

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PRICING ATTENDED REMOTELY HOSTED CONFERENCE SESSIONS

FIELD OF INVENTION

[0001] The present disclosure relates to systems and methods for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Remotely hosted conference sessions or conference calls are used for a variety of purposes, such as client meetings, sales presentations, project meetings, staff training or distance learning.

[0003] Many educational institutions are using such remotely hosted conference sessions (e.g. web conferences) for distance learning as their students come from different countries. Having distance learning may save travel costs and time by not having to gather at a physical classroom. However, current conference calls / video conferencing charges depend on the duration of the call and the conference call provider is usually the beneficiary of the charges. In addition, charges for distance learning courses are typically paid upfront and are not linked to any payment service provider.

[0004] Upfront payment of the training fee has many disadvantages. For example, it makes it troublesome for a participant to seek reimbursement should there be a technical fault which prevents them from joining.

[0005] A need therefore exists to provide a method and system for conducting a transaction that seeks to address at least some of the above problems.

SUMMARY

[0006] According to a first aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a remote conference session pricer for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions comprising: at least one processor; and at least one memory including

computer program code; the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with at least one processor, cause the remote conference session pricer at least to: receive a request for a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session; obtain data providing an evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference session; analyse the evaluation data using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score; calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session using the conference session score; and respond to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0007] In an embodiment, the attended remotely hosted conference session may be provided with an initial price before commencement and the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: determine whether the initial price needs to be adjusted based on the conference session score; and adjust the initial price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to its calculated cost in response to an affirmative determination.

[0008] In an embodiment, the evaluation data may include any one or more of: duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session; video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session; number of participants and/or conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; punctuality of the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; and feedback provided by the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0009] In an embodiment, the evaluation data may be obtained from each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session and the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the participants.

[0010] In an embodiment, the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: calculate an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the participants.

[0011] In an embodiment, the evaluation data may be obtained from each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session and the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the conductors.

[0012] In an embodiment, the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: calculate an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the conductors.

[0013] In an embodiment, the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to: receive details of a payment source funding the attended remotely hosted conference session; and transmit, to the payment source, a request for payment of the calculated cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0014] In an embodiment, the remote conference session pricer may be further configured to receive an indication of completion of the remotely hosted conference session.

[0015] In an embodiment, a remote conference session host may include a plurality of ports for hosting the remotely hosted conference session, wherein the remote conference session host comprises the remote conference session pricer of any one of the preceding claims.

[0016] According to a second aspect of the present disclosure, there is provided a method for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions, the method may include: receiving a request for a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session; obtaining data providing an evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference session; analysing the evaluation data using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score; calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session using the conference session score; and responding to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0017] In an embodiment, the method may include: providing an initial price before commencement of the remotely hosted conference session; determining whether the

initial price needs to be adjusted based on the conference session score; and adjusting the initial price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to its calculated cost in response to an affirmative determination.

[0018] In an embodiment, the evaluation data may be obtained from each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session and the method may further include calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the participants.

[0019] In an embodiment, the method may include calculating an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the participants.

[0020] In an embodiment, the method may include calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the conductors.

[0021] In an embodiment, the method may include calculating an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the conductors.

[0022] In an embodiment, the method may include receiving details of a payment source funding the attended remotely hosted conference session; and transmitting, to the payment source, a request for payment of the calculated cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0023] In an embodiment, the method may include receiving an indication of completion of the remotely hosted conference session.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0024] The accompanying Figures, where like reference numerals refer to identical or functionally similar elements throughout the separate views and which together with the detailed description below are incorporated in and form part of the specification, serve to illustrate various embodiments and to explain various principles and advantages in accordance with a present embodiment, by way of non-limiting example only.

[0025] Embodiments of the invention are described hereinafter with reference to the following drawings, in which:

[0026] Figure 1A shows a schematic of a system for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions according to an example embodiment.

[0027] Figure 1B shows a schematic diagram a schematic diagram of functional modules present in the remote conference session pricer of Figure 1A, according to an example embodiment.

[0028] Figure 2A shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between various entities at the start of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment.

[0029] Figure 2B shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between various entities during payment calculation of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment.

[0030] Figure 2C shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between various entities during final payment and settlement of the cost of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment.

[0031] Figure 3 shows a schematic of a computing device used to realise the calculator server and the monitoring server shown in Figure 1A.

[0032] Figure 4 shows a flowchart depicting steps for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions, according to an example embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

OVERVIEW

[0033] Various embodiments of present disclosure provide a method and a system that allows a remotely hosted conference session to be monitored and the price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to be calculated.

[0034] The system has a server that is responsible for determining a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session, i.e. the cost is determined after a

participant entirely completes the conference session or if the participant exits before completing the conference session. In this disclosure, this server is termed as a “remote conference session pricer”. In one implementation, the remote conference session pricer is realised by one or more servers that allow the cost of the remotely hosted conference session to be determined, such as a monitoring server that monitors the progress of a conference session, a calculator server that calculates the price of the attended conference session from parameters recorded during the progress of the conference session; and a payment server that facilitates payment from an account of the participant to one or more accounts of recipients that are involved in hosting of the remotely conducted conference sessions. Alternatively, the remote conference session is realised by an integrated server that contains all components that are configured to provide the above mentioned functions.

[0035] When the participant is to be billed for attending a remotely hosted conference session that is monitored by the remote conference session pricer, the remote conference session pricer will receive a request to price or determine the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session. To do so, the remote conference session pricer requires parameters that allow it to perform this determination. The remote conference session pricer obtains data that contains such parameters, for example, from the above mentioned monitoring server.

[0036] During each remotely hosted conference session, the monitoring server tracks parameters such as each participant’s attendance; each participant’s punctuality; punctuality of a conductor of the remotely hosted conference session; duration of the remotely hosted conference session; feedback provided by the participant and/or the conductor; along with video and/or audio quality of the remotely hosted conference session. These parameters form the data that the remote conference session pricer uses to price or determine the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session. The remote conference session pricer may also determine the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session depending on a quality and/or type of material presented by the conductor during the conference session, such the number of slides. In addition, a different price may apply for each presented slide, depending on the content in each slide. A conference session score is determined from the data, whereby the conference session score is then used, together with the quality, quantity and/or type of

material presented by the conductor, to calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0037] The remote conference session pricer thus provides a means that automates pricing of remotely hosted conference sessions, where the pricing is done in a dynamic manner and takes in account factors that are relevant to the quality of the remotely hosted conference session. While remotely hosted conference sessions eliminate the need for the conductor and the participant to meet, one factor that can adversely impact is the experienced video and/or audio quality, whereby a participant should not have to pay a full price when poor video and/or audio quality is experienced. The remote conference session pricer provides a solution that can consistently and objectively determine pricing when such adverse factors are encountered. In addition, after the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session is determined, the calculator server uses an algorithm to evaluate and calculate the monetary amount to be deducted from an account of each participant for the conference session based on the received data and the monetary amount to be credited to the conductor for the conference session. This is advantageous because the remote conference session pricer can determine specific pricings for each of the parties (namely the conductor and the participant) to the remotely hosted conference session.

TERMS DESCRIPTION (IN ADDITION TO DICTIONARY MEANING OF TERMS)

[0038] A remotely hosted conference session includes, but is not limited to, any one of a call, a conference, or class hosted by a common platform that is accessed by parties to the remotely hosted conference session. In this disclosure, the parties are a conductor, i.e. the leader or teacher of the conference session from delivering content relevant to the agenda of the conference session; and a participant, i.e. the follower or student from receiving the delivered content. The conductor and the participant attend the conference session by remotely connecting through any electronic means (such as via telephone, a web portal or an instant messaging application) to the hosting common platform and do not need to be physical present. Parties to the session are able to communicate with one another through real-time audio or video, depending on the device that is used to connect to the common platform.

[0039] An attended remotely hosted conference session refers to a completed/concluded remotely hosted conference session; or if a party before completing the conference session, which is contrast to a remotely hosted conference session that has not yet started.

[0040] Evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference refers to finding a means to assess or rate the quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0041] Evaluation data refers to data that can be used to assess the effectiveness, value or usefulness of the attended remotely hosted conference session; such data including, but not limited to duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session; video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session; number of participants and/or conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; punctuality of the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session remote conference session; and feedback provided by the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0042] A conference session score refers to a value that is derived from the evaluated data that is used and thus provides a value for a specific party to the attended remotely hosted conference session. That is, a unique score is obtained for each of the participants and the conductor of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0043] Attendance refers to whether the conductor or the participant joins the conference session while punctuality refers to whether the conductor or the participant joins the session on time. Duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session refers to the interval over which the conductor or the participant is present for the remotely hosted conference session, which can thus be between a minimal length (for example when the conductor or the participant leaves shortly after joining) or the entire length (where the conductor or the participant stays till the conclusion of the remotely hosted conference session).

EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

[0044] Embodiments of the present invention will be described, by way of example only, with reference to the drawings. Like reference numerals and characters in the drawings refer to like elements or equivalents.

[0045] Figure 1A shows a schematic of a system 100 for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions according to an example embodiment. In this system, the cost for attending a remotely hosted conference session for a participant 110 is calculated based on a conference session score for the participant 110 and the amount is deducted from the participant's account. The amount for conducting a remotely hosted conference session for a conductor 114 is calculated based on a conference session score for the conductor 114 and the amount is deposited into the conductor's account. It will be appreciated that the participant 110 and the conductor 114 communicate with a remote conference session pricer 102 through a respective computing device. However, for the sake of simplicity, the computing device is omitted when referring to the participant 110 and the conductor 114.

[0046] The system 100 further includes a payment engine 104, a calculator server 106 and a monitoring server 108. As shown in Figure 1A, the payment engine 104, the calculator server 106 and the monitoring server 108 are components of the remote conference session pricer 102. In another embodiment (not shown), the payment engine 104 is administered by a separate entity (such as an issuer) and is not integral with the remote conference session pricer 102. Similarly, any one of the calculator server 106 and the monitoring server 108 may be external components that are not integral with the remote conference session pricer 102.

[0047] The payment engine 104 is in communication with the calculator server 106 and the monitoring server 108 is in communication with the calculator server 106. The participant 110 has a payment source for funding the remotely hosted conference session, such as a virtual wallet 112. The conductor also has a payment source for depositing funds from the conference session such as a virtual wallet 118. The conductor 114 may have a database 116 which stores the details of the participants 110 for the remotely hosted conference session.

[0048] The following discloses an implementation where the conductor 114 hosts a remote conference session. The conductor 114 initiates the remotely hosted conference session by sending its details to the monitoring server 108. The

conductor 114 may be one or more persons, an educational institution such as a university or a business entity that may conduct a business conference or an online university lecture. The conductor 114 proceeds to send 120 its identification details (for example name, identity number), identification details of the participants (for example name, identity number) and details of the conference session (for example time, date and duration) to the monitoring server 108. The information may be stored in the monitoring server 108 and associated or assigned a unique tracking identity. Referring to Figure 1A, a single participant 110 is shown for representation. It can be appreciated that more than one participant 110 is present in the conference session and details of the participants are retrieved from database 116 located at the conductor 114.

[0049] At the scheduled time of the remotely hosted conference session, the participant 110 logs 122 into the remote conference session pricer 102 with their personal details together with details of his virtual wallet 112, i.e. their mode of payment for the conference session. The information provided by the participant 110 is transmitted 124 to the monitoring server 108 and the payment engine 104. Similarly, the conductor 114 logs 126 into the remote conference pricer 102 at the scheduled time with his personal and virtual wallet 118 details, i.e. its mode of credit for the conference session, which is also transmitted 128 to the monitoring server 108 and the payment engine 104. The mode of payment, for either the conductor 114 and/or the participant 110 determines a payment network that facilitates payment of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0050] The monitoring server 108 may also receive an initial price of the remotely hosted conference session before commencement from the conductor 114 via the database 116. It can be appreciated that the initial price of the remotely hosted conference session may vary depending on a type and duration of the conference session. For example, a one hour lecture conducted by a university may have an initial price of \$100 while a one hour business presentation conducted by a business entity may have an initial price of \$300.

[0051] The monitoring server 108, may verify the received participant 110 and conductor 114 details with the details previously received from the conductor 114. In one approach, the conductor 114 provides the unique tracking identity to the monitoring server 108 in order to retrieve the previously stored information to perform this verification. Alternatively, the monitoring server 108 may verify the

received participant 110 and conductor 114 details by querying the conductor's database 116.

[0052] Thereafter, upon commencement of the remotely hosted conference session, the monitoring server 108 collects data for evaluating the remotely hosted conference session. The collected data may include, but is not limited, to one or more of the following: duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session; video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session; number of participants and/or conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; punctuality of the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; and feedback provided by the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0053] For example, participant A logs into the conference session ten minutes after commencement. The monitoring server 108 records the punctuality of participant A as being ten minutes late. In another example, participant B logs out of the conference session ten minutes before the hour long session is completed. The monitoring server 108 records that participant B had only attended fifty minutes of the session. In yet another example, participant C had connectivity problems during the session and his audio quality was below an acceptable minimum standard for fifteen minutes. The monitoring server 108 also records the inferior audio quality experienced by participant C.

[0054] In order to prevent fraudulent feedback from the participant and/or the conductor regarding video and/or call quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session, a dummy administrative participant, such as an emulator with call analytics capability, may join the session. The dummy administrative participant may analyse the video and call quality of the participants, conductor and service provider of the conference session such that any negative feedback from the participant and conductor may be analysed and determined if they are false. For example, the participants provide feedback that they are unable to hear the conductor properly during the conference session and thus request for a reduced participant fee. The dummy administrative participant analyses the video and call quality from the conductor of the attended remotely hosted conference session. If the video and call quality of the conductor is determined to be poor, the conductor will be fined for it. On the other hand, if the video and audio quality of the conductor shows acceptable quality, the dummy administrative participant analyses the service provider of the conference session. If the service provider of the conference session has acceptable

quality, then the participant's video and call quality is analysed. If the issue lies with the participants, they will not be entitled to the reduced participant fee. The full participant fee is then deducted from their account.

[0055] Upon completion of the remotely hosted conference session, the monitoring server 108 may receive an indication of completion of the remotely hosted conference session from the conductor 114. Thereafter, each of the participants 110 and conductors 114 provide feedback of the attended remotely hosted conference session, which may include the quality of training of the conductor 114 or the audio and/or video quality of the session.

[0056] For example, participant A may feedback that conductor G was not clear in his explanation of certain terms and did not provide sufficient examples of certain concepts during a lecture. The monitoring server 108 records down the feedback provided by participant A. In a further example, conductor G provides feedback that participant B had an ongoing conversation with his friend which was disrupting conductor G's lesson. The monitoring server 108 records down the feedback from conductor G on participant B.

[0057] After receiving the feedback from the participants 110 and the conductor 114, the monitoring server 108 may further receive a request for a cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session from the conductor 114. The monitoring server 108 then proceeds to obtain the previously recorded data for use to evaluate the attended remotely hosted conference session. The monitoring server 108 analyses the evaluation data for each participant 110 using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score. The algorithm may comprise of a participant formula for determining the conference session score. The participant formula may be as follows: Initial price of the remotely hosted conference session + Participant penalty – [(duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session * video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session) + Conductor Penalty]. The participant penalty relates to the punctuality of the participants 110 and/or feedback provided by the conductor 114 of the attended remotely hosted conference session. The conductor penalty relates to the punctuality of the conductor 114 and feedback provided by the participants 110 of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0058] The algorithm may further have a primary conductor formula for crediting the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to the conductor 114.

The primary conductor formula may be as follows: Sum of number of participants' payment of the cost + Service provider Penalty for poor quality. The service provider penalty relates to the cost a service provider, i.e. a host of the common platform, is required to pay due to the poor video and/or audio quality experienced by the conductor 114 during the remotely hosted conference session. In another embodiment, the algorithm may further include a secondary conductor formula as follows: conductor's salary – conductor penalty. The secondary conductor formula relates to the payment to a person (for example, a professor) of the cost for conducting the conference session. The conference session score and the request for the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session are then transmitted 130 to the calculator server 106 for calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each participant 110. It may be appreciated that the algorithm may also be stored in the calculator server 106 for calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0059] With reference to the previous example, participant A was ten minutes late for the session and provided feedback on the quality of training of conductor G after the completion of the session. The monitoring server 108 complies and analyses the data and gives a conference session score of five out of ten for participant A. Participant B had left the session ten minutes before its completion and participant B had disrupted the session based on the feedback from conductor G. Therefore, the monitoring server 108 analyses this data and gives a conference session score of three out of ten for participant B.

[0060] In another embodiment, the calculating server 106 may analyse the evaluation data to determine the conference session score. In such an embodiment, the calculator server 106 analyses the evaluation data for each participant 110, determines the conference session score for each participant 110 and conductor 114 and calculates the individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session using the conference session score for each of the participant 110 and conductor 114.

[0061] The calculator server 106 may, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session, determine whether the initial price needs to be adjusted based on the conference session score and may adjust the initial price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to its calculated cost in response to an affirmative determination.

[0062] In an example, the initial price of the training session is \$300. The calculator server 106 determines that the conference session score for participant B is three out of ten and calculates that participant B has to pay \$350 instead. The calculator server 106 then responds to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session by transmitting 132 the calculated cost to the payment engine 104 to deduct \$350 from participant B's account.

[0063] In a further example, the calculator server 106 determines that the conference session score for participant A is five out of ten and calculates that participant A has to pay \$300, which is identical to the initial price. The calculator server 106 then responds to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session by transmitting 132 the cost of the session to the payment server 104 to deduct \$300 from participant A's account. Similarly, participant C may have a conference session score of nine out of ten and has to pay \$280 which is to be deducted from his account.

[0064] The conductor 114 also has a conference session score such that the calculator server 106 calculates the amount to be credited into the conductor's 114 account based on the attained session score. In this case, the calculator server 106 or the monitoring server 108 analyses the evaluation data of the conductor 114 and determines a conference session score for the conductor 114 (or conductors). Thereafter, the calculator server 106 calculates the credit amount for the conductor 114 (or each individual conductor 114) based on the individual conference session score.

[0065] The calculator server 106 may also receive, from the monitoring server 108, details of the payment source funding the attended remotely hosted conference session; and transmit, to the payment source, a request for payment of the calculated cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0066] For example, participant A provides his digital wallet payment source details before commencement of the remotely hosted conference session. The monitoring server 108 receives and stores participant A's digital wallet details. After calculating the cost for participant A (i.e. \$300), the calculator server 106 receives participant A's digital wallet details and transmits the request for payment of \$300 to the payment engine 104, which subsequently deducts \$300 from participant A's account.

[0067] It will be appreciated that the digital wallet payment source details may be obtained in other ways. In a first approach, the payment source of the participant 110 (i.e. the account linked to the virtual wallet 112), the account linked to the conductor wallet 118 and a banking account used by the service provider of the remotely hosted conference session are from the same entity. During onboarding, the remote control session pricer 102 will identify, from the account details provided by the participant 110 and the conductor 114, that these accounts and the account used by the service provider belong to the same entity. The remote control session pricer 102 will then store the account details in a common database (not shown in the Figures). During commencement of a remotely hosted conference session, the participant 110 and the conductor 118 log in using their respective accounts registered with the service provider. Their respective account details are retrieved from the common database. Therefore, they do not need to provide their respective digital wallet 112, 118 details to provide account details used to pay for attending the remotely hosted conference session or receive payment for conducting the remotely hosted conference session. After the conclusion of the remotely hosted conference session and the scores of the participant 110 and the conductor 114 are calculated, the amount to be debited from the participant 110 and credited to the conductor 114 is automatically calculated. Automated payment is thus achieved. In a second approach which also supports automated payment, a service provider of the remotely hosted conference session partners with a switch of a financial payment network, whereby the switch provides the remote control session pricer 102 function. If the account linked to the digital wallet 112 used by the participant 110, the account linked to the digital wallet 118 used by the conductor 114 and the account used by the service provider uses the payment routing service provided by the switch, then the remote control session pricer 102 has details of these accounts. Should the participant 110, the conductor 114 and the service provider authorise the remote control session pricer 102 to utilise these account details to process payment, the participant 110, the conductor 114 and the service provider will not be required to provide account details each time a remotely hosted conference session is initiated. Such authorisation brings about automated payment in the second approach.

[0068] Figure 1B shows a schematic diagram a schematic diagram of functional modules present in the remote conference session pricer of Figure 1A, according to an example embodiment. The remote conference session pricer 102 may also be a

remote conference session host and further includes a processor 154, a memory 160, an input port 156, an output port 158, an evaluation data module 162, a personal detail module 164, a payment source detail module 166 and a conference session score module 168.

[0069] Each of the memory 160, the input port 158, the output port 158, the evaluation data module 162, the personal detail module 164, the payment source detail module 166 and the conference session score module 168 is coupled to the processor 154, so that their respective operations can be controlled by the processor 154. The memory 160 stores computer program code that the processor 154 compiles to have each of the evaluation data module 162, the personal detail module 164, the payment source detail module 166 and the conference session score module 168 perform their respective functions.

[0070] Each of the evaluation data module 162, the personal detail module 164, the payment source detail module 166 and the conference session score module 168 can be implemented using one or more processors present in the remote conference session pricer 102.

[0071] With reference to Figure 1A, the personal details module 164 is configured to receive details of a participant and a conductor while the payment source detail module 166 is configured to receive details of a payment source from each of the participants and conductors. The evaluation data module 162 is configured to collect data from each participant and each conductor that allows evaluation of an attended remotely hosted conference session. The evaluation data module 162 is also in communication with the conference session score module 168 and transmits the evaluation data to the conference session score module 168.

[0072] The conference session score module 168 is configured to analyze the evaluation data and determine a conference session score for each individual participant and conductor for the attended remotely hosted conference session. The conference session score module 168 is further configured to communicate with the calculator server 106. The conference session score module 168 transmits to the calculator server 106 to calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each participant and conductor based on their conference session score.

[0073] Figure 2A shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between various entities of the system 100 of Figure 1A, at the start of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment. At step 1, a conference session is initiated and a university database provides details of the registered participants and conductor to a monitoring server. The monitoring server registers the participants' names and verifies with the university database. At step 2, participant 1 attends the conference session on time and provides their digital wallet details to the monitoring server. Participant 1 attends the session through a service provider, like an instant messaging application such as Skype®. At step 3, participant 2 attends the conference session ten minutes late and provides their digital wallet details to the monitoring server. Participant 2 attends the session through a service provider such as a telecommunication network like AT&T®. At step 4, the conductor attends the conference session on time and provides their digital wallet details.

[0074] Figure 2B shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between the same entities of Figure 2A, during payment calculation of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment. At step 5, participant 1 leaves the remotely hosted conference session twenty minutes before the end of the session. At step 6, participant 2 attends the whole session and leaves. The monitoring server monitors the participants and conductor call quality during the conference session, time that they hang up and other factors such as feedback from the participants and conductor. At step 7, the monitoring server sends the data to the calculator server for calculation for final payment using an algorithm at step 8.

[0075] Figure 2C shows a schematic diagram illustrating the flow of information between the same entities of Figure 2A, during final payment and settlement of the cost of the remotely hosted conference session, according to an example embodiment. At step 9, the calculator server forwards the final payment cost to the payment server. At step 10, the payment server distributes the final payment statement to the participant, conductor and university and subsequently initiates the payment transaction. At step 11, each of the participants pays the final session fee. At step 12, the payment server also pays the final payment to the conductor via the university database.

[0076] Figure 3 shows a schematic of a computing device used to realise the calculator server 106 and the monitoring server 108 shown in Figure 1A. The following description of the computing device 300 is provided by way of example only and is not intended to be limiting.

[0077] As shown in Figure 3, the example computing device 300 includes a processor 304 for executing software routines. Although a single processor is shown for the sake of clarity, the computing device 300 may also include a multi-processor system. The processor 304 is connected to a communication infrastructure 306 for communication with other components of the computing device 300. The communication infrastructure 306 may include, for example, a communications bus, cross-bar, or network.

[0078] The computing device 300 further includes a main memory 308, such as a random access memory (RAM), and a secondary memory 310. The secondary memory 310 may include, for example, a storage drive 312, which may be a hard disk drive, a solid state drive or a hybrid drive and/or a removable storage drive 314, which may include a magnetic tape drive, an optical disk drive, a solid state storage drive (such as a USB flash drive, a flash memory device, a solid state drive or a memory card), or the like. The removable storage drive 314 reads from and/or writes to a removable storage medium 344 in a well-known manner. The removable storage medium 344 may include magnetic tape, optical disk, non-volatile memory storage medium, or the like, which is read by and written to by removable storage drive 314. As will be appreciated by persons skilled in the relevant art(s), the removable storage medium 344 includes a computer readable storage medium having stored therein computer executable program code instructions and/or data.

[0079] In an alternative implementation, the secondary memory 310 may additionally or alternatively include other similar means for allowing computer programs or other instructions to be loaded into the computing device 300. Such means can include, for example, a removable storage unit 322 and an interface 350. Examples of a removable storage unit 322 and interface 350 include a program cartridge and cartridge interface (such as that found in video game console devices), a removable memory chip (such as an EPROM or PROM) and associated socket, a removable solid state storage drive (such as a USB flash drive, a flash memory device, a solid state drive or a memory card), and other removable storage units 322 and interfaces 350 which allow software and data to be transferred from the removable storage unit 322 to the computer system 300.

[0080] The computing device 300 also includes at least one communication interface 324. The communication interface 324 allows software and data to be transferred between computing device 200 and external devices via a communication path 326. In various embodiments of the inventions, the communication interface 324 permits data to be transferred between the computing device 300 and a data communication

network, such as a public data or private data communication network. The communication interface 324 may be used to exchange data between different computing devices 300 which such computing devices 300 form part an interconnected computer network. Examples of a communication interface 324 can include a modem, a network interface (such as an Ethernet card), a communication port (such as a serial, parallel, printer, GPIB, IEEE 1394, RJ45, USB), an antenna with associated circuitry and the like. The communication interface 324 may be wired or may be wireless. Software and data transferred via the communication interface 324 are in the form of signals which can be electronic, electromagnetic, optical or other signals capable of being received by communication interface 324. These signals are provided to the communication interface via the communication path 326.

[0081] As shown in Figure 3, the computing device 300 further includes a display interface 302 which performs operations for rendering images to an associated display 330 and an audio interface 332 for performing operations for playing audio content via associated speaker(s) 334.

[0082] As used herein, the term "computer program product" may refer, in part, to removable storage medium 344, removable storage unit 322, a hard disk installed in storage drive 312, or a carrier wave carrying software over communication path 326 (wireless link or cable) to communication interface 324. Computer readable storage media refers to any non-transitory, non-volatile tangible storage medium that provides recorded instructions and/or data to the computing device 200 for execution and/or processing. Examples of such storage media include magnetic tape, CD-ROM, DVD, Blu-ray™ Disc, a hard disk drive, a ROM or integrated circuit, a solid state storage drive (such as a USB flash drive, a flash memory device, a solid state drive or a memory card), a hybrid drive, a magneto-optical disk, or a computer readable card such as a PCMCIA card and the like, whether or not such devices are internal or external of the computing device 300. Examples of transitory or non-tangible computer readable transmission media that may also participate in the provision of software, application programs, instructions and/or data to the computing device 300 include radio or infra-red transmission channels as well as a network connection to another computer or networked device, and the Internet or Intranets including e-mail transmissions and information recorded on Websites and the like.

[0083] The computer programs (also called computer program code) are stored in main memory 308 and/or secondary memory 310. Computer programs can also be

received via the communication interface 324. Such computer programs, when executed, enable the computing device 300 to perform one or more features of embodiments discussed herein. In various embodiments, the computer programs, when executed, enable the processor 304 to perform features of the above-described embodiments. Accordingly, such computer programs represent controllers of the computer system 300.

[0084] Software may be stored in a computer program product and loaded into the computing device 300 using the removable storage drive 314, the storage drive 312, or the interface 350. The computer program product may be a non-transitory computer readable medium. Alternatively, the computer program product may be downloaded to the computer system 300 over the communications path 326. The software, when executed by the processor 304, causes the computing device 300 to perform functions of embodiments described herein.

[0085] It is to be understood that the embodiment of Figure 3 is presented merely by way of example. Therefore, in some embodiments one or more features of the computing device 300 may be omitted. Also, in some embodiments, one or more features of the computing device 300 may be combined together. Additionally, in some embodiments, one or more features of the computing device 300 may be split into one or more component parts. The main memory 308 and/or the secondary memory 310 may serve(s) as the memory for the remote conference session pricer 102; while the processor 304 may serve as the processor of the remote conference session pricer 102.

[0086] Figure 4 shows a flowchart 400 depicting steps for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions, according to an example embodiment. At step 402, a request for a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session is received. At step 404, data providing an evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference session is obtained. At step 406, the evaluation data is analysed using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score. At step 408, the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session is calculated using the conference session score. At step 410, the request is responded with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

[0087] Some portions of the description which follows are explicitly or implicitly presented in terms of algorithms and functional or symbolic representations of

operations on data within a computer memory. These algorithmic descriptions and functional or symbolic representations are the means used by those skilled in the data processing arts to convey most effectively the substance of their work to others skilled in the art. An algorithm is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence of steps leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring physical manipulations of physical quantities, such as electrical, magnetic or optical signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and otherwise manipulated.

[0088] Unless specifically stated otherwise, and as apparent from the following, it will be appreciated that throughout the present specification, discussions utilizing terms such as “scanning”, “calculating”, “determining”, “replacing”, “generating”, “initializing”, “outputting”, “identifying”, “authorizing”, “verifying” or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical quantities within the computer system into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system or other information storage, transmission or display devices.

[0089] The present specification also discloses apparatus for performing the operations of the methods. Such apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or may comprise a computer or other device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. Various machines may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein. Alternatively, the construction of more specialized apparatus to perform the required method steps may be appropriate. The structure of a computer will appear from the description below.

[0090] In addition, the present specification also implicitly discloses a computer program, in that it would be apparent to the person skilled in the art that the individual steps of the method described herein may be put into effect by computer code. The computer program is not intended to be limited to any particular programming language and implementation thereof. It will be appreciated that a variety of programming languages and coding thereof may be used to implement the teachings of the disclosure contained herein. Moreover, the computer program is not intended to be limited to any particular control flow. There are many other variants of the computer program, which can use different control flows without departing from the spirit or scope of the disclosure.

[0091] Furthermore, one or more of the steps of the computer program may be performed in parallel rather than sequentially. Such a computer program may be stored on any computer readable medium. The computer readable medium may include storage devices such as magnetic or optical disks, memory chips, or other storage devices suitable for interfacing with a computer. The computer readable medium may also include a hard-wired medium such as exemplified in the Internet system, or wireless medium such as exemplified in the GSM mobile telephone system. The computer program when loaded and executed on such a computer effectively results in an apparatus that implements the steps of the preferred method.

[0092] It will be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A remote conference session pricer for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions comprising:
 - at least one processor; and
 - at least one memory including computer program code;
 the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with at least one processor, cause the remote conference session pricer at least to:
 - receive a request for a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session;
 - obtain data providing an evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference session;
 - analyse the evaluation data using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score;
 - calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session using the conference session score; and
 - respond to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

2. The remote conference session pricer of claim 1, wherein the attended remotely hosted conference session is provided with an initial price before commencement and wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session:
 - determine whether the initial price needs to be adjusted based on the conference session score; and
 - adjust the initial price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to its calculated cost in response to an affirmative determination.

3. The remote conference session pricer of claim 1 or 2, wherein the evaluation data comprises any one or more of:
 - duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session;
 - video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session;
 - number of participants and/or conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session;
 - punctuality of the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session; and
 - feedback provided by the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

4. The remote conference session pricer of claim 3, wherein the evaluation data is obtained from each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session and wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session: calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the participants.

5. The remote conference session pricer of claim 3 or 4, wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session:

calculate an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the participants.

6. The remote conference session pricer of any one of the claims 3 to 5, wherein the evaluation data is obtained from each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session and wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session:

calculate the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the conductors.

7. The remote conference session pricer of any one of the claims 3 to 6, wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to, during calculation of the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session:

calculate an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the conductors.

8. The remote conference session pricer of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to:

receive details of a payment source funding the attended remotely hosted conference session; and

transmit, to the payment source, a request for payment of the calculated cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

9. The remote conference session pricer of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the remote conference session pricer is further configured to receive an indication of completion of the remotely hosted conference session.

10. A remote conference session host comprising a plurality of ports for hosting the remotely hosted conference session, wherein the remote conference session host comprises the remote conference session pricer of any one of the preceding claims.

11. A method for pricing attended remotely hosted conference sessions, the method comprising:

- receiving a request for a cost of an attended remotely hosted conference session;

- obtaining data providing an evaluation of the attended remotely hosted conference session;

- analysing the evaluation data using an algorithm configured to process the evaluation data to determine a conference session score;

- calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session using the conference session score; and

- responding to the request with the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

12. The method of claim 11, the method further comprising:

- providing an initial price before commencement of the remotely hosted conference session;

- determining whether the initial price needs to be adjusted based on the conference session score; and

- adjusting the initial price of the attended remotely hosted conference session to its calculated cost in response to an affirmative determination.

13. The method of claim 11 or 12, wherein the evaluation data comprises any one or more of:

- duration of the attended remotely hosted conference session;

- video and/or audio quality of the attended remotely hosted conference session;

- number of participants and/or conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session;

punctuality of the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session remote conference session; and

feedback provided by the participants and/or the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the evaluation data is obtained from each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session and wherein the method further comprises calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the participants.

15. The method of claim 13 or 14, the method further comprising:
calculating an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the participants of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the participants.

16. The method of any one of the claims 13 to 15, the method further comprising:
calculating the cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session to each of the conductors.

17. The method of any one of the claims 13 to 16, the method further comprising:
calculating an individual cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session for each of the conductors of the attended remotely hosted conference session based on the evaluation data obtained from each of the conductors.

18. The method of any one of the claims 11 to 17, the method further comprising:
receiving details of a payment source funding the attended remotely hosted conference session; and
transmitting, to the payment source, a request for payment of the calculated cost of the attended remotely hosted conference session.

19. The method of any one of the claims 11 to 18, the method further comprising:
receiving an indication of completion of the remotely hosted conference session.