**Claims**

1. An inventory control system comprising:

~~an inventory server for storing inventory parameters defining one or more products;~~

an availability server arranged to receive an availability request for a product wherein the availability server comprises~~;~~

~~broadcasting~~ receiving means for ~~broadcasting~~ receiving updated inventory parameters from ~~the~~ an inventory server ~~to the availability server~~;

wherein the availability server determines the availability of the requested product by comparing one or more product parameters associated with the requested product to the one or more updated inventory parameters in response to the availability server receiving an availability request.

2. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein the availability server is arranged to determine the availability based on the updated inventory parameters and current inventory status, and in particular further comprising an inventory server for storing inventory parameters defining one or more products and preferably further comprising broadcasting means for broadcasting updated inventory parameters from the inventory server to the availability server.

~~2.~~3. An inventory control system according to claim 1 in which the availability server is logically separated from the inventory server, and in particular in which the availability server is in a different location to the inventory server.

~~3.~~4. An inventory control system according to claim 1 in which the availability server is configured to perform an availability request and not a sell request for a product and preferably in which the inventory server is configured to perform both sell and availability requests.

~~4.~~5. An inventory control system according to claim 1 in which the inventory server is communicatively coupled to the availability server in real time via a network such as a Wide Area Network or a Local Area Network.

~~5.~~6. An inventory control system according to claim 1 in which a plurality of availability servers are provided for performing an availability request and not a sell request.

~~6.~~7. An inventory control system according to claim 1 further comprising a distribution server, for example an airline server, or a call centre server or a city ticket office server, wherein the availability server and the distribution server are provided on a single server.

~~7.~~8. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim further comprising one or more additional availability servers each arranged to receive a or the availability request and in particular to determine the availability of a product by comparing one or more product parameters to one or more inventory parameters in response to one of the availability servers receiving an availability request.

~~8.~~9. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the availability server further comprise one or more grid nodes.

~~9.~~10. An inventory control system according to claim ~~8~~ 9 in which each grid node comprises a grid memory.

~~10.~~11. An inventory control system according to claim ~~8~~ 9 or ~~9~~ 10 in which the availability request is routed via one of the grid nodes depending upon the content of the availability request.

~~11.~~12. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~8~~ 9 to ~~10~~ 11 in which at least some of the grid nodes are located on different availability servers.

~~12.~~13. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~9~~ 10 to ~~11~~ 12 wherein each grid memory stores one or more inventory parameters of the most recent availability request received by the grid node.

~~13.~~14. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~9~~ 10 to ~~12~~ 13 in which each grid memory stores at least some inventory parameters which are different from the inventory parameters stored in the other grid memories.

~~14.~~15. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~9~~ 10 to ~~13~~ 14 in which the inventory parameters are sent from the inventory server to one of the grid memories if the inventory parameters of the requested product are not stored in the grid memory or are not the most up to date parameters.

~~15.~~16. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~9~~ 10 to ~~14~~ 15 in which the inventory parameters are routed to one of the grid memories in dependence upon the content of the availability request.

~~16.~~17. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim further comprising an updating means arranged to update the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server and the inventory parameters stored in one of the grid memories.

~~17.~~18. An inventory control system according to claim ~~16~~ 17 in which the updating means is arranged to asynchronously update the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server and the inventory parameters stored in one of the grid memories.

~~18.~~19. An inventory control system according to claim ~~16~~ 17 or ~~17~~ 18 in which the updating means first updates the data stored in one of the grid memories and then the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server if a sell or cancel transaction is received by one of the inventory server.

~~19.~~20. An inventory control system according to any one of claim ~~16~~ 17 to ~~18~~ 19 in which the updating means first updates the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server and then the data stored in one of the grid memories if the inventory server receives bid price data or schedule connection data or fare data or business rule data.

~~20.~~21. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim further comprising one or more processing servers for receiving a request and in particular for determining the type of request.

~~21.~~22. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the inventory server is logically or physically or both logically and physically separated from the availability server.

~~22.~~23. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim further comprising one or more additional inventory servers.

~~23.~~24. An inventory control system according to claim ~~22~~ 23 in which the inventory parameters are partitioned across the inventory servers such that each inventory server stores at least some inventory parameters which are different from the inventory parameters stored on the other server.

~~24.~~25. An inventory control system according to claim ~~22~~ 23 or ~~23~~ 24 in which one inventory server is a fail-over server for the other inventory server, the fail-over server storing a copy of the inventory parameters stored on the other inventory server.

~~25.~~26. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~20~~ 21 to ~~24~~ 25 in which one of the processing servers only routes the request to one of the grid nodes if the request is an availability request.

~~26.~~27. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~20~~ 21 to ~~25~~ 26 in which one of the processing servers routes a request to the inventory server if the request is a sell or cancel request.

~~27.~~28. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the product parameters are compared with updated inventory parameters.

~~28.~~29. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim further comprising one or more additional fail-over servers.

~~29.~~30. An inventory control method comprising comprising:

~~storing inventory parameters on an inventory server;~~

receiving on an availability server an availability request for a product;

~~broadcasting using broadcasting means~~receiving updated inventory parameters from ~~the~~ an inventory server ~~to the availability server~~;

wherein the availability server determines the availability of the requested product by comparing one or more product parameters associated with the requested product to the one or more updated inventory parameters in response to the availability server receiving an availability request.

31. An inventory control method according to claim 30 in which the availability server is arranged to determine the availability based on the updated inventory parameters and current inventory status, and in particular storing inventory parameters, defining one or more products and preferably further comprising broadcasting updated inventory parameters from the inventory server to the availability server.

~~30.~~32. An inventory control method according to claim ~~29~~ 30 in which the availability server is logically separated from the inventory server, and in particular in which the availability server is in a different location to the inventory server.

~~31.~~33. An inventory control method according to claim ~~29~~ 30 or ~~30~~ 31 further comprising one or more additional availability servers each arranged to receive a or the availability

request and in particular to determine the availability of a product by comparing one or more product parameters to one or more inventory parameters in response to one of the availability servers receiving an availability request.

~~32.~~34. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~31~~ 33 in which the availability server further comprise one or more grid nodes.

~~33.~~35. An inventory control method according to claim ~~32~~ 34 in which each grid node comprises a grid memory.

~~34.~~36. An inventory control method according to claim ~~32~~ 34 or ~~33~~ 35 in which the availability request is routed via one of the grid nodes in dependence upon the content of the availability request.

~~35.~~37. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~32~~ 34 to ~~34~~ 36 in which at least some of the grid nodes are located on different availability servers.

~~36.~~38. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~32~~ 34 to ~~35~~ 37 wherein each grid memory stores one or more inventory parameters of the most recent availability request received by the grid node.

~~37.~~39. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~32~~ 34 to ~~36~~ 38 in which each grid memory stores at least some inventory parameters which are different from the inventory parameters stored in the other grid memories.

~~38.~~40. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~32~~ 34 to ~~37~~ 39 in which the inventory parameters are sent from the inventory server to one of the grid memories if the inventory parameters of the requested product are not stored in the grid memory or are not the most up to date parameters.

~~39.~~41. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~32~~ 34 to ~~38~~ 40 in which the inventory parameters are routed to one of the grid memories in dependence upon the content of the availability request.

~~40.~~42. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~39~~ 41 further comprising an updating means arranged to asynchronously update the inventory

parameters stored in the inventory server and the inventory parameters stored in one of the grid memories.

~~41.~~43. An inventory control method according to claim ~~40~~ 42 in which the updating means first updates the data stored in one of the grid memories and then the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server if a sell or cancel transaction is received by one of the inventory server.

~~42.~~44. An inventory control method according to claim ~~40~~ 42 or ~~41~~ 43 in which the updating means first updates the inventory parameters stored in the inventory server and then the data stored in one of the grid memories if the inventory server receives bid price data or schedule connection data or fare data or business rule data.

~~43.~~45. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~42~~ 44 further comprising one or more processing servers for receiving a request and in particular for determining the type of request.

~~44.~~46. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~43~~ 45 in which the inventory server is logically or physically or both logically and physically separated from the availability server.

~~45.~~47. An inventory control method according to any one of claim ~~29~~ 30 to ~~44~~ 46 further comprising one or more additional inventory servers.

~~46.~~48. An inventory control method according to claim ~~45~~ 47 in which the inventory parameters are partitioned across the inventory servers such that each inventory server stores at least some inventory parameters which are different from the inventory parameters stored on the other server.

~~47.~~49. An inventory control method according to claim ~~45~~ 47 or ~~46~~ 48 in which one inventory server is a fail-over server for the other inventory server, the fail-over server storing a copy of the inventory parameters stored on the other inventory server.

~~48.~~50. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~45~~ 47 to ~~47~~ 49 in which one of the processing servers only routes the request to one of the grid nodes if the request is an availability request.

~~49.~~51. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~45~~ 47 to ~~48~~ 50 in which one of the processing servers routes a request to the inventory server if the request is a sell or cancel request.

~~50.~~52. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~49~~ 51 in which the product parameters are compared with updated inventory parameters.

~~51.~~53. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~50~~ 52 further comprising one or more additional fail-over servers.

~~52.~~54. A computer program product or computer readable medium which when loaded onto a computer executes the method of any one of claims ~~29~~ 30 to ~~51~~53.

55. An inventory control system comprising:

an inventory server for storing inventory parameters defining one or more products;

broadcasting means for broadcasting updated inventory parameters from the inventory server to an availability server for determining the availability of the requested product by comparing one or more product parameters associated with the requested product to the one or more updated inventory parameters in response to the availability server receiving an availability request.