

operating the gaming unit **54**, the number of wagers being made on the gaming unit **54**, etc. If the network computer **56** is being used as a player tracking server, the network computer **56** may use the data accumulated to award player tracking points to the player, which points may be used to assess comps or to be redeemed for goods or services. If the network computer is being used as a bonusing computer, the network computer **56** may use the data accumulated to award the player prizes, which may be goods or services, based on individual or collective performance, to award bonusing points which points may be redeemed for goods or services, etc. According to a still further embodiment, the network computer **56** may be used as a download server to monitor the software implemented by and the data utilized by the gaming units **54**, to determine if software or data upgrades are available, and to download the upgrades to the gaming units **54**. According to yet another embodiment, the network computer **56** may be used as a brand association server, as will be explained in greater detail with reference to **FIG. 1A**, below.

[0038] The network computer **76** may be a server and may be used to perform the same or different functions in relation to the gaming units **74, 75** as the network computer **56** described above. Similarly, the network computers **110, 112** may be servers, and may be used to perform the same or different functions in relation to the gaming units **54, 74, 75, 94** as the network computers **56, 76**. Moreover, the network computers **110, 112** may be different servers, and may perform the same or different functions in relation to the gaming units **54, 74, 75, 94**.

[0039] As an alternative, the operation of the gaming units may be monitored and/or coordinated without the use of a central computer or controller, as in the third network **92**. During operation, the processing required by the operations otherwise performed by a network computer may be shared by the gaming units **94**. Such shared processing may be referred to as peer-to-peer networking, and is also within the scope of the present disclosure.

[0040] The communications computers **60, 80** may also be servers. That is, the computers **60, 80** may monitor and coordinate the communications between other computers, such as the network computers **56, 76**, and the personal communication devices **64, 84** via the transceivers **62, 82**. Alternatively, as in the case of the communications computer **120**, the communications computer may be part of a mobile communications network that is operated and administered by an entity other than the entity that operates and administers the network of gaming units, such as gaming units **94**. Such a mobile communications network may be a cellular telephone network, and the communications computer **120** may represent the base station system of such a network, which base station system may be in communication with the Internet via a gateway, for example. According to this embodiment, the personal communication units **126** may be mobile stations, such as cellular telephones, portable e-mail devices (e.g., BLACKBERRY® devices manufactured by Research In Motion Ltd., of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada), personal digital assistants (PDA), laptops, tablet personal computers, etc.

[0041] The first network **52** of gaming units **54** may be provided in a first casino, the second network **72** of gaming units **74, 75** may be provided in a second casino located in

a separate geographic location than the first casino, and the third network **92** of gaming units **94** may be provided in a third casino in a separate geographic location that the first and the second networks. For example, the three casinos maybe located in different areas of the same city, or they may be located in different states. However, the three networks **52, 72, 92** may be disposed in different sections of the same casino, or the gaming units **54, 74, 75, and 94** may even be disposed in the same section of the same casino.

[0042] Although the networks **52, 72** are shown as including one network computer **56, 76**, one communications computer **60, 80**, and four gaming units **54, 74, 75** and the network **92** as including four gaming units **94**, it should be understood that different numbers of computers and gaming units may be utilized. For example, the network **52** may include a plurality of network computers **56** and tens or hundreds of gaming units **54**, all of which may be interconnected via the data link **58**. The data link **58** may be provided as a dedicated hardwired link, a wireless link, a fiber optic link, or a network (LAN, WAN, Internet, intranet) connection. Although the data link **58** is shown as a single data link **58**, the data link **58** may comprise multiple data links. Numerous gaming units **130**, kiosks **88** and personal communication units **64, 84, 126** may also be included.

[0043] **FIG. 1A** is one embodiment of the system **50**, as seen from the point of view of the brand association aspect of the system **50**. As such, many of the elements of the system **50** referenced in **FIG. 1A** correspond to one or more of the elements described with reference to **FIG. 1**. However, as more than one of the elements described in **FIG. 1** may correspond to the elements shown in **FIG. 1A**, the elements of **FIG. 1A** have been numbered separately, and the correspondences addressed in turn in detail below.

[0044] As seen in **FIG. 1A**, the system **50** may include several servers **140, 142, 144, 146**, although other servers may be included. These servers **140, 142, 144, 146** may correspond to one or more of the network computers **56, 76, 110, 112** or the communications computers **60, 80**, or, alternatively, the processing of these servers may be shared by gaming units, as in the network **92**. The servers shown are as follows: a brand association server **140**, a player tracking server **142**, a gaming unit download server **144**, and a communication server **146**. Other servers that may be used with the system **50** could include advertisement scheduling servers, advertisement selection servers, advertising billing servers (which may include both local advertisement billing servers and national advertisement billing servers) etc.; many of the operations carried out by such servers are discussed below in regard to the brand association server **140**, but it should be understood that these operations could be tasked to one or more of the servers just mentioned.

[0045] The servers **140, 142, 144, 146** may be connected by one or more data links and one or more networks. According to the embodiment shown, the brand association server **140** is coupled via a data link **148** and a network **150** to the player tracking server **142**, the gaming unit download server **144**, and the communication server **146** via the data links **152, 154, 156**. The brand association server **140** is also coupled via a data link **158** another network **160**, which is in turn coupled via a data links **162, 164, 166** to remote servers **168, 170, 172**. The servers **168, 170, 172** may be associated with three different brands, for example, as will be explained in greater detail below.