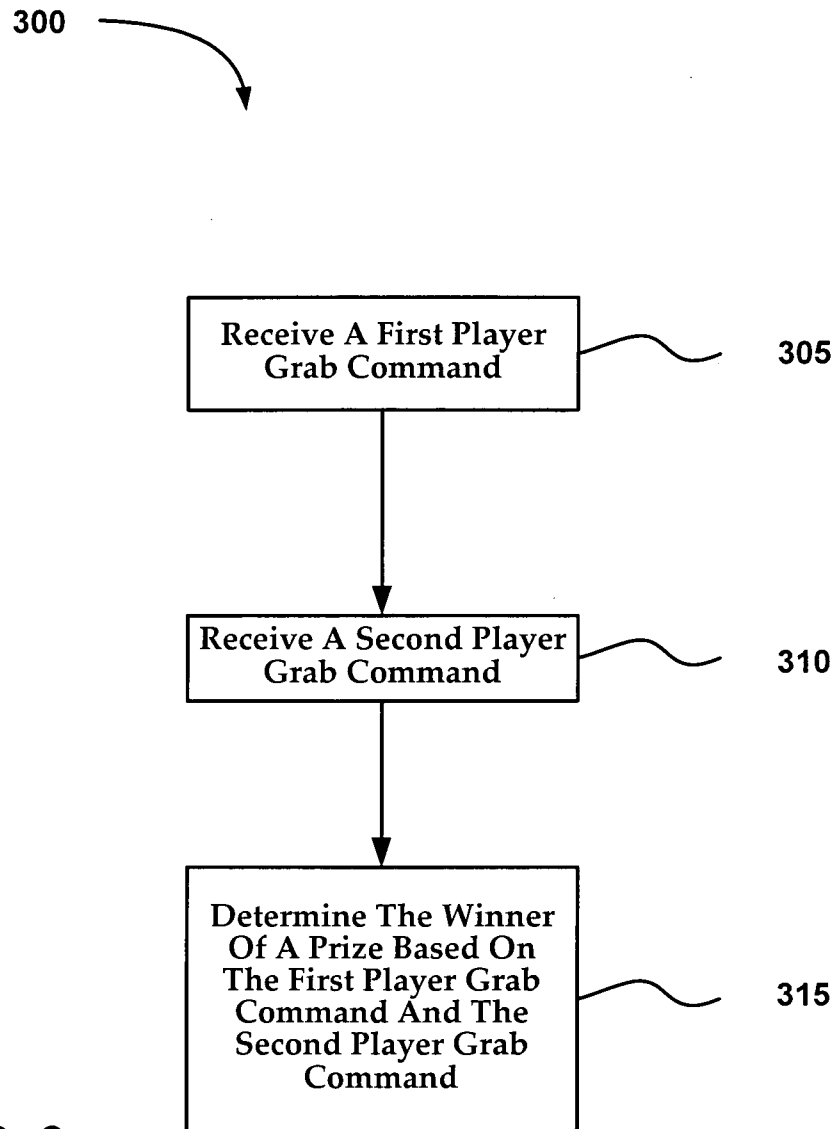


FIG. 3

4/11

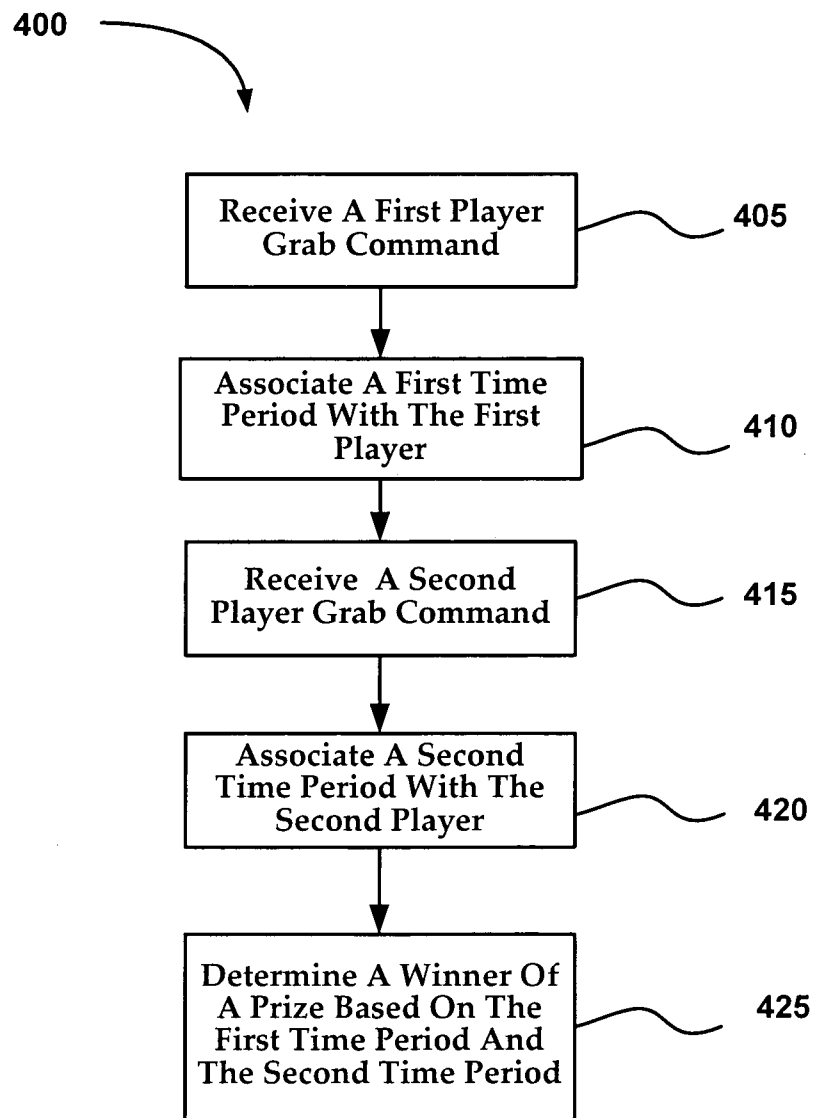


FIG. 4

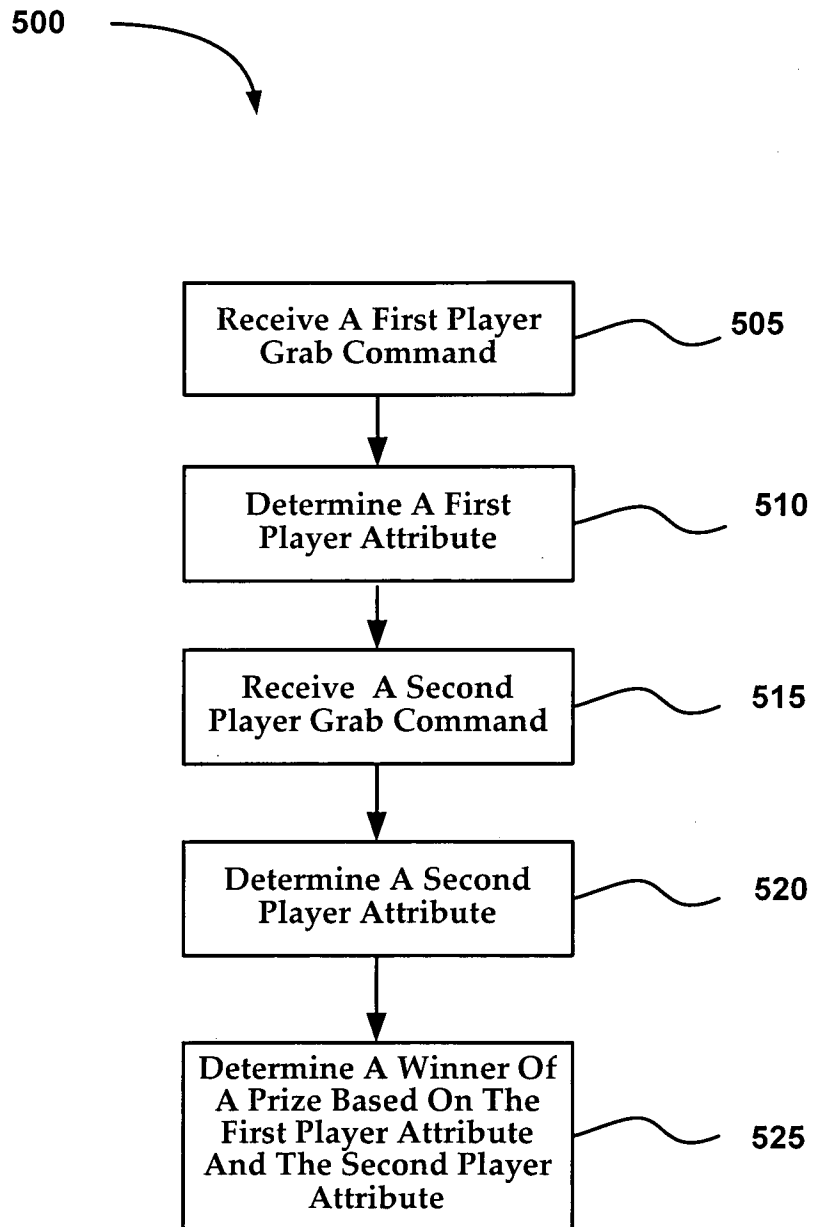
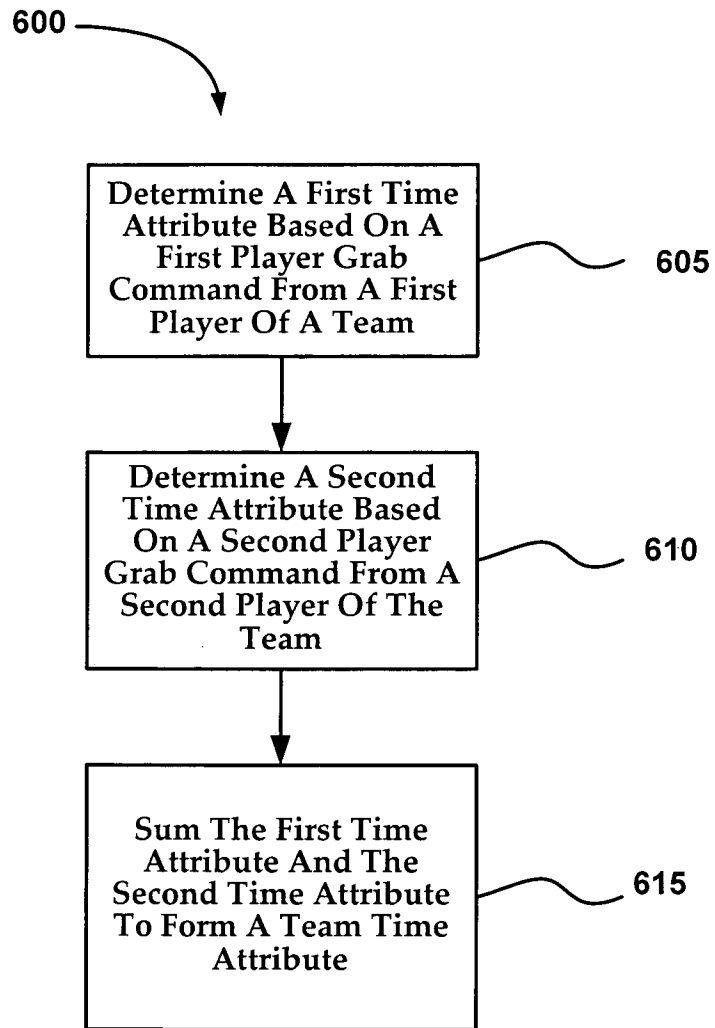


FIG. 5



**FIG. 6**

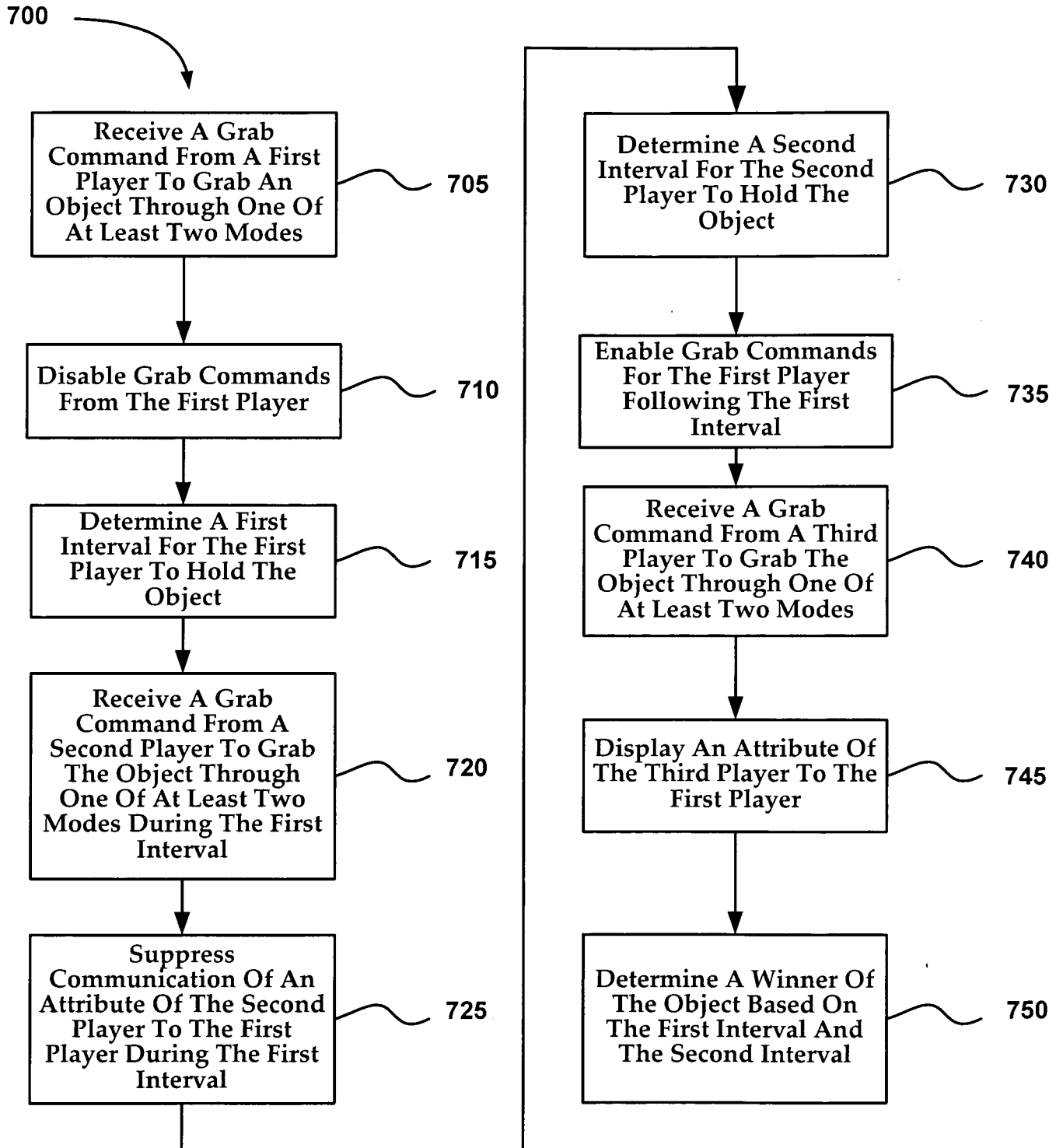


FIG. 7

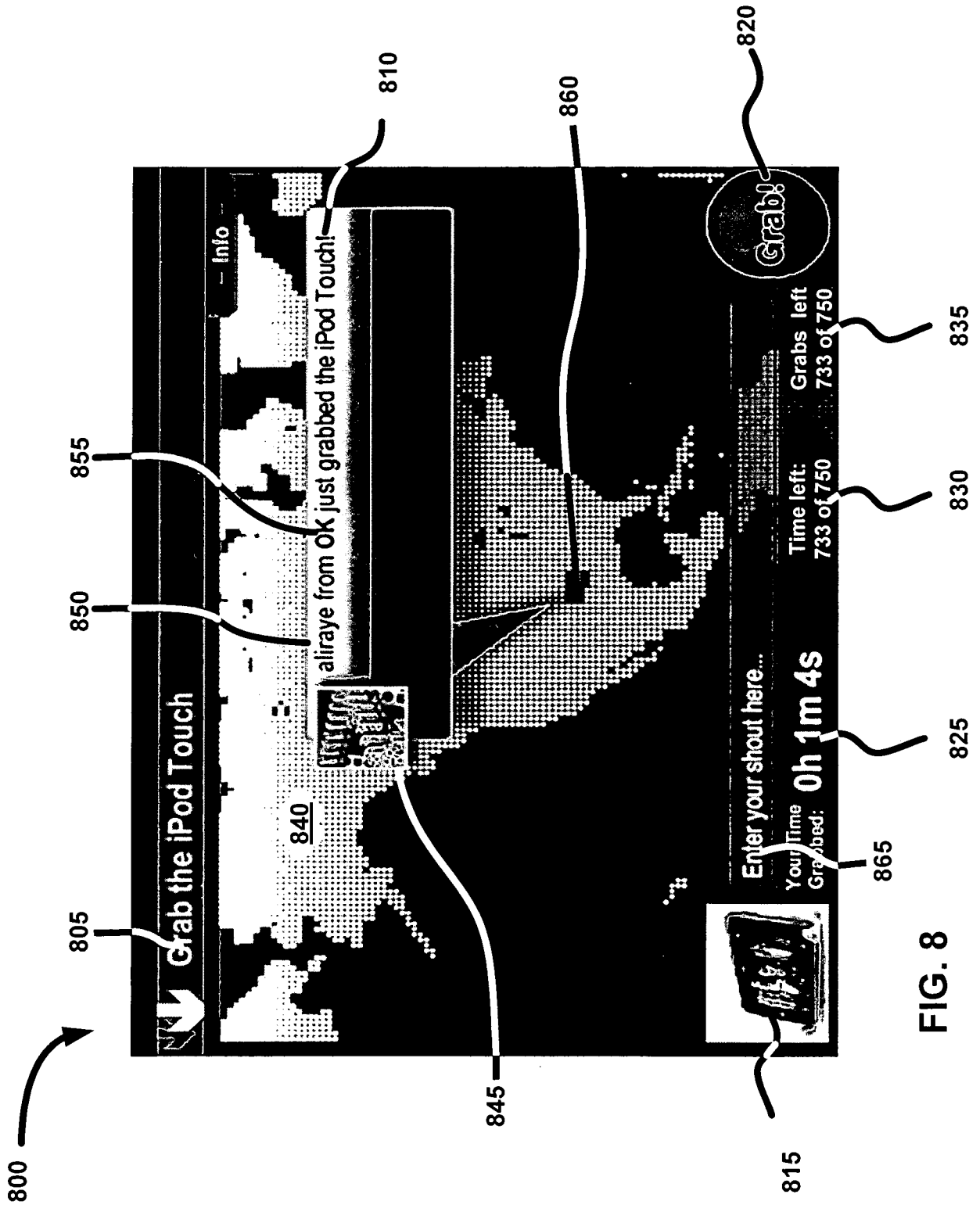


FIG. 8



10/11

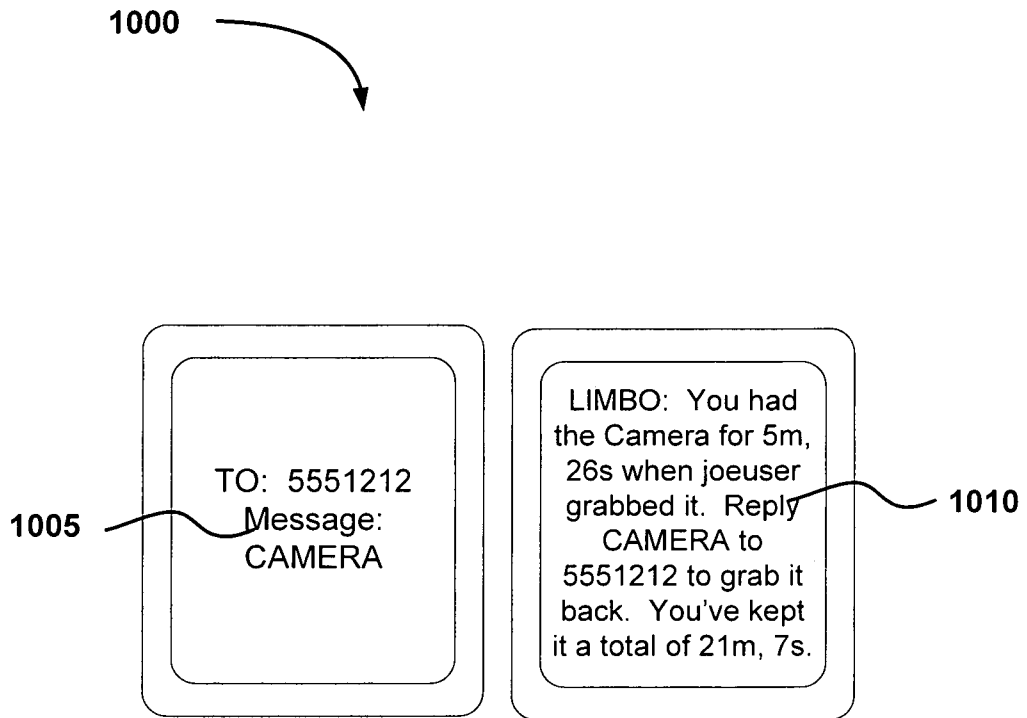


FIG. 10

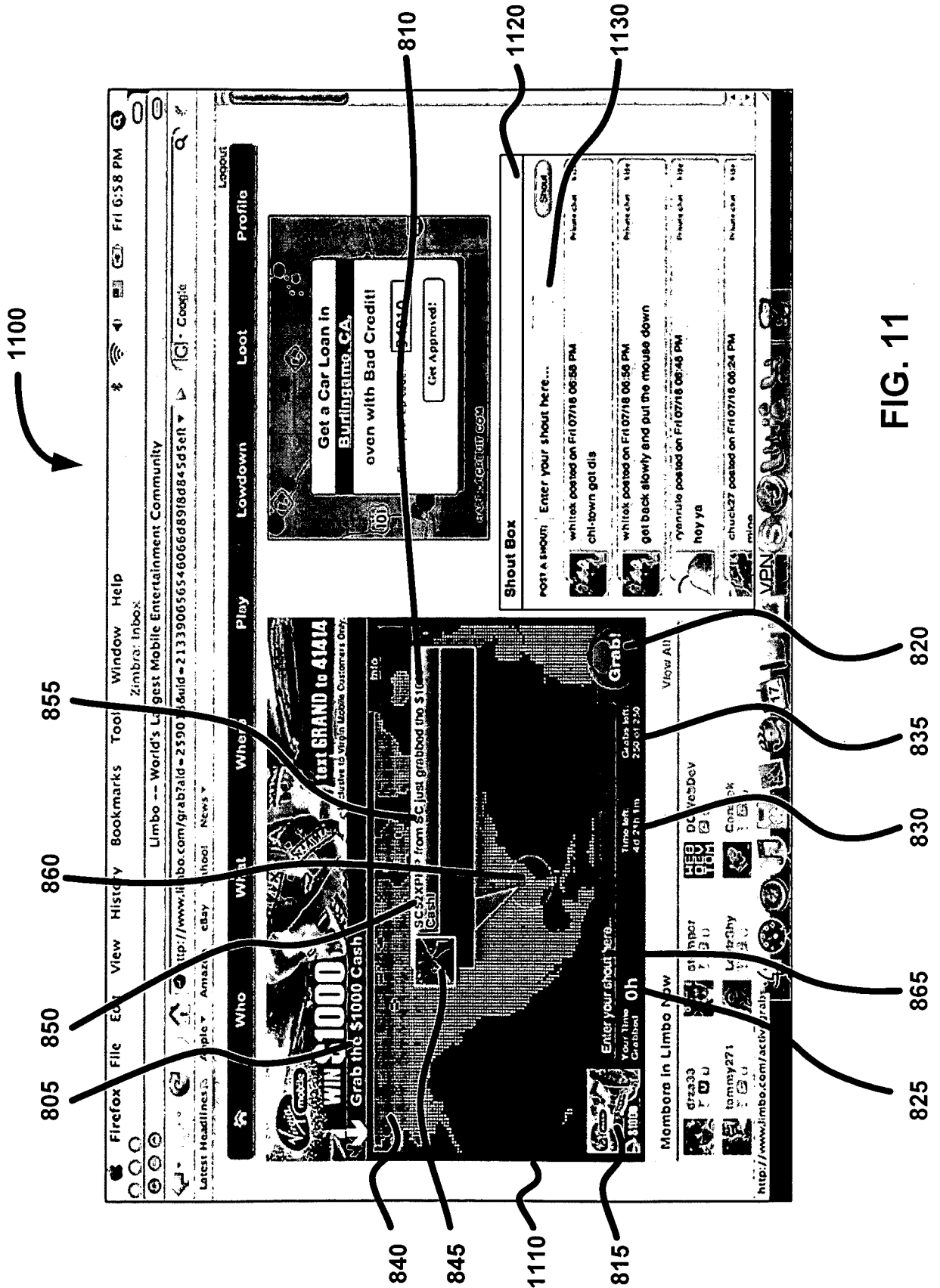


FIG. 11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
PCT/US 08/09095

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(8) - A63F 9/24 (2008.04)  
USPC - 463/7

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)  
IPC(8): A63F 9/24 (2008.04)  
USPC: 463/7

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched  
IPC(8): A63F 9/24 (2008.04) - see search terms below  
USPC: 463/1, 7, 40-42 - see search terms below

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)  
PubWEST(USPT,PGPB,EPAB,JPAB); DialogPRO(Engineering); GoogleScholar  
Search Terms: Method, determine, winner, game, time, hold, possess, obtain, longest, grab, command, calculate, steals, player, location, display, identity, reveal, other, increment, reward, award, random

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X — Y	US 6,095,527 A (ROBERTSON) 01 August 2000 (01.08.2000), col 3, ln 16-19	1 — 2-36
Y	US 4,309,030 A (GOLDFARB et al.) 05 January 1982 (05.01.1982), col 1, ln 16-28	2, 4, 8-33
Y	US 6,923,721 B2 (LUCIANO et al.) 02 August 2005 (02.08.2005), claim 6	3
Y	US 6,287,193 B1 (REHKEMPER et al.) 11 September 2001 (11.09.2001), claim 18	5
Y	US 2006/0252476 A1 (BAHOU) 09 November 2006 (09.11.2006), para [0114]-[0119], [0173]-[0174]	6, 27-28, and 36
Y	US 6,030,288 A (DAVIS et al.) 29 February 2000 (29.02.2000), col 18, ln 47-49	7 and 29-30
Y	US 2007/0099705 A1 (TANZ) 03 May 2007 (03.05.2007), Fig 1	34-36

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&" document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search 21 October 2008 (21.10.2008)	Date of mailing of the international search report <b>30 OCT 2008</b>
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-3201	Authorized officer: Lee W. Young  PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 08/09095

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 6,695,700 B2 (WALKER et al.) 24 February 2004 (24.02.2004), Fig 1, col 6, ln 65-66	4, 10, 11, 18-21, and 29-30
Y	US 5,158,301 A (MARTUKOVICH, Jr.) 27 October 1992 (27.10.1992), col 14, ln 39-41	9-11 and 35
Y	US 2006/0063581 A1 (HARRIS et al.) 23 March 2006 (23.03.2006), para [0044]	15
Y	US 4,062,180 A (MESH I et al.) 13 December 1977 (13.12.1977), col 13, ln 5-11	11, 17, 21-22, 24-26, and 33
Y	US 4,322,074 A (JAMES et al.) 30 March 1982 (30.03.1982), Fig 10, col 15, ln 59-62	17, 30, and 33
Y	US 6,873,257 B2 (MALONEY et al.) 29 March 2005 (29.03.2005), col 7, ln 33-37	26 and 29-30