

tion, it should be understood that the legal scope of the invention is defined by the words of the claims set forth at the end of this patent. The detailed description is to be construed as exemplary only and does not describe every possible embodiment of the invention since describing every possible embodiment would be impractical, if not impossible. Numerous alternative embodiments could be implemented, using either current technology or technology developed after the filing date of this patent, which would still fall within the scope of the claims defining the invention.

[0031] It should also be understood that, unless a term is expressly defined in this patent using the sentence "As used herein, the term '_____' is hereby defined to mean . . ." or a similar sentence, there is no intent to limit the meaning of that term, either expressly or by implication, beyond its plain or ordinary meaning, and such term should not be interpreted to be limited in scope based on any statement made in any section of this patent (other than the language of the claims). To the extent that any term recited in the claims at the end of this patent is referred to in this patent in a manner consistent with a single meaning, that is done for sake of clarity only so as to not confuse the reader, and it is not intended that such claim term be limited, by implication or otherwise, to that single meaning. Finally, unless a claim element is defined by reciting the word "means" and a function without the recital of any structure, it is not intended that the scope of any claim element be interpreted based on the application of 35 U.S.C. §112, sixth paragraph.

[0032] FIG. 1 illustrates one possible embodiment of a casino gaming and brand association system 50 (hereinafter "system 50") in accordance with the disclosure. Referring to FIG. 1, the system 50 may include a first group or network 52 of casino gaming units 54 operatively coupled to a network computer 56 via a network data link or a bus 58. The first network 52 may also include a communications computer 60, which may be coupled to the network computer 56 via the data link or bus 58. The communications computer 60 may also be coupled to a transceiver 62, which transceiver may be a wireless transceiver, such as a radio frequency transceiver or infrared transceiver, for example. The transceiver 62 may be in communication with one or more personal communication units 64 (such as a Personal Digital Assistant or the like, having a controller including a processor and memory operatively coupled to the processor), a data link 66 being formed according to the method of communication used (e.g., radio frequency, infrared, etc.). The personal communication units 64 may be owned by the player, or may be provided to the player by the operator of the network 52.

[0033] The system 50 may include a second group or network 72 of casino gaming units 74, 75 operatively coupled to a network computer 76 via a network data link or a bus 78. The second network 72 may also include a communications computer 80, which may be coupled to the network computer 76 via the data link or bus 78. The communications computer 80 may also be coupled via the data link or bus 78 to transceivers 82 that are attached to or integrated with the gaming units 75, which transceivers may be wireless transceivers, such as a radio frequency transceivers or infrared transceivers, for example. The transceivers 82 may be in communication with one or more personal communication units 84, a data link 86 being formed accord-

ing to the method of communication used (e.g., radio frequency, infrared, etc.). The personal communication units 84 may be owned by the player, or may be provided to the player by the operator of the network 72. The network 72 may also include a kiosk 88, which differs from the gaming units 74, 75 in that the kiosk is not programmed to operate according to the gaming aspect of the system 50, the gaming aspect being explained in greater detail with reference to FIGS. 9-21.

[0034] The system 50 may further include a third group or network 92 of casino gaming units 94. The gaming units 94 may be coupled via a data link or a bus 96. The third network 92 differs from the first and second networks in that there is no network computer coupled to the data link 96.

[0035] The first, second, and third gaming networks 52, 72, 92 may be operatively coupled to each other via a fourth network 102, which may comprise, for example, the Internet, an intranet, a wide area network (WAN), or a local area network (LAN). The network 102 may include a plurality of network computers or server computers (not shown), each of which may be operatively interconnected, and may include Internet Service Providers (ISPs) or online service providers. The first, second and third networks 52, 72, 92 may be coupled to the fourth network 102 via a first, second, and third data links 104, 106, 108. Where the network 102 comprises an Intranet or the Internet, data communication may take place over the communication links 104, 106, 108 via an Internet communication protocol.

[0036] The fourth network 102 may also be coupled to other computers or networks other than the first, second and third networks 52, 72, 92 discussed above. For example, the fourth network 102 may be coupled to one or more other network computers 110, 112, via data links 114, 116. These network computers may, in turn, be coupled via data links 118. Additionally, the fourth network 102 may be coupled to a communications computer 120 via a data link 122, the communications computer 120 being coupled to a transceiver 124. The transceiver 124 is shown in communication with personal communication units 126, which may be in the same geographic location as the gaming units 94 of the network 92, via a data link 128 formed according to the method of communication used (e.g. radio frequency, infrared, etc.). The personal communication units 126 may be owned by the player, or may be provided to the player by the operator of the network 92. Also shown coupled to the network 102 is a gaming unit 130; the network 102 may be coupled to the gaming unit 130 by a data link 132.

[0037] The network computer 56 may be a server. According to one embodiment, the network computer 56 may be used as an accounting system server to accumulate and analyze data relating to the operation of the gaming units 54. For example, the network computer 56 may continuously receive data from each of the gaming units 54 indicative of the dollar amount and number of wagers being made on each of the gaming units 54, data indicative of how much each of the gaming units 54 is paying out in winnings, etc. According to another embodiment, the network computer 56 may be used as a player tracking server or a bonusing server to accumulate and analyze data relating to the operation of particular gaming units 54. According to this embodiment, the network computer 56 may receive data from a particular gaming unit 54 indicative of the identity of the player