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(54) METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING A FEATURE GAME DIVIDED IN MULTIPLE INSTANCES

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

There is described a method of conducting a feature game. The method comprises the steps of providing a player with participation rights for participating in a plurality of instances of a feature game when a criterion is fulfilled, comprising storing information regarding the participation rights. The method further comprises authorizing participation in a first instance of the feature game upon request and valid participation right, and authorizing participation in a second instance upon request and valid participation right. The method further comprises providing awards according to the outcomes of the participation in the feature game. According to embodiments, other methods, a system and a gaming machine for conducting game feature and awarding participation rights are provided.

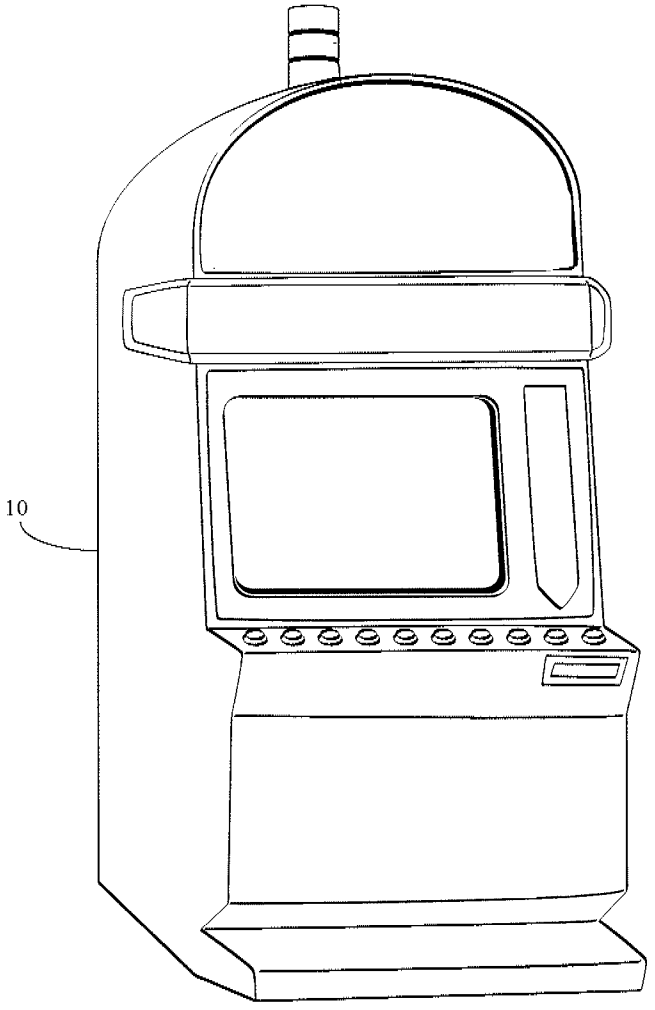


Figure 1

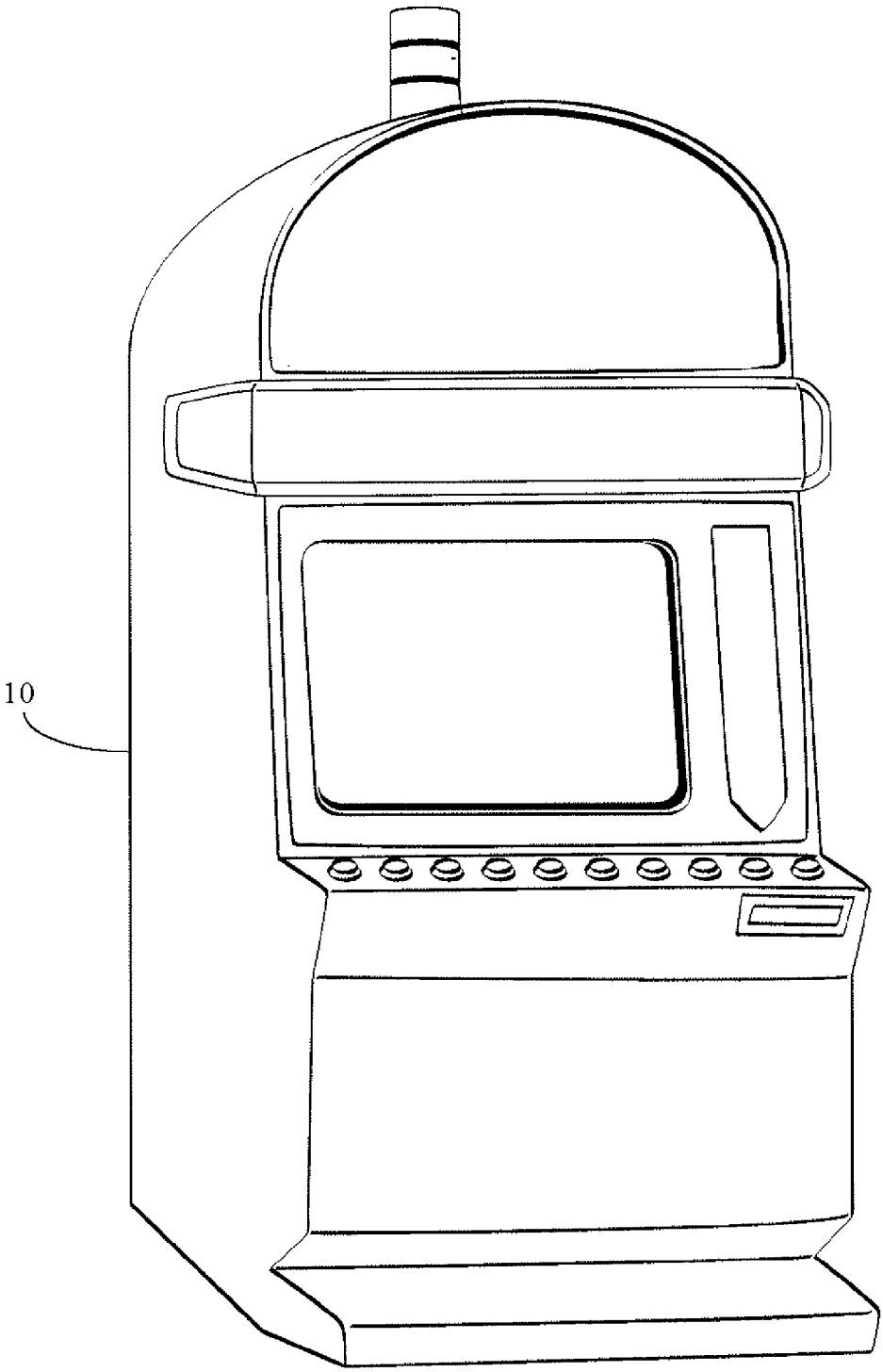


Figure 2

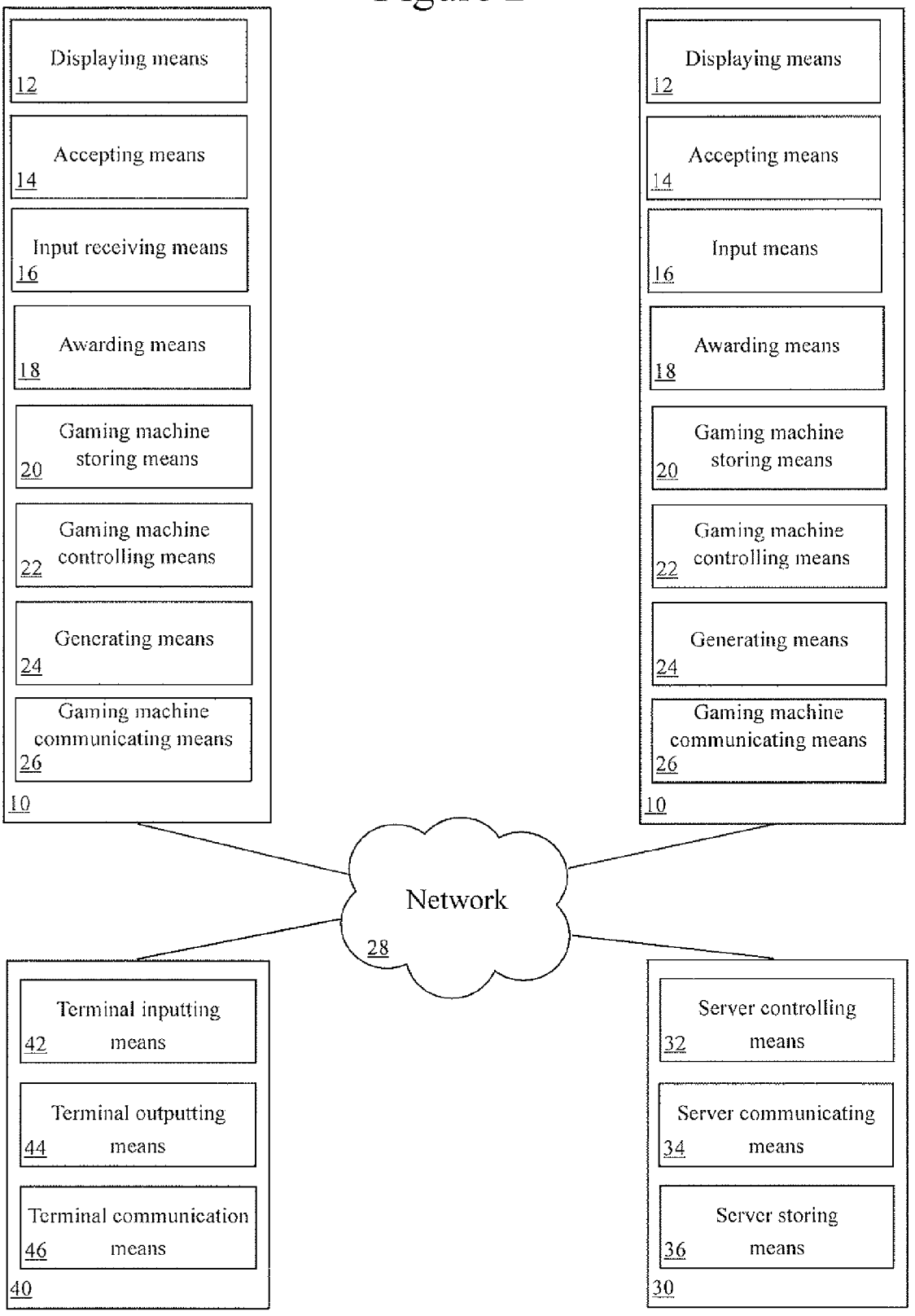

Displaying means
12
Accepting means
14
Input receiving means
16
Awarding means
18
Gaming machine storing means
20
Gaming machine controlling means
22
Generating means
24
Gaming machine communicating means
26
10
Displaying means
12
Accepting means
14
Input means
16
Awarding means
18
Gaming machine storing means
20
Gaming machine controlling means
22
Generating means
24
Gaming machine communicating means
26
10
Network
28
Terminal inputting means
42
Terminal outputting means
44
Terminal communication means
46
40
Server controlling means
32
Server communicating means
34
Server storing means
36
30

Figure 3

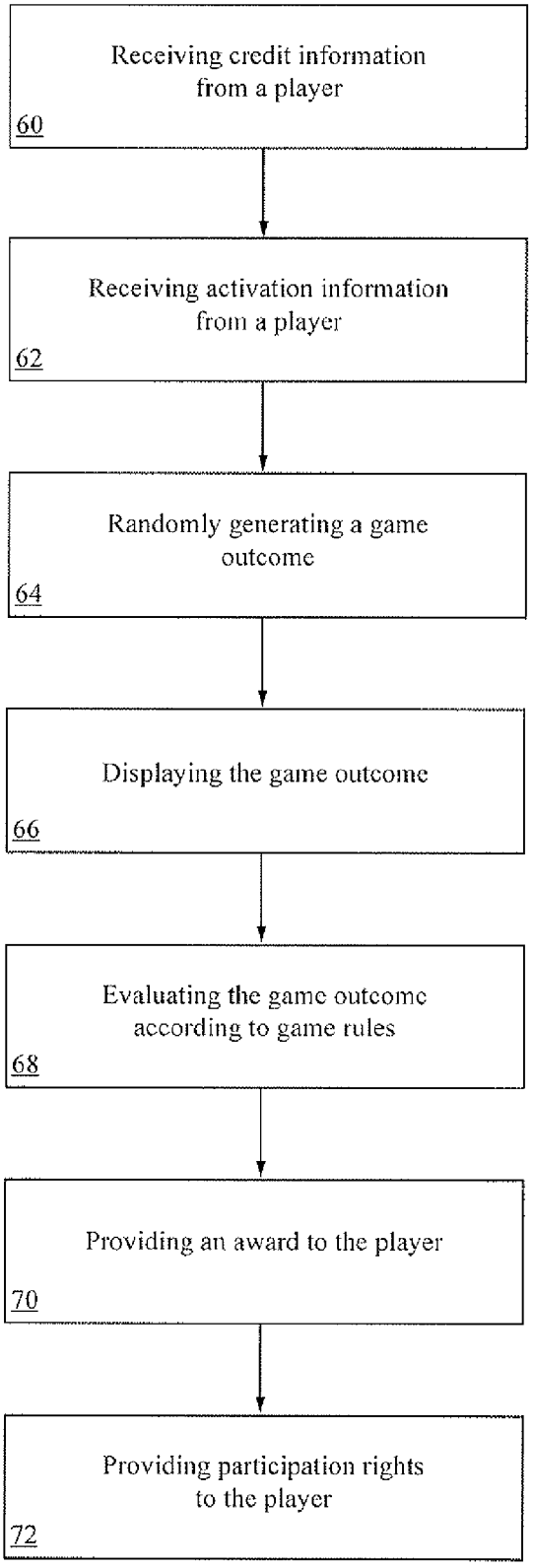

Receiving credit information from a player
60
Receiving activation information from a player
62
Randomly generating a game outcome
64
Displaying the game outcome
66
Evaluating the game outcome according to game rules
68
Providing an award to the player
70
Providing participation rights to the player
72

Figure 4

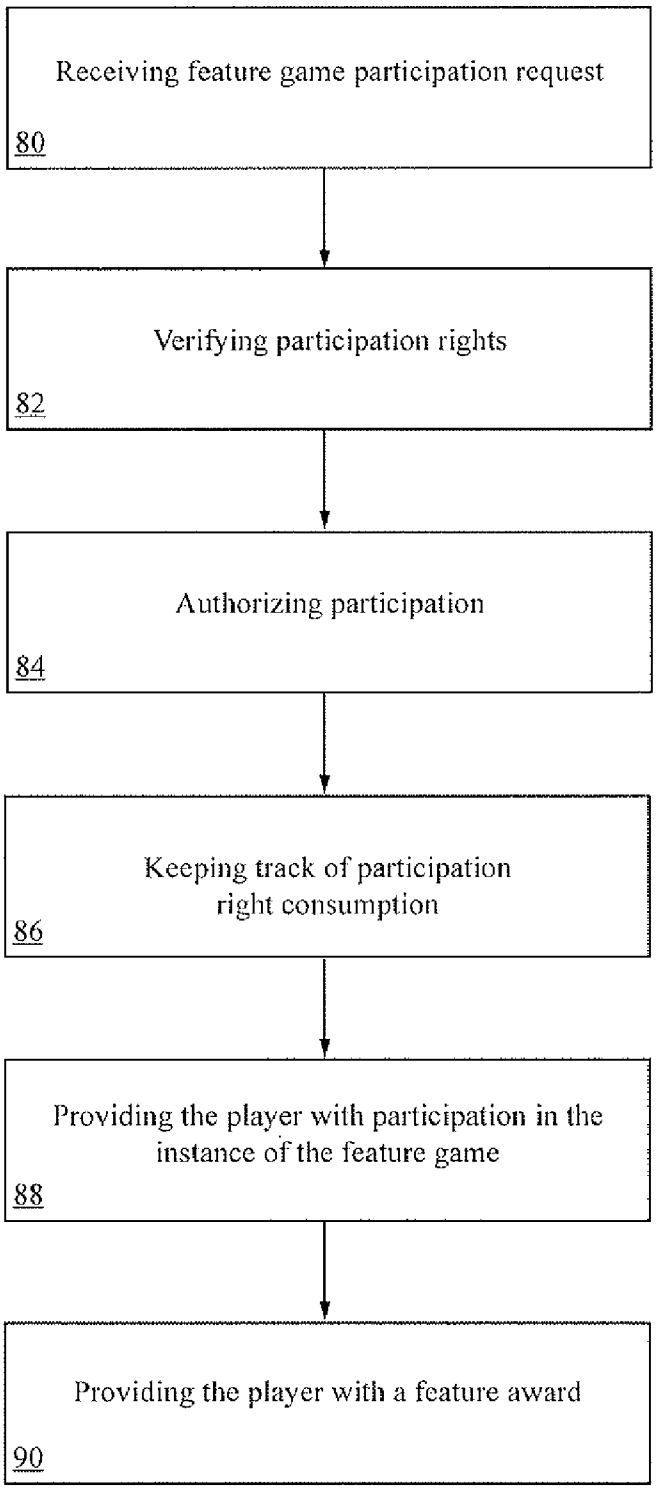
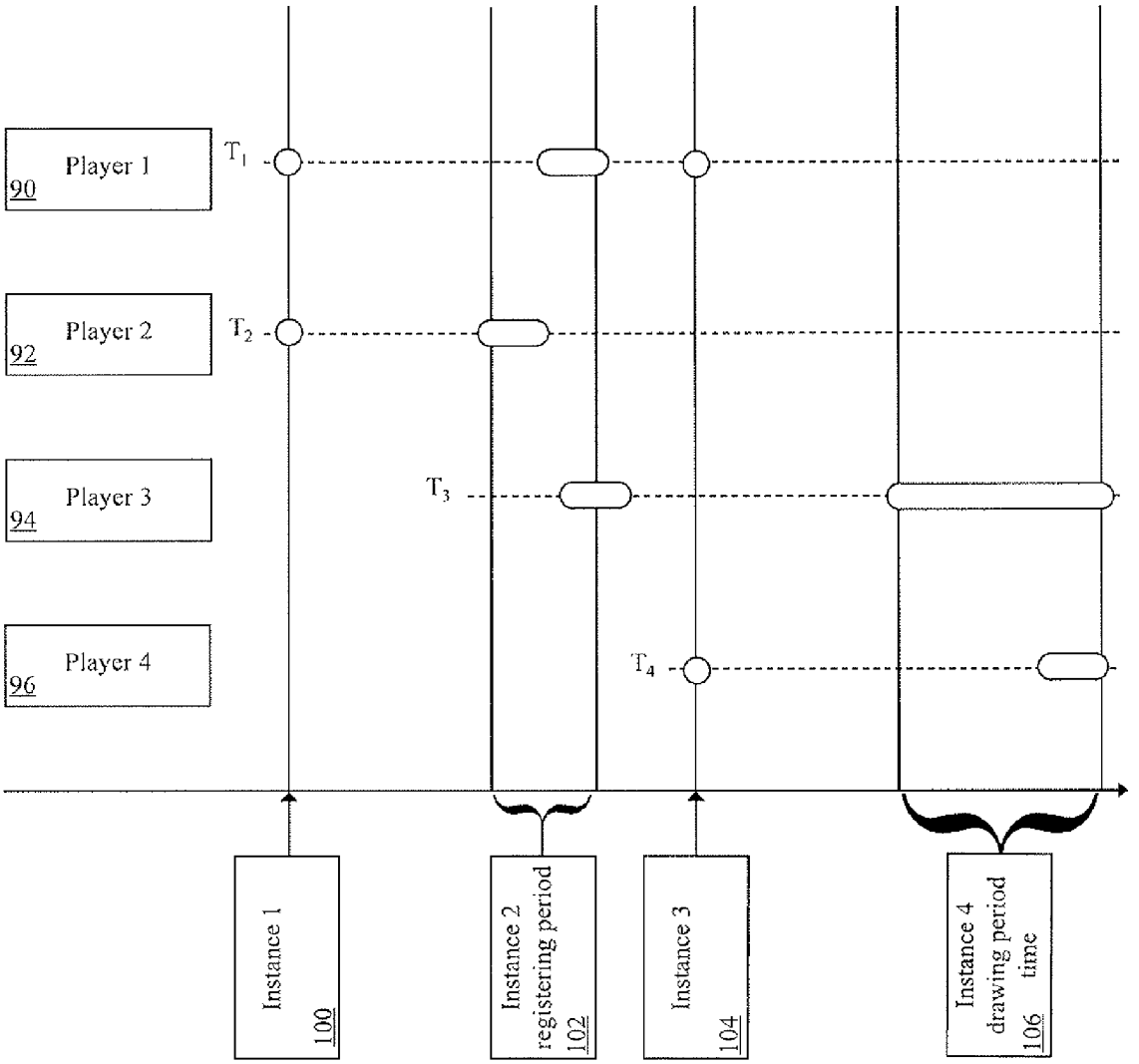

Receiving feature game participation request
80
Verifying participation rights
82
Authorizing participation
84
Keeping track of participation right consumption
86
Providing the player with participation in the instance of the feature game
88
Providing the player with a feature award
90

Figure 5


Player 1
90
Player 2
92
Player 3
94
Player 4
96
T1
T2
T3
T4
Instance 1
100
Instance 2
registering period
102
Instance 3
104
Instance 4
drawing period
106
time

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING A FEATURE GAME DIVIDED IN MULTIPLE INSTANCES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority under 35US§119(e) of U.S. Provisional Patent Application 60/711,384 filed on Mar. 22, 2006 and entitled LUCKY WEEK JACKPOT. The specification of the foregoing Provisional Application is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates to methods and systems for providing a gaming feature divided in multiple instances.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a method of conducting a feature game. The method comprises: upon fulfillment of a feature criterion, awarding participation rights to a player for participating in a plurality of instances of the feature game, comprising storing information in a database regarding the participation rights provided to the player; upon reception of a first request from the player for participation in a first instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for a first one of the participation rights relating to the first request, authorizing participation by the player in the first instance of the feature game, keeping track of the player's participation in the first instance, and providing participation to the player in the first instance of the feature game; upon reception of a second request from the player for participation in a second instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for a second one of the participation rights different from the first participation right relating to the second request, authorizing participation by the player in the second instance of the feature game, keeping track of the player's participation in the second instance, and providing participation to the player in the second instance of the feature game; and providing the player with an award based on the outcome of the player's participation in at least one of the first instance and the second instance of the feature game.

[0004] According to another embodiment, there is provided a method of conducting a feature game. The method comprises: upon fulfillment of a feature criterion, awarding a player with participation rights, each one of the participation rights pertaining to a distinct instance of the feature game to take place in predetermined conditions; upon identification of the player in relation to any one of the instances of the feature game, providing the player with participation in that instance of the feature game without preventing the player in participating in another one of the instances of the feature game for which the player has received one of the participation rights; and providing an award to the player based on the participation.

[0005] According to another embodiment, a method of conducting a feature game is provided. The method comprises: upon fulfillment of a feature criterion in a wagering process, registering participation rights associated with a player in a database, each one of the participation rights being associated with a single instance of the feature game; upon reception of a request for participating in an instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for an associated participation right, authorizing the participation, providing the participation, and providing the player with an award based on the participation; and continue providing participations in instances of the feature game to the player as long as participation rights associated with the player registered in the database allow providing participations and as long as the participation requests respect limitations associated with the participation rights registered in the database.

[0006] According to another embodiment, a system for conducting a feature game comprises a server, and a terminal. The server comprises controlling means for controlling the awarding of sets of a plurality of participation rights to a plurality of patrons with each one of the participation rights pertaining to a distinct instance of the feature game, storing means for storing information regarding the participation rights awarded to the patrons, and communicating means. The terminal comprises inputting means for inputting a participation request in association of an instance of the feature game, controlling means for controlling authorization process regarding the participation request, and outputting means to output authorization to participate in the instance of the feature game among a plurality of instances of the feature game, and communicating means for communicating the request information to the server in order to evaluate the information of the participation right associated with the participation request.

[0007] According to another embodiment of the invention, there is provided a gaming machine comprising: receiving means for receiving inputs from a player; controlling means for (i) controlling the conduct of a wagering game in which an outcome is provided in response of a wager, wherein the outcome is selected among a plurality of outcomes among which at least one is a winning outcome associated with a prize and at least one is a losing outcome, and for (ii) associating a set of a plurality of participation rights to a player when a monitoring of a trigger event is performed on the gaming machine; awarding means for awarding the prize when the outcome is a winning outcome; and communicating means for communicating information regarding the set of participation rights associated with the player to a server used to authorize the player to participate in a plurality of instances of a feature game based on the different participation rights associated with the player.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] Further features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in combination with the appended drawings, in which:

[0009] FIG. **1** is a schematic diagram showing a perspective view of a gaming machine according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0010] FIG. **2** is a bloc diagram illustrating the components of the gaming system comprising the gaming machine of FIG. **1**;

[0011] FIG. **3** is a flowchart illustrating steps performed while conducting a game play on the gaming machine illustrated on FIGS. **1** and **2**;

[0012] FIG. **4** is a flow chart illustrating a set of steps performed while conducting an authorization process in association with an instance of the feature game of the present invention; and

[0013] FIG. **5** is a time chart illustrating example of participations of different players in different instances of the feature game of the present invention.

[0014] It will be noted that throughout the appended drawings, like features are identified by like reference numerals.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Lexicon

[0015] In relation with embodiments of the present invention, the terms "game of chance" are meant to encompass all games and game-related processes depending on a random event to be conducted. Examples of games of chance comprise casino-style games such as poker games, line games, and bingo games.

[0016] The terms "feature game" are means to encompass any process auxiliary to a principal process and resulting in the participant being awarded or not a prize at the end depending on the outcome of that participation in the present auxiliary process.

[0017] The term "instance" is meant to define a step, stage or situation viewed as a part of a process or a series of events. Therefore, an instance accordingly defines a single process distinct from another single process and both part of a more global process.

General Description of Physical Embodiments

[0018] Embodiments of the present invention may be carried out in part on a gaming apparatus, such as a personal computer, a gaming terminal, a server or a gaming machine as illustrated in FIGS. **1** and **2**. Said gaming machine **10** comprises displaying means **12**, such as a video screen, an LCD screen or mechanical reels; accepting means **14** such as a card reader, or a coin and/or bill acceptor; input-receiving means **16**, such as buttons, levers or a touch screen; awarding means **18**, such as a ticket printer, an information display, a card reader or a hopper; storing means **20** such as RAM, flash memory, a hard drive or a removable memory medium; and controlling means **22** such as a computer, computer codes, or a hardware controller. The gaming machine **10** further comprises generating means **24**, which also may correspond to a computer, computer codes or hardware components. In another embodiment, the gaming machine **10** carrying out the invention may comprise, either in replacement of or in combination with the accepting means **14**, communicating means **26** allowing communication between the controlling means **22** and a remotely linked accounting means (not shown) wherein player accounts are maintained (either by a casino or by a financial institution, such as a bank), and monetary value is downloaded on the gaming machine **10** to play the game and uploaded on the accounting means upon quitting the game. FIG. **2** shows two identical gaming machines **10**. For sake of simplicity, the numerals associated to machines **10** and all components forming part of them are identical and there descriptions will not be repeated.

[0019] Embodiments of the invention may comprise additional components to be carried on. As illustrated on FIG. **2**, typical additional components comprise a server **30** adapted to perform management tasks in view of the present multi-instance feature game. The server **30** is communicatively linked to gaming machines **10** through its communicating means **34**. The server **30** comprises also controlling means **32** such as a computer and computer codes, and storing means **36** such as computer hard drive. A feature terminal **40**, adapted for authorizing participation or providing these participations in instances of the feature game is also part of the additional components. Such a terminal **40** comprises communicating means **46**, inputting means **42** and outputting means **44**. Gaming machines **10**, server **30**, and feature terminal **40** communicate through network **28**.

[0020] Typically, the described gaming machine **10** is designed, as shown on FIG. **3**, to receive credit information from a player (at step **60**) coming from the deposit of money either in a physical format (such as coins or bills) or in an electronic format (such as monetary value stored on a player card or transferred from a bank account), to receive activation information from the player (at step **62**), to randomly generate (at step **64**) and display (at step **66**) a game outcome, to evaluate said game outcome according to game rules (a pay schedule for example) (at step **68**), and to award a prize to the player for a winning game outcome (at step **70**). The gaming machine further provides participation rights into a plurality of instances of the feature game (at step **72**) upon fulfillment of a feature criterion.

[0021] According to an embodiment, a participation in the multi-instance feature may be awarded to a player upon occurrence of a randomly-controlled trigger event. Examples of such trigger events comprise a particular symbol or combination of symbols in a line game, a particular pattern in a bingo game, a particular outcome in a lottery game, a particular number of matches in a keno game, a particular outcome in a bonus feature associated to a game, a trigger signal received from a networked game server based on random determination or a lottery process, etc. The criteria used in relation to the trigger event may also be a combination of criteria such as the presence of a particular bet level at the time of the occurrence of a trigger outcome, a particular sequence of outcomes such as two winning keno outcomes with a minimum number of common matching numbers, a player identification at the time of the occurrence of the trigger outcome, etc. Furthermore, the randomly-controlled trigger event may be a combination of trigger events that have to occur according to certain criteria: for instance a second occurrence of the same trigger event within a predetermined period following the first occurrence of the trigger event.

[0022] According to another embodiment, a participation in the multi-instance feature may result from a multi-event monitoring process. An example of such process may be a monitoring in a tally of the bets of a player, and initiation of an internal lottery process to determine if the player should be awarded a multi-instance participation right each time the tally value reaches or overcomes a threshold. In this example, the probability of awarding a participation right to the player may increase with each threshold reached. According to configurations, the tally may be reset upon the award of a participation right, at regular time periods, etc. Another example of multi-event monitoring process may comprise a voluntary accumulation of points by the player, with the use of the points to purchase participation rights, or the use of these points in a random process that can result in participation rights. According to this last example, players may have different advantages of accumulating more points before consuming them; for example to increase the number of participation rights, to increase the value of the awards resulting from participation rights, etc.

[0023] Participation rights to the same multi-instance feature may be awarded through different processes or games. The participation rights awarded may have the same or different characteristics based on the way they are awarded to players. These characteristics may include the advantages they provide in the feature, the number of instances of the feature for which they provide rights, etc.

[0024] According to embodiments, the media through which the player is awarded these participation rights may vary. In one embodiment, a voucher is printed and awarded to the player to award a participation right. In another embodiment, the award takes form of a modification of data of a smart card inserted in the gaming machine. In another embodiment, the player is signaled on the gaming machine display that he is awarded a participation right with the details of the multi-instance feature, the player being requested to provide a Personal Identification Number (PIN) for future validation of his identity at any of the instances of the feature.

[0025] According to embodiments, the multi-instance feature of the present invention may take many forms. In one embodiment, the feature takes form of a lottery in which the player may win prizes. In another one, each instance of the feature takes form of a participation in a roulette game with the player participating in the roulette game, for example, according to the characteristics of the participation rights he was awarded. According to another embodiment, the player having participation rights may participate in multiple scheduled tournaments wherein players concurrently compete to win the tournament. In another one, the tournament or tournaments the player may participate in is an asynchronous tournament in which the winner is established at the end of the tournament process. In another embodiment, players having participation rights who play on designated gaming machines during an instance available period which receive a trigger signal, or upon generation of trigger outcome, may initiate a feature bonus (that may be considered as an instance) available only to these players.

[0026] In relation to the embodiments, the player who has been awarded rights to participate in an instance of a feature may require an authorization: to identify himself; a process that may be performed in many ways. In one embodiment, the player may have to provide an identification card to a feature attendant who will compare the identification information to a database. In another one, the player may simply have to enter a smart card, provide a previously provided PIN or a voucher to a feature gaming machine to participate in an instance of the multi-instance feature. During the authorization process, the player's participation right is evaluated by verifying its validity in a feature database, and a modification is performed in the database to keep track of the use of the feature participation right by the player.

[0027] This authorization process and may be illustrated through the flow chart of FIG. **4**. In one embodiment, to initiate the providing of an instance of the feature game to a player, the player requests participation in said instance (at step **80**). The request is verified in order to determine if a valid participation right is associated in the database with the request (at step **82**) If the request is valid, the player is provided an authorization to participate in the instance of the feature game (at step **84**) taking form of an identified feature machine being associated with the player, feature credits being awarded to the player to use in a live feature game such a roulette game, or any other suitable form. The system further keeps track of the consumption of the participation right (at step **86**) to prevent another participation to be provided in association with the same participation right. Finally, the player is provided his participation (at step **88**) that may result in the player being awarded a feature prize (at step **90**).

[0028] When entering a second instance of the multi-instance feature, the player may use the same process, with a verification being performed in the feature database in a similar fashion, including the evaluation of the player having used up all of his participation rights.

[0029] It has to be noted that the multi-instance feature allows, in some embodiments, different players to participate in the feature for the first time in distinct instances. For example, a player being awarded participation rights may participate for the first time in the feature at an instance which corresponds to a non-first instance for another player. Therefore, a continuous process wherein old and new feature participants are mixed up at each instance of the feature is provided.

[0030] FIG. **5** illustrates the chronology of an example of participation of four (4) players into a plurality of instances of the feature game with the different players being provided their participation rights at different times. Player **1 90** is provided participation rights prior to the conduct of Instance **1 100** of the feature game. He may therefore participate in Instance **1 100** (as illustrated through a bold point. Player **2 92** is also provided participation rights before the conduct of Instance **1 100** and may also participate in this instance. Player **3 94** and Player **4 96** are awarded their participation rights later, allowing them to participate in Instance **2 102** and Instance **3 104** as their respectful first instances. Instance **1 100** provides an example of scheduled instance wherein the participants must participate at the same time to the instance. Instance **2 102** provides an example of an instance wherein players has a time period to register in participating in the instance, and wherein they do not have to use them concurrently. An example of this kind of instance is a tournament wherein all participants must begin playing during a predetermined time period and wherein the winner is determined when the last participant has completed his participation. Instance **4 106** is an example of another instance that takes place over a time period. In an example, participants play on designated gaming machines during the instance time period, and, at a random time during this period, one of the designated gaming machines is selected. If the machine is occupied by a valid participant, this one receives a prize. Otherwise, all valid participants playing on designated gaming machines receive prizes at the end of the instance time period. It has to be noted that FIG. **5** illustrates players receiving different participation rights. In the example, player **1 90** receives rights to participate to Instance **1 100**, Instance **2 102** and Instance **3 104**. Player **2 92**, for his part, received rights to participate in Instance **1 100** and Instance **2 102**. Player **3 94** receives rights to participate in Instance **2 102** and Instance **4 104** but not in Instance **3 104**.

[0031] Even though not illustrated, instances may overlap one another. For example, an instance may have a registering time period that ends after the beginning of a following registering time period. Therefore, a player could register for the first of the two instances, participate in the instance, and immediately after ending his first participation register himself for the second instance.

[0032] As described above, participations in an event may take many forms, comprising for example a competition between participating players, a game involving cooperation between players (or team play), or a parallel or independent game wherein the participation of a player does not influence the participation of another player in the same instance of the feature.

[0033] According to outcomes obtained by players in each instance of the feature, the player may be awarded monetary prizes, non-monetary prizes such as products and services, participation rights over additional features or additional instances of the present multi-instance feature, etc.

[0034] According to an embodiment, a database is maintained of feature-related data, including data regarding participation rights awarded in the multi-instance feature, consumption of participation rights in single-instance events of the feature, and participation right limitation data. This database is managed to provide management tools necessary to perform participation authorizations, necessary follow up of the participation rights, management of participation-right limitations, and feature auditing processes.

[0035] Therefore, according to some of the embodiments of the invention, an additional incentive is provided to players to play particular games, to register themselves in a player tracking system, etc. Furthermore, the present invention provides the advantages for the gaming providers to incite the feature players to return in the gaming providing establishment many times, at least once for each of the feature instances they won the right to participate in. The feature participants, since already on location, may play games during their visit and therefore provide additional patronage they would not provide otherwise. They may even bring company to encourage them in their participation in the multi-instance feature and create even more patronage and potentially new patrons.

[0036] In consequence, to provide a better understanding of the invention, hereinafter is provided a practical example of an embodiment of the invention which does not limit the scope of the invention.

[0037] For example, an embodiment may take the form of an electronic wagering game, a line game. Upon occurrence of a feature trigger event, a combination of symbols in the line game fulfilling a criterion, a participation right awarding process is initiated. During this process, the bet level on the game, the nature of the trigger event, and other influencing data are considered in order to establish the characteristics of the feature participation rights to be awarded to the player.

[0038] Afterwards, the gaming machine prints a voucher on which the nature and details of the participation rights are inscribed. The information may comprise limitations regarding the feature instances (time, location, nature of the instances, the prizes that may be won during the feature participations, etc.).

[0039] Accordingly, the player comes back to the casino at the time corresponding to the first instance of the feature and inscribed on the voucher, enters the voucher in a feature gaming machine and participates in a tournament. Based on the outcome of the player in the tournament, the player may be awarded or not a prize.

[0040] The player comes back for the second instance wherein a roulette game is played. During this feature, the player may place a number of feature credits on particular betting areas with the number of feature credits being determined by voucher borne information. This process is performed for all feature participants.

[0041] In the present case, a third instance consists in a network lottery being performed during a pre-establish time period. During this period, the feature participants are invited to play on gaming machines in the casino. At some point during the time period, a network controller establishes a gaming machine to be a feature-winning gaming machine. Depending if the selected gaming machine is played by one feature participant, the feature prize is awarded or not. If not, the feature participants that are playing on gaming machines at the time of the winning gaming machine determination are awarded a participation in a bonus feature in which they each may win a portion of the feature prize.

[0042] Following this third participation, the voucher loses its value. Since the feature instances associated with the voucher have all been used up, the voucher would not permit the player to participate in a subsequent instance, unless updated.

[0043] It has to be noted that even if the present multi-instance feature has been described in view of a single feature participant, many participants typically participate in the same instance of the feature. As illustrated on FIG. **5**, participants begins participations in the feature at different instances, may participate to a different number of instances. According to embodiments, a feature outcome in one feature instance may or may not influence the following conduct of the feature for a participant. FIG. **5** illustrates the occurrence of the feature triggering event with a T symbol for each of the players. Each horizontal line indicates a different feature participant. Each vertical line indicates a different instance of the feature. According to the width of the line, the instance may be an instantaneous one (as the roulette) or a non-instantaneous one (the tournament participation or the last described network instance). Other instances may be for example instantaneous or non-instantaneous ones with the initiation being required to occur within predetermined time periods.

[0044] As another example, random determination of winning patrons may be performed in a patron-monitoring facility, such a casino, with the probabilities of winning participation rights to a feature varying based on the activities of each patron. For example, virtual tokens may be associated with patrons for actions they perform (being in the facility during a time period, purchasing goods and services, betting in games, etc.). Each time a predetermined number of virtual tokens are distributed, a lottery-type process is performed to establish winning patrons. These winning patrons are awarded their feature participation rights the next time they performed suitable actions. For example, a winning patron may be printed a feature-participating voucher when playing on a gaming machine, or may be provided feature-participation data on the receipt received from the first purchase performed after the winning patron determination process.

[0045] Accordingly, details on the multiple instances of the feature and the won participation rights are provided to the patrons. Accordingly, patrons may stay in the facility longer to use these participation rights, or may come back is order to use them.

[0046] It has to be noted that the nature of the feature and the instances, time limitation and other limitations in regard

to the instances, etc. are not limited by the way the feature participation rights are awarded.

[0047] It should be noted, as illustrated throughout the present document, that the present invention can be carried out as a method, can be embodied in one or more components of a system, a computer readable medium, processor-readable memory or an electrical or electromagnetic signal. Any of these embodiments are meant to be comprised within the scope of the present invention.

[0048] In conclusion, the embodiments of the invention described above are intended to be exemplary only. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A method of conducting a feature game comprising:

upon fulfillment of a feature criterion, awarding participation rights to a player for participating in a plurality of instances of the feature game, comprising storing information in a database regarding the participation rights provided to said player;

upon reception of a first request from the player for participation in a first instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for a first one of said participation rights relating to said first request, authorizing participation by the player in the first instance of the feature game, keeping track of the player's participation in the first instance, and providing participation to the player in the first instance of the feature game;

upon reception of a second request from the player for participation in a second instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for a second one of said participation rights different from said first participation right relating to said second request, authorizing participation by the player in the second instance of the feature game, keeping track of the player's participation in the second instance, and providing participation to the player in the second instance of the feature game; and

providing the player with an award based on the outcome of the player's participation in at least one of the first instance and the second instance of the feature game.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the second instance of the feature of the player is the first instance of the feature game of another player.

3. The method of claim **1**, further comprising verifying said fulfillment of a feature criterion, which comprises monitoring of at least one of (i) an instant event, and (ii) multiple events.

4. The method of claim **1**, wherein conducting an instance of the feature game comprises one of (i) conducting a game process, (ii) conducting a lottery-type process, and (iii) conducting a tournament process.

5. The method of claim **1**, wherein providing the player with participation rights comprises one of (i) providing the player with readable information on a physical media, (ii) providing the player with information to use when providing participation request of instances of the feature game, and (iii) modify a media associated with said player for said media to be used in providing participation requests of instances of the feature game.

6. A method of conducting a feature game comprising:

upon fulfillment of a feature criterion, awarding a player with participation rights, each one of said participation rights pertaining to a distinct instance of the feature game to take place in predetermined conditions;

upon identification of the player in relation to any one of the instances of the feature game, providing the player with participation in that instance of the feature game without preventing the player in participating in another one of the instances of the feature game for which the player has received one of said participation rights; and

providing an award to the player based on said participation.

7. The method of claim **6**, further comprising verifying said fulfillment of a feature criterion, which comprises monitoring at least one of (i) an instant event, and (ii) a combination of multiple events.

8. The method of claim **6**, wherein providing the player with participation rights comprises one of (i) providing the player with readable information on a physical media,

(ii) providing the player with information used to consume said participation rights, and (iii) modify a media associated with said player for said media to be used to consume said participation rights.

9. A method of conducting a feature game comprising:

upon fulfillment of a feature criterion in a wagering process, registering participation rights associated with a player in a database, each one of said participation rights being associated with a single instance of the feature game;

upon reception of a request for participating in an instance of the feature game, verifying in the database for an associated participation right, authorizing said participation, providing said participation, and providing the player with an award based on said participation; and

continue providing participations in instances of the feature game to the player as long as participation rights associated with the player registered in the database allow providing participations and as long as the participation requests respect limitations associated with the participation rights registered in the database.

10. The method of claim **9**, further comprising awarding said participation rights to the player, wherein said participation rights are provided in one of: (i) readable information borne on a physical media, (ii) confidential information visually provided, and (iii) a modification of a player-associated media.

11. The method of claim **9**, further comprising monitoring player-associated events or game-associated events to establish fulfillment of said feature participation criterion.

12. A method of conducting a feature game comprising:

upon fulfillment of a feature participation criterion, registering a set of a plurality of participation rights in a database with each of said participation rights being associated with a distinct instance of a feature game;

during conduct of each distinct instance of the feature game, verifying presence of a participation right associated with said instance for a player; and

upon positive verification of said participation right, providing said player with an award.

13. The method of claim **12**, wherein the step of providing an award comprises providing at least one of: verifying fulfillment of an awarding criterion; providing the player with a prize; conducting a game process; and conducting a tournament participation process.

14. The method of claim **12**, further comprising monitoring player-associated events or game-associated events to establish fulfillment of said feature participation criterion.

15. The method of claim **12**, wherein the step of registering participation rights comprises registering participation data comprising characteristics regarding the instance associated with each one of the participation rights.

16. The method of claim **12**, wherein each one of the distinct instances are conducted according to a time schedule.

17. The method of claim **12**, wherein each one of the distinct instances may be conducted at a random time within a predetermined time period.

18. The method of claim **17**, wherein the time periods associated with two distinct instances may overlap.

19. The method of claim **12**, wherein conduct of an instance of the feature game comprises monitoring an instance-associated event, wherein positive monitoring of the instance-associated event triggers the conduct of said instance.

20. A system for conducting a feature game, comprising:

a server comprising controlling means for controlling the awarding of sets of a plurality of participation rights to a plurality of patrons with each one of said participation rights pertaining to a distinct instance of the feature game, storing means for storing information regarding the participation rights awarded to said patrons, and communicating means; and

a terminal comprising inputting means for inputting a participation request in association of an instance of the feature game, controlling means for controlling authorization process regarding said participation request, and outputting means to output authorization to participate in said instance of the feature game among a plurality of instances of said feature game, and communicating means for communicating said request information to the server in order to evaluate the information of the participation right associated with the participation request.

21. The system of claim **20**, further comprising monitoring means for monitoring events associated with a patron, wherein the monitored events fulfilling a feature game criterion triggers the award of one said set of a plurality of participation rights to the patron.

22. The system of claim **20**, further comprising a feature awarding means for conducting a participation in an instance of the feature in response to the authorization.

23. The system of claim **20**, wherein the storing means comprises a database for maintaining information regarding said participation rights and said participation authorizations.

24. A gaming machine comprising:

receiving means for receiving inputs from a player;

controlling means for (i) controlling the conduct of a wagering game in which an outcome is provided in response of a wager, wherein the outcome is selected among a plurality of outcomes among which at least one is a winning outcome associated with a prize and at least one is a losing outcome, and for (ii) associating a set of a plurality of participation rights to a player when a monitoring of a trigger event is performed on the gaming machine;

awarding means for awarding said prize when said outcome is a winning outcome; and

communicating means for communicating information regarding the set of participation rights associated with the player to a server used to authorize said player to participate in a plurality of instances of a feature game based on the different participation rights associated with the player.

25. The gaming machine of claim **24**, wherein the monitored event comprises a feature triggering outcome among the plurality of outcomes, and wherein each one of the participation rights consists in an authorization for the player to participate in a distinct scheduled instance of a prize awarding process conducted separately from the gaming machine.

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