

to be programmed in accordance with the end user's wishes. A timer for a shower, for example on a camping, is usually of a simple construction and only determines the shower-taking time and possibly the use of the relevant shower (for example, per day, week, month, etc.). A timer for a suntanning installation in business surroundings, on the other hand, is to monitor and/or register several time periods such as, for example, a  
5 warming-up time, an effective tanning time, and the number of hours of operation.

Fig. 2 diagrammatically shows an embodiment of a programmable device 1 in accordance with Fig. 1 in more detail. In this embodiment, the programmable device  
10 comprises five modules 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in which the respective functions are present. Each of these functions can be activated by the supplier, as desired, after payment by the end user. Fig. 2 shows that the modules 11 and 13 have been activated "A", and the modules 12, 14 and 15 have not.

15 It will be obvious that the system and the method according to the invention may be adapted in a variety of ways without departing from the scope of the invention. Thus the programming means and the (card) reading means may be integrated with the programmable device, as was noted above.

20 Furthermore, the electronically readable information carrier, for example a programmable card, may be adapted in various ways and may be constructed as a chip card, for example a rechargeable cash card or otherwise, as long as due payments are made to the manufacturer for the activated functions, i.e. it should not be possible to use a card not issued by the relevant manufacturer for activating a programmable device  
25 sold by this manufacturer.

It is also possible, for example, to rent out or lease the programmable devices, in which case the system according to the invention renders it possible not only to activate functions, but also to deactivate functions and to base the renting or leasing bill on the  
30 number of functions activated. It is in addition possible, for example, to deactivate a