Title: SYSTEM FOR A SECOND PLAYER TO PLAY ALONG WITH A GAME BEING PLAYED BY A FIRST PLAYER ON A GAMING DEVICE

Abstract: System for a second player to play along with a game being played by a first player on a gaming device, comprising at least one gaming device, in particular a fruit machine, comprising a communication interface for issuing current game information of the game being played by the first player, and a communication network connected to the communication interface and adapted to forward the current game information, in addition to at least one play-along device connected to the communication network and comprising a display device for representing the game information of the current game on the gaming device, insertion means for payment means from the second player, and means for issuing value vouchers to the second player.
Declaration under Rule 4.17:  
— as to applicant’s entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent  
(Rule 4.17(U))

Published:  
— with international search report
System for a second player to play along with a game being played by a first player on a gaming device

The present invention relates to a system for a second player to play along with a game being played by a first player on a gaming device.

Gaming devices are per se known and are usually disposed in casinos, amusement arcades or similar locations. At determined times, for instance during weekends, such locations receive a greater number of visitors than at other times, for instance on weekdays.

It is therefore possible that at determined moments there are fewer gaming devices available at a determined location, such as a casino, than the number of people wishing to make use of them.

The present invention therefore has for its object to provide a system for providing a player with the option of playing a game of chance without the player actually having to be seated at a gaming device.

The invention provides for this purpose a system for a second player to play along with a game being played by a first player on a gaming device, comprising at least one gaming device, in particular a fruit machine, provided with a communication interface for issuing current game information of the game being played by the first player, a communication network connected to the communication interface and adapted to forward the current game information, and at least one play-along device which is connected to the communication network and provided with a display device for representing the game information of the current game on the gaming device, insertion means for payment means from the second player and means for issuing value vouchers to the second player.

If no gaming device is available in a casino where he or she is present, the second player can thus nevertheless play on a gaming device such as a fruit machine. The play-along device can here be situated in the vicinity of the gaming device or at a distance therefrom, such as in an adjoining or nearby space, in which cases the communication
network comprises for instance a (local) ethernet, or at greater distance from the gaming device, wherein the communication network comprises for instance the internet.

In an advantageous embodiment the play-along device is adapted to display on the display device, after insertion of payment means, the current game being played on the gaming device and to issue value vouchers to the second player on the basis of game results achieved on the at least one gaming device and payment means inserted by the second player.

The second player, without him/herself exerting any influence on (the progress of) the game, can thus participate in the game and receive winnings in the form of value vouchers after inserting payment means.

In a further advantageous embodiment the display device comprises for this purpose a touchscreen, and the insertion means comprise a bill acceptor and the issuing means a ticket printer, so that the second player has an at least partially similar "look and feel" experience as if he/she were playing on a real gaming device.

For the purpose of enabling display of the game on the play-along device it is advantageous that the current game information comprises at least a wager, a start of the game and/or a won credit.

In order to provide the second player with the option of playing with an available gaming device of his/her choice, the at least one play-along device can further be adapted to provide an overview display of gaming devices present within the system; and to indicate per gaming device whether it is being played at that moment; and to provide an option of playing along on one of the gaming devices being played.

Such an option can for instance be formed in that the play-along device, for instance on an available touchscreen thereof, shows a visual overview of all gaming devices, wherein for instance a colour or other designation indicates which devices are being played at that moment, so that it is possible to play along on these devices. Devices that are being played can for instance be provided with a green marking on the screen, while devices not being played are provided with a red marking.
In a further embodiment the system comprises a central server computer linked to the communication network for the purpose of generating image information from at least one play-along device on the basis of the current game information provided by the at least one gaming device. The play-along devices hereby need comprise a minimum amount of hardware, and an overview of the current degree of use of the various gaming devices and play-along devices can be easily tracked.

In a subsequent embodiment the play-along device is adapted to end the game on the play-along device as soon as the first player ends the game being played on the gaming device, and to issue at that moment to the second player value vouchers to the amount of accumulated winnings. This avoids a second player remaining seated at the play-along device while a game is no longer being played.

The invention will now be elucidated on the basis of the following figures, in which:

- Figure 1 shows a schematic overview of the system according to the present invention; and
- Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the components of a play-along device, wherein an enlarged example of a screen image presented on the display screen is shown.

Figure 1 shows a system 1 according to the present invention, wherein a number of gaming devices 100, 200, 300 are connected via a respective communication interface 110, 210, 310 to communication network 400 formed by an ethernet. Communication interfaces 110, 210, 310 are shown as separate devices coupled to gaming devices 100, 200, 300, but can also be accommodated or integrated therein.

Further coupled to the communication network is a central server computer 500 which is adapted to generate, on the basis of game information generated by the respective gaming devices 100, 200, 300, display information for the respective play-along devices 610, 620, 630 and 640 which are provided with respective insertion means for payment means 611, 621, 631 and 641 and means for issuing value vouchers 612, 622, 632 and 642.
Shown first of all to a second player who takes a seat at one of the play-along devices 610, 620, 630, 640 is an overview screen on which are shown all gaming devices 100, 200, 300 available within the system. Indicated hereon per gaming device 100, 200, 300 is whether the relevant gaming device 100, 200 or 300 is at that moment being played by a first player, for instance in that all gaming devices 100, 200 or 300 being played - on which it is thus possible to play along - are provided with a green marking, and all gaming devices 100, 200 or 300 not being played are provided with a red marking.

The second player can indicate that he/she wishes to play along by means of touching a determined gaming device 100, 200 or 300 of his/her choice on a touchscreen of play-along device 610, 620, 630 or 640. The play-along device 610, 620, 630 or 640 then shows a request for insertion of payment means and, as soon as the second player has paid, play-along device 610, 620, 630 or 640 shows a display of the game being played on the chosen gaming device 100, 200 or 300. If the first player playing the game on gaming device 100, 200 or 300 wins, the second player also wins, and the relevant play-along device 610, 620, 630 or 640 issues vouchers.

The second player can decide at any time to end play, and can play along for no longer than the period during which the first player plays on gaming device 100, 200 or 300. If the first player stops playing sooner than the second player wishes, the second player can continue his/her game by selecting another gaming device 100, 200 or 300 being played and playing along further with this other gaming device 100, 200 or 300.

Figure 2 shows a schematic representation of the components of a play-along device 700 according to the present invention. The play-along device comprises a display screen 710 embodied as touchscreen. Screen image 720 is shown on display screen 710. Screen image 720 comprises a first display window 721 in which current game data of a first gaming device are shown and a second display window 722 in which current game data of a second gaming device are shown. The current game data can be provided from the gaming device via an ethernet connection, or via a (direct) video connection between the gaming device and the play-along device, wherein the image on the gaming device is recorded by a recording device and shown by a display device or a part thereof.
The player seated at play-along device 700 thus plays along on two gaming devices. The play-along device can however be adapted for playing along on a random number of gaming devices, for instance between one and ten. A player can in this way increase his/her chances of winning by playing along on more devices, whereby a play-along device 700 represents an interesting alternative even when gaming devices are still available in a determined space, such as a casino.

The display window also shows "stop" buttons 724 and 725 with which the player can end play on a gaming device corresponding with a respective stop button. By pressing on "stop-all" button 728 the player can also opt to end play on all gaming devices on which he/she is playing along at that moment. By touching the "main menu" button he/she can also retrieve a main menu from which he/she can view for instance all or at least a number of available gaming devices.

Figure 2 also shows the "bill acceptor" 730 and the "cash out ticket printer" 740 coupled to the play-along device for the purpose of receiving payments and issuing value vouchers in the case of winnings made by the player.
Claims

1. System for a second player to play along with a game being played by a first player on an at least first gaming device, comprising:

- at least one gaming device, in particular a fruit machine, comprising a communication interface for issuing current game information of the game being played by the first player;
- a communication network connected to the communication interface and adapted to forward the current game information;
- at least one play-along device connected to the communication network, and comprising:
  o a display device for representing the game information of the current game on the at least one gaming device;
  o insertion means for payment means from the second player; and
- means for issuing value vouchers to the second player.

2. System as claimed in claim 1, wherein the play-along device is adapted to:

- display on the display device, after insertion of payment means, the current game being played on the at least one gaming device, and
- issue value vouchers to the second player on the basis of game results achieved on the at least one gaming device and payment means inserted by the second player.

3. System as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein

- the display device comprises a touchscreen, and wherein
- the insertion means comprise a bill acceptor, and wherein
- the issuing means comprise a ticket printer.

4. System as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the current game information comprises at least the following data:

- a wager;
- a start of the game;
- a won credit.
5. System as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the at least one play-along device is further adapted to:
   - provide an overview display of gaming devices present within the system; and
   - indicate per gaming device whether it is being played at that moment; and
   - provide an option of playing along on at least one of the gaming devices being played.

6. System as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, comprising:
   - a central server computer linked to the communication network for the purpose of generating image information from at least one play-along device on the basis of the current game information provided by the at least one gaming device.

7. System as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the play-along device is adapted to:
   - end the game on the play-along device as soon as the first player ends the game being played on the at least one gaming device, and to issue at that moment to the second player value vouchers to the amount of accumulated winnings.

8. System as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, comprising a (direct) video connection between the gaming device and the play-along device.
FIG. 2
A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC:

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols):

G07F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched:

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used):

EPO-Internal, WPI Data

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th>
<th>Relevant to claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

D. Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

See patent family annex

- Special categories of cited documents
  - "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
  - "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
  - "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
  - "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
  - "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

Date of the actual completion of the international search: 10 March 2009

Date of mailing of the international search report: 31/03/2009

Name and mailing address of the ISA/PCT:

European Patent Office, P B 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel: (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer: Van Dop, Erik
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patent document cited in search report</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
<th>Patent family member(s)</th>
<th>Publication date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AU 2006204658 A1</td>
<td>21-09-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CA 2448454 A1</td>
<td>12-12-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EP 1393268 A2</td>
<td>03-03-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WO 02099760 A2</td>
<td>12-12-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>US 2004106446 A1</td>
<td>03-06-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US 2007149278 A1</td>
<td>28-06-2007</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>