CLAIMS

1. A control entity for controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, the control entity comprising:

a time sale unit adapted for selling time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities;

an offer reception unit adapted for receiving offers from the plurality of participant entities to purchase the object, wherein each offer reduces a remaining trade time after the expiry of which the object is sold to the participant entity having provided a final offer, and wherein each offer deducts a corresponding amount, particularly a corresponding number, of time reduction credits from the corresponding participant entity;

a trade control unit adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by an offer corresponding to an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits is variable over the maximum trade time, particularly regardless of the number of the plurality of participant entities.

2. The control entity according to claim 1, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for operating based on a trade time-dependent function correlating an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit.

3. The control entity according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit increases with an

advancing trade time.

4. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a first time interval is smaller than a number of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a second time interval succeeding the first time interval.

5. The control entity according to claim 4, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for informing, before expiry of the first time interval, the plurality of participant entities about the increased amount, particularly number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within the second time interval.

6. The control entity according to claim 5, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for informing the plurality of participant entities by an electronic communication message provided by a messaging system, particularly by one of the group consisting of an SMS, an MMS, an email, a telephone call, and a pop-up window or the like.

7. The control entity according to claim 4 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that a total payment of the plurality of participant entities for time reduction credits for a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by the offers within the first time interval is larger than or equal to a predefined fixed price, particularly a market price or a list price, of the object.

8. The control entity according to claim 4 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit continuously increases during the first time interval.

9. The control entity according to claim 4 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within the second time interval or within individual sub-intervals thereof is calculated by a random number generator.

10. The control entity according to claim 9, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for performing the calculation by the random number generator with the boundary condition that an integral amount, particularly number, of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time to zero within the second time interval equals to a predefined cost value.

11. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for selling a total amount of the time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities so that a total amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by all time reduction credits equals to the maximum trade time.

12. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for enabling a trade of time reduction credits between different ones of the plurality of participant entities, particularly for enabling a trade of time reduction credits

between different ones of the plurality of participant entities with prices which are definable by the plurality of participant entities.

13. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, comprising a time reduction credit display unit adapted for displaying a present distribution of time reduction credits assigned to the plurality of participant entities participating at the trade.

14. The control entity according to claim 13, wherein the time reduction credit display unit is adapted for updating the displayed distribution of time reduction credits upon determining that time reduction credits assigned to the plurality of participant entities have changed, particularly have changed due to sale, use or trade of time reduction credits.

15. The control entity according to claim 13 or 14, wherein the time reduction credit display unit is adapted for displaying a price of time reduction credits offered by an assigned one of the plurality of participant entities to other ones of the plurality of participant entities.

16. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for deducting time reduction credits from an account of only the one of the plurality of participant entities who has succeeded to purchase the object.

17. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for deducting time reduction credits from accounts of the plurality of participant entities regardless which one of the plurality of participant entities has succeeded to purchase the object.

18. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the remaining trade time is reducable exclusively by offers of the plurality of participant entities.

19. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the remaining trade time is reducable by offers of the plurality of participant entities and is reducable by an advancing clock time during the trade.

20. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the final offer is the offer which reduces the remaining trade time to zero.

21. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the offer reception unit is adapted, upon receiving an offer from a participant entity, to increase a price to purchase the object in accordance with the reduction of the remaining trade time correlated with the deduction of a corresponding number of time reduction credits.

22. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the following procedure is executable:

receiving input from a seller entity including an identification of the object, object data, a minimum price for purchasing the object, a maximum price for purchasing the object, and the maximum trade time;

offering the object for sale starting at the minimum price and the maximum trade time and displaying a current price and the remaining trade time;

receiving at least one value offer for the product from at least one of the plurality of participant entities;

displaying the respective value offer;

accepting the respective value offer when the value offer results in a price greater than or equal to the minimum price and greater than a current price offered subsequently to the minimum price and results in time units to be deducted less than or equal to the maximum trade time or remaining auction time and equal to the time reduction credits assigned to the corresponding offer of one of the plurality of participant entities;

increasing the current price by a predefined price amount and decreasing the remaining trade time by a predefined time amount for each value offer that results in a price greater than the minimum price and greater than the current price and results in time units to be deducted less than or equal to the remaining trade time; and

displaying the value offer as the current price and the remaining trade time.

23. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims,
wherein the time sale unit is adapted for operating independent from the offer reception unit.

24. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims,
wherein the time sale unit is adapted for selling the time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities independent of offers of the participant entities.

25. The control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above

claims, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for selling a time reduction credit to a participant entity without having received an offer from that participant entity.

26. A communication system, comprising

a plurality of participant entities communicatively coupled over a communication network for trading an object up to a predefined maximum trade time;

a control entity according to claim 1 or any one of the above claims for controlling the trade of the object between the plurality of participant entities over the communication network.

27. A method of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, the method comprising:

selling time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities;

receiving offers from the plurality of participant entities to purchase the object, wherein each offer reduces a remaining trade time after the expiry of which the object is sold to the participant entity having provided a final offer, and wherein each offer deducts a corresponding amount, particularly a corresponding number, of time reduction credits from the corresponding participant entity;

controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by an offer corresponding to an amount, particularly a number, of time reduction credits may be variable over the maximum trade time, particularly regardless of the number of the plurality of participant entities.

28. A computer-readable medium, in which a computer program of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities

over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time is stored, which computer program, when being executed by a processor, is adapted to carry out or control a method according to claim 27.

29. A program element of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, which program element, when being executed by a processor, is adapted to carry out or control a method according to claim 27.

CLAIMS

1. A control entity for controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, the control entity comprising:

a time sale unit adapted for selling time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities;

an offer reception unit adapted for receiving offers from the plurality of participant entities to purchase the object, wherein each offer reduces a remaining trade time after the expiry of which remaining trade time the object is sold to the participant entity having provided a final offer, and wherein each offer deducts a corresponding amount of time reduction credits from the corresponding participant entity;

a trade control unit adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by an offer corresponding to an amount of time reduction credits is variable over the maximum trade time;

wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a first time interval is smaller than a number of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a second time interval succeeding the first time interval.

2. The control entity according to claim 1, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for operating based on a trade time-dependent function correlating an amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit.

3. The control entity according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of time

reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit increases with an advancing trade time.

4. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for informing, before expiry of the first time interval, the plurality of participant entities about the increased amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within the second time interval.

5. The control entity according to claim 4, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for informing the plurality of participant entities by an electronic communication message provided by a messaging system.

6. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that a total payment of the plurality of participant entities for time reduction credits for a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by the offers within the first time interval is larger than or equal to a predefined fixed price of the object.

7. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit continuously increases during the first time interval.

8. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within the second time interval or within individual sub-intervals thereof is calculated by a random number generator.

9. The control entity according to claim 8, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for performing the calculation by the random number generator with the boundary condition that an integral amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time to zero within the second time interval equals to a predefined cost value.

10. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for selling a total amount of the time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities so that a total amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by all time reduction credits equals to the maximum trade time.

11. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for enabling a trade of time reduction credits between different ones of the plurality of participant entities.

12. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 11, further comprising a time reduction credit display unit adapted for displaying a present distribution of time reduction credits assigned to the plurality of participant entities participating at the trade.

13. The control entity according to claim 12, wherein the time reduction credit display unit is adapted for updating the displayed distribution of time reduction credits upon determining that time reduction credits assigned to the plurality of participant entities have changed.

14. The control entity according to claim 12 or 13, wherein the time reduction credit display unit is adapted for displaying a price of time reduction credits offered by an assigned one of the plurality of participant entities to other ones of the plurality of participant entities.

15. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for deducting time reduction credits from an account of only the one of the plurality of participant entities who has succeeded to purchase the object.

16. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 15, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for deducting time reduction credits from accounts of the plurality of participant entities regardless which one of the plurality of participant entities has succeeded to purchase the object.

17. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 16, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the remaining trade time is reducible exclusively by offers of the plurality of participant entities.

18. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the remaining trade time is reducible by offers of the plurality of participant entities and is reducible by an advancing clock time during the trade.

19. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein the final offer is the offer which reduces the remaining trade time to zero.

20. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 19, wherein the offer reception unit is adapted, upon receiving an offer from a participant entity, to increase a price to purchase the object in accordance with the reduction of the remaining trade time correlated with the deduction of a corresponding number of time reduction credits.

21. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 20, wherein the trade control unit is adapted for controlling the trade in such a manner that the following procedure is executable:

receiving input from a seller entity including an identification of the object, object data, a minimum price for purchasing the object, a maximum price for purchasing the object, and the maximum trade time;

offering the object for sale starting at the minimum price and the maximum trade time and displaying a current price and the remaining trade time;

receiving at least one value offer for the object from at least one of the plurality of participant entities;

displaying the respective value offer;

accepting the respective value offer when the value offer results in a price greater than or equal to the minimum price and greater than a current price offered subsequently to the minimum price and results in time units to be deducted less than or equal to the maximum trade time or remaining auction time and equal to the time reduction credits assigned to the corresponding offer of one of the plurality of participant entities;

increasing the current price by a predefined price amount and decreasing the remaining trade time by a predefined time amount for each value offer that results in a price greater than the minimum price and greater than the current price and results in time units to be deducted less than or equal to the remaining trade time; and

displaying the value offer as the current price and the remaining trade time.

22. The control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 21, wherein the time sale unit is adapted for selling a time reduction credit to a participant entity before receiving an offer from that participant entity.

23. A communication system, comprising

a plurality of participant entities communicatively coupled over a communication network for trading an object up to a predefined maximum trade time; and

a control entity according to any one of claims 1 to 22 for controlling the trade of the object between the plurality of participant entities over the communication network.

24. A method of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, the method comprising:

selling time reduction credits to the plurality of participant entities;

receiving offers from the plurality of participant entities to purchase the object, wherein each offer reduces a remaining trade time after the expiry of which remaining trade time the object is sold to the participant entity having provided a final offer, and wherein each offer deducts a corresponding amount of time reduction credits from the corresponding participant entity;

controlling the trade in such a manner that an amount of a reduction of the remaining trade time caused by an offer corresponding to an amount of time reduction credits may be variable over the maximum trade time;

wherein the trade is controlled in such a manner that an amount of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a first time interval is smaller than a number of time reduction credits required for reducing a remaining trade time by a time unit within a second time interval succeeding the first time interval.

25. A computer-readable medium, in which a computer program of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time is stored, which computer program, when being executed by a processor, is adapted to carry out or control a method according to claim 24 .

26. A program element of controlling a trade of an object between a plurality of participant entities over a communication network up to a predefined maximum trade time, which program element, when being executed by a processor, is adapted to carry out or control a method according to claim 24 .