

[0176] According to a first example, the brand association routine 350 is operating in the server 140. In this example, the brand association routine 350 utilizes information or data from the player profile and brand criteria, but no event criteria. Consequently, the routine 350 starts at block 352.

[0177] At block 352, the determination is made that player profiles will be utilized in determining the selected brand to be used. According to this example, the player profiles are stored in the player tracking server 142, and the brand association server 140 determines which profiles are to be retrieved from the player tracking server 142 according to those players that are signed in to the player tracking system including the player tracking server 142 and at least the gaming units associated with the player tracking modules 176. A player may sign in to the player tracking system by disposing a player tracking card into the card reader 262 associated with the respective player tracking module 260. The player profiles of the players that are signed into the player tracking system are downloaded to the brand association server 140, completing block 354.

[0178] For purposes of illustration, the player profiles downloaded may contain a travel record. In particular, the travel record may include information regarding the player's preferences concerning airline travel, hotels accommodations, and rental car companies. According to this example this information will be used in the determination made at block 388.

[0179] The routine 350 then passes to block 380, wherein the determination is made that no event criteria will be used in the determination made at block 388. As a consequence, the routine 350 proceeds to block 384.

[0180] At block 384, the server 140 determines that brand criteria is to be used, in part, to select the brand or brands according to the present example. The routine then proceeds to block 386, wherein the brand criteria are received by the brand server. According to the present example, the network operator may be looking to provide a prize program for its player tracking club members that includes airline travel, hotel accommodations, and ground transport. As such, the network operator may established a brand criteria which will select those players whose player profiles, and in particular, their travel records, indicate that they have taken a trip recently by airplane, typically take at least one four-day vacation each year, and typically rent a car if they travel by airplane.

[0181] At block 388, the determination is made as to which brands to select. In this example, the server 140 first compares the brand criteria with the player profiles to determine the number of players that have travel records that match the brand criteria. Based on the comparison, the server 140 may determine that there are three hundred individuals that meet the brand criteria. The server 140 then sends a request for bids to several airlines, to several hotels, and to several car rental companies, alerting them to the fact that the network operator associated with the server 140 wishes to establish a prize package including first class air travel to Orlando, Fla., four-night accommodation, and a rental car. In exchange, the winning bidder will have their advertisements displayed and their corporate logo included as a symbol on one or more of the game elements displayed. In response to the request for bids, the server 140 may receive several bids from airlines, hotel companies and car

rental companies. According to this example, the determination of which brands to feature may be made by selecting the lowest bid for each service (airline travel, hotel accommodation, and car rental).

[0182] At block 390, the server 140 retrieves brand materials from each of the winning bidders. According to this example, the server 140 may receive downloads of logos from each of the winning bidders to be used to replace the symbols on one of the gaming units associated with one of the players is part of the selected group of players. The server 140 may also receive advertising materials from the winning bidder/brand-promoters.

[0183] In turn, the server 140 may download the logos to the gaming unit download server 144 as part of block 392. The server 140 may also define a modification to the payable used by the gaming units 180 to include an outcome that will be associated with the prize package, which payable will be downloaded to the gaming unit download server 144. Preferably, this prize package will be assigned to a combination of symbols that is infrequently displayed and not presently associated with a payout, and that could be composed of one each of the logo of the selected airline brand, the selected hotel brand, and the selected car rental brand. The server 140 may further download the advertising materials to the gaming unit download server 144. The gaming unit download server 144 may then download the logos, the payable, and the advertising materials to the gaming units 180.

[0184] With the logos, payable and advertising materials downloaded to the gaming units 180, the routine 350 may proceed to block 394. The server 140 or the gaming units 180 may perform a check before using the downloaded brand materials, to determine if the gaming unit 180 is presently executing an iteration of the game routine, which may be a video slots routine. If the determination is made that the gaming unit 180 is presently executing an iteration of the game routine, the substitution of the logos and the payable may be delayed until the execution of the present iteration is complete, whether that means that the server 140 delays the transmission of a signal that would otherwise cause the gaming unit 180 to use the downloaded logos and payable or that means that the controller 310 associated with the gaming unit delays implementation. On the other hand, because the advertising material would not affect the operation of the game routine, the gaming unit may begin to display the advertising material as soon as the routine proceeds to block 394. According to this example, the advertising material of each of the winning bidders/brand-promoters may be displayed to the player in sequence, along with an explanation of the prize program that the player is participating in, or the advertising material of all of the winning bidder/brand-promoters may be displayed at the same time, if space permits.

[0185] The operation of the gaming units 180 continues in this fashion until one of the player/participants achieves the outcome that is associated with the prize. At that time, the server 140 may determine at block 444 that a new brand may now be displayed on the gaming units 180 other than the gaming unit 180 associated with the winning player. For these other gaming units 180, the routine 350 may return to block 352.

[0186] As for the winning player, the outcome may cause the server 140 to retrieve one or more images that are