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(54) **GAMING METHODS EXTENDING THEMES OF PLAY BETWEEN SCRIP AND GAMING MACHINES**

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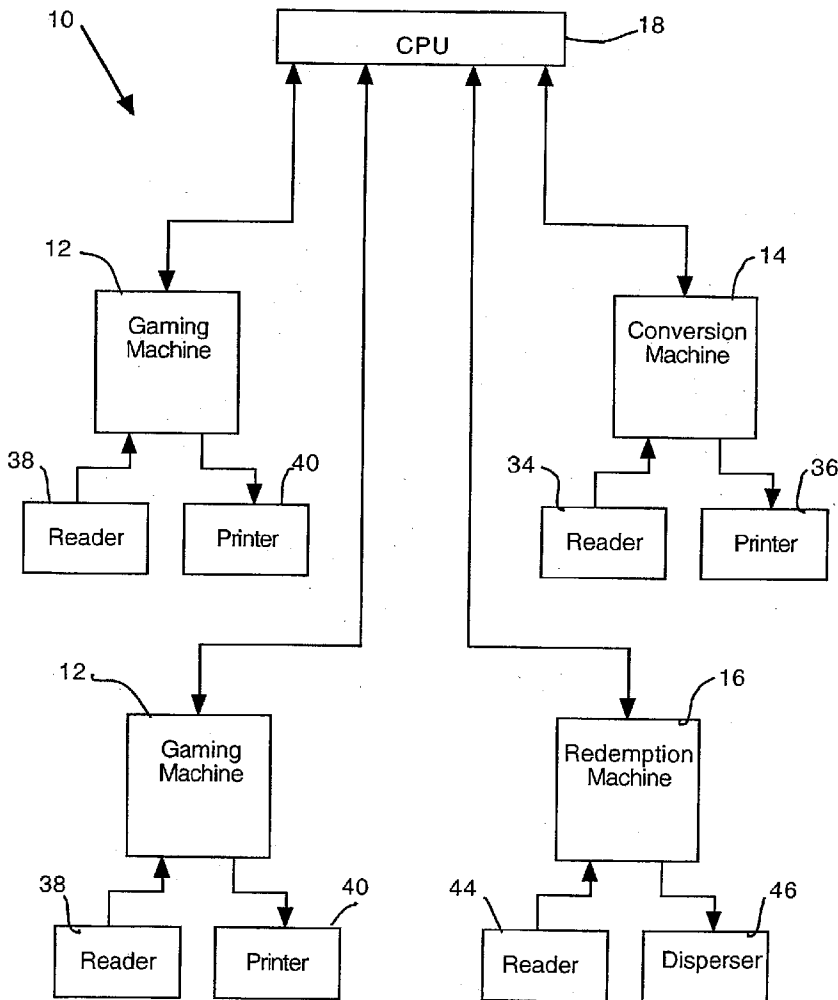
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A scrip intended to support transactions with gaming machines that exhibit themes of play is printed with graphics that match the themes of play. The graphics are preferably high-quality images that generate interest in the scrip beyond its cash equivalence. The graphic patterns can be arranged in sets to encourage collection of the scrip or additional play.



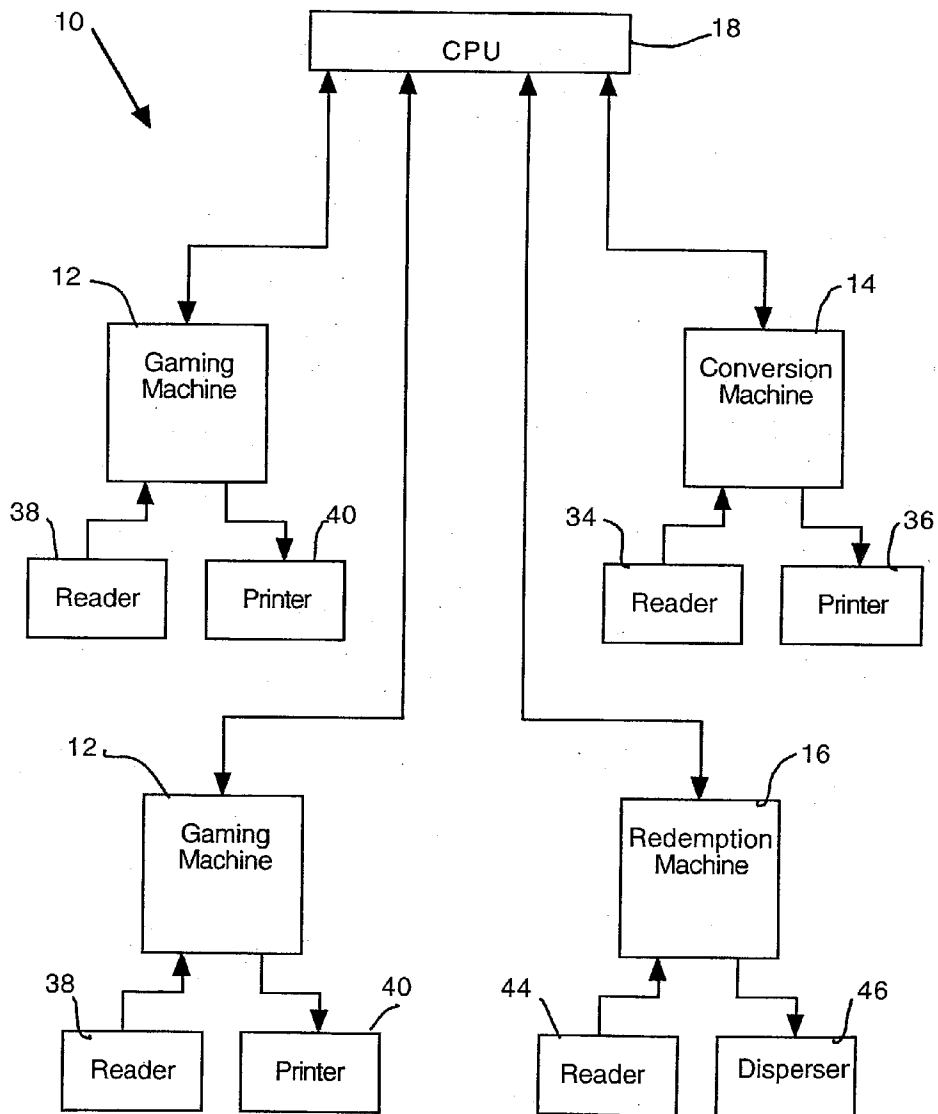


Fig. 1

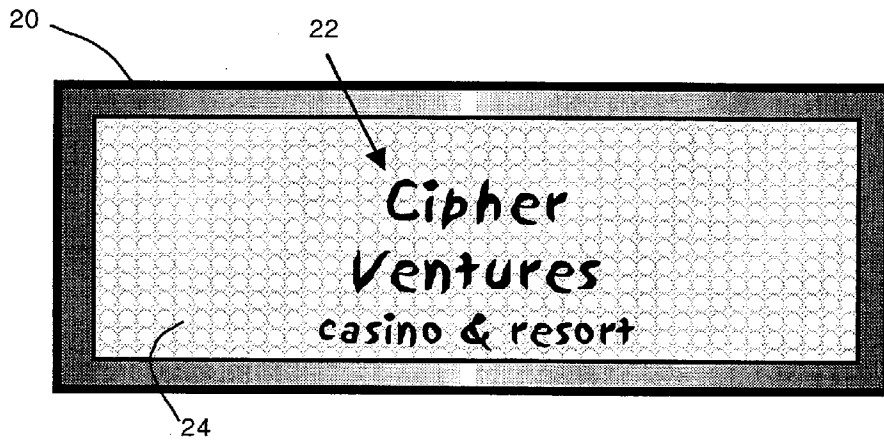


Fig. 2A

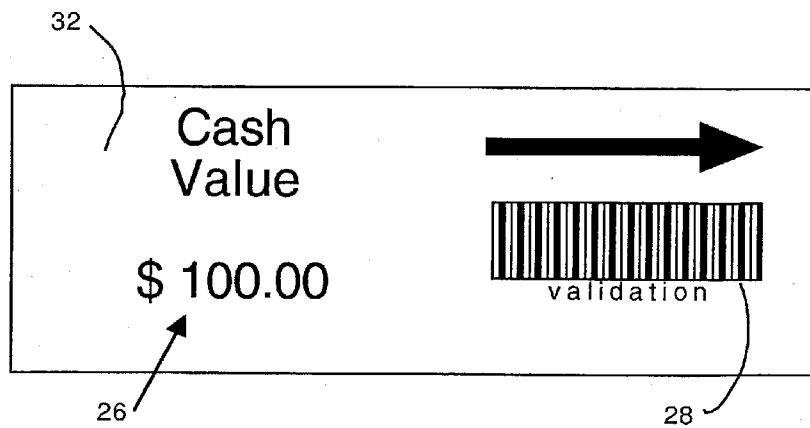


Fig. 2B

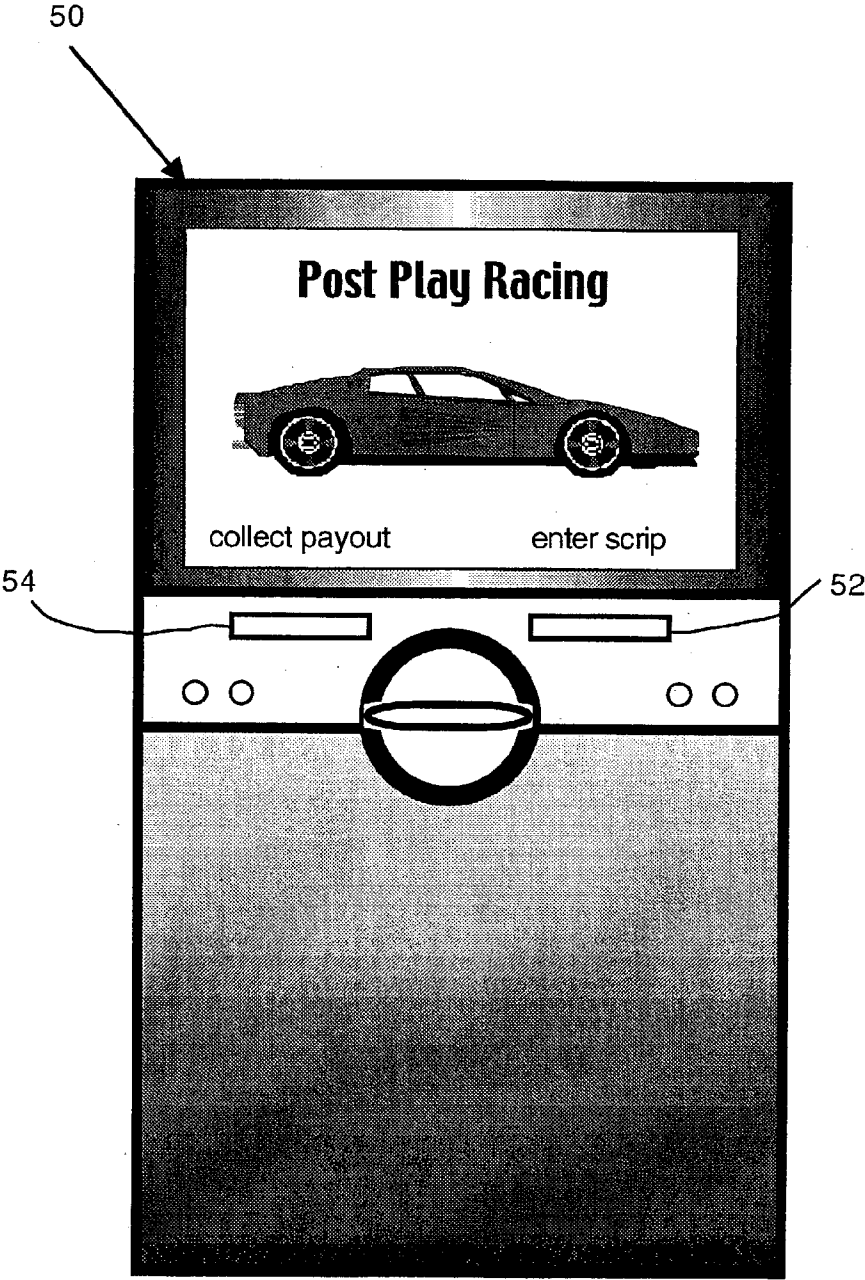


Fig. 3

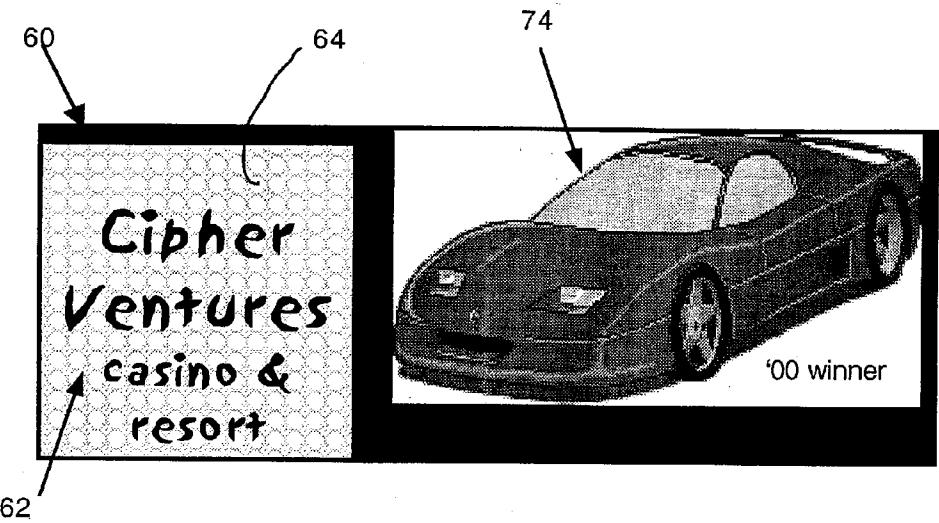


Fig. 4A

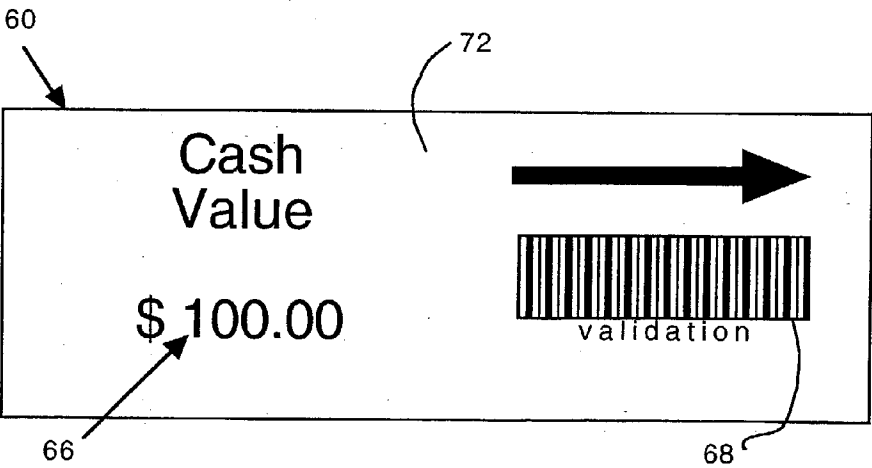


Fig. 4B

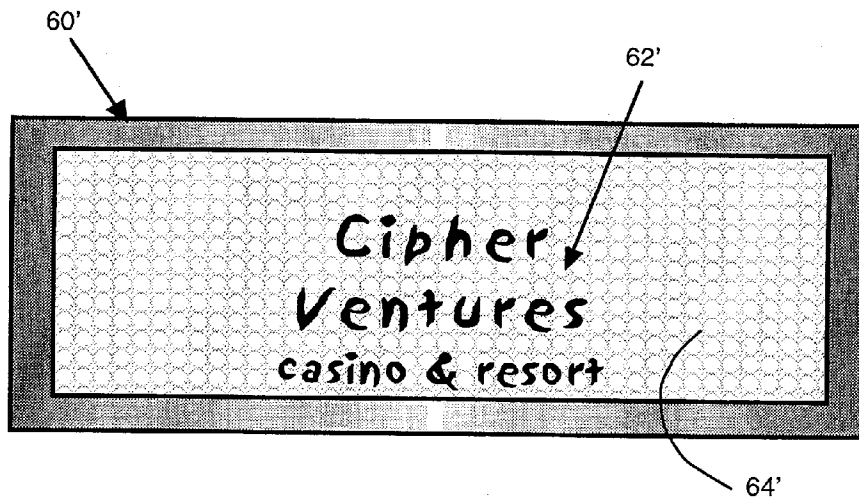


Fig. 5A

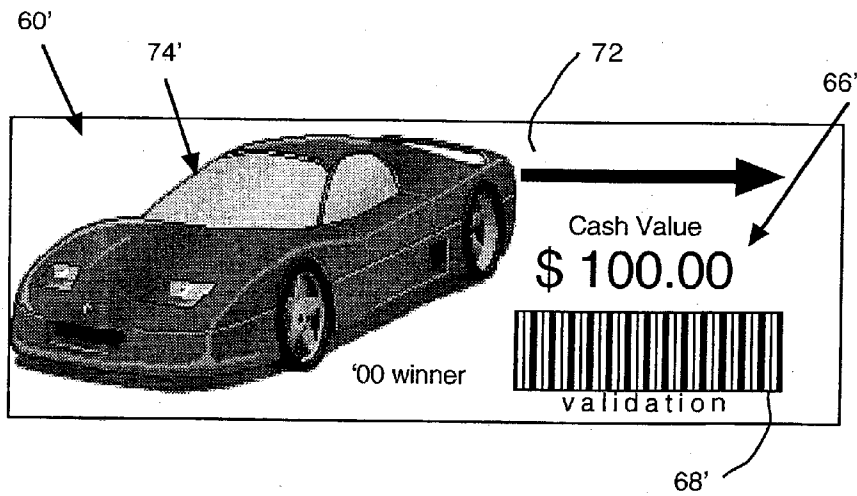


Fig. 5B

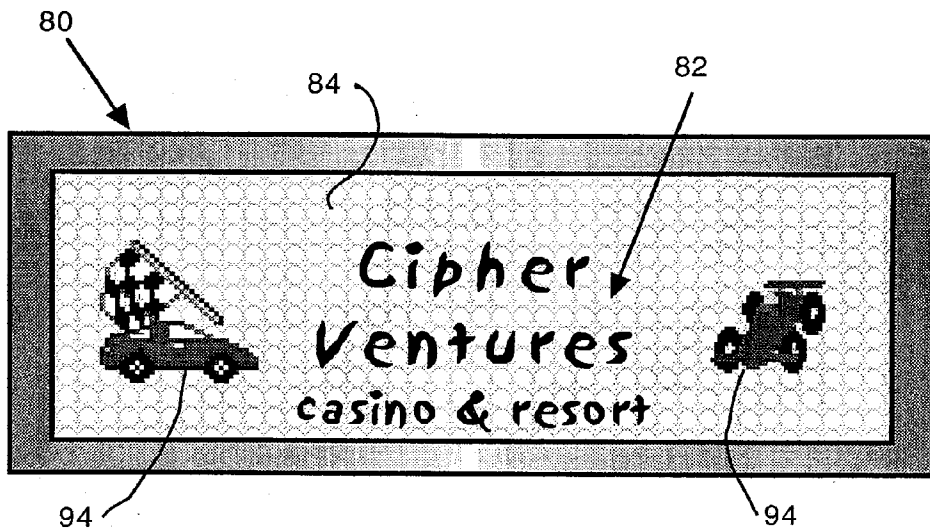


Fig. 6A

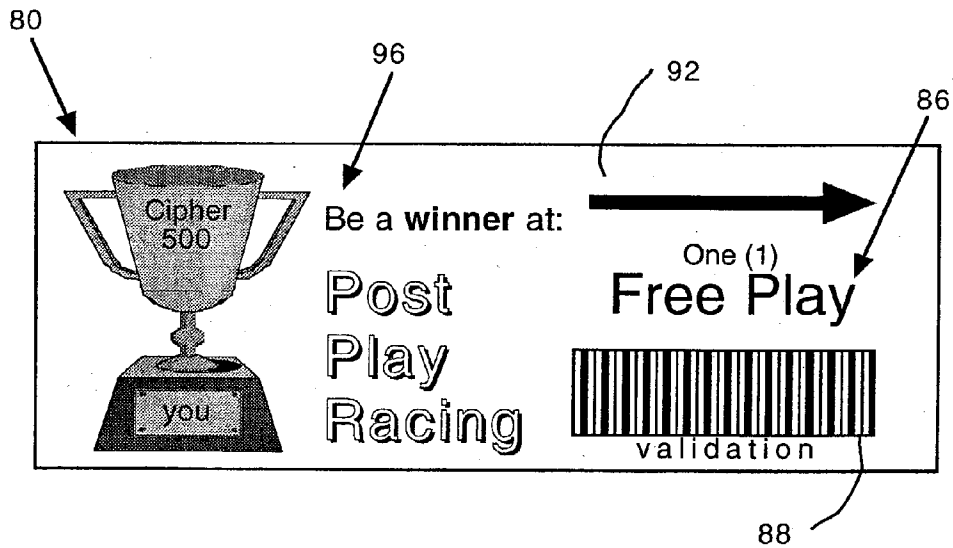


Fig. 6B

## GAMING METHODS EXTENDING THEMES OF PLAY BETWEEN SCRIP AND GAMING MACHINES

### RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a Division of copending parent application Ser. No. 09/829,571, filed Apr. 10, 2001, by Chauncey T. Mitchell, Jr., entitled THEME-MATCHING SCRIP FOR GAMING SYSTEMS.

### TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] To enhance the gaming experience, many gaming machines (previously referred to as slot machines) feature themes that are integrated with the play. Interactions with the gaming machines also involve the use of scrip for establishing play credits and cashing out of the machines.

### BACKGROUND

[0003] As a substitute for cash, transactions with many gaming machines take place with currency in the form of scrip issued by gaming operators. Generally, the scrip identifies the issuers or their properties and records credits payable to the bearers.

[0004] The scrip is issued in exchange for money or as a substitute for money accumulated from winnings during play. Many gaming machines accept scrip for initiating play or for recording credit toward future play or redemption. During play, additions or subtractions are made to the credit according to the results of the play. The credit can be transferred from individual machines by requesting the printing of new scrip recording the current credit. The new scrip can be used to initiate play at another game or converted into cash or banking credit.

[0005] Ordinarily, graphics and other information are printed on a back of the scrip identifying the public issuers of the scrip such as the gaming properties where the scrip is issued. This information lets the bearer know where the scrip is accepted. Information relating to the accumulated credit or redemption value of the scrip is printed on a front of the scrip. Validation information, such as a transaction code, is also printed on the front of the scrip to authenticate the scrip for single-time use.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 6,048,269 to Burn et al. discloses a coinless gaming system involving scrip in the form of cash-out slips and free play coupons that are used as substitutes for cash. Gaming machines include (a) barcode readers for reading encoded validation information printed on coupons and cash-out slips and (b) printers for printing similarly encoded information on other coupons and slips reflecting the current status of play. The cash-out slips represent the value of a player's credits originally obtained from cash or coupons and subsequently adjusted by play. The coupons can have a monetary value such as a free play or an entitlement to participate in a promotion or contest.

[0007] Another trend in the development of gaming machines is the emergence of interactive games featuring widely recognized themes of play, which often involve more user interaction and choice. Examples of such themes include well-known board games, popular television series or films, and sporting events such as car racing. The popular

associations add familiarity, enhance interest or enjoyment, and provide more options for wagering during play.

### SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0008] My invention provides for graphically relating scrip dispensed from gaming machines to the games being played. Many gaming machines feature individual themes to add interest or enjoyment to the play by making associations with known subjects beyond the actual stakes of the play. The themes generally originate from cultural experiences independent of wagering. Graphically relating the scrip to the themes of play can generate interest in the scrip itself separate from its actual cash equivalence.

[0009] Graphic patterns can be printed on front or back sides of my new scrip matching the themes of gaming machines from which they are dispensed or intended for play. The theme-oriented graphics associate the scrip with particular gaming machines and playing experiences. In addition, the graphics are intended to be visually appealing and of value to possess on their own. A series of related graphic images can be made available for each theme of play to encourage collection of sets of the theme-matching scrip.

[0010] Players tend to favor gaming machines exhibiting themes matching their interests. Theme-oriented graphics appearing on scrip dispensed from these machines are likely to be valued by those having an interest in the theme. For example, theme-matching scrip dispensed from gaming machines featuring a popular story line could be printed with pictures or other representations of their characters. The dispensing of the theme-matching scrip from the machines can take place regularly, periodically, or randomly. The graphic patterns (e.g., images) appearing on the dispensed scrip can be repeated on successively dispensed scrip or varied in a prescribed or random sequence.

[0011] Preferably, the scrip is varied to contain sets of graphic patterns matching a particular theme to encourage collection. For example, graphic patterns associated with a car racing theme can be arranged in sets of drivers, cars, or tracks pictured on the scrip. The graphic members of each set (e.g., pictures of different race car drivers) can be dispensed randomly or in a prescribed sequence. Each time the machine is loaded with scrip, a different graphic pattern can be featured on the scrip. Alternatively, multiple graphic patterns can be made available within the same load of scrip.

[0012] My new theme-matching scrip is expected to increase acceptance of scrip as a replacement for cash while playing gaming machines and to build loyalty for particular machines. The attractiveness of the graphics themselves matched to players' interests can encourage players to save or even collect the scrip as an alternative to receiving its cash value, especially for small cash equivalents.

[0013] The scrip dispensed from teller machines can also feature graphics related to particular gaming machines to encourage play at those machines. Machine-specific coupons can be generated with graphic themes from teller machines or even other gaming machines. The theme-matching graphics can assist players to identify the machines at which the coupons can be redeemed for play.

### DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 is a diagram of a gaming system supporting transactions using scrip as a replacement for cash or other medium of exchange.



[0015] FIGS. 2A and 2B are front and back views of conventional scrip.

[0016] FIG. 3 is a front view of a gaming machine exhibiting a racing theme of play.

[0017] FIGS. 4A and 4B are back and front views of a theme-matching scrip containing graphics printed on a back side of the scrip matching the racing theme of play.

[0018] FIGS. 5A and 5B are back and front views of another theme-matching scrip containing graphics printed on a front side of the scrip matching the racing theme of play.

[0019] FIGS. 6A and 6B are back and front views of another theme-matching scrip functioning as a coupon and containing graphics printed on both back and front sides of the scrip matching the racing theme of play.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] A gaming system 10 of electronically linked gaming machines 12 is depicted in FIG. 1. Although only two gaming machines 12 are depicted, many more can be incorporated within the same gaming system 10. Conversion tellers 14 and redemption tellers 16 are also electronically linked together with the gaming machines 10 through a central processing unit 18.

[0021] The conversion tellers 14 exchange scrip 20 (shown in FIGS. 2 and 3) for cash or cash equivalents such as credit or debit cards. The scrip 20 has graphic information 22 identifying a public issuer of the scrip 20 on a back side 24 and a cash amount 26 and a validation number 28 (e.g., barcode) on a front side 32. A cash reader 34 accepts the cash and reports the amount of cash received to the central processing unit 18. In return for the cash, a scrip printer 36 dispenses the scrip 20 printed with the reported cash amount 26 and an associated validation number 28 assigned by the central processing unit 18.

[0022] The gaming machines 12 include both a scrip reader 38 and a scrip printer 40. The scrip reader 38 accepts the scrip 20, reads the validation number 28, and reports the validation number to the central processing unit 18. The cash amount 26 associated with the validation number 28 is confirmed by the central processing unit 18 and made available as a particular credit for play. When play is terminated, the remaining credit is reported to the central processing unit 18 and a new validation number is assigned. The scrip printer 40 dispenses a replacement scrip 20 printed with the cash amount 26 of the remaining credit along with the new validation number assigned to the credit. The replacement scrip 20 can be inserted for credit at the same or a different one of the gaming machines 12 to continue play or can be redeemed for cash at the redemption tellers 16.

[0023] The redemption tellers 16 include a scrip reader 44 and a cash dispenser 46. Similar to the scrip reader 38 of the gaming machines 12, the scrip reader 44 of the redemption tellers 16 accepts the scrip 20, reads the validation number 28, and reports the validation number to the central processing unit 18. Upon confirmation of the validation number 28, the central processing unit authorizes the cash dispenser 46 to dispense the associated amount of cash. The cash dis-

penser 46 can dispense legal currency and coins or transfer the credit to another account, such as a banking account.

[0024] Although depicted separately, functions of the gaming machines 12, the cash conversion tellers 14, and the scrip redemption tellers 16 can be combined in various ways within compound machines that provide overlapping functions. Details of exemplary systems for electronically linking gaming machines are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,636,951 to Harlick, U.S. Pat. No. 5,265,874 to Dickinson et al., and U.S. Pat. No. 6,048,269 to Burns et al., all three of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

[0025] A compatible gaming machine 50 having a racing theme to enhance play is depicted in FIG. 3. The machine 50 has a slot input 52 for a scrip reader (as shown in FIG. 1) and a slot output 54 for a scrip printer (as shown in FIG. 1). The machine 50 is also intended to be one of a group or bank of similar machines connected to a central processing unit (as shown in FIG. 1) to support and verify transactions.

[0026] Building upon the established benefits of such theme-oriented gaming machines 50, my invention incorporates theme-matching scrip 60 and 60' as shown in FIGS. 4A-5B. Like the generic scrip 20 shown in FIGS. 2A and 2B, the exemplary theme-matching scrip 60 or 60' has graphic information 62 or 62' identifying a public issuer of the scrip 60 or 60' printed on a back side 64 or 64' and a cash amount 66 or 66' and a validation number 68 or 68' (e.g., barcode) on a front side 72 or 72'.

[0027] The new theme-matching scrip 60 or 60' also includes theme-oriented graphics 74 or 74' printed on the back side 64 (as shown in FIG. 4A) or on the front side 72' (as shown in FIG. 5B). Although not shown in these figures, the theme-oriented graphics 74 and 74' could also be printed on both sides 64 and 72 of the same scrip 60. The theme-oriented graphics 74 or 74' of the scrip 60 or 60' is matched to the theme of play of the gaming machines 50 for deriving additional benefits. For example, the theme-oriented graphics 74 or 74' feature a race car that matches the racing theme of the gaming machine 50. Alternative associations with the racing game can be made by printing images of race car drivers, teams, tracks, events, or moments of the sport. Descriptive or informative text related to the theme of play can also be printed on the scrip 60 or 60'.

[0028] The graphics 74 or 74' are preferably printed by a high-quality in-line process such as four-color flexographic or other transfer printing technologies. The scrip 60 or 60' can be arranged and printed in multiple columns that are later cut into rolls, fan-folded stacks, or single sheets. Each column can be a different image, and a repeating pattern of images can be printed in successive rows. Digital printing technologies can be used for even greater versatility, such as arranging the graphic images in random or continuously varying patterns.

[0029] The cash amount 66 or 66' and the validation number 68 or 68' are preferably printed on the front side 72 or 72' using thermal print technology for purposes of economy and ease of maintenance. Accordingly, the front side 72 or 72' of the scrip 60 or 60' is preferably coated with a heat-sensitive recording medium, e.g., a thermosensitive imaging layer that changes color in response to the application of heat. Alternatively, thermal transfer printing could be used as well as other print technologies including impact,

ink jet, and laser printing for printing the cash amount 66 or 66' and validation number 68 or 68' information on demand. The scrip 60 or 60' itself is preferably made of a paper or film substrate, which is selected or adapted to the particular print technologies employed for printing the cash amount 66 or 66', the validation number 68 or 68', and the graphics 74 or 74'.

[0030] The gaming machine 50 preferably exhibits a theme of play associated with cultural experience independent of wagering. The scrip 60 or 60', which is printed with graphics 74 or 74' matching the themes of play, can be loaded into the machines 50 in stacks or rolls for dispensing in a sequence. Just prior to dispensing, the scrip 60 or 60' is preferably printed with indicia of value, e.g., the cash amount 66 or 66' and the validation number 68 or 68', reflecting the outcome of the play. Preferably, the graphics 74 or 74' is printed prior to loading the scrip 60 or 60' in the gaming machine 50 to enable the printing of high-quality images. The graphic 74 or 74' can vary between or within the loads.

[0031] For example, the scrip 60 or 60' can contain the same graphics 74 or 74' throughout a load, which can be dispensed from the machine 50 until exhausted or replaced, or the scrip 60 or 60' can contain graphics 74 or 74' that are spaced or varied within the same load. The scrip 60 or 60' containing the different graphics 74 or 74' can be dispensed in a random or prescribed order. Gaming machines 50 arranged in banks with a similar theme can dispense scrip 60 or 60' with the same or different graphics 74 or 74'.

[0032] The variations in the graphics 74 or 74' can be ordered, organized, or otherwise arranged in sets for encouraging collection of the scrip 60 or 60'. For example, the different graphics 74 or 74' made available from a single or bank of gaming machines 50 can be arranged as members of a set of graphics 74 or 74', such as a set of cars, drivers, or tracks. Instead of redeeming the theme-matching scrip 60 or 60' for cash, some players may choose to save some of the theme-matching scrip 60 or 60' as mementos or to complete a collection of a set of the scrip 60 or 60' with related graphics 74 or 74'.

[0033] Ordinarily, the scrip 60 or 60' is intended to be redeemable for cash. However, an alternative scrip 80 as shown in FIGS. 6A and 6B can be used for free play or other promotional activities. Graphic information 82 identifying the public issuer of the coupon scrip 80 is printed on a back side 84. Free play information 86 and a validation code 88 are both printed on a front side 92 of the coupon scrip 80. Theme-oriented graphics 94 and 96 are printed on both sides 84 and 92 of the scrip 80 to link the scrip 80 to particular theme-oriented gaming machines 50. Although the theme-oriented graphics 94 and 96 appear on both the back and front sides 84 and 92 of the coupon scrip 80, either or both of the graphics could be printed on just one of the two sides 84 and 92.

[0034] The coupon scrip 80 can be dispensed from conversion tellers 14 (see FIG. 1) or gaming machines 12, including theme-oriented gaming machines 50 with the same or other themes. The graphics 94 and 96, however, are preferably intended to lead players to gaming machines 50 having matching themes, where the coupon scrip 80 can be exchanged for play credits. In conjunction with the central processing unit 18, the coupon scrip 80 can be accepted for

credit at only the matching theme machines 50. The coupon scrip 80 with graphics 94 and 96 can be dispensed to encourage play at particular ones or banks of the machines 50 exhibiting the matching theme.

[0035] My new theme scrip 60, 60', and 80 can be used with single gaming machines 50 or with groups or banks of such gaming machines 50. The theme-oriented graphics 74, 74'94, and 96 printed on the scrip 60, 60', and 80 should match the themes of the gaming machines 50 where the scrip 60, 60', and 80 is dispensed or accepted for play. Preferably, the theme-matching scrip 60 or 60' that is redeemable for cash is dispensed only from the gaming machines 50 whose themes are matched by the scrip 60 or 60'. The theme-matching scrip 80 that is redeemable only for play is preferably dispensed from a wider assortment of gaming machines 12 and tellers 14 but is redeemable for play only at the gaming machines 50 whose themes are matched by the scrip 80.

[0036] The range of themes that can be graphically depicted on the scrip 60, 60', or 80 is limited only by artistic capacities to match themes of the gaming machines 50. The association between the theme-oriented graphics 74, 74'94, or 96 printed on the scrip 60, 60', or 80 and the themes of the gaming machines 50 should be strong enough so that the ordinary player having an interest in the theme of the gaming machine 50 automatically recognizes the association.

I claim:

1. A method of relating themes of play exhibited by gaming machines to scrip dispensed from the machines for reflecting an outcome of the game comprising the steps of:

providing a gaming machine that exhibits a theme of play visible on the machine associated with a cultural experience independent of wagering;

loading the gaming machine with a scrip printed with a graphic pattern matching the theme of play of the gaming machine; and

arranging a printer within the gaming machine for printing an indicia of value on the scrip reflecting an outcome of the game.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the graphic patterns are printed prior to said step of loading the gaming machine with scrip.

3. The method of claim 1 in which the step of loading includes loading the gaming machine with scrip printed with a plurality of different graphic patterns matching the theme of play.

4. The method of claim 3 including the further step of dispensing the scrip containing the plurality of different graphic patterns in a prescribed sequence.

5. The method of claim 1 including a further step of arranging the gaming machine to accept scrip printed with the graphic pattern matching the machine's theme of play for credit.

6. A method of enhancing a gaming experience comprising the steps of:

providing a scrip printed with a graphic pattern depicting a theme;

loading the scrip in a gaming machine that exhibits a theme of play visible on the machine matching the theme depicted by the graphic pattern printed on the scrip;

printing the scrip with a redeemable indicia of value related to the outcome of play; and

dispensing the scrip from the gaming machine at a conclusion of play to provide a player of the gaming machine with both the redeemable indicia of value and the graphic pattern for associating the scrip with the theme of play.

7. The method of claim 6 in which the graphic pattern is printed by an in-line transfer printing technology.

8. The method of claim 6 in which the graphic pattern is one of a set of different graphic patterns matching the theme of play.

9. The method of claim 8 in which the step of dispensing includes dispensing the scrip with different graphic patterns in succession from the gaming machine.

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