(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
17 June 2010 (17.06.2010)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2010/068905 A1

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

(21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2009/06773 1

(22) International Filing Date:
11 December 2009 (11.12.2009)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
61/122,146 12 December 2008 (12.12.2008) US

(72) Inventor; and
(71) Applicant : HERRMANN, Mark, E. [US/US]; 79 Fairbanks Avenue, Wellesley, MA 02481 (US).

(74) **Agent:** MCGINNIS, Thomas, J.; Lando & Anastasi, LLP, One Main Street, Eleventh Floor, Cambridge, MA 02142 (US).

(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, CL, 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, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD,

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR OFF PROPERTY PRIZE POOLING

(57) Abstract: A system and method is provided for incentivizing players to visit a gambling location. A system is provided that allows users to group players into teams that may perform various gaming activities and share in prizes earned by those activities. Further the system may require that players visit a gambling location to perform various acts, including activating electronic game play requests. A method is provided by which players have additional incentive to visit gambling establishments with more regularity.

Figure 8

WO 2010/068905 A1

SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(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, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

— *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR OFF PROPERTY PRIZE POOLING

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

At least one embodiment in accord with the present invention relates generally to gaming and more particularly to providing incentives to game players.

Discussion of Related Art

People enjoy playing games and often regard the experience of winning a prize by playing a game to be more valuable than the prize itself. Just the chance to win a prize provides considerable entertainment. Games are often used to induce persons to visit a location in order to obtain a game entry, check game outcomes or redeem prizes won. The well-known McDonalds restaurant, for example, provides scratch-off game cards with prizes of cash and other awards as prizes. Such scratch-off tickets are provided free of charge without a purchase requirement. To obtain a free game card, people need only to visit a local McDonald's location.

In another example, the well-known Publisher's Clearing House sweepstakes offers the chance to win large sums of money just by returning a form which is entered into a future sweepstakes drawing for the cash prizes. People receiving the offer could return the sweepstakes entry alone, or may include an order for magazine subscriptions (requiring payment) along with the sweepstakes entry.

Other games may require payment to be played. For example, to play slot machines or gaming tables in Las Vegas, people are required to make a wager. Casinos sometimes issue free or reduced price wagers to entice people to visit a casino location. For example, an enticement of $20 in free play might be included in a direct mail piece. A person that receives such a mailer can simply bring the mailer to a designated casino location within defined time limits and receive that amount in coins, free credits on a gaming machine or promotional chips for play on table games. While such offers are enticing, they often are not strong enough to overcome the effort of returning to the casino and often times, people simply forget about the offer and do not return within the allotted time to collect their incentive.

Some casinos offer promotional games on the casino floor, wherein players redeem their free credit entitlement in the form of a game which can randomly award one of several amounts of free credits for casino game play, which are redeemable immediately or at a later time to encourage return visits. In some cases, the person must return at a later time just to learn the award value. People are sometimes reluctant to revisit the casino to learn of a prize value or to collect a prize due to the passage of time, disengagement from the game process or simple forgetfulness.

Player tracking systems, such as International Game Technology's Advantage system and Bally Technology's Slot Management System and Table Management System are also well known. Player tracking systems are useful for automating some or all of the tasks required to provide additional incentives for frequent or loyal play. For example, points may be awarded for every unit of wagers made and those points may be redeemed for prizes.

Player tracking systems utilize magnetic striped cards to hold a unique identifier which is associated with a specific person's account. Each gambling machine or table game position is equipped with a compatible card reader. A person wishing to allow their gambling activities to be monitored inserts their card into the compatible card reader. Other identification techniques are also useful with player tracking systems and include, but are not limited to, biometric identification, smart cards and Hollerith cards. In some cases, additional identity authentication is required such as entering a PIN or password on a keypad or touchscreen.

Most player tracking systems include a display which provides acknowledgment that the card was accurately read and associated with an account. Typically, for so long as the person's card remains inserted in the reader, all gambling activity that occurs on the associated gambling game is recorded on the identified account.

All card readers and displays associated with the player tracking systems are connected via a network to one or more central servers where account records are kept. Player tracking systems are well-known in the gambling industry. Example player tracking system architectures are found in United States Patent Number

5,429,361 entitled "Gaming machine information, communication and display system" and United States Patent Number 5,655,961 entitled "Method for operating networked gaming devices," both of which are herein incorporated by reference in their entireties.

Player tracking systems are also used to automatically provide awards to players as described in United States Patent Number 6,712,697 entitled "Method for crediting a player of an electronic gaming device" which is also incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

Although gambling is a popular activity, a great percentage of the worldwide populations do not gamble. This is true even after excluding underage persons, those with insufficient disposable income and those with a religious or other belief that prevents them from gambling as recreation. It is expensive for the casino to market to the general population because so many people are unqualified for gambling because of age restrictions or the biases of personal belief. And the burden of making a first-ever visit to the casino are comparatively high in terms of comfort and convenience, so incentives must be disproportionately large. As a result of these factors, most gambling venues, such as casinos, find it prohibitively expensive to recruit new players to the extent desired.

There are many different types of games that can be provided for entertainment separate from the casino environment. For instance, lottery tickets are sold through retailers using machines referred to as point of sale (POS) terminals to permit players to play such games. These tickets are generally printed at the POS terminal, and are usually issued for some lottery drawing to be performed at a later time. Examples of these types of lottery games of chance include traditional state lottery drawings and multi-state lottery drawings (e.g., PowerBall). Another well-known drawing-based game includes the game of Keno. Further, there are many online games that can be played using a computer system coupled to a communication network (e.g., the Internet). These games may include traditional games of chance, games of skill, and casino-type games, among others, some of which may involve online gambling.

Numerous organizations and companies have incentive programs for customers. For example, airlines have frequent flyer programs that allow a member passenger to take free trips or provide other perks after the member has taken a minimum number of flights or has flown a minimum number of miles. Numerous other types of establishments, including hotel chains, chain stores, and movie rental companies, have similar programs used to incentivize a customer.

Casinos also often have similar frequent player programs that provide incentives for continued customer patronage. For instance, the Foxwoods Casino (Mashantucket, CT) offers a program referred to as Wampum Rewards. A player participating in the program receives a card which the player uses whenever he/she comes to the casino. In one example implementation, the player swipes the card at special kiosks located within the casino which permit that player to have a chance to win prizes. A Wampum Rewards member may also swipe his or her card whenever betting or spending money within the casino and in the associated hotel, resort, or shops. As the player bets or spends more money, the player becomes eligible for free or reduced cost perks. Other examples of frequent player programs used in the casino environment include the well-known Harrah's Total Rewards, Wynn Casino's Red Card, and Trump Casinos' Trump Card programs.

As with frequent flyer programs and other types of incentive programs, typical goals of the casino frequent player program include increasing player loyalty, providing incentives to a player to visit the associated casinos as often as possible, and encouraging the player to spend as much money in the associated establishments as possible. To further improve the effectiveness of player loyalty programs, there is a present and recurring need for new methods to provide incentives to frequent player program members.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

New and more interesting game formats are needed for lottery and casino type games that keep players' interest and therefore result in continued or return players. According to one aspect of the present invention, a method is disclosed for providing

additional incentives for a player to visit a gambling location (e.g., a land-based casino or other gaming establishment).

Additionally, an aspect in accord with the present invention manifests an appreciation for the ability of team-oriented games and game play to enhance the entertainment experience of individual players, thus encouraging them to play more and more frequently visit a casino or other gambling location. It is also desirable to invite qualified persons to either return to, or initially visit, a gambling location based upon their projected interest in gambling and their projected worth as a gambling customer. It is further desirable to automate some or all of the monitoring and fulfillment process using computer networks such as those found within the Internet infrastructure and the gambling location's player tracking infrastructure.

In one example game format consistent with principles of the present invention, a player wishing to enter a game may acquire entry information, such as an entry code, from a game operator. The player may activate the entry information by visiting a casino, affiliated location or other gambling location and performing or requesting activation via various methods. The player may then play the electronic game from a location other than the gambling location. Additionally, the player may be incentivized to again visit the gambling location of the operator to redeem a prize based on an outcome of the electronic game. In one embodiment, the player may be permitted to reveal the prize associated with the outcome in the interface of the computer system. In one form, the prize may be revealed during play of the electronic game.

As discussed, the prize may be redeemed on the operator's property, thereby encouraging the player to return to the gambling location. In another example, the prize is awarded after the player's experience on the operator's property, increasing the likelihood that the player will return to the operator's property to redeem the prize. The prize, in one embodiment, may include a non-cashable credit for playing additional games, and thus, the play of additional games may increase revenue for the gaming operator. Other prizes (e.g., complimentary offers, promotional prizes, etc.) separate from the casino may be provided which enhance the player's experience and

encourage the player return.

In another aspect of the present invention, a player may join one or more teams of players who may share in prizes won by team members. In one embodiment, each team member may view the contribution of himself and the rest of the team members to the prizes redeemed. In another embodiment, prizes may be allocated to each team member in portion to the contribution of each team member. The contribution may be measured using various criteria including, among others, length of play on a particular device, amount of money spent within a period of time, or other parameters associated with types of game play that the operator wishes to encourage.

According to one aspect, a method for conducting a game using an electronic device is provided. The method includes acts of providing entry information to at least one first player of a plurality of qualified players, the plurality of qualified players including a team of associated players, receiving, from the at least one first player by the electronic device, at least one request to activate the entry information, the at least one request to activate including the entry information, the electronic device being located in either a gambling location or a affiliate location and providing at least one game to the at least one first player.

The method may include acts of receiving, from a first location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to enter the at least one game from a second player of the plurality of qualified players and receiving, from a second location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to play the at least one game from a third player of the plurality of qualified players, wherein the at least one first player, the at least one second player and the at least one third player are associated with the team. In addition, the method may include an act of receiving, from a location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to enter at least one game from the at least one first player.

In the method, the act of receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request may include an act of

receiving at least one request to enter a game conducted at either the gambling location or the affiliate location. In addition, the act of receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request may include an act of receiving a request to enter a game of skill. Further, the act of receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request may include an act of receiving a request to enter a game of chance. Moreover, the act of receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request may include an act of receiving a request to enter at least one game that provides an outcome when each of a plurality of the team gathers at least one game token. Additionally, the act of receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request may include an act of receiving at least one request to enter an electronic game. Furthermore, the act of receiving the at least one request to enter the electronic game may include an act of receiving at least one request to enter an electronic game that is separate from games offered in a gambling environment at the gambling location.

In the method, the act of receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate may include an act of receiving the at least one request to active at a kiosk. In addition, the act of receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate may include receiving the at least one request to activate from a casino. Further, the act of receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate may include receiving the at least one request to activate from a convenience store.

The method may include an act of qualifying the at least one first player. In addition, the method may include an act of inviting the at least one first player. Moreover, the method may include an act of associating the at least one first player with the team.

In the method, the act of associating may include an act of receiving an indication, from a person, of the at least one first player to associate with the team. In

addition, the act of associating may include an act of receiving an indication, from a system, of the at least one first player, the indication referring to recorded demographic information applicable to the at least one first player. Further, the act of associating may include an act of receiving an indication, from a system, of the at least one first player, the indication referring to recorded playing history information applicable to the at least one first player.

The method may include acts of providing outcome information to the at least one first player, the outcome information indicating at least one winning outcome, receiving a redemption request including the outcome information in the gambling location and redeeming the outcome information in the gambling location. In the method, the act of providing the outcome information to the at least one first player may include an act of providing the outcome information to all of the plurality of qualified players. In addition, the act of redeeming may include an act of providing a monetary prize. Further, the act of redeeming may include an act of providing a non-monetary prize. Moreover, the act of providing a non-monetary prize may include an act of providing any of merchandise, points, a chance to win a monetary prize, free game play, reduced cost game play, credits, coupons, gift certificates, and qualification for other games. Additionally, the act of providing the non-monetary prize may include an act of providing an entry to play one of the games offered in a gambling environment at the gambling location. Furthermore, the act of redeeming may include an act of allocating a portion of a prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players.

The method may include an act of recording a number of games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players. Furthermore, the act of allocating the portion of the prize may include an act of allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players. In addition, the method may include an act of recording a number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players. Further, the act of allocating the portion of the prize may include an act of allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players. Moreover, the method

may include an acts of receiving at least one request to play the at least one game from the at least one first player, the at least one request to play including the entry information and recording a number of games played by each of the plurality of qualified players. Additionally, the act of allocating the portion of the prize may include an act of allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number games played by each of the plurality of qualified players.

According to another aspect, a system for conducting at least one electronic game, the at least one electronic game being separate from games offered in a gambling environment at a gambling location and having at least one winning outcome is provided. The system includes an input, an output and a controller. The controller is configured to receive, via the input, at least one request to enter the at least one electronic game from a first electronic device, the first electronic device coupled to a network located outside the gambling location, provide, via the output, entry information to the first electronic device, receive, via the input, at least one request to activate the entry information from a second electronic device, the at least one request to activate including the entry information, the second electronic device coupled to a network located within the gambling location and provide, via the output, the at least one electronic game to a third electronic device.

The system may include a database storing identifiers of a plurality of qualified players, wherein the at least one request to enter the at least one electronic game includes an identifier of a first player of the plurality of qualified players, the at least one request to activate the entry information includes an identifier of a second player of the plurality of qualified players and the database includes an association between at least one team and the first player and the second player. In the system, the at least one electronic game may provide an outcome when each of a plurality of the at least one team gathers at least one token. In addition, the second electronic device may be a kiosk. Further, the gambling location may include a convenience store. Moreover, the controller may be further configured to qualify the first player. Additionally, the controller may be further configured to provide an invitation to the first electronic device. Furthermore, the controller may be configured to provide

outcome information to the third electronic device, receive a redemption request including the outcome information from a fourth electronic device, the fourth electronic device coupled to the network located within the gambling location and redeem the outcome information.

In the system, the controller configured to provide outcome information may be further configured to provide outcome information to electronic devices being used by any of the plurality of players. In addition, the controller configured to redeem the outcome information may be further configured to provide a monetary prize. Further, the controller configured to redeem the outcome information may be further configured to provide a non-monetary prize. Moreover, the controller configured to redeem the outcome information may be further configured to allocate a portion of a prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players. Additionally, the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players may be further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players. Furthermore, the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players may be further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players. Also, the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players may be further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of games played by each of the plurality of qualified players.

According to another aspect, a computer readable storage medium comprising instructions that when executed by a controller cause the controller to perform a method is provided. The method includes acts of receiving at least one request to enter at least one electronic game from at least one of a plurality of qualified players, the at least one electronic game being separate from games offered in a gambling environment at a gambling location and having at least one winning outcome, providing entry information to the at least one of the plurality of qualified players, receiving, from an electronic device in the gambling location, at least one request to

activate the entry information from the at least one of a plurality of qualified players, the at least one request to activate including the entry information and providing the at least one electronic game to the at least one of the plurality of qualified players.

Still other aspects, embodiments, and advantages of these exemplary aspects and embodiments, are discussed in detail below. Moreover, it is to be understood that both the foregoing information and the following detailed description are merely illustrative examples of various aspects and embodiments, and are intended to provide an overview or framework for understanding the nature and character of the claimed aspects and embodiments. The accompanying drawings are included to provide illustration and a further understanding of the various aspects and embodiments, and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification. The drawings, together with the remainder of the specification, serve to explain principles and operations of the described and claimed aspects and embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings are not intended to be drawn to scale. In the drawings, each identical or nearly identical component that is shown in various figures is represented by a like numeral. For the purpose of clarity, not every component may be labeled in every drawing. In the drawings:

Figure 1 shows an example computer system upon which various aspects may be implemented;

Figure 2 shows an environment suitable for implementing various aspects;

Figure 3 shows another environment suitable for implementing various aspects;

Figure 4 shows one process for providing a player incentive according to another embodiment;

Figure 5 is a block diagram of a system for conducting a game according to one embodiment;

Figure 6 is an example ticket that may be issued in association with a game

according to one embodiment;

Figure 7 shows a process for providing player incentive according to one embodiment; and

Figure 8 is a flow chart of a process for conducting a game according to one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

At least one embodiment presented herein relates to systems and methods for providing game players with incentives to visit gambling locations. For example, according to one embodiment, a player may receive the invitation from a game operator as part of a new player promotion being conducted at the gambling location (e.g., at the casino). In this instance, a player may receive, as part of a new player promotion, an invitation to play an electronic game when the player leaves the gambling location. For example, the player may receive a brochure which includes a ticket that allows the player to request entry into the electronic game via an access code.

In one embodiment, the player may be required to return to a gambling location to activate the requested entry, prior to playing the electronic game. The activated entry may permit the player to play a number of plays or credits with the electronic game, and play of the game by the player may earn points, credits or other award types that can be redeemed at the gambling location, thus encouraging the return of the player to the gambling location. In this manner, a single visit by a player is converted into two-or-more visits by the player by extending one or more invitations, which in themselves may earn chances for the player to earn awards that are required to be redeemed at one or more gambling locations. Such invitations lead to a ping-pong effect whereby the player plays games at the gambling location, receives invitations to play one or more electronic games, and is awarded prizes that need to be redeemed at the gambling location or affiliated location.

Another action that may cause a player to receive an invitation may include a player referring a "friend" who should receive an invitation. Such a program may be

beneficial in identifying potential gamblers, as a personal reference of who is likely to be receptive to an invitation may be more likely to accept the invitation rather than a mass mailing to a particular group of people. In this way, an action by a current player may cause an invitation to be extended to another player. This invitation may or may not include any additional qualifications of the new player, including a qualification based on the demographic of the new player, or play of the player in one or more online games, historical play at casinos or other gambling locations, or any other qualifications that may be performed for the new player. An existing player may refer a new player by providing, for example, information about the new player including, but not limited to his e-mail address, residence address, phone number, name or other identifying information of the new player.

In another embodiment, invitations may be used to build teams of players. For example, a user donning the role of a game organizer may issue invitations to players to band together a team. The game organizer may be a person, system or some other entity and the game organizer may be a player or a non-player. The teams may include a group of like-minded players who wish to play both competitively and cooperatively to acquire prizes. In some embodiments, in addition to sharing prizes, team members may take action on behalf of other team members, e.g. requesting entry into games based on other player's invitations, activating entries for other team members, playing electronic games based on activated entries of teammates, etc. .. Banding together thusly, team members may play cooperatively and share in prizes, and the team play may enhance the entertainment value of the experience.

Many of the embodiments disclosed herein describe various communications that may occur between one or more systems and one or more users. Similarly, many of the embodiments describe a variety of communications that may occur between users, including users who are members of a team. These communications may be facilitated by methods and systems disclosed in U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial Number 61/076,918 filed June 30, 2008, entitled "SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING IN A GAMING ENVIRONMENT" which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. For example, players may band

together by using one or more of the social networking functions described in U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial Number 61/076,918.

The aspects and embodiments disclosed herein are not limited in their application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. These aspects are capable of assuming other embodiments and of being practiced or of being carried out in various ways. Examples of specific implementations are provided herein for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to be limiting. In particular, acts, elements and features discussed in connection with any one or more embodiments are not intended to be excluded from a similar role in any other embodiments.

For example, according to one embodiment, a general purpose computer system is configured to perform any of the functions described herein, including but not limited to, storing and processing requests to activate entry information. However, such a system may also perform other functions, such as providing an electronic game to a player. Moreover, the systems described herein may be configured to include or exclude any of the functions discussed herein. Thus embodiments are not limited to a specific function or set of functions. Also, the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. The use herein of "including," "comprising," "having," "containing," "involving," and variations thereof is meant to encompass the items listed thereafter and equivalents thereof as well as additional items.

One aspect relates generally to inviting qualified people to play an electronic game which has a plurality of outcomes, at least one of which is a winning outcome. Outcomes or winnings are redeemed by an entity, usually a person, (referred to as a player) that takes an action in at least one specified gambling location or affiliated location. Time limits may constrain when the game can be played, when winnings are redeemable and when the specified task must be completed.

According to another aspect, the electronic game may be an online game that is offered over the Internet, for example. In one instance, the electronic game may be an online game that provides one or more revealed outcomes to a player during play

of the online game. To this end, various aspects may be facilitated using a game that provides one or more revealed outcomes to a player during play of the online game (referred hereinafter as a "reveal-based game").

Another aspect relates to inviting a qualified person, where there is a determination of the qualification of that person. The term "qualified" as used herein indicates that a person or persons, when considered as individuals or as teams, are placed, based on a variety of criteria, into specific categories and each qualified category may be eligible for a different game, or combination of games, different outcomes, different likelihoods of reaching a given outcome, different award schedules, different visit requirements for redemption or different task completion requirements for redemption. For example, specific time limits may be imposed based upon player categories, game types, winning outcome redemptions, award size, number of team members and task completion requirements. Moreover, while much of this specification discusses qualification of a specific type of entity, i.e. a person or player, the principles by which a player is qualified may be applied to other types of entities. For example, a team maybe qualified using the same or analogous methods as a player.

According to one aspect, it is appreciated that qualification may be based, for instance, upon a person's answers to questions, the person's activity at a website—length of visit, page views, games played, play strategy, etc.—the amount of money the person has available to play with or other criteria which relate to the person's instant condition. Alternatively, or in combination with instant qualification criteria, the person's record of information that was previously obtained and stored in association with the person's identification may be used to determine qualification.

Qualification is important because a relatively few people are responsible for a disproportionately large amount of play. This concept is sometimes referred to as the 5-50 rule because, in approximation, 5% of players of casino games, for example, are typically responsible for 50% of total revenues. According to one aspect, a system and method is provided for qualifying people according to their perceived worth. For example, such qualification may be based upon criteria such as player performance

history, current play levels or even projected play levels based upon the details of a potential player's occupation, income level, age, gender, background, personal preferences, location of residence, employment history or other such criteria, including personal information such as birthday or anniversary, either alone or in combination.

Further, qualification may be based upon taking an action, attending an event or visiting a location on a particular date. For example, a verbal invitation could be extended to each person that purchases a Cadillac. A printed invitation is given to all people over the age of 21 that attended a concert or an invitation could be extended to anyone that visits a particular website or physical location. An email invitation could be extended to all of the players of a fantasy sports league to join a gaming team. These qualifications may be made based solely upon the individual or based in whole or in part, on criteria applied to the spouse, family member, friend or peer group.

According to another aspect, the qualification may depend at least in part, on a player taking an action within a gambling location (e.g., in a casino), or within an online gaming environment (e.g., over the Internet). In at least one instance, the action may involve the player using an identifier of a frequent player program. In one case, for example, the player may swipe his or her frequent player program card at a casino location, which causes the player to become qualified to play the electronic game. In another example, the player may "swipe" or otherwise enter their frequent player identifier in an online environment, causing him/her to become qualified. To this end, various aspects may be facilitated using a frequent player tracking system.

According to one aspect, it is appreciated that the projection or estimation of future worth of a person is especially important to identifying and qualifying valued players and all such methods of worth projection or estimation may be used herein. The potential value of a person to a gambling institution may be determined using the person's historical performance of other, related activities that show a propensity towards gambling or that otherwise indicates persons with disposable income. Thus, persons may be valued using any number of criteria such as, for example, demographic information, among other information that may be correlated to the

person's potential worth as a gambler. As discussed above, and as applies to other qualification methods, teams may be valued by any number of criteria including, among other criteria, team size, spread or clustered demographics, average/total disposable income, historical performance summarized for the team, e.g. team average, standard deviation from average, etc.

According to one embodiment, persons may not be considered qualified if they are explicitly barred from gambling by government regulation, gambling location policy or self-exclusion. Governments sometimes ban a specific person or group of persons if their presence in a gambling location causes harm. Nevada, for example, maintains a "black book" listing persons which are not allowed, by law, to visit a gambling location within that state. Individual casinos sometimes ban persons caught cheating or engaging in undesirable activity. Sometimes individuals ban themselves from visiting a gambling location in order to prevent themselves from engaging in excessive gambling. There may be many reasons why and methods for barring or banishing a person or groups of persons from a gambling location and all such reasons and methods can be used as criteria for whether a person is qualified for a particular category as used herein.

The term "identifier" as used herein indicates a device, code or technique used to recognize a particular person or team. The identifier may simply be a number or code associated with the entity, such as a magnetic stripe card or a smart card which contains electronic or other circuitry. The identifier may also be biometric, such as voice-print, handwriting recognition, fingerprint, hand shape recognition or eye-pattern recognition. It should be appreciated that there are many different ways to identify a person uniquely, or as a member of a team or other group, and all such techniques are anticipated as being useful for implementing various aspects.

The term "invitation" as used herein refers to a request extended to a person to participate. Examples range from a printed invitation to a website offering a place to play a game or take some other action. Invitations may be communicated by any means, including but not limited to, electronic, written and verbal means. It should be

appreciated that there is a wide range of ways to invite a person uniquely, or as a member of a group, and any such way of inviting a person may be used.

The term "specified time period" as used herein indicates a period before or after a specific time and date or a period within a beginning and ending time and date. A specified time period may be unbounded as in "any" time or may be more limited. The term may, for example, include a recurring time period, such as every Wednesday, every Tuesday afternoon between the hours of 2 and 5 PM, the last Monday of each month, every Fourth of July, this coming Fourth of July, amongst others. The term may also be construed as any type of time period that can be specified by one or more parameters. It should be appreciated that there are many other permutations and combinations of one-time and recurring time restrictions that can be useful in various embodiments and representation of all such permutations and combinations is intended by the term "specified time period" and its variants.

The term "gambling location" as used herein refers to any location where free or fee-based gambling is allowed. Examples of gambling locations include, but are not limited to, casinos, racinos, dog-racing tracks, horse racing tracks, sports books, lottery point-of sale locations, clubs or pubs where gambling is conducted, amongst others. Gambling locations may be at physical locations such as the Mirage casino in Las Vegas, a range of locations, such as "any MGM-owned casino in the United States, or a virtual location such as an Internet-based gambling site. It should be appreciated that there are many possible types of gambling location and all such locations are contemplated for use in various embodiments.

The term "affiliated location" as used herein refers to any location that is not a gambling location, and that is identified by gambling locations or their representatives as a place at which a person may receive an invitation, qualify to receive an invitation or accomplish all or part of a redemption or other element described herein, when invitation, qualification, redemption or the other element described herein does not involve any element of gambling.

The term "general location" as used herein refers to any location that is either a gambling location or an affiliated location.

The term "redemption location" as used herein refers to the location, which may be either a gambling location or an affiliated location, where the awards gained by playing an electronic game are redeemed or acted upon.

The term "game" as used herein is meant to encompass all types of games including those of physical or mental skill, chance, or games with outcomes that are already known before play begins, such as those disclosed in U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 11/001,775 filed November 30, 2004, entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONDUCTING A GAME OF CHANCE" and includes games which require a wager of a financial value and a wager of consideration, as well as games which do not require wagers of any value to play. Games may be played against another player or players such as in a sweepstakes or tournament. Games may also be played against the "house"—i.e. the game host—and the house may be represented by a person or a device such as a computer, gaming machine or other device. It should be appreciated that there are a vast number of games and more are created with each passing day. Various aspects are contemplated for use with any type of game.

The term "electronic game" as used herein refers to any game which is at least partially implemented on an electronic device. For example, all or part of a game may be conducted on a personal computer, a computer terminal, a cell phone such as the well-known Palm Treo 700W or 700P, a music player such as the well-known Apple iPod, a personal data assistant such as a Palm Pilot or a home video game such as the well-known Nintendo Wii game console or the well-known Microsoft Xbox 360. It should be appreciated that there is a wide array of electronic devices which could be adapted for convenient game play with more being developed every day and all such devices are contemplated for use with various embodiments.

An electronic game could also be conducted on a purpose-built electronic device such as a slot machine, a video poker machine or other electronic gaming or lottery machine, including such devices as electronic bingo minders and other devices.

Within this specification, the phrase "electronic game" is referred to herein to allow inclusion of game play elements or stages which are not electronic. For example, an electronic game is used for a portion of game play but each person is also provided a printed scratch-off ticket that provides clues or elements of information which are entered into the electronic game to further play. Conversely, results of electronic play may provide guidance as to which elements of a scratch-off ticket are to be removed for the highest likelihood of winning or to win the most valuable prize.

Other non-electronic elements that could be used, in part to conduct electronic game play, include manually tracked bingo cards, pull-tabs, game boards, card games and crossword puzzles. One of skill in the art recognizes there are many desirable ways to combine manual game elements with electronic game play and we include all such manual game elements within the scope of the meaning of "electronic game". Moreover, optical and biological computing devices are in development that perform the equivalent work of today's electronic devices. It should be appreciated that various embodiments are useful with such technologies and it is our intention to include them within the definition of "electronic game".

The term "redeem" indicates the redemption of an outcome which may result in the award of prizes. Some outcomes may result in opportunity to play additional games which have at least one outcome that awards a prize or enhances the value of an initial prize. It should be appreciated that there are a wide variety of ways, both manual and automated, by which persons may be allowed to redeem outcomes and more are being created with each passing day. All such methods are contemplated for use with various embodiments.

Prizes may include, for example, cash, merchandise, points, free or reduced cost of games, non-cashable credits (credits which may be wagered in a game but not converted to cash), cashable credits (credits which may be wagered in a game or converted to cash), coupons (including physical, such as paper, and electronic), gift certificates, entry into other games, qualification for other games, entry into tournaments, qualification for tournament entry, and the like. Some prizes may allow the winner to select one or a combination of these elements. It should be appreciated

that there are a wide variety of prizes and more are created with each passing day. All such forms of prizes are contemplated for use with various embodiments.

Also, in one embodiment in which credits are non-cashable, credits may be limited to a specific denomination of play, may be limited to games of a specific type or in a specific location. In other embodiments, credits are given on existing player club accounts, credits are given on machine readable paper coupons, credits are given in cash, credits are given in electronics credits transferred directly to a game, and credits are given as table game chips. It should be appreciated that prizes (such as cashable credits) may be provided to or redeemed by the person in any manner.

Further, a person may be awarded a prize that is a multiplier and not an actual prize amount. For instance, the person could be awarded a multiplier prize which has the effect of multiplying the value of some yet unearned jackpot. For example, a player wins a 2X multiplier prize by playing an Internet-based game. If the player visits a gambling location and strikes a jackpot of at least $X (or at most $Y), the prize may be doubled. According to one embodiment, the gambling location visit and win must occur within a specified time or wager amount. It should be appreciated that any form of providing a prize which is real or relative to another prize or purchase may be used according to various aspects.

General Purpose Computer System

Various aspects and functions described herein may be implemented as hardware or software on one or more computer systems. These computer systems may be, for example, general purpose computers such as those based on Intel PENTIUM-type processor, Motorola PowerPC, AMD Athlon or Turion, Sun UltraSPARC, Hewlett-Packard PA-RISC processors, or any other type of processor or controller. Further, aspects may be located on a single computer or may be distributed among a plurality of computers attached by one or more communications networks.

For example, various aspects and functions may be distributed among one or more computer systems configured to provide a service to one or more client

computers, or to perforin an overall task as part of a distributed system. Additionally, aspects may be performed on a client-server or multi-tier system that includes components distributed among one or more server systems that perform various functions. Thus, examples are not limited to executing on any particular system or group of systems. Further, aspects may be implemented in software, hardware or firmware, or any combination thereof. Thus, embodiments may be implemented within methods, acts, systems, system elements and components using a variety of hardware and software configurations, and embodiments are not limited to any particular distributed architecture, network, or communication protocol.

Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a distributed computer system 100, in which various aspects and functions may be practiced. Distributed computer system 100 may include one more general purpose computer systems. For example, as illustrated, distributed computer system 100 includes general purpose computer systems 102, 104 and 106. As shown, computer systems 102, 104 and 106 are interconnected by, and may exchange data through, communication network 108. Network 108 may include any communication network through which computer systems may exchange data. To exchange data using network 108, computer system 102, 104 and 106 and network 108 may use various methods, protocols and standards known in the art, including, among others, token ring, ethernet, wireless ethernet, Bluetooth, TCP/IP, UDP, HTTP, FTP and SNMP. To ensure data transfer is secure, computer systems 102, 104 and 106 may transmit data via network 108 using a variety of security measures including TSL, SSL or VPN among other security techniques. While distributed computer system 100 illustrates three networked computer systems, distributed computer system 100 may include any number of computer systems and computing devices, networked using any medium and communication protocol.

Various aspects and functions may be implemented as specialized hardware or software executing in one or more computer systems including general purpose computer system 102 shown in Figure 1. As depicted, computer system 102 includes processor 110, memory 112, bus 114, interface 116 and storage 118. Processor 110

typically performs a series of instructions resulting in data manipulation. Processor 110 is typically a commercially available processor such as an Intel Pentium, Motorola PowerPC, SGI MIPS, Sun UltraSPARC, or Hewlett-Packard PA-RISC processor, but may be any type of processor or controller as many other processors and controllers are available. Processor 110 is connected to other system elements, including one or more memory devices 112, by bus 114.

Memory 112 is typically used for storing programs and data during operation of computer system 102. Thus, memory 112 is often a relatively high performance, volatile, random access memory such as a dynamic random access memory (DRAM) or static memory (SRAM). However, memory 112 may include any device for storing data, such as a disk drive or other non-volatile storage device.

Components of computer system 102 may be coupled by an interconnection element such as bus 114. Typically, bus 114 includes one or more physical busses (e.g., between components that are integrated within a same machine), but may include any communication coupling between system elements including specialized or standard computing bus technologies such as IDE, SCSI, PCI and InfiniBand. Thus, bus 114 enables communications (e.g., data, instructions) to be exchanged between system components of computer system 102.

Computer system 102 also includes one or more interface devices 116 such as input devices, output devices and combination input/output devices. Interface devices may receive input or provide output. More particularly, output devices typically render information for external presentation. Input devices typically accept information from external sources. Examples of interface devices include keyboards, mouse devices, trackballs, microphones, touch screens, printing devices, display screens, speakers, network interface cards, etc. Interface devices allow computer system 102 to exchange information and communicate with external entities, such as users and other systems.

Storage system 118, typically includes a computer readable and writeable nonvolatile storage recording medium in which instructions are stored that define a program to be executed by the processor or information stored on or in the medium to

be processed by the program. More specifically, the information may be stored in one or more data structures specifically configured to conserve storage space or increase data exchange performance. The instructions may be persistently stored as encoded signals, and the instructions may cause a processor to perform any of the functions described herein. The medium may, for example, be optical disk, magnetic disk or flash memory, among others. Typically, in operation, the processor causes data to be read from the nonvolatile recording medium into another memory, such as memory 112, that allows for faster access to the information by the processor than does the storage medium included in storage system 118. The memory may be located in storage system 118 or in memory 112, however, processor 110 typically manipulates the data within the memory 112, and then copies the data to the medium associated with storage system 118 after processing is completed. A variety of components are known for managing data movement between the medium and integrated circuit memory element and embodiments are not limited thereto. Examples are not limited to a particular memory system or storage system.

Various footprints of computer system 102 are common. For example, computer system 102 may include one or more mobile computing devices. Example mobile computing devices include, among others, cellular phones, personal digital assistants and other types of mobile computer systems. Computer system 102 may also include computer systems of varying size and capacity. A non-limiting list of particular computer systems includes a supercomputer, a minicomputer, a mainframe, a personal computer, a workstation, a mainframe, a networked client, a server, media servers, application servers, database servers, web servers, load balancers, routers and switches.

Although computer system 102 is shown by way of example as one type of computer system upon which various aspects and functions may be practiced, aspects are not limited to being implemented on the computer system as shown in Figure 1. Various aspects and functions may be practiced on one or more computers having a different architectures or components than that shown in Figure 1. For instance, computer system 102 may include specially-programmed, special-purpose hardware,

such as for example, an application- specific integrated circuit (ASIC) tailored to perform a particular operation disclosed herein. While another embodiment may perform the same function using several general-purpose computing devices running MAC OS System X with Motorola PowerPC processors and several specialized computing devices running proprietary hardware and operating systems.

Computer system 102 may be a general purpose computer system including an operating system that manages at least a portion of the hardware elements included in computer system 102. Usually, a processor or controller, such as processor 110, executes an operating system which may be, for example, a Windows-based operating system (e.g., Windows NT, Windows 2000 (Windows ME), Windows XP operating systems) available from the Microsoft Corporation, a MAC OS System X operating system available from Apple Computer, one of many Linux-based operating system distributions (e.g., the Enterprise Linux operating system available from Red Hat Inc.), a Solaris operating system available from Sun Microsystems, or a UNIX operating systems available from various sources. Many other operating systems may be used, and embodiments are not limited to any particular implementation.

The processor and operating system together define a computer platform for which application programs in high-level programming languages are written. These component applications may be executable, intermediate (e.g., C-) or interpreted code which communicate over a communication network (e.g., the Internet) using a communication protocol (e.g., TCP/IP). Similarly, aspects may be implemented using an object-oriented programming language, such as SmallTalk, Java, C++, Ada, or C# (C-Sharp). Other object-oriented programming languages may also be used. Alternatively, functional, scripting, or logical programming languages may be used.

Additionally, various aspects and functions may be implemented in a non-programmed environment (e.g., documents created in HTML, XML or other format that, when viewed in a window of a browser program, render aspects of a graphical-user interface or perform other functions). Further, various embodiments may be implemented as programmed or non-programmed elements, or any combination thereof. For example, a web page may be implemented using HTML while a data

object called from within the web page may be written in C++. Thus, embodiment are not limited to a specific programming language and any suitable programming languages could also be used.

A general-purpose computer system included within an embodiment may perform other functions. For instance, aspects of the system may be implemented using an existing commercial product, such as, for example, Database Management Systems such as SQL Server available from Microsoft of Seattle WA., Oracle Database from Oracle of Redwood Shores, CA, and WebSphere middleware from IBM of Armonk, NY. However, a general purpose computer system running, for example, SQL Server may be able to support both aspects in accord with embodiments and databases for sundry applications not within the embodiments.

Example Internet Infrastructure

According to various embodiments, an Internet-based system may be provided to facilitate various embodiments. Various embodiments may be implemented on an Internet-based system, generally involving a website infrastructure. As is known in the art, a basic website infrastructure logically contains web server(s), application server(s) and database server(s). All servers may be located on the same computer hardware or may be separated onto different computer hardware at various locations depending on processing or security requirements. Networking equipment is also required to connect the servers to the Internet and to interconnect servers when they are implemented on separate computer hardware.

A web server is used to handle requests and delivery of content from and to the browsers of website visitors. The web server also dispatches requests and data to the application servers.

The application server is used to control the website processes and to supply dynamic content back to the web servers. The application server performs all data dependent procedures at the website.

The database server manages the storage of all data required by the website. It responds to requests (storage and retrieval) for data from the application server.

Various embodiments may be implemented in a gaming system as described, for example, in U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 11/001,775 filed November 30, 2004, entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONDUCTING A GAME OF CHANCE" which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. However, it should be appreciated that other gaming system infrastructures may be used. For example, the infrastructures as described below with reference to Figures 2 and 3 may be used, either alone or in combination with other infrastructures or elements thereof. Also, infrastructures referred to in Figure 5 may be used either alone or in combination to implement various aspects.

Incentives Awarded From Website Play

According to one embodiment, parameters are established by which persons are invited to play an electronic game at a website. Parameters may include, but are not limited to, terms of invitation, qualification, entry, activation, game play type, quantity and outcome schedule, required actions, time periods, group or team membership and redemptions. All invited persons may be grouped into a single category with shared parameters or various classes of persons may be created with each category given a specific set of parameters which may be different from parameters assigned to other categories.

Moreover, individuals may band together into teams who collectively share the prizes won by the team. The teams may allocate these prizes into portions using one or more allocation rules. Allocation rules may be designed by the team members or the game operator to allocate prizes based on individual contributions to the team's prizes. The contributions may be measured using a variety of metrics, as will be discussed below.

According to one embodiment, an authorized entity that visits the website during a specified time period is allowed to play electronic games where awards may be earned and then redeemed at a gambling location within a specified time period. An authorized entity may be an invited person or an entity associated with the invited person and authorized to play on behalf of the invited person, such as a teammate of

the invited person. Moreover any actions described as being performed by an authorized entity may be performed by another authorized entity, e.g. one authorized entity may perform one act, and another authorized entity may perform a subsequent act. In this way, teams may play electronic games in a cooperative fashion.

For example, qualified persons are selected from a general list (e.g. white pages, third party email lists, direct mail lists), targeted lists (based on demographic, geographic, team membership or economic criteria) or from the gambling location's frequent player database and invited to play an electronic game. Next, the invitation is sent to the player, in this example via email or regular mail. This act of sending the invitation may establish one or more authorized entities, e.g. an invited person or a team of invited persons.

Each authorized entity may request entry into an electronic game from a location other than a gambling or affiliated location. In response, the electronic game may provide authorized entity with entry information. Further, the electronic game may require that authorized entity visit a gambling or affiliated location to activate the entry. The activation process may validate that the authorized entity is located at the gambling or affiliated location. Further, the activation process may request that the authorized entity present the entry information at the gambling or affiliated location.

Each authorized entity is assigned a quantity of game plays in which the outcome is predetermined, either for each individual game play or for a collective of multiple game plays, when the entry is activated. Records indicating the quantity of games and their outcome are stored in a database and annotated to indicate the games are yet unplayed. Each record is linked to an identifier unique to the authorized entity to which the games are assigned. In this example, the identifier is the authorized entity' s tracking identifier.

When an authorized entity visits the website, she may identify herself by entering her player tracking identifier, which links a website game chosen by the authorized entity to the pre-assigned outcomes assigned to the authorized entity that activated the entry. In one example, the pre-assigned outcomes are revealed to the authorized entity visiting the website as each game play concludes. The database

record for that authorized entity is annotated to indicate each game that has been played.

In an alternative embodiment, a portion of the game play may be conducted away from a gambling location and a portion may be conducted within a gambling location. This embodiment is conducive to "cliff-hanger" online entertainment experience that may further encourage some players to visit the gambling location to complete game play, and experience resolution to the cliff-hanger dilemma.

For example, a treasure hunt game may provide several game tokens or pieces to a player during online play. Further, the treasure hunt game may reveal only certain pieces through play conducted at a gambling location, or may only reveal new tokens by activating the tokens during a visit to a gambling, or an affiliated, location. Once a player or team has collected all the pieces, they may redeem them for prizes or chances to win a prize through a game conducted at the gambling location. Other embodiments of this game may stipulate that tokens be collected by a two or more team members, and in one embodiment, the game may stipulate that specific tokens be collected by specific team members.

An authorized entity then visits a designated gambling location and redeems associated awards. If the award is game play credit, she may redeem at a gambling machine by inserting her player tracking card into the machine's card reader, after which the award is transferred to the gambling machine's credit meter. The authorized entity may then use the credits to gamble.

If the award can not be redeemed as game credits at the machine directly, the authorized entity may visit a player club center and present identification, after which the award is manually or otherwise given. In other redemption alternatives an authorized entity may visit a redemption kiosk, a restaurant, a gift shop, a hotel representative or other place where the award may be redeemed.

Regardless of which manner of redemption is used, the database is annotated to indicate that the redemption was fulfilled so as to prevent multiple redemptions for one award.

In a specific example, a first lottery player may request to play an electronic lottery. In response, the lottery may provide the first player with lottery numbers, or the lottery may allow the first player to pick numbers. The lottery may notify the first player that, for the numbers to become active, i.e. for the first player to have a chance to win, the first player must present the numbers to casino personnel to activate the numbers prior to the next lottery drawing. A second player, such as a teammate of the first player, may then watch the designated lottery drawing to determine if the first player won a prize. If the first player's entry was a winner, the second player may visit the casino to redeem the prize. The lottery drawing may be conducted at a gambling location or online.

In another example, a player or team may subscribe to a lottery number generation service for a fee. In this instance, a system may select lottery numbers for the player and forward those numbers to the player. These number generation methods may be static, random or formulaic per player preferences. The player may then activate those lottery numbers by visiting a gambling or affiliated location. These lottery numbers may be communicated using various technology including, among others technology, SMS, email, and Instant Messaging.

In another embodiment, qualified persons or teams are separated into categories wherein each category may be offered at least one parameter which is different in value from a parameter offered to persons in another category.

In an example, a universe of players is divided, based upon historical play levels of each individual person, into five categories. The highest tier, Tier 1, contains persons with an average daily theoretical loss, also known as Average Daily Theoretical or ADT, of at least $2,000. Tier 2 includes persons with an ADT of at least $1,200, while Tier 5 contains those persons with an ADT of at least $200. Tiers are not populated equally in this example, because far more persons reach the $200 ADT level than the number that reaches an ADT of $2,000.

The electronic games for all 5 tiers have possible outcomes of $100, $50, $25 and $0 but the likelihood of winning each specific award is different for each tier. Table 1 below indicates each award amount and its likelihood of occurrence for each

tier. Of course, this is but one example of such a structure. It should be appreciated that, according to one aspect, any number of tiers, and any number of persons per tier, and assignment of any number of outcome amounts with a probability of occurrence set to any desired value from 0% to 100% to each tier may be used. Further, other parameters may be included within such a table of category parameters and in any combination.

Table I

Tier #	$100	$50	$25	$0
1	30%	50%	15%	5%
2	20%	50%	20%	10%
3	10%	40%	30%	20%
4	10%	30%	30%	30%
5	1%	25%	44%	30%

In this example, each game outcome is determined by a random number generator, as is well known to those of skill in the art, which is selected as each game is played in accordance with the probabilities specified in parameters for the player's assigned category.

The awards of $100, $50 and $25 are paid as non-cashable credits, which are amounts of credit which may be gambled in a gambling location but may not be converted directly to cash. Awards won by wagering the non-cashable credits may be converted to cash or replayed in additional wagers.

Qualified persons are then invited to play electronic games on the Internet. The invitation may be extended through mail, email, personal invitation or other method.

Figure 2 shows an environment suitable for implementing various embodiments. For example, according to one embodiment illustrated in Figure 2, one or more authorized entities may request entry to one or more electronic games at their home computer 310, Internet enabled cell phone 320 or other Internet device 330. When the authorized entity first arrives at the website, she identifies herself by entering her player ID number, which is also assigned to the player tracking account at a gambling location. She may also identify the invited person with whom she may be associated by entering the player ID number of the invited person. The website then responds with entry information, which may include, among other information, an access code, lottery numbers or electronic game tokens.

To activate the entry information, an authorized entity may visit a designated gambling of affiliated location and insert her player tracking card into the card reader 355 of any connected gambling device 350. The gambling location's player tracking server 345 reads the identity code from the inserted card and requests the authorized entity's individual and team entry records from database 340. The connected gambling device 350 then prompts the authorized user to select which entry information to activate. The entry information presented to the authorized user includes any entry information that the authorized entity is authorized to activate, e.g. entry information resulting from entry requests made by the authorized entity or entry requests made by other entities who indicate the authorized entity may activate their entries, e.g. teammates. After the authorized user selects entry information to activate, the connected gambling device 350 notifies the player tracking server 345. The player tracking server then activates the selected entry information. According to an alternative embodiment, rather than requesting the authorized entity' s individual and team entry records from database 340, connected gambling device 350 notifies the player tracking server 345 to activate all entries associated with the authorized entity.

After activation of an entry, an authorized entity may play electronic games at their home computer 310, Internet enabled cell phone 320 or other Internet device 330. As with entry requests, when the authorized entity first arrives at the website,

she identifies herself by entering her player ID number, which is also assigned to the player tracking account at the gambling location. She also identifies a particular instance of entry information that is the basis for this electronic game session. The selected entry information is then processed to determine the invited person associated with the entry information. These identifiers are used to index the player database 340, where the authorized entity's and the invited person's electronic game parameters are stored. Additionally, the invited person's electronic game parameters may include the category to which the invited person is qualified.

A small application program is downloaded to the authorized entity's computer, cell phone or other Internet enabled device. This application randomly determines each electronic game's outcome according to the database parameters for the invited person. Award amounts from each outcome are stored in database 340 along with annotations showing that an electronic game was completed. The authorized entity continues electronic game play until she exhausts her supply of electronic games, again according to parameters stored in database 340.

To redeem the awards won, an authorized entity visits a designated gambling location and inserts her player tracking card into the card reader 355 of any connected gambling device 350. The gambling location's player tracking server 360 reads the identity code from the inserted card and requests the identified person's award record from database 340. The player tracking server then transfers the appropriate amount of non-cashable credit to the gambling device 350, which makes said noncashable credits available for play. If the authorized entity is a member of a team, the appropriate amount of non-cashable credit will vary depending on the amount of credit available to the team, the allocation rules under which the team plays and the contribution of the authorized entity to the team' s available credit. As each non-cashable credit is wagered, it is deducted from the award balance maintained on database 340. According to one embodiment, when all non-cashable credits are exhausted, or time period parameters are exceeded, no additional non-cashable credit play is allowed.

According to another embodiment illustrated by Figure 2, user 315 may attempt to band players 317 and 319 into a team by issuing invitations. User 315 may be any entity capable of interacting with the system and thus may be, among others, a user, system or other entity. The invitations may include information in addition to, or separate from, the electronic game information discussed above. For example, the invitation may include an identifier of the user who sending the invitation and an indication of the team that the invitee is asked to join. For example, this team indicator may include a universal resource locator (URL) of a home page for the team. In various embodiments, players associated with the same team are authorized to perform activities on behalf of their team and teammates. In some embodiments, teammates may perform any activities available to any other teammate. In other embodiments, teammates may perform only a restricted subset of activities available to other teammates. In still other embodiments, teammates may not be authorized to perform activities on behalf of teammates, but may be authorized to perform activities on behalf of the team, itself. In these embodiments, information indicating the activities a teammate is authorized to perform is stored in a database, such as the player database 340.

In one example, user 315 issues invitations, using his home computer 310, to players 317 and 319 who use Internet enabled cell phone 320 and Internet device 330, respectively. In this example, the invitation is in an electronic form, such as an email, but other embodiments may utilize other media to issue invitations. Upon receipt of the invitation, players 317 and 319 either accept or decline. If player 317 and 319 accept, associations between the team ID and their player IDs will be created in player database 340. Thus when players 317 and 319 interact with gaming device 350, their recorded gaming activity may be associated with the team or teams to which they belong.

In another example, player tracking server 345 may issue invitations to players 317 and 319 based on demographic information regarding the players as well as the player's gaming history. For example, if players 317 and 319 share demographic information, such as working for the same company, or exhibit similar gaming

patterns, such as both spending a substantial amount of time playing blackjack, player tracking server 345 may issue invitations to players 317 and 319 to join groups catering to those characteristics.

Other sources of data may be used to by player tracking server 345 to establish group relationships. For example, other social networking websites, such as, among others, Facebook, Amazon, Linkedln and AIM may provide demographics, purchase history and other data about players. This data may be used to automatically issue invitations to certain players to join groups in which they may be interested.

In one embodiment, a service provider, such as a game operator, may provide teams with an analysis of overall team and individual team member performance. For example, player tracking server 345 may track the gaming activity of team members and may report this activity via various communication channels or social networking functions to one or more team members. In another embodiment, team leaderboards may be created which summarize team performance and rank teams according to a variety of metrics. Thus teams may compete against one another for various prizes. In some instances, this tracking and reporting service may be subject to a fee.

According to an embodiment, any team member may review the team analysis using various displays. For example a team member may review the team analysis while at home through a website. Further, a team member may review the team analysis while at a gambling or affiliated location through kiosks, in-room displays or electronic game machines, such as gaming device 350. The analysis may include the relative contributions of each team member. Contribution metrics may be used as a basis for allocating prizes to team members.

According to an embodiment, the allocation rules may apportion prizes won by the group according to various parameters. These parameters may be weighted in a variety of fashions to produce rules that are preferable to the team or the game operator. Parameters that may be considered when determining the contribution of a team member to the overall team include, among others, number of games played, type of games played, location of games played, number of chances for a prize earned, number of gambling location visits, number entry requests generated, number

of entries activated, number of outcome redemptions, the amount of prizes won or any combination of these. For example, one allocation rule may allocate prizes as a function of the number of entry requests generated by a team member. In another example, an allocation rule may allocate prizes as a function of the number of entries activated by a team member. Yet another allocation rule may apportion prizes as a function of number of games played by a team member.

In another embodiment, the allocation rules possess additional attributes. For example, in one embodiment, the metrics used by the allocation rule are calculated using a rolling time window of a specified period of time, e.g. 30, 60 or 90 days. When player tracking systems span game operators and the gambling locations they run, allocation rules may span the game operators as well. Thus, allocation rules allow teams to collaborate and compete across their preferred gambling locations.

Additionally, the team analysis service may alert team members to significant events. For example, other team members may be alerted if one team member hits a large payout.

As discussed above, various aspects may be implemented within various environments. For example, instead of downloading an application to the person's computer, the game could be entirely resident on a server-based network. Further, the game could be accessed by the player through an interface such as the interface of the well-known Internet Explorer browser program or the well-known Firefox browser program available from Mozilla.

Figure 3 shows another environment suitable for implementing various aspects. In particular, Figure 3 shows a distributed system 400 in which a user, such as a customer 402, receives an invitation to play one or more electronic games. At block 403, the system may deliver an invitation to the player. The invitation may be delivered using any of the methods previously described herein.

According to one embodiment, the player may receive an invitation to play the electronic game, and, after activation of an entry information as discussed above with reference to Figure 2, may play the electronic game on a computer (e.g., a personal computer (PC)). However, it should be appreciated that the user may access the

electronic game on other types of computing systems, and embodiments are not limited thereto.

As shown, the user may play a game over a distributed network such as the Internet 401. As discussed above with reference to Figure 2, the game may be a web-based game that uses one or more server systems, such as web/application server 406 or database server 405. However, it should be appreciated that other types of Internet architectures may be used.

Further, according to one embodiment, the user that is provided the invitation may be identified in a player tracking system or another casino system. For instance, the user may be identified in a casino player tracking system 404 as shown in Figure 3. Although player tracking systems are implemented in casinos, it should be appreciated that various aspects may be applied to player tracking systems implemented in other environments (e.g., slot parlors, racinos, amongst others).

Figure 4 shows an example process for providing incentives according to one embodiment. As shown, a player tracking system 410 may be used to conduct a promotion at a gambling location, such as a casino.

The promotion may be extended, for example, to players identified in a frequent player database or other list or data source. For instance, as shown in Figure 4, a patron list 411 may be maintained which include an account number for the player (e.g., a frequent player identifier), the name of the player, information about the player (e.g., date of birth (DoB), email address, team affiliations) and any other information related to the player or determined by the casino about the player (e.g., the player rating, ranking, historical performance, preferences, etc.).

Based on the information maintained in patron list 411 or any other information (e.g., action(s) taken by the player, team or teams with which the player is associated), a promotion (e.g., a bonus play promotion 412) may be conducted that reviews the list 411 and determines, based on the information relating to the players, a resulting promotion with associated prizes. As shown in Figure 4, prize data 414 may be determined which associates the determined prize with the player or team. This could be accomplished, for example, by associating an identifier of the player or team

(e.g., a player ID, team ID, frequent player account number, etc.) with a determined prize (or class of prizes) to be awarded to the player or team.

Prize data 414 may include, for example, the account number of the player or team, any award or winnings associated with the promotion that are determined for the player or team (or class of prizes the player may win), a coupon or other code associated with the promotion, and any extant expiration information associated with the promotion. Such data may be used to conduct a validation process by the gambling location (e.g., a casino) when such awards are redeemed by players.

Further, such prize data 414 may be provided to an online game provider in order to conduct an online gaming experience. To this end, the casino may transmit or otherwise provide data 414 to an Internet website system to be used to conduct the online experience. The website may store the data in a website database 417. Thereafter, the player proceeds to play the online game.

As discussed, the award may either be predetermined, may be determined later through a sweepstakes or drawing, may be determined when the online experience is conducted, or at any time after the invitation is extended to the player, e.g. after an entry request is received or after entry information is activated. Actual revealed prize data 416 may be maintained that tracks what prizes were awarded to which players or teams. Such data may assist in the redemption or validation processes. Data 416 may include, for example, the account number of the player or team, any actual awards or winnings determined for the player or team, and any coupon or expiration data associated with the promotion.

During or after the online game experience, the award may be revealed to a player, and a player is then required to return to the gambling location to redeem the award. At this point, a redemption process 415 may be conducted (e.g., at the casino location). As a result of this process, redemption data 418 may be generated which tracks the players or teams who have redeemed their awards. Such data 418 may include, for example, the player or team account information, the actual awards or winnings determined for the player or team, and any coupon data, and the redemption date and time.

As discussed above, based on an event that occurs (e.g., an action taken by the player, an occurrence with the gambling location, amongst others), an invitation may be generated and delivered to the user. As discussed further below, the invitation may be generated in response to an action.

Incentives Awarded In Multiple Steps

The process by which a person receives an invitation or redeems an outcome may include multiple interim steps of invitations and redemptions. In this case, the initial invitation process (as described in the section above describing incentives awarded from website play) may be initiated by the casino operator or as a result of an action taken at a gambling location or affiliated location (as described in the section above describing incentives awarded based on specific gambling location activity). In both these cases the process continues as described above, respectively. At the point where the electronic game is played, the outcome may include the invitation to play another electronic game or to take an action at a gambling location or affiliated location. At the point where the person is taking the action at the gambling location or affiliated location, the result may include the invitation to play another electronic game or to take another action, including an action to redeem an outcome. It should be appreciated that the processes and steps described in the selections above describing incentives awarded from website play and incentives awarded based on specific gambling location activity may be incorporated into this method, and in one example, are incorporated. It should be appreciated that the iterations could continue in a back-and-forth manner multiple times.

One aspect relates to encouraging the person to continue to participate in the multiple, interim steps. In one example, coupons or other forms of compensation may be provided if a team member activates entry information within a predetermined time period. In another example, the possible outcomes increase in value with subsequent iterations. The person may also be allowed to redeem an outcome at a certain point or to parlay that outcome for the chance to win something of higher value. Similarly, to

encourage the person to continue to participate, there may be interim outcomes of value for the person to redeem that are additive to the final outcome.

Player Qualification: Data Provided or Action Taken

A player may also be qualified to receive an invitation based upon data provided or actions taken in response to a separate invitation. The player may first be invited to play games for entertainment only (no redeemable outcomes). In order to play the games, the player would be required to register and provide personal information (name, address, date of birth, etc). From that personal information, the system would qualify the player for an invitation to play an electronic game which has a plurality of outcomes that could be redeemed at the gambling location or affiliated location.

The system could do this by comparing the personal information provided with a database of similar information. The database could include a correlation of demographic information with categories of player value to the gambling location. As an example, the system could utilize a database of median income by address to determine the potential value of the player. The system could also utilize algorithms to analyze the personal information to determine categories of player value to the gambling location. As an example, using an algorithm, the system could determine the distance between the gambling location and the player's home address. Players living closer to the gambling location may have a higher likelihood to visit the gambling location.

The qualification of the player may also be based on actions taken while playing the games for entertainment only. As an example, players choosing to play specific electronic games (i.e. slot machines) may be considered more valuable to the gambling location. For those players, a different invitation with different possible outcomes may be provided. Qualifying actions could be based on games played, game strategies employed, or duration of play.

The first invitation is not limited to the play of electronic games for entertainment only. The invitation to take an action may be to sign up for a gambling

location's frequent player card or any activity that solicits player personal information that could be used to estimate the player's value to the gambling location.

A qualification of the player may also be provided based upon gathered data, without the need for a player action. For instance, an invitation may be extended to the player based on player demographics without having the player play a game for pure entertainment. In one example, the player may be selected to receive an award based on information collected about the player such as location or income level.

Player Qualification: Indicators Other Than Past Performance in a Gambling Location

Introducing players with a propensity to enjoy the activity of gambling to gambling locations is a valuable action, particularly if that person and the financial means and time to gamble in significant volume. One aspect relates generally to estimating the worth of an untested person, or group of persons, by comparing their personal attributes or historical conduct with those of persons known to gamble at a particular volume. If the comparison yields enough matching characteristics, the untested person is considered to be qualified to receive inducements to gamble, so that a relationship between that person and a gambling location can be initiated.

The offered inducement may be the chance to play a game or electronic game. Alternatively, one embodiment includes an offer of inducement that does not involve playing a game or electronic game but that simply invites the person to visit the gambling location and is particularly valuable when the gambling location has no relationship or communication with the person, outside of this invitation. Finding qualified persons, especially those with a likelihood of enjoying the activity of gambling that have not visited, phoned or contacted the gambling location is a valuable benefit and the invitation alone may be sufficient inducement, or the person or persons may be offered an appearance fee, free or reduced airfare to travel to the location, free or reduced cost gambling at the location, free or reduced cost food, beverage, room or other such inducements, whether alone or in combination. It

should be appreciated that there are many such inducements that may be offered, and all such inducements are anticipated as useful within the scope certain embodiments.

In one example, it is determined that persons with personally managed brokerage accounts often have an affinity for gambling. A list of persons with such brokerage accounts is obtained but it is too expensive to extend an attractive inducement to all members of that list because a significant portion of them do not have an affinity for gambling. However, it is believed that persons that reside in certain zip codes tend to have a greater amount of disposable income than the average of all people with qualifying brokerage accounts. A new list is created including only of those persons with a qualifying brokerage account that also live within one of the qualifying zip code areas and only those so qualified persons are offered the inducement.

One embodiment begins with a list of people that might have an affinity for gambling and then compares the persons on that list to one or more additional lists that also contain persons that might have an affinity for gambling. If the same person appears on two, or more lists, their likelihood of enjoying a gambling relationship with a gambling location is higher than for those appearing on a single list and therefore are more worthy of a particular inducement than the general population or persons that are members of fewer lists. For example, a person appearing on a list of owners of personally managed brokerage accounts and on a list of fantasy football league participants may be a statistically relevant to gambling propensity and, therefore, worth the expense of inducement.

In another embodiment, a list of persons that currently do not play at a particular gambling location(s) is obtained. Invitations may be extended to them as a chance to play games on the Internet for prizes, at least some of which will incite the person to visit a gambling location. In one example, the games and prizes may be scaled according to a perceived value of player.

In another embodiment, a person with influence over others may be incentivized to participate in a new game or gambling location. For example, a team

organizer of a team that has reached a threshold size or gambling activity threshold may be provided with games or prizes to encourage further growth and achievement.

There are many other ways and methods by which to start with a list of people believed to have, as a group, a more likely affinity for gambling than the general population. There are many other ways to further qualify members of this initial list based upon other factors, to create a new list of people that will, on average, have a higher likelihood of an affinity for gambling in sufficient volume as to make them attractive candidate customers for gambling locations, and therefore worth the cost of providing an inducement in an effort to initiate a relationship between the person or persons and the gambling location.

In one embodiment, those qualified persons are invited to play a game using the structures outlined in Figures 7 and 8. Qualified persons or teams of a given category may be provided different inducements than qualified persons of other categories. They may be offered a chance to participate in unique electronic games, the outcomes of which, determine the specific inducement offered. They may also or alternatively be offered a different set of game outcomes, different outcome award structures, different redemption opportunities or other differentiated offers in relationship to their category of qualification. It should be appreciated that there are many ways in which various aspects may be used to offer inducements based upon the category of qualification of a person or persons and embodiments are not be limited to just the examples described herein.

Reveal-Based Gaming System Used to Provide Incentives

As discussed above, various aspects may be implemented using an Internet-based computer system. One such system includes a reveal-based gaming system that may be used according to various embodiments, to provide additional incentive for a player to return to a gambling location. Such a system may be used to play one or more online games, which may be then used to incentivize a player to return to a gambling location (such as a casino). The game may be initiated by a player accessing a website by a gaming operator, after which the game may be played.

As discussed, the player may be invited to play the online game. Such an invitation may come from a direct mail invitation, email, website advertisement, issued ticket, coupon or other type of invitation. The invitation may, for example, include a code that permits the player to access the online game. The invitation may include any number of identifying information, including codes that may be associated with the player to which the invitation was extended. In some cases, there may not be a hard association of the invitation to the player (e.g., when advertising to a team of players or a group of people who are not yet players), and the player when redeeming the invitation may be required to provide additional information identifying the player.

Figure 6 shows an example ticket 601 that may be issued to a player, although it should be appreciated that an invitation may be extended to a player in other forms, and the invitation need not come in printed form. Rather, according to one aspect, the player may need to be correlated to a particular invitation to permit the player to redeem any winnings, if awarded. Such a correlation may be effected using one or more codes, either printed or not, gaming pieces, any out-of-band messaging (e.g., a phone call) or other methods, and embodiments are not limited to any particular form of an invitation unless explicitly recited in the claims.

In the case where the player is issued a scratch-type ticket, the player may scratch a surface of the ticket to reveal one or more indications. These indications may include, for example, a serial number of the ticket, an access code, or other indication (or combination thereof) that may be activated to access the online game. Alternatively, the ticket may be a pull-tab ticket or other ticket type suitable for presenting indications to a player. In other embodiments, the player may be permitted to access a website to receive an invitation, may receive an e-mail, or may receive an invitation in a non-printed form as discussed above.

In the case where the ticket is printed, the ticket may include other indications (e.g., a decryption key or portion thereof as described above that may be used to decrypt game results). Also, the ticket may indicate to a player the number of plays of a second game (e.g., as played by the player on a computer system). For instance, in

the case of a slot machine game, the ticket may indicate the number of spins that a player may be awarded by the ticket. In the case of a COLLAPSE-type game, the ticket may indicate the number of game instances (or plays) of the COLLAPSE-type game that can be played by the player. Further, as discussed above, the player may be permitted to play any one of a number of offered games, and the player may select different games to play to reveal results associated with game instances. For instance, the player may be permitted to play a number of different games, including, but not limited to games of chance, games of skill and chance, games of skill, casino games, card games, or any other type of game. In one embodiment, the player may be awarded during the online experience, an award which may be redeemed at the gambling or other redemption location (e.g., a POS location).

In one embodiment where a physical ticket is printed, ticket 601 includes a code 602 printed on a surface of the ticket that provides access to outcomes (e.g., prizes) stored on the server. As discussed, code 602 may also include, as an optional feature to increase security, a key that may be used to decrypt the outcome. This outcome may be stored in a database stored on a server system. Ticket 601 may also include a ticket identifier 603 used to identify the ticket, and which may be used to identify the outcome associated with the ticket. Further, ticket 601 may include a game indication 604 that relates information relevant to a game played on a computer system. For example, there may also be stored, on the ticket, an identifier that indicates, to the player, the number of plays associated with an online game. In one example, a player is provided a ticket (e.g., for free) or otherwise purchases a ticket at a retailer or other POS location (e.g., in a casino). The ticket may also include an indicator as to the website that supports the online game. In the case where there is no physical ticket associated with the invitation, the invitation may itself have an identifier associated with the invitation. The invitation identifier may be unique to a particular player, or may be unique to a particular group of players, such as a team of players, to which the invitation is extended.

The player, or another authorized entity associated with the player, such as a teammate, accesses a website to request entry to the online game. In one example, the

player requests entry by entering the ticket identifier 603 into a website. In response, the website provides the player with additional entry information, such as, for example, a gambling location that will activate the ticket. Additionally, the entry information provided may include multiple gambling locations, each with the same or different incentives to activate the entry at that gambling location.

The player, or a teammate, may visit a gambling location capable of activating the entry. In one example, a teammate swipes her card into a general purpose kiosk and selects the entry to activate. In another example, the player enters a players club to activate all of his entries and those of his teammates.

The player then proceeds to play a game on a computer system. Figure 5 shows an example system 500 according to one embodiment upon which a game may be played. The user (a player) 510 plays a game through an interface of a host computer system (e.g. host 501). Host 501 may be any type of computer system that is capable of playing a game. The host may be, for example, a general-purpose computer system (e.g., a personal computer (PC)) that connects to a network (e.g., the Internet). Other general purpose computer system types (e.g., a PDA, a cell phone, set-top box, or other system type) may be used to play the game.

The computer system may be coupled to a server system 503 through one or more communication networks 502, including, but not limited to, the Internet. The server may provide a game program 509 that is executed by host 501 for playing the game. More particularly, game program 509, when executed, may provide an online game that can be played by a user through an interface associated with host 501. This online game may be, for example, a video slot machine, blackjack, or other online or casino-type game.

The game program may be stored, for example, in a volatile or non-volatile computer-readable medium (e.g., a memory, storage, or other media) associated with server 503 that provides game programs. For instance, the game program may be stored on a web server and downloaded to a client computer over the Internet. Game program 509 may be one of a number of game programs associated with an online game experience. Different game programs may be selectively downloaded to the

client, based on the type of game ticket issued, the game selected for play by the user, the type of client used, or other criteria.

Server 503 may also be a general-purpose computer system, or any other type of computer system capable of authenticating tickets, providing game programs, and performing other game-related functions. Further, it should be appreciated that various game functions may be performed by one or more server systems. Server 503 generally includes a processor 504 for executing server-based game functions. Server 503 may also include a memory 505 for storing data associated with game programs. Server 503 may also include one or more network interfaces 506 that couple server 503 to network 502, which permit server 503 to communicate with one or more hosts. Further, server 503 may include one or more storage entities 507, including disks or other media for storing data. In one embodiment, storage 507 is adapted to store one or more game programs 509 as discussed above. Server 503 may have any number or type of processor that executes an operating system and one or more application programs. In one embodiment, server 503 provides web server content to one or more clients for the purpose of accessing and playing the game.

Server 503 may also include a database 108 that is adapted to store one or more outcomes associated with a ticket or other gaming piece. As discussed, the outcome may be indexed using an identifier of the ticket.

One embodiment is implemented as a process including acts of invitation, identification, qualification, activation, play and action, as illustrated in Figure 7. These acts may be conducted with regard to a person, such as a player, or a group of persons, such as a team, or other entities. In addition, according to at least one embodiment, the process illustrated in Figure 7 is performed by a computer system. Details regarding particular acts included in each of the steps illustrated in Figure 7 may be found throughout this disclosure. For example, the discussion of the process illustrated in Figure 8 includes additional information regarding each of the steps shown in Figure 7. Step 110 is invitation, wherein an entity is invited to participate in a game, such as an electronic game.

Step 120 is identification, wherein the identity of an entity that has requested entry into a game is ascertained. Step 130 is a test of qualification, wherein the entity is measured against predefined criteria to determine if they are eligible to participate in the electronic game. If the entity is unqualified, it is excluded from play 140. If the entity is qualified, the entry may receive entry information in this step.

Step 145 is activation, wherein the entity visits a gambling location to activate the invitation or other entry information. After activation, qualified entities are presented an opportunity to play all or portions of an electronic game in step 150. The electronic game may include a plurality of outcomes, at least one of which is a winning outcome. When electronic game play concludes, depending on outcome, the entity may be offered an opportunity to take an action 160. This action may include another visit to a gambling location. Awards earned by taking the action are then redeemed 170. In one embodiment, the steps of action 160 and redemption 170 may be combined into a single step.

While Figure 7 shows at least one example which represents the steps of invitation, identification, qualification, play, action and redemption as occurring in a specific order, it should be appreciated that the order of these steps may be altered and remain within the scope of some embodiments.

Other embodiments may place the steps of invitation, identification, qualification, activation, play and action in any order. In some embodiments, the person may have to complete a step multiple times. For example, a person might have to accomplish identification before being allowed to play an electronic game on the Internet and must again submit to the identification process before being allowed to take an action or redemption. In another embodiment one or more of the steps may be eliminated or combined with other steps. For example, the steps of action and redemption may be combined, redemption may be allowed without an action or an action may be required without a redemption possibility. Embodiments may include all orders, permutations and combinations of the steps of invitation, identification, qualification, activation, play and action, including the repetition of one or more of those steps and the division of one or more of the steps into partial accomplishment.

In addition, each step may include restrictions based upon one or more of the following criteria: specified time period, gambling location, affiliated location, team membership, location of games within the gambling location upon which an action is to be taken, games within the gambling location upon which an action is to be taken, perception of worth, amongst others.

Further, various aspects as described herein may be used in association with those described in U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 60/838,234 entitled "METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONDUCTING A GAME OF CHANCE" filed August 17, 2006, and U.S. Patent Application Serial Number 11/704,144 entitled "METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR REMOTE ENTRY IN FREQUENT PLAYER PROGRAMS" filed February 8, 2007, each of which is incorporated by reference herein in it entirety.

Figure 8 shows one example process for conducting a game according to one embodiment. At block 802, process 800 begins. At block 804, a system executing process 800 provides an invitation to an entity. As discussed, an invitation may take on several forms and be communicated via various media. The entity to which the invitation is provided may be a player, team member, system or any other entity capable of interacting with the system.

In one example, a player is issued a ticket or is otherwise provided an invitation to play an electronic game (e.g., using any of the invitation methods or systems described herein). In another embodiment, a player may purchase or is otherwise provided a ticket at a retailer, casino, or other POS location. In another embodiment, the invitation is provided free of charge. As discussed, the invitation may be provided based on some qualification of the player.

At block 806, a system executing process 800 receives a request to enter an electronic game from an entity. As discussed, the request may include, among other information, an identifier of the electronic game and an identifier of the invitee. The request may be communicated in any media, including an electronically transmitted request.

For example, a team member who is responsible for processing invitations to

team players may receive one or more invitations on behalf of team players. This team member may then request entry to various electronic games based on these invitations by providing an entry request to the game operator. In embodiments where no invitation is require to request entry to the electronic game, this team member may simply request an appropriate number of entries to support the efforts of his team. Thus, this team member may be able to identify and enter only the most entertaining (or statistically advantageous) electronic games to which members of the team are invited.

At block 808, a system executing process 800 provides entry information to an entity. As discussed, the entry information may include an access or entry code. Further, the entry information may include information used by the electronic game to provide a gaming experience, such as a set of lottery numbers or other game tokens.

For example, in response to a request for entry into an electronic poker game, a system may provide an access code. The access code may include embedded information as to the number of chips to be allocated to a player who plays the electronic poker game using the access code. In another embodiment, the access code may simply be a pointer to table entry that lists the amount of credit to be given the player utilizing this access code to play the electronic poker game.

At block 810, a system executing process 800 receives an activation request for entry information from an entity. This activation request may be required to be received from one or more gambling or affiliated locations. The activation request may include, among other information, the ID of the requestor and the entry information that is the subject of the activation request.

The activation act may be any act that evidences the player's presence at a gambling or affiliated location. Activation acts may include, among other acts, inserting a player card into an electronic gaming machine, swiping the player card at a kiosk and redeeming a coupon offer. In one embodiment, activation through game play at a gambling location may be subject to a minimum amount of gambling activity. For example, to activate entries into electronic games, the team may be required to gamble for a certain number of hours or hours per entry to be activated.

Thus, the game operator may encourage game play in addition to simply visiting a gambling location.

In another example, a player who wishes to play an electronic lottery may be provided numbers on a regular basis as part of a fee based subscription service. The player may make periodic trips to various gambling locations to activate these numbers prior to the lottery drawings with which they are associated.

At block 812, a system executing process 800 provides an electronic game and an outcome to an entity. As discuss, the electronic game may be any game of chance or skill, and the outcome may be any of several outcomes, some of which may be winning outcomes. The outcome may be presented online or at a gambling location.

According to one embodiment, a player may play an electronic game on one or more computer systems (e.g., a PC or other computer system capable of playing games). For example, a host computer system may execute a game program. The game program may be, for example, an online game that includes one or more components downloaded over a communication network (e.g., the Internet).

As discussed, the ticket may include a code which is used to access the outcome of a game. This code may be printed on a face of the ticket as discussed above with reference to Figure 6. In one example system, the player accesses a website that includes an interface in which the player may enter the code. In the case where no physical ticket is issued, there may be other methods for associating a invitation to a particular player or group of players, such as a team, and an outcome of an award to be provided to the player or group of players.

This interface may be, for example, used to access the game, or may be any other interface, e.g., an interface used to access a download website used for downloading game software (e.g., game program 509). The interface may be programmed in one or more computer languages (e.g., an HTML, Java, Macromedia Flash, or other type interface) and may include a text entry box in which the player can input the code. The interface may include other ways of entering a code or other parameter (e.g., a glyph printed on a ticket) that allows the user to gain access to the game. It should be appreciated that embodiments are not limited to any particular

method for entering the code, or any format of the code, and that any type of code or method of entry may be used.

The player enters the code, and an outcome is determined at based on the code. More particularly, there may be a mapping between the code printed on the ticket and an outcome stored on the server. This code may be stored, for example, in a database structure stored in database 508 of the server. Database 508 may be, for example, a relational database, object database, flat file database, or other organizational entities used to store and maintain data. Further a listing of winning codes may be furnished to an organization that provides the game (such as, for example, a state-run lottery commission, casino operator, etc.). The code may include an optional decryption key that decrypts an entry stored on the server. This entry may indicate one or more outcomes of game instances.

The outcome of the game is then used by the online game to determine play of the game by the player. For instance, if the stored outcome is "Win $50," the online game may present an outcome to the player that indicates that the player won a $50 prize. This presentation may be in the form of one or more reveals presented to the player while playing the online game. The presentation may be progressive, in that the ultimate outcome (e.g., "Win $50") is achieved through a set of reveals or progressions through the online game. For example, in the case where a COLLAPSE-type game is played wherein items are collected for playing in a second level game, such reveal outcomes of each instance of the COLLAPSE-type game may be stored on the server.

As discussed, prizes may be distributed over game instances or items (or more generally, win opportunities) to maximize game interest and to entice the player to play each game instance associated with a particular ticket. For example, one approach may include providing to the player an early (relative in the series of game instances) indication of winning to keep the player interested. As the player plays more game instances, the magnitude of the prizes may be adjusted such that a level of game "drama" is increased. That is, prize values are adjusted among later game instances to provide relatively higher prize values in later games. Other

approaches/distributions may be provided for increasing or maintaining game interest.

At block 814, a system executing process 800 receives a request to redeem an outcome from an entity. The redemption request may be required to be received from one or more gambling, affiliated or redemption locations. The redemption request may include, among other information, the ID of the requestor, information regarding the outcome and an ID of the activated entry upon which the electronic game was based.

For example, the player may redeem the ticket at the point of sale or other redemption location (e.g., a gambling location such as a casino). Alternatively, the player may be permitted to redeem the ticket without playing the game. Redemption may be permitted, for example, after a predetermined time. For instance, the player may be permitted to redeem a ticket after a set time (e.g., 10 PM), a particular time period after ticket purchase (e.g., 24 hours) or other absolute or relative time. This may be the case for a Keno or lottery-based system, where a Keno or lottery result is made available at a set time after the ticket or other type of invitation was provided to the player. Alternatively, tickets may be redeemed immediately after they are provided to the player to entice the player to remain at the gambling location. According to one embodiment, the player may be permitted to redeem the ticket (and winning result) any time after accessing the game.

At block 816, a system executing process 800 provides a payout to an entity. Payouts may be determined by a pay table associated with the electronic game. The number of tickets, or other invitations, may be determined *a priori*, and a pay table that determines payouts may be allocated to the tickets. This allocation may be determined, for example, by shuffling the pay table and allocating results to tickets. The following is an example of a pay table that may be used with a game according to one embodiment:

Number of Tickets Issued: 2000

Ticket Price: $5

Table II - Example Payout **Table**

Number of Tickets	Payout
1	$100
700	$10
500	$5
100	$1
600	$0

Game Operator Return: $300 (3%) - expenses

As shown in the example above, a certain number of tickets may be allocated as winning tickets having a particular payout (e.g., an outcome). Some tickets may have no payout associated with them, and some may only have a nominal payout (e.g., a small award amount, free ticket, etc.). A small number of tickets may include a large payout as compared to the magnitude of other payouts. It should be appreciated, however, that payouts are not limited to money, but other types of prizes may be awarded including merchandise, game credit, loyalty points or any other representation of value. As discussed above, it is appreciated that it would be beneficial to provide a great enough reward to encourage the player to return to the gambling location. Thus, according to one embodiment, the player may be provided an appropriate award that properly incentivizes the player to redeem their award (and return to the gambling location).

In another embodiment, the prize won could be credits toward play of another game, or "bonus game." The bonus game would typically have a large payout associated with any winning outcome. Further, depending on the number of players, the bonus game may be a massively multiplayer game. Moreover, certain bonus games may span game operators to increase the magnitude of the payout and thus the draw of the game.

In another embodiment, certain electronic games may provide tokens or pieces that may be combined to redeem various prizes. For example, as discussed above with regard to a treasure hunt game, an electronic game may require a full set of

pieces prior to providing the redeemer with a prize or a chance to win a prize, e.g. by playing another game at the gambling location.

At block 818, process 800 ends.

Each of the processes described above depicts one particular sequence of acts in a particular embodiment. Other actions can be added, or the order of actions can be altered in this method without departing from the scope of some embodiments.

Payouts and Game Play

According to aspects, payouts and game play may be interrelated. For example, according to one embodiment, the odds of winning an electronic game may be the type of odds experienced in actual (rather than computer-based) games. Alternatively, the odds of winning may not necessarily be "natural" odds of winning any particular type of game, but rather, the odds may be adjusted to obtain the outcome desired (e.g., by the gaming operator). The odds of winning, number of winning tickets, amount of payout per ticket, or other payout parameter may be any amount or number, and embodiments are not limited to any particular odds of winning, number of winning tickets, payout amount or type of payout. However, according to one embodiment, the overall odds of winning, amount and type of payout, etc. may be similar to a game previously approved by regulators (e.g., scratch ticket games, Keno, bingo, etc.) so that the use of an additional game to display an outcome associated with the previously-approved game is scrutinized much less by regulators, and as a result, the approval of the additional game is less burdensome. To this end, a system associated with the previously-approved game may provide ticket and outcome information to a system conducting an online game (e.g. server 503).

The code stored on the server (e.g., server 503) may be used to determine electronic game play as played on the computer system. For instance, the electronic game outcome may be "Win $50." In the case of a slot machine-type game, the ticket may indicate that the player receives 10 spins of the slot machine. The outcome of each spin may be predetermined, and the electronic game may retrieve information from the server indicating a predetermined sequence of game play as discussed above.

In the case of a slot machine-type game, the predetermined sequence may indicate the winnings associated with each of the spins. In the case of a COLLAPSE-type game, the outcome of each instance of the second level game may be stored on the server and retrieved prior to game play.

In another example, only the overall outcome is predetermined (e.g., the total winning associated with the ticket), and the sequence of game play may be determined when the game is played. In the example above where the player is indicated as winning $50 over 10 spins, the $50 winnings (and any intermediate losses) may be allocated to the player at any point over the 10 spins. In the case of the COLLAPSE-type game, winnings may be allocated across game instances. In a further example, winnings may be allocated across items collected while playing the COLLAPSE-type game. Because the number of items collected may vary depending on the skill of the player, the distribution of prizes among collected items may be determined during game play by the game playing system. Thus, according to one embodiment, the player's skill (or lack thereof) does not affect the overall outcome of the game.

This allocation may be determined by the server, the game software executing on the client, or a combination thereof. Further, the game play may be randomized in that a further play using the same ticket may yield a different sequence of game states leading to the same outcome. For example, in the case of a slot machine game as described above, a player may be indicated as winning $50, but the sequence by which the player attains the $50 winning outcome may be different depending on various factors. Such factors may include a randomization function that determines results of individual game plays (e.g., in the case of a series of "spins," the result of each spin), or some other function. The series of intermediate outcomes may be stored in a database associated with the server as discussed above with respect to game outcomes. Also, the outcomes may be adjusted using a formula or rule-based approach during execution of the game to increase the game drama and heighten the game playing experience.

According to another aspect, a player may purchase a ticket at a point of

purchase (e.g., a convenience store) and the indication of a win/no win condition of the ticket is revealed on a different medium. For instance, a player purchases a scratch ticket in a convenience or other type of store. The prize that the player wins is not revealed on the scratch card itself, but rather the prize is revealed through another medium (e.g., on a home computer system, PDA, cell phone, etc.).

For instance, as discussed above, the player may be presented another game (e.g., a slot machine or COLLAPSE-type game as described above) that reveals at least a portion of the prize. The underlying prizes available via the reveals may be predetermined, in that the outcome of the game may be stored in one or more systems. The scratch ticket may reveal different numbers of plays (e.g., pulls in the case of a slot-machine type game, or game instances of a COLLAPSE-type game) the player receives. As discussed, the game could be any type of game, and the type and number of plays may be any number and may be selected according to the type of online game being played.

In one aspect wherein a physical ticket is issued, the ticket may include authentication information that is used to obtain the reveals. In one example, the scratch ticket contains a secret key which is used to decrypt the results that are revealed to the player. That is, according to one aspect, it is impossible to determine if and what a particular ticket wins without having possession of the ticket (and therefore the secret key). In another example, the scratch ticket could contain only a portion of the secret key. The other portion of the key may be stored, for example, on a server and retrieved from a database (e.g., file, relational database, etc.) based on, for example, the serial number of the card. Mappings of serial numbers of tickets to encrypted results can be provided to the lottery, casino, or other provider for additional audit control.

Having now described some illustrative embodiments, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that the foregoing is merely illustrative and not limiting, having been presented by way of example only. Numerous modifications and other illustrative embodiments are within the scope of one of ordinary skill in the art and are contemplated as falling within the scope of some embodiments. In particular,

although many of the examples presented herein involve specific combinations of method acts or system elements, it should be understood that those acts and those elements may be combined in other ways to accomplish the same objectives. Acts, elements and features discussed only in connection with one embodiment are not intended to be excluded from a similar role in other embodiments. Further, for the one or more means-plus-function limitations recited in the following claims, the means are not intended to be limited to the means disclosed herein for performing the recited function, but are intended to cover in scope any means, known now or later developed, for performing the recited function.

Use of ordinal terms such as "first", "second", " third", "a", "b" "c" etc., in the claims to modify or otherwise identify a claim element does not by itself connote any priority, precedence, or order of one claim element over another or the temporal order in which acts of a method are performed, but are used merely as labels to distinguish one claim element having a certain name from another element having a same name (but for use of the ordinal term) to distinguish the claim elements.

CLAIMS

1. A method for conducting a game using an electronic device, the method comprising:

providing entry information to at least one first player of a plurality of qualified players, the plurality of qualified players including a team of associated players;

receiving, from the at least one first player by the electronic device, at least one request to activate the entry information, the at least one request to activate including the entry information, the electronic device being located in either a gambling location or a affiliate location; and

providing at least one game to the at least one first player.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

receiving, from a first location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to enter the at least one game from a second player of the plurality of qualified players; and

receiving, from a second location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to play the at least one game from a third player of the plurality of qualified players, wherein the at least one first player, the at least one second player and the at least one third player are associated with the team.

3. The method according to claim 1 further comprising receiving, from a location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, at least one request to enter at least one game from the at least one first player.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request includes receiving at least one request to enter a game conducted at either the gambling location or the affiliate location.

5. The method according to claim 3, wherein receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request includes receiving a request to enter a game of skill.

6. The method according to claim 3, wherein receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request includes receiving a request to enter a game of chance.

7. The method according to claim 3, wherein receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request includes receiving a request to enter at least one game that provides an outcome when each of a plurality of the team gathers at least one game token.

8. The method according to claim 3, wherein receiving, from the location other than any gambling location or any affiliate location, the at least one request includes receiving at least one request to enter an electronic game.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein receiving the at least one request to enter the electronic game includes receiving at least one request to enter an electronic game that is separate from games offered in a gambling environment at the gambling location.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate includes receiving the at least one request to active at a kiosk.

11. The method according to claim 1, wherein receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate includes receiving the at least one request to activate from a casino.

12. The method according to claim 1, wherein receiving, from the at least on first player by the electronic device, the at least one request to activate includes receiving the at least one request to activate from a convenience store.

13. The method according to claim 1, further comprising qualifying the at least one first player.

14. The method according to claim 1, further comprising inviting the at least one first player.

15. The method according to claim 1, further comprising associating the at least one first player with the team.

16. The method according to claim 15, wherein associating includes receiving an indication, from a person, of the at least one first player to associate with the team.

17. The method according to claim 15, wherein associating includes receiving an indication, from a system, of the at least one first player, the indication referring to recorded demographic information applicable to the at least one first player.

18. The method according to claim 15, wherein associating includes receiving an indication, from a system, of the at least one first player, the indication referring to recorded playing history information applicable to the at least one first player.

19. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

providing outcome information to the at least one first player, the outcome information indicating at least one winning outcome;

receiving a redemption request including the outcome information in the gambling location; and

redeeming the outcome information in the gambling location.

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein providing the outcome information to the at least one first player includes providing the outcome information to all of the plurality of qualified players.

21. The method according to claim 19, wherein redeeming includes providing a monetary prize.

22. The method according to claim 19, wherein redeeming includes providing a non-monetary prize.

23. The method according to claim 22, wherein providing a non-monetary prize includes providing any of merchandise, points, a chance to win a monetary prize, free game play, reduced cost game play, credits, coupons, gift certificates, and qualification for other games.

24. The method according to claim 22, wherein providing the non-monetary prize includes providing an entry to play one of the games offered in a gambling environment at the gambling location.

25. The method according to claim 19, wherein redeeming includes allocating a portion of a prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players.

26. The method according to claim 25, further comprising recording a number of games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players, wherein allocating the portion of the prize includes allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players.

27. The method according to claim 25, further comprising recording a number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players, wherein allocating the portion of the prize includes allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players.

28. The method according to claim 25, further comprising:

receiving at least one request to play the at least one game from the at least one first player, the at least one request to play including the entry information; and

recording a number of games played by each of the plurality of qualified players, wherein allocating the portion of the prize includes allocating a portion of a prize as a function of the number games played by each of the plurality of qualified players.

29. A system for conducting at least one electronic game, the at least one electronic game being separate from games offered in a gambling environment at a gambling location and having at least one winning outcome, the system comprising:

an input;

an output; and

a controller configured to:

receive, via the input, at least one request to enter the at least one electronic game from a first electronic device, the first electronic device coupled to a network located outside the gambling location;

provide, via the output, entry information to the first electronic device;

receive, via the input, at least one request to activate the entry information from a second electronic device, the at least one request to activate including the entry information, the second electronic device coupled to a network located within the gambling location; and

provide, via the output, the at least one electronic game to a third electronic device.

30. The system according to claim 29, further comprising:

a database storing identifiers of a plurality of qualified players, wherein the at least one request to enter the at least one electronic game includes an identifier of a first player of the plurality of qualified players, the at least one request to activate the entry information includes an identifier of a second player of the plurality of qualified players and the database includes an association between at least one team and the first player and the second player.

31. The system according to claim 29, wherein the at least one electronic game provides an outcome when each of a plurality of the at least one team gathers at least one token.

32. The system according to claim 29, wherein the second electronic device is a kiosk.

33. The system according to claim 29, wherein the gambling location includes a convenience store.

34. The system according to claim 29, wherein the controller is further configured to qualify the first player.

35. The system according to claim 29, wherein the controller is further configured to provide an invitation to the first electronic device.

36. The system according to claim 29, wherein the controller is further configured to:

provide outcome information to the third electronic device;

receive a redemption request including the outcome information from a fourth electronic device, the fourth electronic device coupled to the network located within the gambling location; and

redeem the outcome information.

37. The system according to claim 36, wherein the controller configured to provide outcome information is further configured to provide outcome information to electronic devices being used by any of the plurality of players.

38. There system according to claim 36, wherein the controller configured to redeem the outcome information is further configured to provide a monetary prize.

39. The system according to claim 36, wherein the controller configured to redeem the outcome information is further configured to provide a non-monetary prize.

40. The system according to claim 36, wherein the controller configured to redeem the outcome information is further configured to allocate a portion of a prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players.

41. The system according to claim 40, wherein the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players is further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of games entered by each of the plurality of qualified players.

42. The system according to claim 40, wherein the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players is further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of entries activated by each of the plurality of qualified players.

43. The system according to claim 40, wherein the controller configured to allocate the portion of the prize to more than one of the plurality of qualified players

is further configured to allocate a portion of the prize as a function of a number of games played by each of the plurality of qualified players.

44. A computer readable storage medium comprising instructions that when executed by a controller cause the controller to perform a method comprising:

receiving at least one request to enter at least one electronic game from at least one of a plurality of qualified players, the at least one electronic game being separate from games offered in a gambling environment at a gambling location and having at least one winning outcome;

providing entry information to the at least one of the plurality of qualified players;

receiving, from an electronic device in the gambling location, at least one request to activate the entry information from the at least one of a plurality of qualified players, the at least one request to activate including the entry information; and

providing the at least one electronic game to the at least one of the plurality of qualified players.

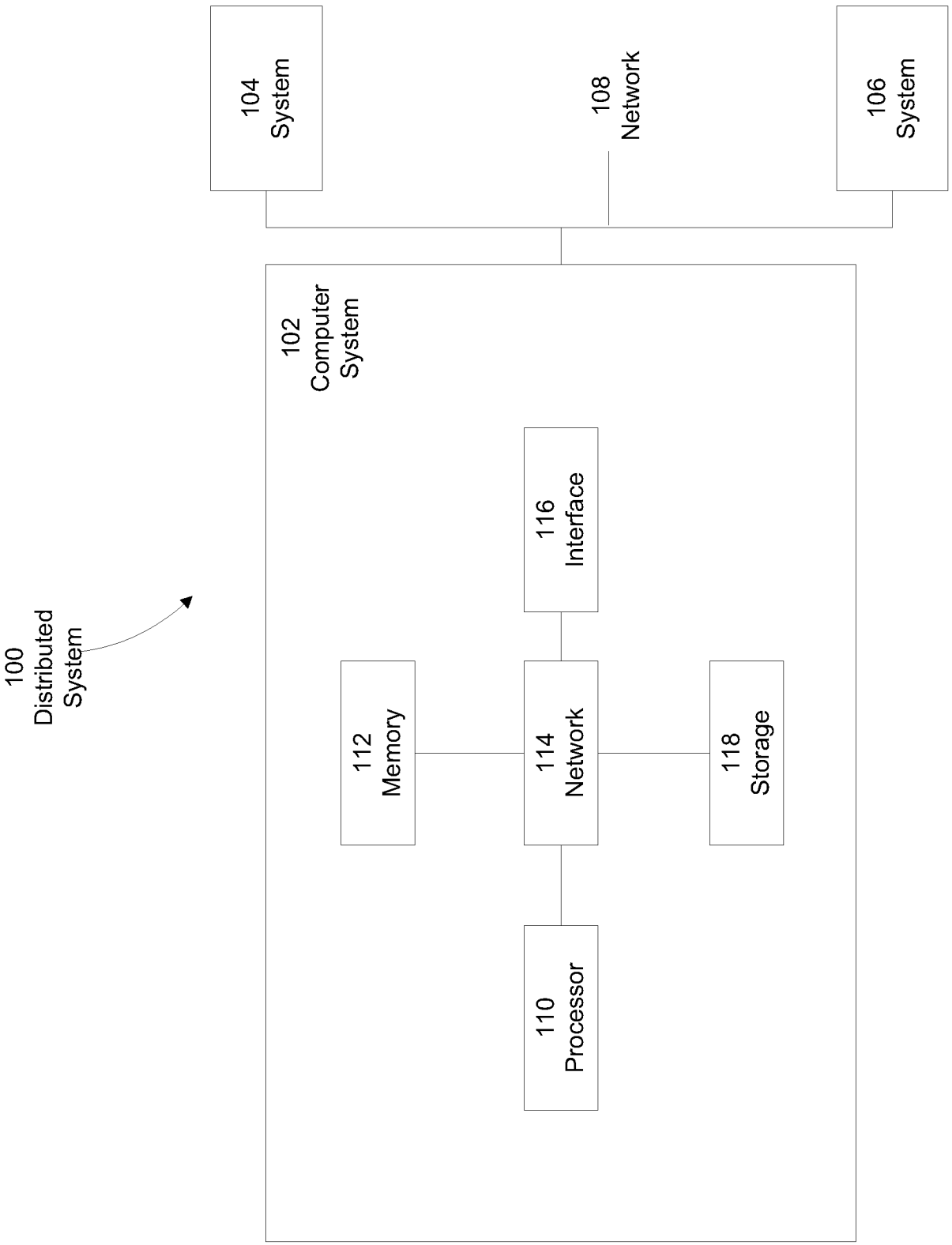
100
Distributed
System
102
Computer
System
104
System
106
System
108
Network
110
Processor
112
Memory
114
Network
116
Interface
118
Storage

Figure 1

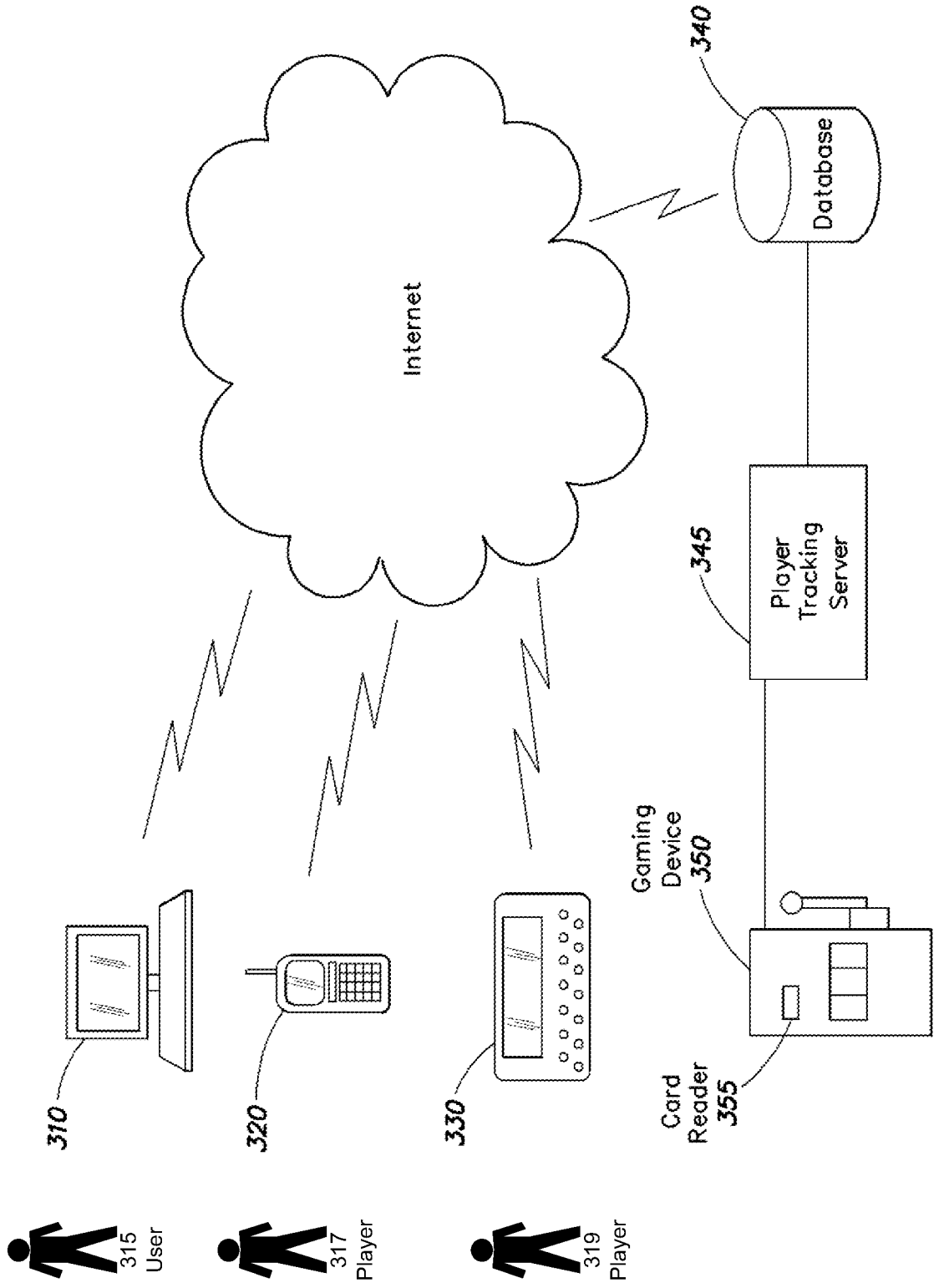
340
Database
Internet
345
Player Tracking Server
Gaming Device 350
Card Reader 355
310
320
330
315 User
317 Player
319 Player

Figure 2

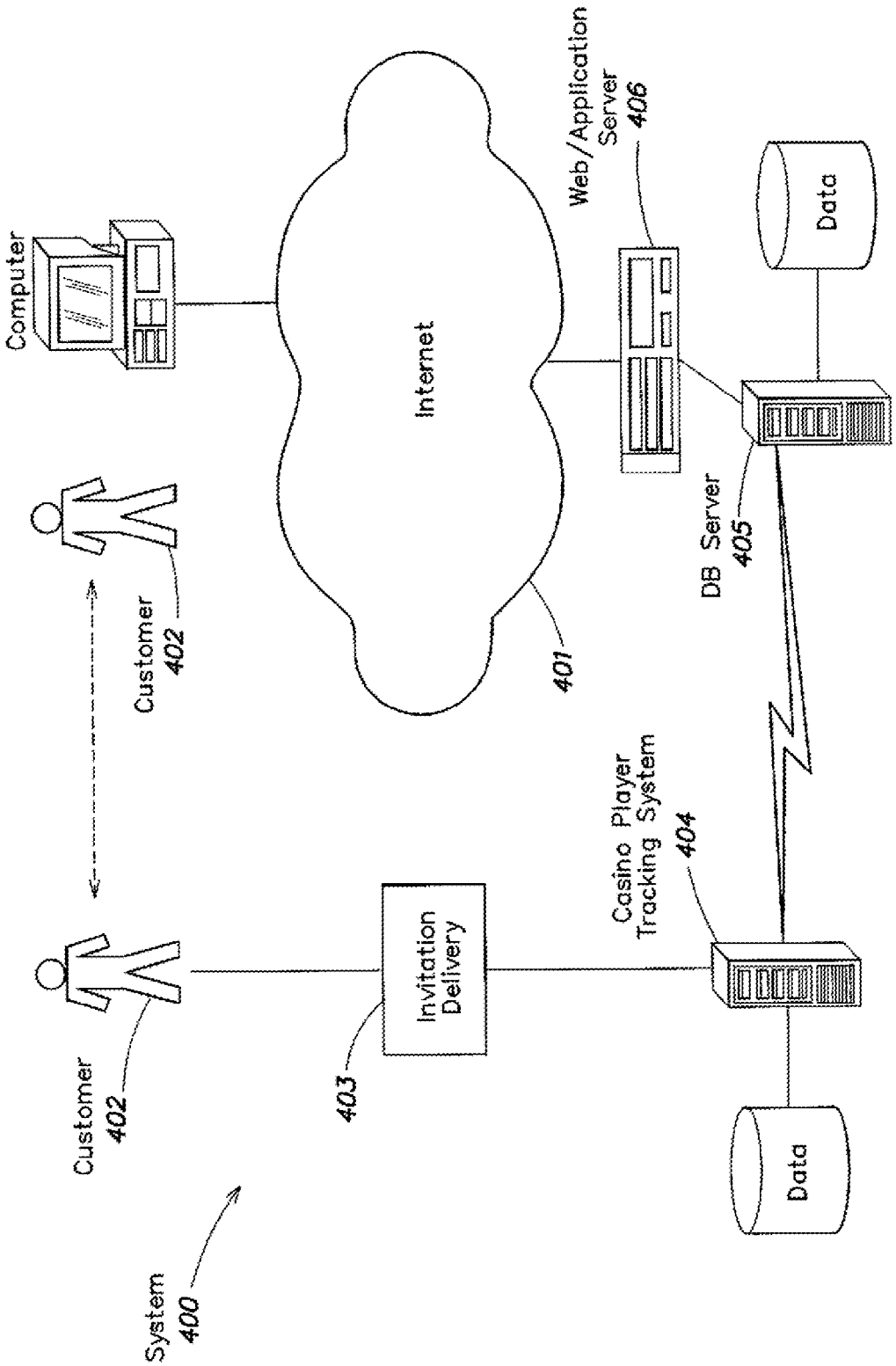
System
400
Customer
402
Customer
402
Computer
Invitation Delivery
403
Internet
401
Casino Player Tracking System
404
Web/Application Server
406
DB Server
405
Data
Data

Figure 3

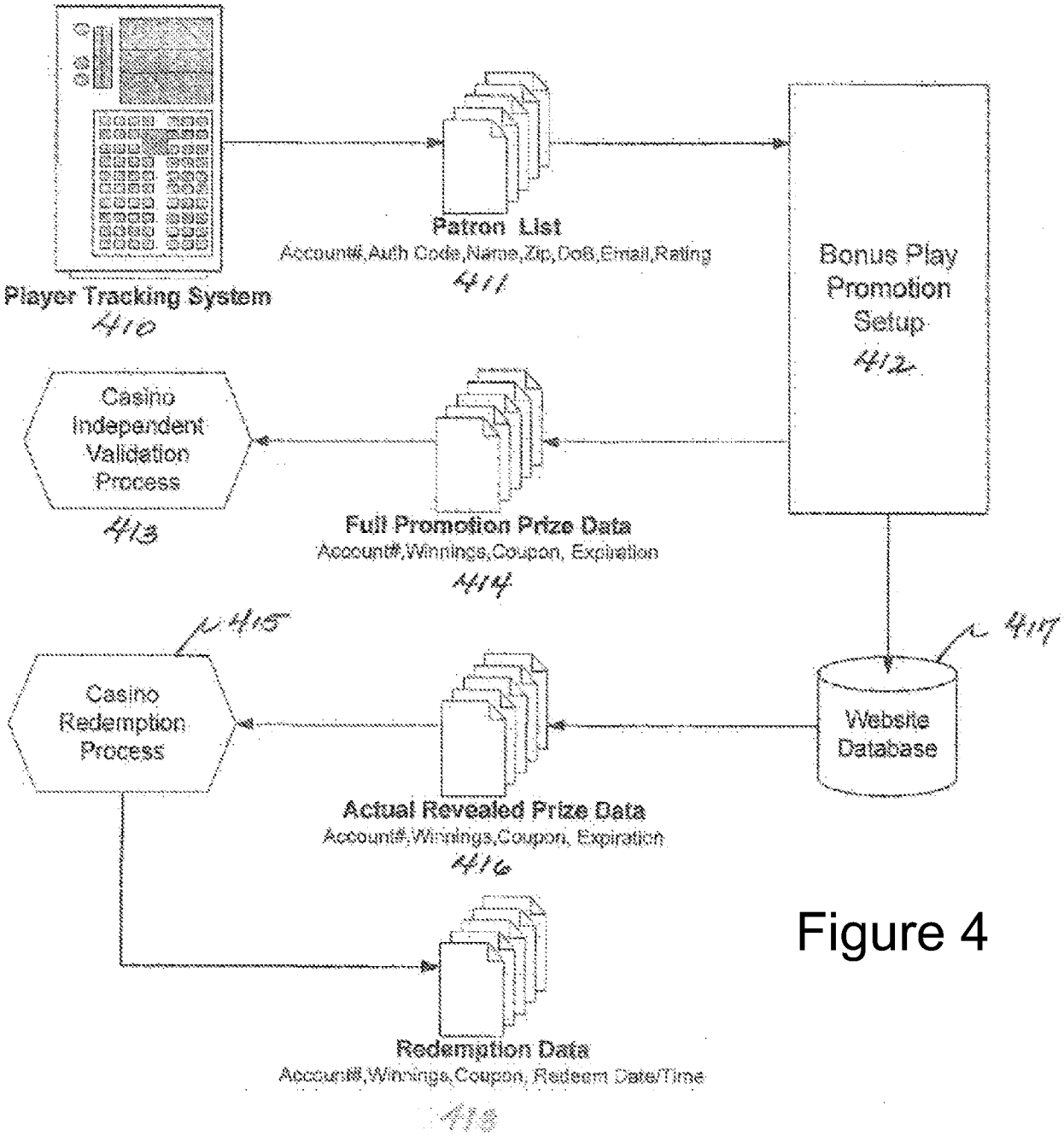
Player Tracking System
410
Patron List
Account#,Auth Code,Name,Zip,DoB,Email,Rating
411
Bonus Play Promotion Setup
412
Casino Independent Validation Process
413
Full Promotion Prize Data
Account#,Winnings,Coupon, Expiration
414
415
417
Casino Redemption Process
Website Database
Actual Revealed Prize Data
Account#,Winnings,Coupon, Expiration
416
Redemption Data
Account#,Winnings,Coupon, Redeem Date/Time
418

Figure 4

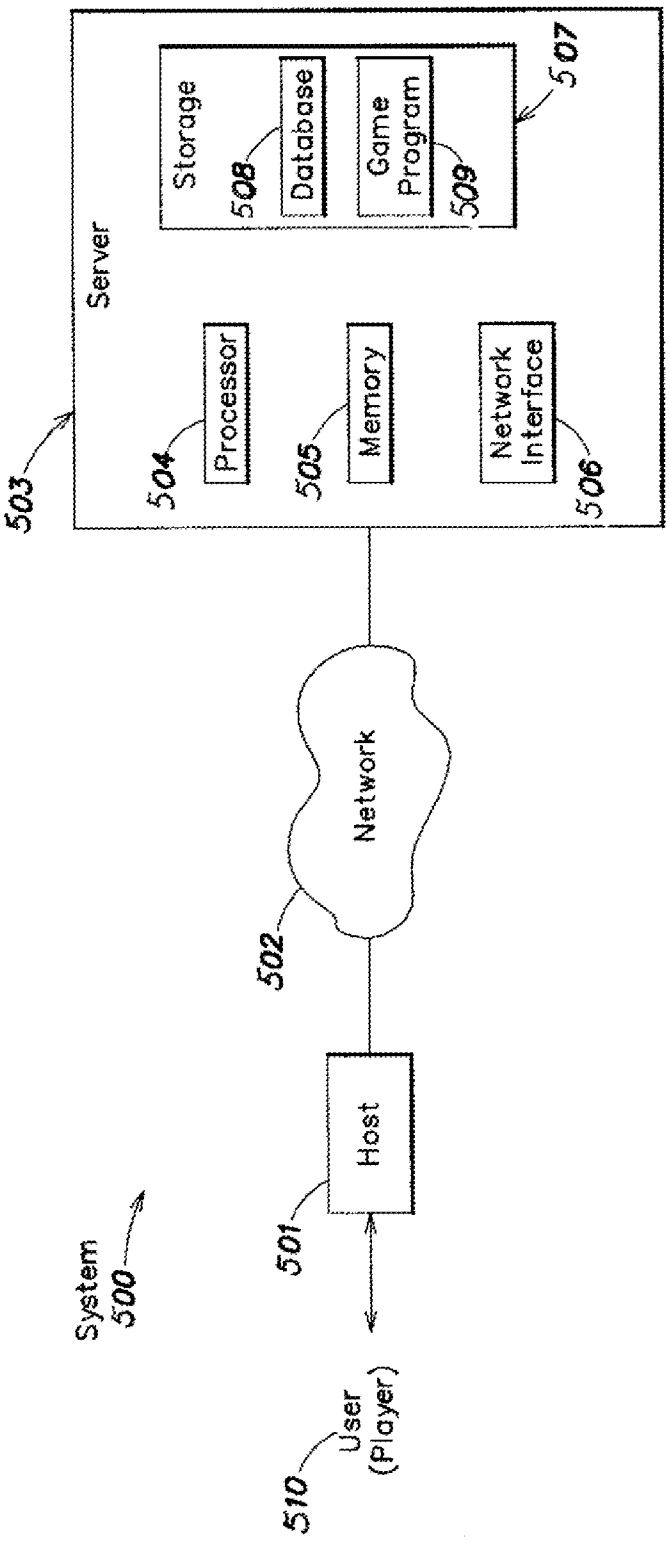
System
500
User
(Player)
510
Host
501
Network
502
Server
503
Processor
504
Memory
505
Network
Interface
506
Storage
507
Database
508
Game
Program
509

Figure 5

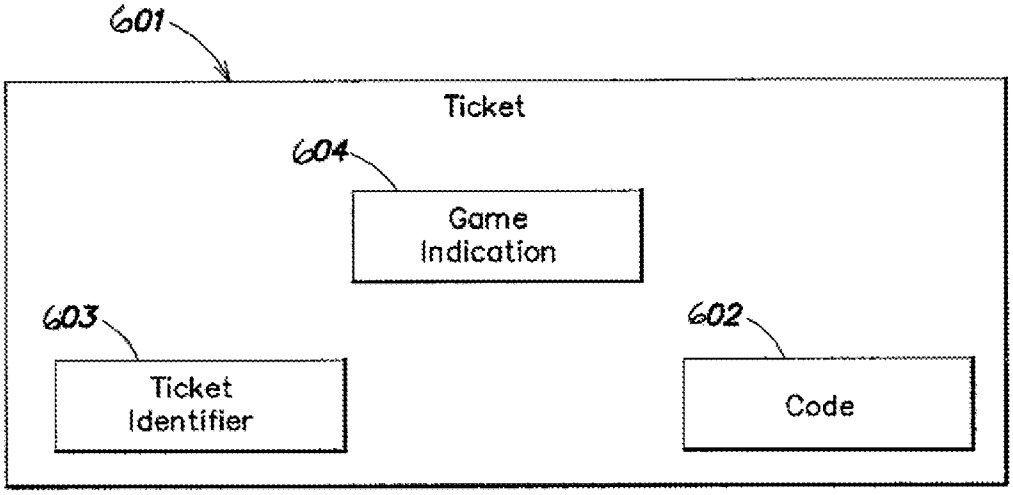
601
Ticket
604
Game Indication
603
Ticket Identifier
602
Code

Figure 6

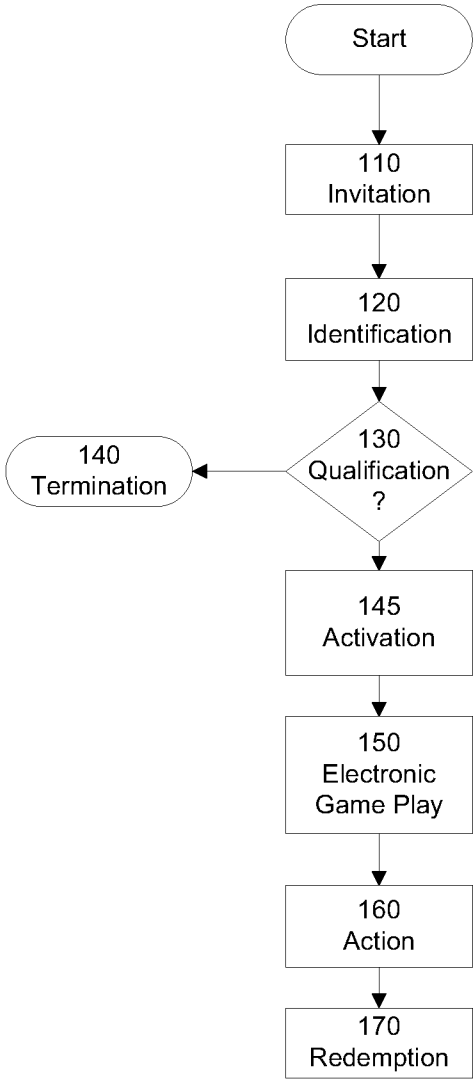
Start
110
Invitation
120
Identification
130
Qualification
?
140
Termination
145
Activation
150
Electronic
Game Play
160
Action
170
Redemption

Figure 7

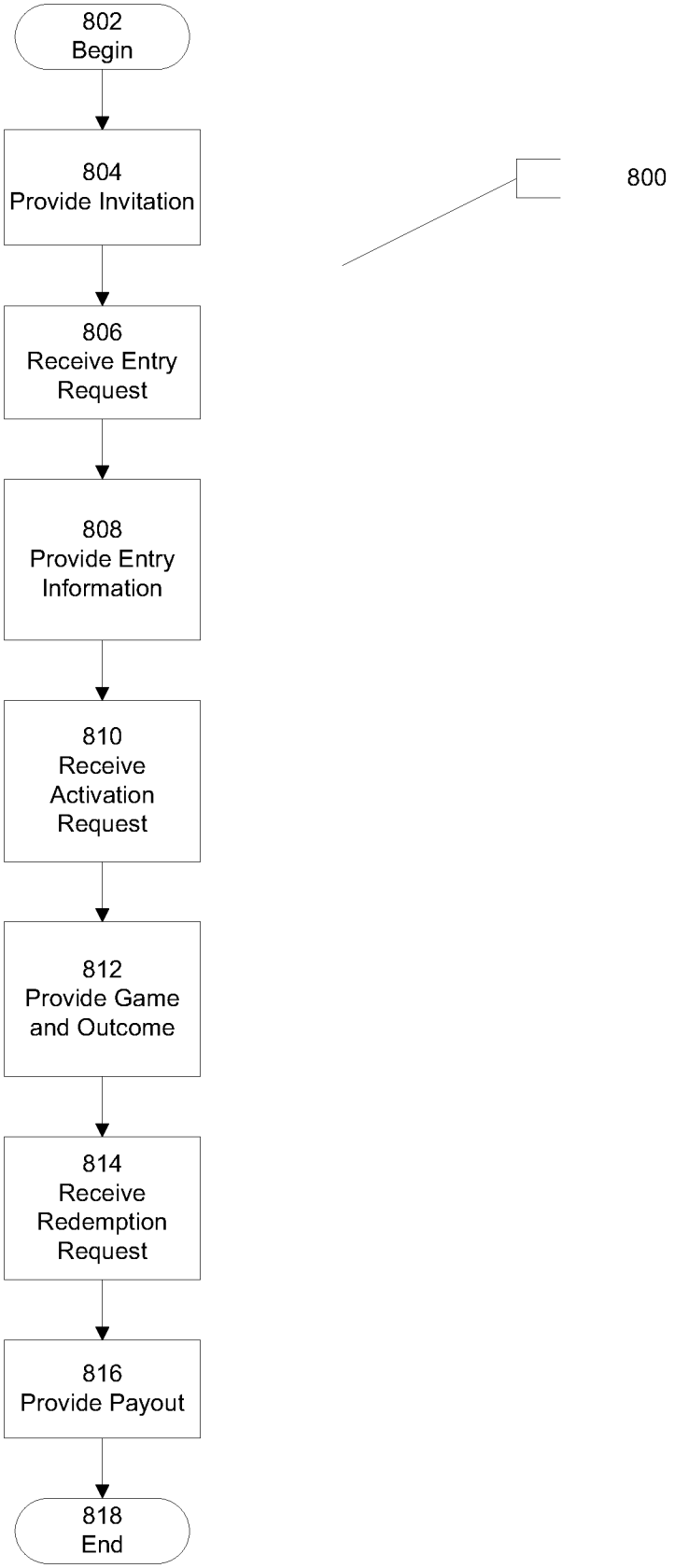
802
Begin
804
Provide Invitation
800
806
Receive Entry
Request
808
Provide Entry
Information
810
Receive
Activation
Request
812
Provide Game
and Outcome
814
Receive
Redemption
Request
816
Provide Payout
818
End

Figure 8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No
PCT/US2009/067731

A CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC(8) - A63F 09/24 (2010 01)
USPC - 463/001
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 09/24 (2010 01)
USPC - 463/001

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 practicable, search terms used)
MicroPatent

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 2006/0205461 A1 (LAROCCA et al) 14 September 2006 (14 09 2006) entire document	1-8, 10-11, 13-28 ---------- 9, 12, 29-44
Y	US 2007/0202941 A1 (MILTENBERGER et al) 30 August 2007 (30 08 2007) entire document	9, 12, 29-44
A	US 2008/0254893 A1 (PATEL et al) 16 October 2008 (16 10 2008) entire document	1-44

[ ] Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C [ ]

* Special categories of cited documents
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date
"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)
"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
"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
"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
"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
"Sc" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
27 January 2010	**10 MAR 2010**
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 Blame R Copenheaver PCT Helpdesk 571 272-4300 PCTOSP 571 272 7774

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 2009)