

MEMENTO DISPENSING DEVICE WITH SIMULATED GAMING FEATURES

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/733,545, filed Nov. 4, 2005, entitled "Memento Dispensing Device with Simulated Gaming Features," the disclosures of which, including all attached documents, are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety for all purposes.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates in general to a memento dispensing device for dispensing tokens, medallions, souvenirs, and other articles or objects having commemorative value. More specifically, the present invention, in addition to its primary function for dispensing mementos, comprises supplemental means for allowing one to engage in interactive activities, including the viewing of pre-selected video feeds and participating in a simulated gaming event momentarily after depositing a predetermined sum of currency, whereupon such interactive activities may further an establishment's opportunity to advertise or promote a certain product or service, commemorate a particular event or occasion, or advance an establishment's theme.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] This patent application will describe the memento selling trade, the occasions when mementos are sold, the current challenges to implementing a successful marketing and advertising strategy using mementos and a novel solution to these challenges. Mementos are distributed or sold in commerce by a variety of means, some of which may involve direct sale by onsite sales personnel or an automated device such as a vending machine. Automated devices of this type may be regarded as the preferred manner in transacting a memento sale given their efficient, accurate handling of a high volume of sales in a centralized location or deployment of an inexpensive workforce to cover a large territory of smaller transactions. Automated devices can vary significantly in size, shape and form, but all operate on the common principle of a direct exchange of money for a memento, whether it is in a form of a token, medallion, souvenir, and other article or object having commemorative value.

[0004] The memento in a form of a token, for example, may be further utilized in a commercial transaction similar to that involving currency, which may be exchanged at a later time for a purchase of a good or service, activation of an entertainment device such as an arcade game or simply kept in its own right for its commemorative value and appeal. In the past, sellers of mementos have applied very few creative approaches to their trade. One such creative approach may involve active participation of the purchaser to create a memento using an onsite press and stamp machine which accepts for a nominal fee a relatively low value coin, such as a United States penny, and converts it into a uniquely shaped token to commemorate an event, occasion or attraction. Part of the appeal of such an exchange can be attributed to user participation in creating and obtaining a unique token through manipulation of

hand-crank rollers and selection of a design-bearing stamp to be mechanically reproduced and transferred onto the coin's face.

[0005] The opportunity to sell mementos has traditionally been observed on two occasions: arcade establishments with coin operated entertainment equipment and impulse purchases by tourists at tourist attractions. Arcades, for example, may use a memento in the form of a token bearing a design unique to the establishment in lieu of currency to centralize the collection of money and practice their trade without dependency on the current supply of the appropriate denomination of coined money. In other memento transactions, a tourist may purchase a token, souvenir or medallion for its commemorative value, and as discussed earlier, actively participate in its creation by selecting a stamp bearing words and images which coincide with a particular tourist attraction or theme park.

[0006] The opportunity to expand the use and sale of mementos, particularly tokens, depends on overcoming current challenges to implementing a successful marketing and advertising strategy. Such challenges include the inexistence of a memento dispensing device which integrally attracts patrons for a predetermined amount of time insofar to permit one to engage in an interactive event and purchase a memento while simultaneously affording an establishment the opportunity to gain the attention of the consumer to promote or advertise a certain product or service.

[0007] A memento dispensing device comprising the strategic arrangement of lights, sounds and music can collectively attract patrons to the memento dispensing device to make a memento purchase and momentarily observe decorative and video displays which depict promotional offerings being made by the establishment. Memento dispensing devices incorporating these entertaining functions could serve as a novelty item to further the establishment's theme or to promote a business by selling tokens and the like in a fun and exciting manner for the exchange of a good or service at a later time.

[0008] Gaming devices such as a typical slot machine offer an inherent attraction to patrons. However, such devices are categorically games of chance where the excitement is primarily associated with their operation, such as the pulling of a lever or pressing a button to set in rotational motion reels bearing a collection of symbols or images of some sort. Although this operation comprises entertaining value to some, the net transaction may or may not yield a payment. In general, such devices by their design operate to avoid providing a payment on each transaction in favor of providing a more random pattern of small to large payments between extended periods of nonpayment. Harnessing the attraction and excitement of pulling a lever or pressing a button and observing the rotation of reels would greatly enhance the experience of purchasing a memento, even more so than the traditional direct money for memento exchange manner common to the memento selling trade.

[0009] Currently, gaming devices such as slot machines are categorically considered illegal in some jurisdictions or locations throughout the United States and the world given their stature as a game of chance. Gaming devices lacking the game of chance element while functioning in the capacity as a memento selling device may rightfully and readily permit their use in most jurisdictions where games of chance