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European Patent Office  
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(11)

**EP 1 607 918 A1**

(12)

## EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:  
**21.12.2005 Bulletin 2005/51**

(51) Int Cl.7: **G07F 17/32**

(21) Application number: **05002756.4**

(22) Date of filing: **10.02.2005**

(84) Designated Contracting States:  
**AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR  
HU IE IS IT LI LT LU MC NL PL PT RO SE SI SK TR**  
Designated Extension States:  
**AL BA HR LV MK YU**

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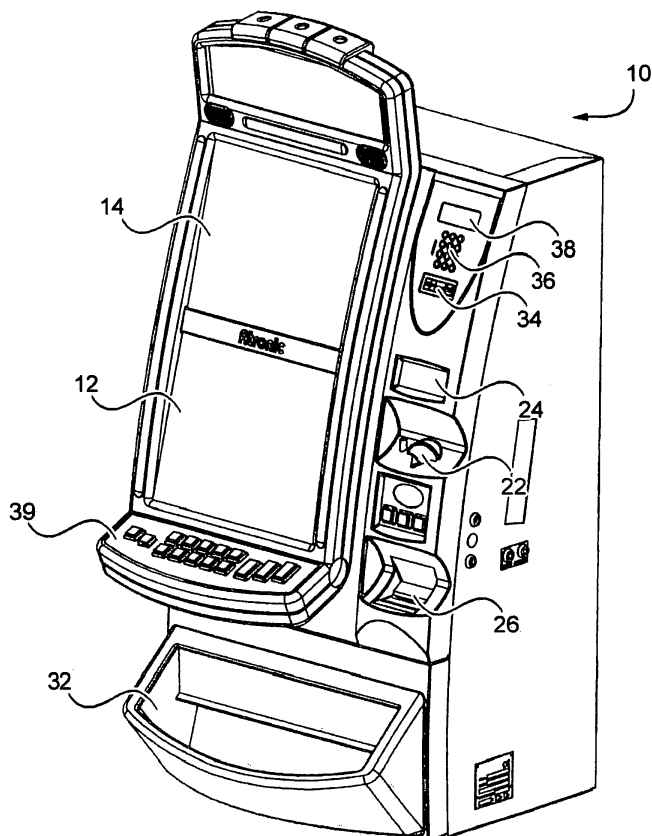
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(30) Priority: **17.06.2004 US 871395**

### (54) Gaming machine providing pop-up advertising

(57) In one embodiment, the invention is incorporated in a video gaming machine that emulates the spinning and random stopping of reels, where awards are granted based on symbol combinations across one or more activated paylines. In one embodiment, during a time when the virtual reels are spinning or at other times,

a pop-up advertisement or other offer appears on the screen either obscuring or not obscuring the reels. In one embodiment, the player is rewarded in any one of various ways for viewing the various advertisements in the pop-up window. Offers made in the pop-up window may be printed on a ticket by the gaming machine. Other features are described.



**Fig. 1**

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## Description

**[0001]** This invention relates to gaming machines, also referred to as slot machines, and, in particular, to an advertising technique using a video screen in a gaming machine.

**[0002]** Gaming machines that incorporate a video display are extremely common in casinos. Thousands of people may be viewing video screens at any single time in a casino while watching virtual reels spin and randomly stop and while watching between games when new bets are wagered. Video displays are also incorporated in motor-driven reel-type slot machines for displaying information such as the logo of the game, the winning symbol combinations, and other game-related information.

**[0003]** Disclosed herein is an advertising technique that may be used to convey information to thousands of people at a great benefit to the casino and yet not reduce the casino's revenue from players playing the gaming machines. In one embodiment, the invention is incorporated in a video gaming machine that emulates the spinning and random stopping of reels, where awards are granted based on symbol combinations across one or more activated paylines. In one embodiment, during a time when the virtual reels are spinning, a pop-up advertisement or other offer (referred to herein as a pop-up window) appears on the screen either obscuring or not obscuring the spinning reels. The pop-up window may arise at any other time during play of the gaming machine in a way that is not irritating to the player, such as between games, after a win, or at any other time.

**[0004]** The pop-up window may also appear on a video screen in a motor-driven reel-type slot machine, where the video screen is typically used for displaying game-related information.

**[0005]** In one embodiment, the player is rewarded in any one of various ways for viewing the various pop-up advertisements. The player may even have the ability to disable the advertisement feature, thus foregoing any rewards for having the advertisement feature enabled. Such rewards may be a small percentage of the player's wagers being paid back to the player after the player's playing session, or may constitute free games, free gifts, or other offers.

**[0006]** It is now popular for gaming machines to print tickets rather than issuing cash to the player. Such tickets have a barcode printed on them that is used to identify the number of credits or monetary value stored in the machine when the player cashes out. The ticket may be inserted into any suitable gaming machine, and the credits represented by the barcode are loaded into the new machine. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, instead of printing on the ticket a code representing the credits on the gaming machine, the ticket is printed to provide the player with a tangible record of the offer made by the pop-up window. For example, the pop-up window may display that the player

has won a \$5.00 gift certificate at the casino's gift store or restaurant. A ticket would then be printed documenting this \$5.00 certificate. A barcode on the ticket may also be scanned at the restaurant to verify the authenticity of the ticket.

**[0007]** The invention may be applied to gaming machines in casinos other than those that display rotating reels.

**[0008]** Other features are described.

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of one type of video gaming machine that may receive signals via a communications link to generate pop-up ads or other offers on the video screen.

Fig. 2 illustrates virtual reels displayed on the video screen as they are spinning in a conventional manner.

Fig. 3 illustrates a pop-up window with an ad or other offer superimposed on the spinning reels.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart identifying basic steps in the displaying and canceling of the pop-up ad or offer.

Fig. 5 illustrates a printed ticket dispensed by the gaming machine documenting an accepted offer.

Fig. 6 illustrates various functional units in the gaming machine of Fig. 1, including a communications board for receiving signals for the display of the pop-up ads or other offers.

Fig. 7 is a perspective view of a motor-driven reel-type slot machine having a video screen above the reels for displaying the pop-up ads or other offers.

**[0009]** The present invention may be implemented using any gaming machine having a video display. One example of such a video gaming machine is shown in Fig. 1. Gaming machine 10 includes a display 12 that may be a thin film transistor (TFT) display, a liquid crystal display (LCD), a cathode ray tube (CRT), or any other type of display. Display 12 may include a touch screen, where a player can make selections by touching areas of the display 12 overlying images. A second display 14 provides game data or other information in addition to display 12. Display 14 may provide static information, such as the logo for the game, the rules of the game, pay tables, paylines, or other information, or may even display the game itself along with display 12. Alternatively, the area for display 14 may be a display glass for conveying information about the game.

**[0010]** A coin slot 22 accepts coins or tokens in one or more denominations to generate credits within machine 10 for playing games. A slot 24 for an optical reader and printer receives machine readable printed tickets and outputs printed tickets for use in cashless gaming.

A bill acceptor 26 accepts various denominations of banknotes.

**[0011]** A coin tray 32 receives coins or tokens from a hopper upon a win or upon the player cashing out.

**[0012]** A card reader slot 34 accepts any of various types of cards, such as smart cards, magnetic strip cards, or other types of cards conveying machine readable information. The card reader reads the inserted card for player and credit information for cashless gaming. The card reader may also include an optical reader and printer for reading and printing coded barcodes and other information on a paper ticket. The card reader may also be used to read player tracking cards.

**[0013]** A keypad 36 accepts player input, such as a personal identification number (PIN) or any other player information. A display 38 above keypad 36 displays a menu for instructions and other information and provides visual feedback of the keys pressed.

**[0014]** Player control buttons 39 include any buttons needed for the play of the particular game or games offered by machine 10 including, for example, a bet button, a repeat bet button, a play two-ways button, a spin reels button, a deal button, hold cards buttons, a draw button, a maximum bet button, a cash-out button, a display paylines button, a display payout tables button, select icon buttons, and any other suitable button. In other embodiments, buttons 39 are replaced by a touch screen with virtual buttons.

**[0015]** In the examples given below, the invention is incorporated in a video gaming machine that emulates the spinning and random stopping of reels, where awards are granted based on symbol combinations across one or more activated paylines.

**[0016]** Fig. 2 illustrates three spinning virtual reels 42, 43, 44 displayed on screen 12 in Fig. 1. The rotation of the reels is simply a delay time between the player initiating the rotation and the final outcome of the game. During this delay time, the casino is not generating any revenue from the machine. In one embodiment, during this delay time, the gaming machine is programmed to display a pop-up window 46, shown in Fig. 3. In the example of Fig. 3, the pop-up window offers a \$5.00 discount at the casino's restaurant. The pop-up window may display an ad, an offer, or any other information to the player not related to the play of the game. The information will typically be such that it may be read in only a few seconds by the player. Some examples of information that may be displayed include an advertisement of new games by the manufacturer, an award such as a free trip, a free drink, a free movie, a free hotel room, complementary chips, a discount coupon, or a raffle type ticket.

**[0017]** Additionally, instead of advertisements or offers, jokes, cartoons, stories, questions to be answered, or other entertaining statements may be displayed. If the pop-up window is a question to be answered, such as multiple choice question that the player may answer by touching a button or an area of the touch screen, the

player may be provided awards for a correct answer.

**[0018]** The player may receive a mystery win each time the pop-up window appears, or may receive credits every second or third time the pop-up window appears.

**[0019]** The player may be offered the opportunity to disable the pop-up window feature by simply pressing one of the control buttons 39 or pressing an area on screen 12 if screen 12 is a touch screen. The player may be offered an incentive to not disable the pop-up window feature, such as by being given a gift certificate, or being given an additional monetary award at any time, or being given free games or other additional opportunities to win, such as additional value symbols, additional winning combinations, etc. Offers made by the pop-up windows themselves may provide sufficient incentive for the player to not disable the pop-up window feature.

**[0020]** There are some jurisdictions where the delay time for the reel spins has to be, for example, ten seconds. This delay time may seem long for a player who seeks heightened excitement. Displaying a pop-up ad provides such excitement during the ten second delay while the reels are spinning. The window 46 would typically be extinguished shortly before the reels stop spinning.

**[0021]** In normal use, after each game, the display of the stopped reels remains fixed until the player wagers a certain amount and initiates the rotation of the reels for the next game. During this time between games, the pop-up window 46 may appear. In other embodiments, the pop-up window 46 may appear any time, such as randomly, or may be triggered by time, date, after a certain number of games, or on a regular basis.

**[0022]** Fig. 4 is a flow chart illustrating basic steps in one embodiment of the method. In step 50, the player operates the gaming machine by either inserting money or a ticket, or initiating the spin of the reels by pulling a handle or by pressing a button, or performing other steps indicating that the gaming machine is being operated. If the pop-up offer is such that a reward or gift is provided, the casino does not want to present such pop-up offers on idle gaming machines since the gifts may be retrieved by passersby rather than active players. By providing pop-up windows that offer rewards only to active players, the players may be induced to continue playing the gaming machine.

**[0023]** In step 52, upon a certain event, which may be between games, or while the reels are spinning, or randomly, the pop-up window is presented on the video screen. This window may or may not obscure the reels or other game being displayed. For example, the pop-up window may appear beneath the display of the reels or may appear on a separate screen, such as screen 14 in Fig. 1. The window need not be in a pop-up form like that typically occurring when connected to the Internet. For example, the pop-up window need not have a frame or background surrounding the information.

**[0024]** In step 54, if applicable, a printer within the gaming machine prints a coupon or other tangible evi-

dence of the offer made so that the player may present the coupon for redemption. Such a ticket is dispensed through slot 24 in Fig. 1. Fig. 5 illustrates one embodiment of a ticket 55 that is printed by the gaming machine at the appropriate time and dispensed through slot 24. In another embodiment, an accepted offer is stored on a player card or stored in a central server and accessed using a player card inserted into a card reader.

**[0025]** In one embodiment, the player is presented with the option to accept or decline an offer made by the pop-up window, such as an offer to receive a coupon for a \$5.00 credit at the restaurant. The player then presses an accept button for the offer to be printed on the ticket. A barcode on the ticket may be scanned at the restaurant to verify the authenticity of the ticket.

**[0026]** In step 56, the pop-up window is canceled and disappears at the appropriate time, such as when the reels stop spinning or after a win presentation is made.

**[0027]** Since, typically, offers and ads will be updated on a timely basis, it is beneficial for the gaming machine to be connected via a communications link to a central server that may be programmed to present a series of ads or offers for the various gaming machines in the casino.

**[0028]** The player has incentive to watch the pop-up ads since they may lead to immediate prizes. The ad could be linked to the bet of the player. For example, the player may only get a particular ad if the player makes a maximum bet. Further, the value of the ad or offer may be directly related to the size of the player's bet. Therefore, the ads may provide incentive for the player to increase her bets.

**[0029]** Fig. 6 illustrates functional units in a gaming machine 60 that carries out one embodiment of the invention. A communications board 62 may contain conventional circuitry for coupling the gaming machine 60 to a local area network (LAN) or other type of network using Ethernet or any other protocol. The communications board 62 basically sets up a communication link and buffers data between a server and the game controller board 64. The server identifies information to be displayed by the pop-window 46 (Fig. 3) upon a certain trigger event. The trigger event may be detected by the gaming machine or the server.

**[0030]** The game controller board 64 contains memory and a processor for carrying out programs stored in the memory and for providing any information requested by the network. The game controller board 64 primarily carries out the game routines and controls the display of the pop-up window 46.

**[0031]** Peripheral devices/boards communicate with the game controller board 64 via a bus 66 using, for example, an RS-232 interface. Such peripherals may include a bill validator 67, a coin detector 68, a smart card reader or other type of credit card reader 69, and player control inputs 70 (such as buttons or a touch screen). An audio board 71 converts coded signals into analog signals for driving speakers. A display controller 72,

which typically requires a high data transfer rate, converts coded signals to pixel signals for the display 73. Display controller 72 and audio board 71 may be directly connected to parallel ports on the game controller board 64.

**[0032]** The electronics on the various boards may be combined onto a single board. The software used to carry out the present invention may be written without undue experimentation.

**[0033]** Although the invention has been described as being employed in a pure video gaming machine, the pop-up ad or offer may also be displayed on a video screen in a motor-driven reel-type slot machine, as shown in Fig. 7. In Fig. 7, gaming machine 80 includes three motor-driven reels 82, 83, and 84 that may operate in a conventional manner. A video screen 86, which may be a touch screen, normally displays the game logo or the various winning combinations of symbols and their corresponding payouts. Video screen 86 may be a thin film transistor LCD type, a plasma type, a CRT type, or any other type of controllable display. In typical prior art gaming machines, the game logo and the set of winning combinations of symbols are printed on display glass.

**[0034]** Like the embodiment described with respect to Fig. 1, a pop-up window for ads or other offers is displayed on screen 86 at the appropriate times. The player may be given various options to accept the ads, disable the pop-up window feature, or make other selections as previously described. The player may make her selections using the touch screen feature of screen 86. Machine 80 may include a ticket printer, as previously described. Machine 80 may contain the same functional units shown in Fig. 6.

**[0035]** Although the invention has been described in the context of a gaming machine that displays rotating reels, the game played may be a draw poker game, or any other type of video game.

**[0036]** Having described the invention in detail, those skilled in the art will appreciate that given the present disclosure, modifications may be made to the invention without departing from the spirit and inventive concepts described herein. Therefore, it is not intended that the scope of the invention be limited to the specific embodiments illustrated and described.

## Claims

1. A method performed by a gaming machine (10) for use in a casino comprising:
  - receiving a wager by the gaming machine (10) for playing a game;
  - displaying a game by the gaming machine (10);
  - displaying, upon detecting a triggering event, a pop-up window (46) on a video display (12, 14)

displaying information unrelated to the game being displayed; and

canceling the pop-up window (46) after a certain period of time.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying the game comprises displaying rotating reels on the video display (12, 14) and randomly stopping the reels, the triggering event occurring during the rotating of the reels. 10
3. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying the game comprises displaying rotating reels on the video display (12, 14) and randomly stopping the reels, the triggering event occurring during a time between when the reels are stopped and when the reels are rotating. 15
4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the triggering event occurs after a certain number of games played or at a random time. 20
5. The method of Claim 1 further comprising offering a player a choice to enable or disable displaying the pop-up window (46). 25
6. The method of Claim 1 further comprising offering a player a choice to accept an offer displayed by the pop-up window (46). 30
7. The method of Claim 1 wherein the pop-up window is an advertisement or an offer.
8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising printing out a ticket documenting the information displayed by the pop-up window (46). 35
9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the gaming machine (10) is connected to a network, the method further comprising transmitting the information to be displayed by the pop-up window (46) to the gaming machine (10) via the network. 40
10. The method of Claim 1 further comprising providing a reward to a player for viewing the information. 45
11. The method of Claim 10 wherein the reward is other than a reward offered by the information displayed by the pop-up window. 50
12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the information comprises questions to be answered by a player.
13. The method of Claim 1 wherein the pop-up window (46) comprises an item of value, the value being dependent on an amount wagered by a player for the game. 55

14. A gaming device (10) for being installed in a casino comprising:

a video display (12, 14):

one or more processors for carrying out a game, the one or more processors also displaying on the video display (12, 14), upon detection of a triggering event, a pop-up window (46) on the video display (12, 14) displaying information unrelated to the game being displayed; and

canceling the pop-up window (46) after a certain period of time.

15. The gaming device (10) of Claim 14 wherein the game is displayed on motor-driven reels.

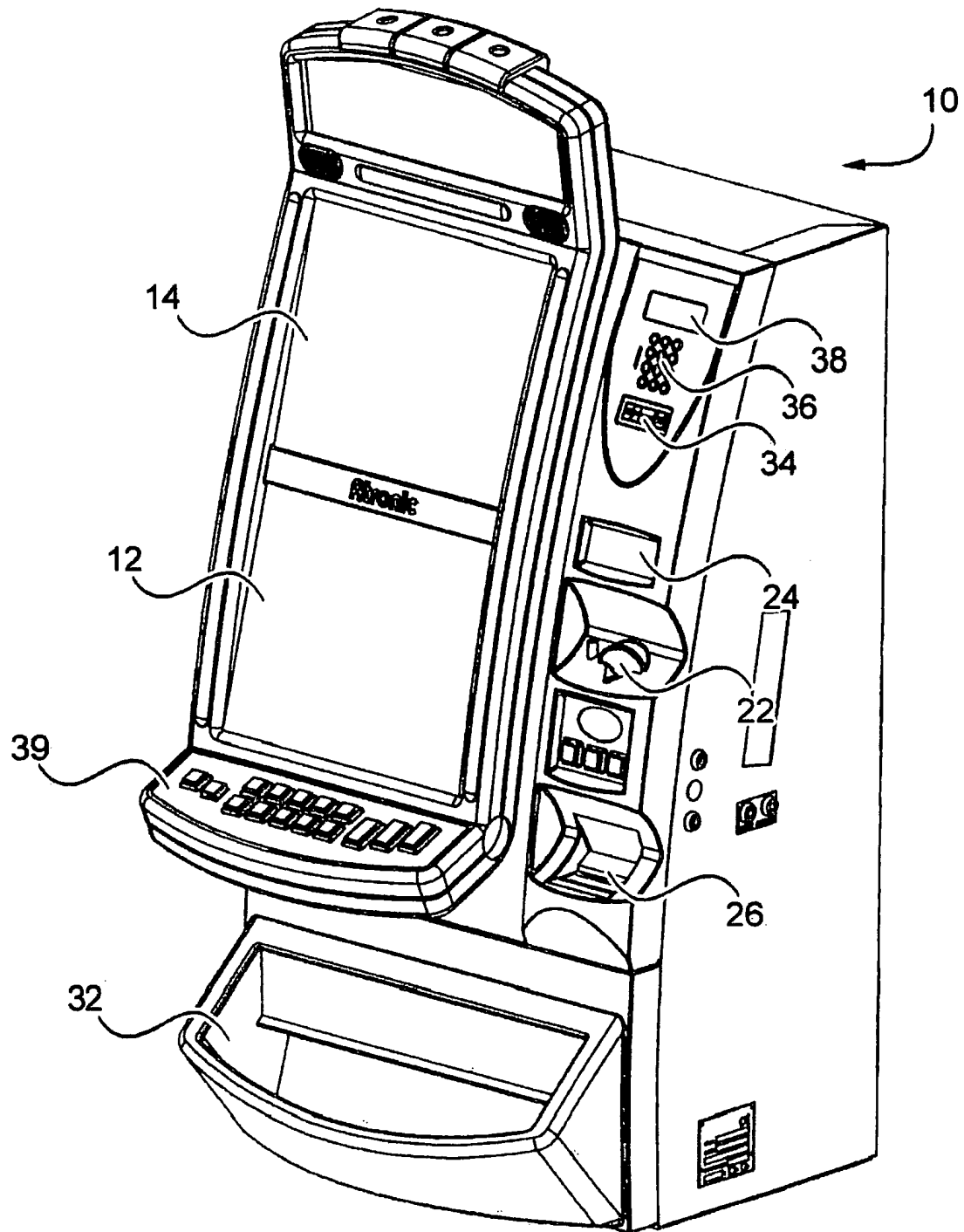


Fig. 1

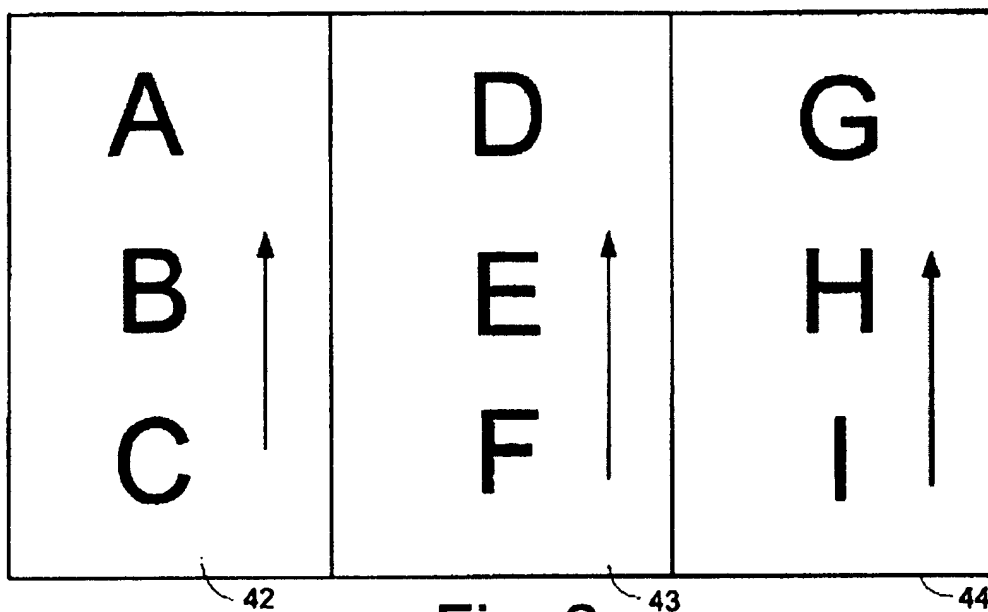


Fig. 2

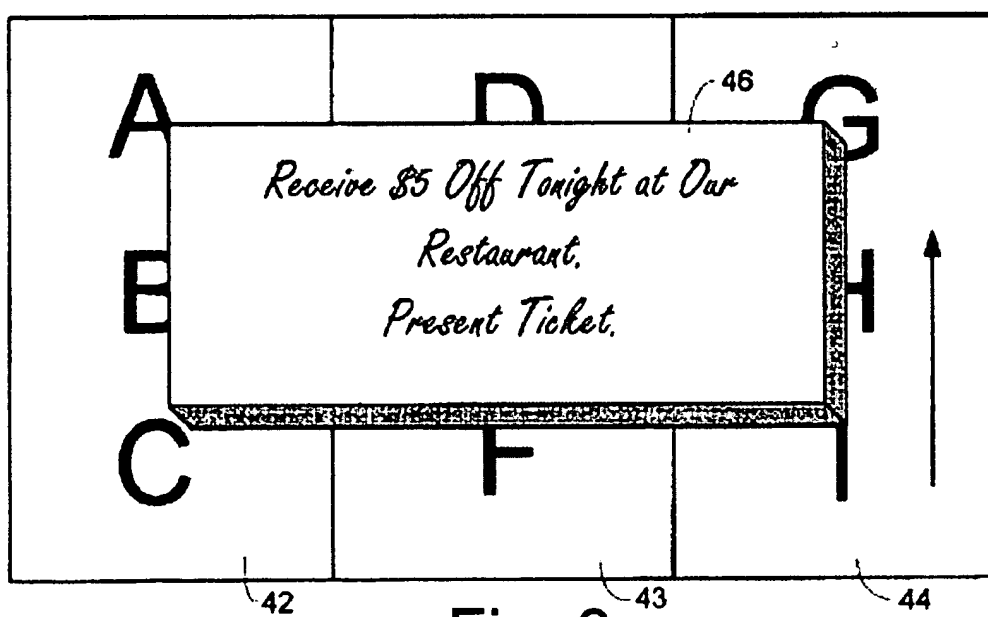


Fig. 3

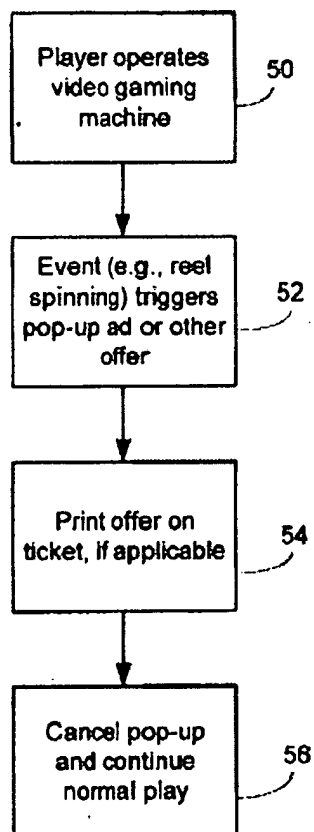


Fig. 4

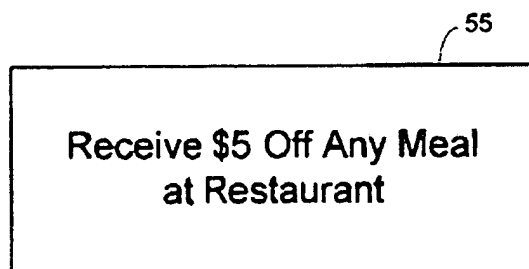


Fig. 5



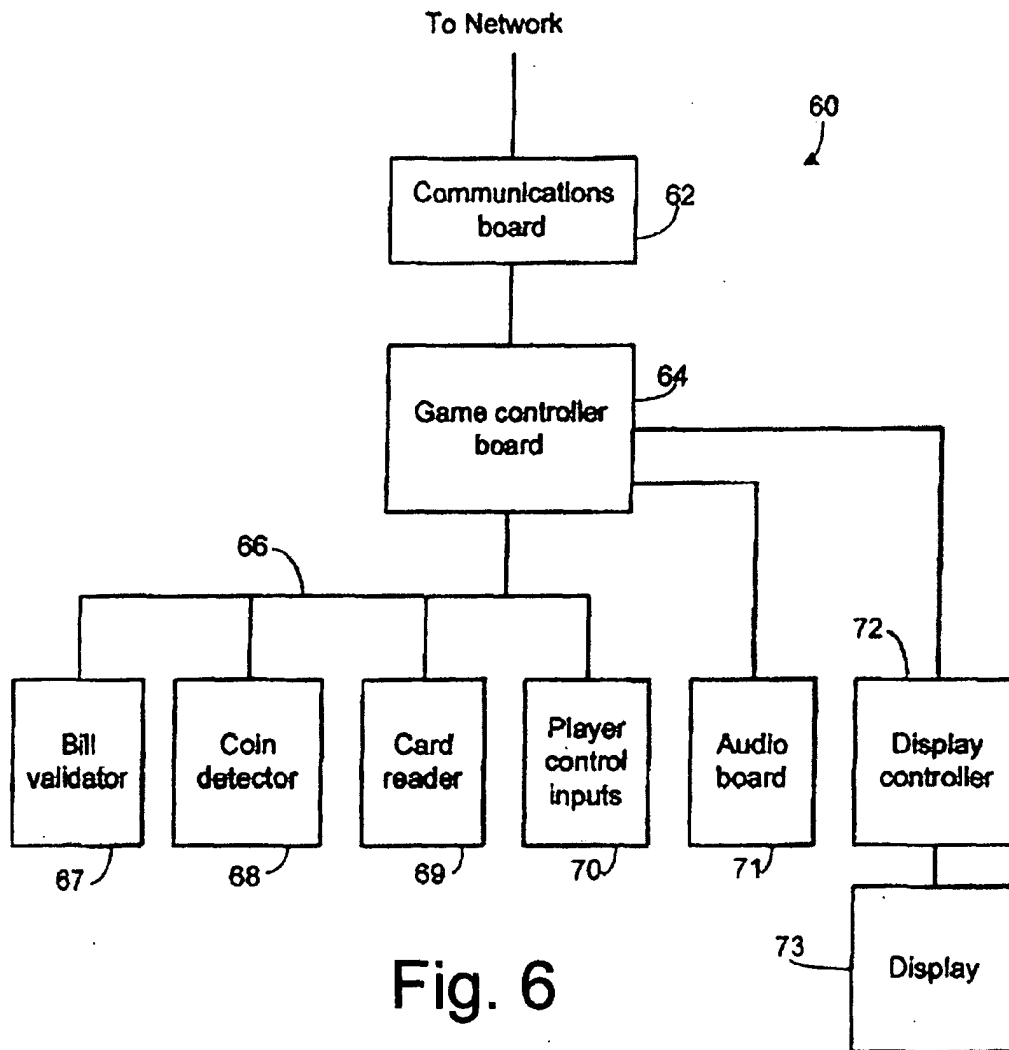


Fig. 6

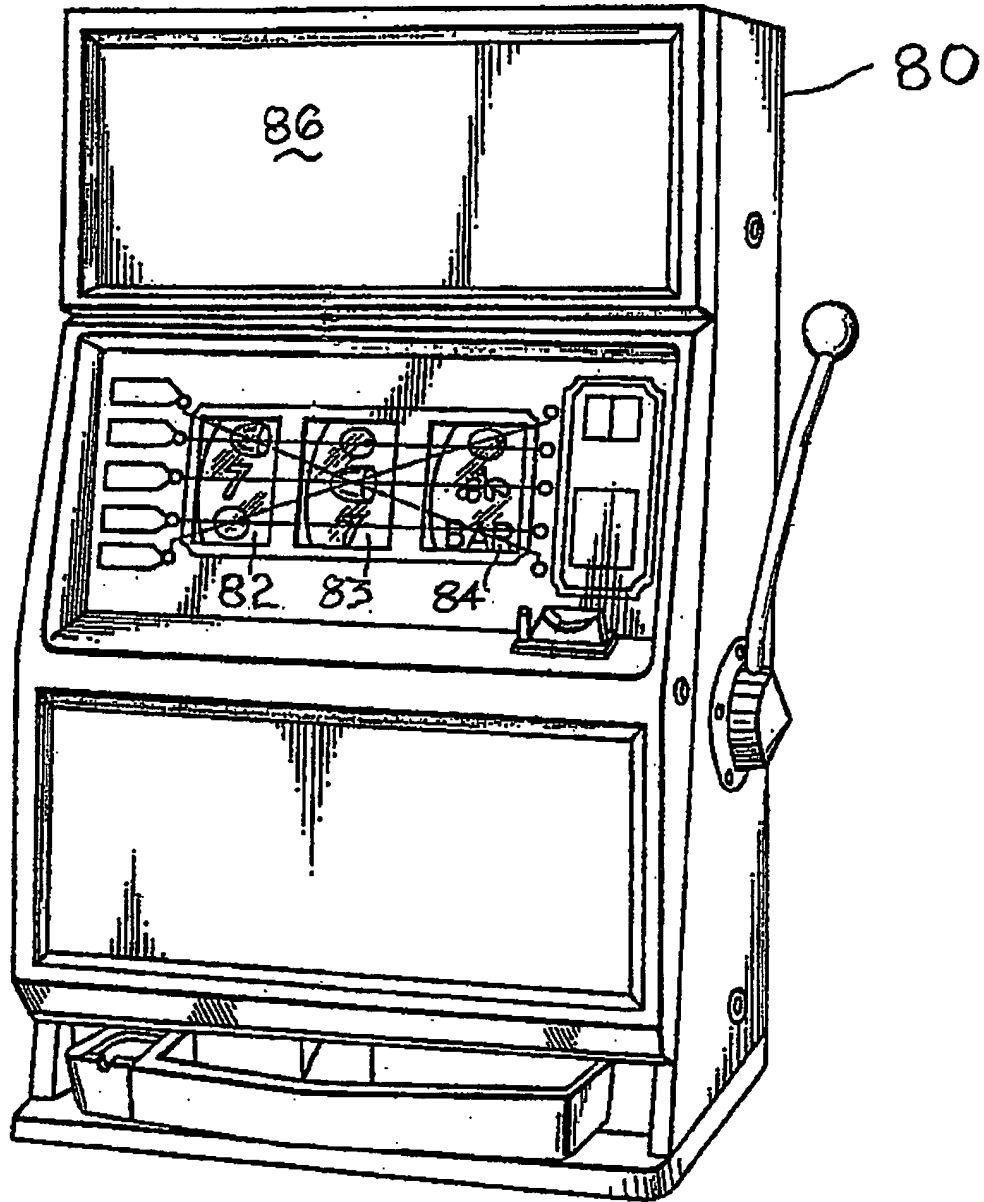


Fig. 7



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# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number  
EP 05 00 2756

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search <b>Munich</b>		Date of completion of the search <b>4 October 2005</b>	Examiner <b>Kemény, M</b>
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ..... & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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EPO FORM 1503 03.02 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT  
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EP 05 00 2756

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.  
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