Claims

1. An inventory control system comprising:

a. a receiver for receiving an availability request for a desired product or service associated with a leg of a journey between an origin and destination, the availability request comprising one or more attributes defining the desired product or service;

b. a storage device for storing data defining a plurality of products or services of a provider, each product or service defined by one or more attributes; and

c. a processor configured to compare the attribute or attributes of the received availability request with the stored data~~, wherein the stored data defining at least one of the products or services comprises one or more further attributes which distinguish a product or service for a first journey having a first number of legs from a product or service for a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs~~ and to determine an availability status indicator for the products or services based on market value and point of sale data.

2. An inventory control system according to claim 1 wherein the stored data defining at least one of the products or services comprises one or more further attributes which distinguish a product or service for a first journey having a first number of legs from a product or service for a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs.

~~2.~~3. An inventory control system according to claim ~~1~~ 2 wherein the first journey is a multi-leg journey and the second journey is a single leg journey.

~~3.~~4. An inventory control system according to ~~claims 1 or 2~~any preceding claim wherein the attribute or attributes of the products or services stored in the storage device comprise an availability status indicator attribute for indicating the open or closed status of each product or service stored in the storage device.

~~4.~~5. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim wherein the attribute or attributes of the products or services stored in the storage device comprise an availability status indicator attribute for indicating the open or closed status of each product or service stored in the storage device and in which the processor is configured to change the availability status of one product or service for the first journey independently of the availability status of a product or service for the second journey.

~~5.~~6. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the processor is configured to determine whether the availability request is associated with a first journey having a first number of legs or a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs ~~preferably~~ based on one or more of data indicative of whether one or more legs or segments have previously been booked, and data indicative of the origin of the availability request, and data indicative of the pricing value of the availability request.

~~6.~~7. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the availability request is associated with a single leg journey or a multi-leg journey ~~preferably~~ based on one or more of data indicative of whether one or more legs or segments have previously been booked, and data indicative of the origin of the availability request, and data indicative of the pricing value of the availability request.

~~7.~~8. An inventory control system according to claim ~~6~~ 7 wherein the processor is configured to allocate to a user one of the products or services having the further attribute which identifies the product or service as being for a multi-leg journey if the received availability request comprises data indicative that the journey is a multi-leg journey.

~~8.~~9. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim wherein the processor is configured to compare the attribute~~s~~ or attributes of the received availability request with the further attribute which distinguishes a product or service for a local passenger or non-stop passenger or single leg journey from a product or service for a connecting passenger or through passenger or multi leg journey.

~~9.~~10. An inventory control system according to claim ~~1~~ 2 wherein the further attribute comprises data indicative of the number of legs of the journey associated with the received availability request.

~~10.~~11. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the further attribute comprises a service indicator attribute which allows a product or service for the first journey to be distinguished from a product or service for the second journey, and preferably in which the further attribute comprises one or more of a Point of Sale attribute and pricing value data attribute.

~~11.~~12. An inventory control system according to any one of claims ~~2~~ 3 to ~~9~~ 10 wherein the processor is configured to use one or more of a service indicator attribute and a pricing

value data attribute and a Point of Sale attribute to determine whether the product is for the first or second journey.

~~12.~~13. An inventory control system according to any one of claims 2 to ~~9~~ 10 in which the further attribute comprises a service indicator attribute which allows a product or service for a non-stop passenger or local passenger or single-leg journey to be distinguished from a product or service for a through passenger or connecting passenger or multi leg journey.

~~13.~~14. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the processor is configured to determine the availability of one of the products by using a Hash function to determine which product has attributes which match those of the received availability request.

~~14.~~15. An inventory control system according to any preceding claim in which the processor is configured to transform one or more attributes of the availability request into a key value such as an integer.

~~15.~~16. An inventory control method comprising:

a. receiving with a receiver an availability request for a desired product or service associated with a leg of a journey between an origin and destination, the availability request comprising one or more attributes defining the desired product or service;

c. comparing, using a processor, the attribute or attributes of the received availability request with data stored in a storage device, the data defining a plurality of products or services of a provider, each product or service defined by one or more attributes; ~~wherein the stored data defining at least one of the products or services comprises one or more further attributes which distinguish a product or service for a first journey having a first number of legs from a product or service for a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs.~~

d. determining an availability status indicator for the products or services based on market value and point of sale data.

17. An inventory control method of claim 16 wherein the stored data defining at least one of the products or services comprises one or more further attributes which distinguish a product or service for a first journey having a first number of legs from a product or service for a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs.

~~16.~~18. An inventory control method according to claim ~~15~~ 17 in which the first journey is a multi-leg journey and the second journey is a single leg journey.

~~17.~~19. An inventory control method according to ~~claims 15 or 16~~any one of claims 16 to 18 wherein the attribute or attributes of the products or services stored in the storage device comprise an availability status indicator attribute for indicating the open or closed status of each product or service stored in the storage device.

~~18.~~20. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~17~~ 19 wherein the attribute or attributes of the products or services stored in the storage device comprise an availability status indicator attribute for indicating the open or closed status of each product or service stored in the storage device and in which the processor is configured to change the availability status of one product or service for the first journey independently of the availability status of a product or service for the second journey.

~~19.~~21. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~18~~ 20 wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the availability request is associated with a first journey having a first number of legs or a second journey having a second number of legs which is less than the first number of legs ~~preferably~~ based on one or more of data indicative of whether one or more legs or segments have previously been booked, and data indicative of the origin of the availability request, and data indicative of the pricing value of the availability request.

~~20.~~22. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~19~~ 21 wherein the processor is configured to determine whether the availability request is associated with a single leg journey or a multi-leg journey ~~preferably~~ based on one or more of data indicative of whether one or more legs or segments have previously been booked, and data indicative of the origin of the availability request, and data indicative of the pricing value of the availability request.

~~21.~~23. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~20~~ 22 wherein the processor is configured to allocate to a user one of the products or services having the further attribute which identifies the product or service as being for a multi-leg journey if the received availability request comprises data indicative that the journey is a multi-leg journey.

~~22.~~24. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~21~~ 23 wherein the processor is configured to compare the attribute~~s~~ or attributes of the received availability request with the further attribute which distinguishes a product or service for a

local passenger or non-stop passenger or single leg journey from a product or service for a connecting passenger or through passenger or multi leg journey.

~~23.~~25. An inventory control method according to claim ~~15~~ 17 wherein the further attribute comprises data indicative of the number of legs of the journey associated with the received availability request.

~~24.~~26. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~23~~ 25 in which the further attribute comprises a service indicator attribute which allows a product or service for the first journey to be distinguished from a product or service for the second journey, and preferably in which the further attribute comprises one or more of a Point of Sale attribute and pricing value data attribute.

~~25.~~27. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~23~~ 25 wherein the processor is configured to use one or more of a service indicator attribute and a pricing value data attribute and a Point of Sale attribute to determine whether the product is for the first or second journey.

~~26.~~28. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~23~~ 25 in which the further attribute comprises a service indicator attribute which allows a product or service for a non-stop passenger or local passenger or single-leg journey to be distinguished from a product or service for a through passenger or connecting passenger or multi leg journey.

~~27.~~29. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~26~~28, in which the processor is further configured to determine the availability of one of the products in dependence upon the result of the comparison.

~~28.~~30. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~27~~ 29 in which the processor compares the attributes or attributes of the received availability request with the further attribute which allows a local or non-stop passenger to be distinguished from a connecting passenger.

~~29.~~31. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~28~~ 30 wherein the further attribute comprises data indicative of the number of legs of a journey for each product.

~~30.~~32. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~29~~ 31 in which the processor determines which product has an attribute defining the product as a multi leg product or a product for connecting passengers.

~~31.~~33. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~30~~ 32 in which each product comprises an attribute indicative of the maximum number of seats allocated to each product.

~~32.~~34. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 17 to ~~23~~ 25 in which the further attribute comprises a service indicator attribute which allows non-stop or local flights to be distinguished from connecting flights or single leg journeys to be distinguished from multi-leg journeys.

~~33.~~35. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~32~~ 34 in which the data defining each product comprises an availability status attribute indicating whether the product is open or closed for providing seats for an availability request.

~~34.~~36. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~33~~ 35 in which the processor determines the availability of one of the products by matching one or more of the attributes of the availability request to one or more of the attributes defining the products.

~~35.~~37. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~34~~ 36 in which the processor determines the availability of one of the products by using a Hash function to determine which product has attributes which match those of the received availability request.

~~36.~~38. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~35~~ 37 in which the processor transforms one or more attributes of the availability request into a key value such as an integer.

~~37.~~39. An inventory control method according to any one of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~36~~ 38 in which the processor transforms one or more attributes of the availability request into a key value such as an integer and in which the processor searches a table of key values associated with product identifiers to determine which product has an associated key value which matches the key value produced by the Hash function.

~~38.~~40. A computer readable medium which when executed undertakes the method of claims ~~15~~ 16 to ~~37~~39.

~~39.~~41. A computer program product comprising the computer readable medium of claim ~~38~~40.

42. An inventory control system comprising: a processor, a receiver for receiving an availability request for a leg of a journey between an origin and destination, wherein the availability request comprises one or more attributes defining the leg; and a comparator for comparing the attribute or attributes of the received availability request with data defining a plurality of products, each product defined by one or more attributes wherein the processor is configured to determine an availability status indicator for the products or services based on market value and point of sale data.

43. An inventory control method comprising receiving on a receiver an availability request for a leg of a journey between an origin and destination, wherein the availability request comprises one or more attributes defining the leg; comparing using a comparator the attribute or attributes of the received availability request with data defining a plurality of products, each product defined by a one or more attributes and determining an availability status indicator for the products or services based on market value and point of sale data.