

[54] **DUAL VALUE DOCUMENT**

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283/48-52, 53; 40/2 B; 206/DIG. 22;
235/61.12

[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS

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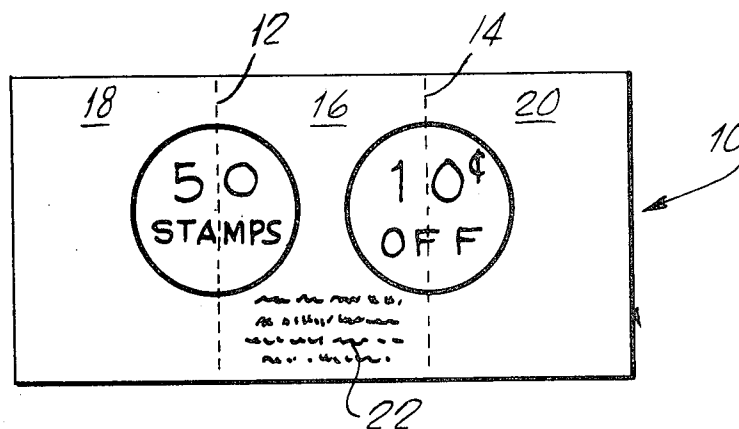
1,040,243 10/1912 Schwartz283/14
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Attorney—Robert S. Dunham et al.

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A dual value document includes a sheet of flexible material such as paper divided into a middle section and at least two connected and detachable end sections. The middle section contains printed matter to indicate that a document consisting of the middle section and one of the end sections has one value, while a document consisting of the middle section and the other of the end sections has a different value.

2 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



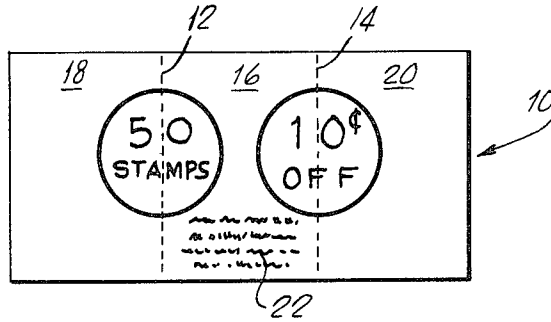


Fig. 1.

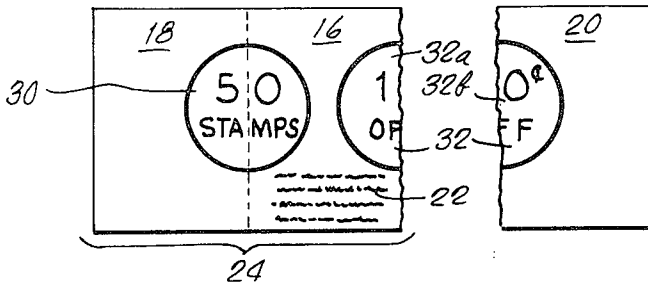


Fig. 2.

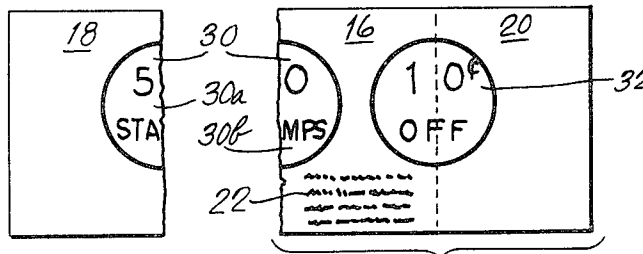


Fig. 3.

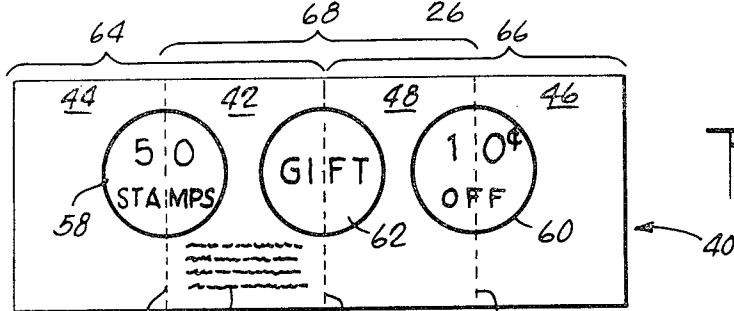


Fig. 4.

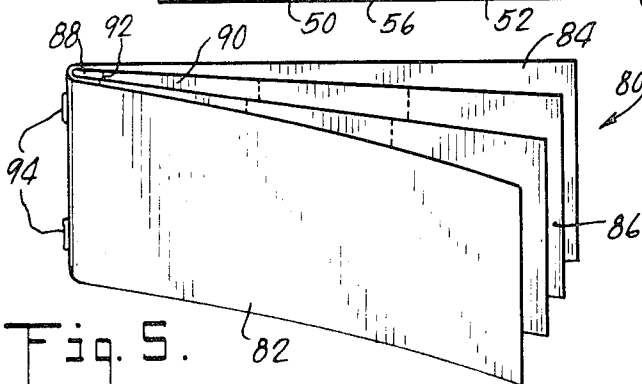


Fig. 5.

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DUAL VALUE DOCUMENT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a dual value document. More particularly, the invention relates to a multi-section redemption coupon of a type adapted to be distributed by merchants and manufacturers.

Trading stamps have been found to be an effective vehicle for generating business on the retail level. Such stamps comprise printed documents, having a certain nominal value, which are given as a premium by a retailer to his customer and which are usable in place of money by the customer in procuring articles from the stamp issuer. However, trading stamps are not employed in all businesses as they are limited in use to promoting stores and services wherein the stamps may be conveniently saved, easily handled and accumulate to a sufficient amount to make savings worthwhile within a reasonable period of time. Manufacturers have refrained from using this promotional tool as no single brand of trading stamps has received universal acceptance, it is inherently expensive to insert coupons for obtaining the stamps in packages of a product, there are production line problems in packaging such coupons and/or stamps and there are great obstacles to overcome to inventory and ship the proper amount of the trading stamps to each store using the appropriate stamps. Accordingly, manufacturers have been reluctant to use trading stamps to promote individual products.

On the other hand, redemption coupons are commonly distributed to the consuming public by merchants and manufacturers for the purpose of instigating sales of particular products. Such coupons comprise printed documents, having a certain nominal value, which are given as a premium by a manufacturer to a potential customer and which are usable in place of money by the customer in procuring the manufactured merchandise from a retailer. Typically, an assortment of coupons is placed in an envelope and mailed to the general public. Another frequent method of distributing coupons is to include them in a tear sheet found in a magazine or newspaper.

It is desirable to provide a means of increasing the effectiveness and appeal of trading stamps, while maintaining the value of redemption coupons. It is also desirable to provide in the promotion of a product a means of allowing the consumer a choice of receiving either a discount on purchased merchandise or a quantity of trading stamps or even a small gift. However, the medium to be employed for this purpose must contain adequate safeguards against fraud in redemption.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, a principal object of the present invention is to provide a dual value document.

Another object of the invention is to provide a redemption coupon having means for allowing the consumer a choice as to whether the coupon to be redeemed either for a reduction in the cost of the item, a quantity of trading stamps or a small gift.

A further object is to provide a redemption coupon providing for minimum handling and expense on the part of merchants, manufacturers and the consuming public, while obviating the possibility of fraud in the redemption of the coupon.

To these and other ends, the subject invention contemplates a dual value document comprising a sheet of flexible material divided into a middle section and at least two connected and detachable end sections. The middle section has printed matter thereon to indicate that a document consisting of the middle section and one of the end sections has one value, while a document consisting of the middle section and the other of the end sections has a different value. A document consisting of the middle section and either one of the end sections is preferably rectangular in shape and is equal in size to a document consisting of the middle section and the other of the end sections. The end sections desirably also have printed matter thereon, which cooperates with printed matter on the middle section to indicate the value of the document selected.

The documents are preferably in the form of redemption coupons which are redeemable either for a cash discount or for trading stamps at the option of the user. In this regard, the detachable end section which is not desired is removed from the dual value document and discarded. The middle section and the remaining attached end section indicating the document or coupon selected is then redeemed at the merchant. As only one document may be selected from the dual value document, fraud is prevented during redemption.

In another embodiment of the document, an additional middle section is defined in the sheet of material and is connected to the first-mentioned middle section and one of the end sections. This additional middle section together with the first-mentioned middle section may comprise a document of yet another value than the above-mentioned documents.

It is further contemplated that in a modification of the invention, the documents are bound along a common edge and are contained within a book or carrier. This allows the documents to be easily transported, readily viewed and results in greater use of the documents. It also provides a lower distribution cost and a reduction in handling expense.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a view of a representative dual value document in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a view of the document shown in FIG. 1 having one end section detached therefrom;

FIG. 3 is a view of the document shown in FIG. 1 having the other end section detached therefrom;

FIG. 4 is a view of a multiple value document in accordance with another embodiment of the invention; and

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a representative book or carrier for containing documents of the type shown in FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to FIG. 1 of the drawings, there is shown a representative dual value document 10 in the form of a multi-section redemption coupon. The document is of a type which is distributed to a consumer by a manufacturer of a product and returned by the consumer to a merchant for value upon the purchase of that product at that merchant. The document 10 is formed from a sheet of flexible material, such as paper, light cardboard or plastic. The document 10 is preferably rectangular in shape, although it is contemplated that it might

be circular, triangular, diamond shaped, cross shaped or any other suitable configuration.

The dual value document 10 is provided with lines of division 12 and 14 extending parallel to each other and to the shorter edges of the rectangular document and dividing the document into preferably three equal sections — a middle section 16 and two end sections 18 and 20 separated from the middle section 16 by the respective lines of division 12 and 14. The lines of division 12 and 14 comprise either single or double rows of slits, perforations, score lines, tear strips, printed lines or the like.

Preferably, each of the sections 16, 18 and 20 defined by the lines of divisions 12 and 14 is of substantially equal size and is rectangular in shape. A pair of contiguous sections taken together define alternatively a document or coupon 24 or 26, as shown in FIGS. 2 and 3. As shown in FIG. 2, the end section 20 is detachable along the line of division 14 from the remainder of the document, indicated by the reference numeral 24 and consisting of the middle section 16 and the other end section 18. With the section 20 detached, the document or coupon 24 has a given value. As shown in FIG. 3, the end section 18 is detachable along the line of division 12 leaving the middle section 16 and other end section 20 connected. With the end section 18 detached, the document or coupon 26, which consists of the middle section 16 and the end section 20, has a different value than the coupon 24 shown in FIG. 2. However, the coupons 24 and 26 are of equal size and are each rectangular in shape.

It is important and desirable that at least one of the sections contain printed matter thereon to explain to the consumer the manner in which the document 10 is to be used. This printed matter typically is in the form of a notice 22 describing the method of validating the document selected by the consumer for redemption. Additionally, there may be printed matter (not shown) on the rear of the document for informing the merchant as to how he is to handle the document to recover the value given the consumer upon redemption. Machine translatable characters, e.g. magnetic indicia, can be printed on the documents to permit electronic processing of redeemed documents.

It is also preferable that the detachable end sections 18 and 20 each contain printed matter thereon, which cooperate with the printed matter on the middle section 16 to indicate the respective values of the dual documents 24 and 26. In the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 through 3 of the drawings, coupon 24 (FIG. 2) contains printed matter 30 on both the middle section 16 and the end section 18 and extending across the line of division 12. This printed matter 30 indicates that the coupon 24 may be redeemed, for example, for 50 trading stamps. The coupon 26 (FIG. 3) contains printed matter 32 on both the middle section 16 and the end section 20 and extending across the line of division 14. This printed matter 32 indicates that the coupon 26 may be redeemed, for example, for ten cents off the price of purchased merchandise.

In FIG. 2, the printed matter 32 is separated into two areas 32a and 32b, one area 32a being located on the middle section 16 which comprises the coupon 24 and the other area 32b being located on the end section 20 which has been detached and is to be discarded. Thus, the consumer cannot become confused as only the printed matter 30 indicating that the coupon is to be

redeemed, in the example, for 50 trading stamps is entirely located on the coupon 24. Similarly, in FIG. 3, the printed matter 30 is separated into two areas 30a and 30b, area 30a being present on the end section 18 which has been detached and area 30b being present on the coupon 26 which is to be redeemed by the consumer. Accordingly, fraud is obviated as the consumer can prepare for redemption only one complete coupon or document 24 or 26 having an entire printed area 30 or 32 from one dual value document 10.

It is desirable that the two-digit numerals contained within the printed matter areas 30 and 32 be separated by the lines of division 12 and 14 so that, for example, if 50 trading stamps are to be obtained for the coupon 24, the numeral 1 of the area 32 will appear on one side of the line of division 14 and the numeral 0 will appear on the other side of that line of division. When the end section 20 is detached and discarded, only the numeral 1 remains on the coupon 24 to be redeemed for trading stamps. Similarly, the numeral 5 of the area 30 is located on one side of the line of division 12 and the numeral 0 is located on the other side of that line of division. When the end section 18 is detached and discarded, only the numeral 0 remains on the coupon 26 to be redeemed for a cash discount. Separation of the numerals of the printed matter areas 30 and 32 prevents consumer confusion and also serves to prevent fraud in redemption.

In use of the dual value document 10 of the present invention, a manufacturer initially issues or causes the documents to be issued, such as by mailing the documents in the form of coupon collections directly to consumers, advertising in magazines and newspapers or inserting coupons into packages of products to be sold. By employing any of these methods, the manufacturer makes an offer directly to consumers and bypasses merchants and other retailers. The consumer after examining the document decides on the option desired, typically either trading stamps or a cash discount. To validate the document, the consumer detaches therefrom either the end section 18 or 20 which is not desired along the respective line of division 12 or 14, leaving the opposite end section connected to the middle section 16. At the time the product is purchased at a retail outlet, the consumer presents the selected portion of the document and receives value in the form of either cash or trading stamps.

If the consumer chooses the option of redeeming the coupon 26, for example, for a cash discount, the retailer deducts the denominated amount from the price of the merchandise. The retailer counts and sorts the coupons or has this function performed by a clearing house. The manufacturer is then advised as to the count and pays or causes payment to be forwarded to the retailer. In addition to the face value of the redeemed documents or coupons, the manufacturer frequently also allows the retailer a credit of, for example, three cents per coupon for handling.

If the consumer decides to redeem the coupon 24 for trading stamps, the retailer distributes the stamps in the designated amount to the consumer from his own supply. Of course, the retailer will give to the consumer those stamps which he normally employs or which he chooses to distribute. The consumer therefore chooses the type of stamps desired by choosing the retailer from which he purchases the product. The documents or coupons which have been redeemed for trading stamps

are sent to the manufacturer either directly by the retailer or through a clearing house. The manufacturer then pays or causes payment to be forwarded to the stamp issuer which in turn either replaces the retailer's inventory of stamps or credits the retailer's account receivable. Again the retailer is typically also paid a premium for his handling expense.

The dual value document 10 of the invention is intended to be a replacement for and an improvement on the standard redemption coupon. It is believed that many consumers will find such documents to be of greater value than presently used redemption coupons. A consumer might well feel that obtaining 50 trading stamps in exchange for a coupon would be of greater value to him than obtaining a ten cent discount from the price of purchased merchandise. Typically, redeeming only twenty documents or coupons each having a value of about fifty trading stamps will result in accumulating enough stamps to fill an entire book of stamps. Accordingly, the consumer can more readily fill books of trading stamps of the type which he or she may be saving and thus obtain a gift premium in a shorter period of time. Of course, the documents may provide for a greater or lesser value and for a different relationship between the number of trading stamps and the cash discount to be given.

The dual value document 10 also has significant advantages to retail establishments, such as supermarkets. It gives the retailer a competitive opportunity over competitors which do not carry stamps. Moreover, it represents a reinforcement and enlargement of the trading stamp promotional tool. It does not cost the retailer a significant amount to redeem the documents and distribute the stamps, and it improves his customer relations in that they can accumulate trading stamps at a greater rate than heretofore.

To the manufacturer, the use of a dual value document 10 in accordance with the invention has the advantage of reinforcing the savings habit of those consumers who have demonstrated their willingness to collect trading stamps. It will further create a new market of trading stamp savers among those who previously did not collect such stamps because of the assumption that it would take far too long based on the amount of purchases that they normally make in stores giving away such stamps to accumulate a great enough number of stamps to receive gift premiums of any significant value. It is believed that the use of such documents will increase the response rate of coupon redemption. The potential response rate is believed to be as high as about 25 percent, as opposed to up to about 8 percent for standard cents-off coupons. Furthermore, the vehicle employed herein supports and is compatible with one of the basic promotional devices used by a majority of large retail operations.

Turning now to FIG. 4 of the drawings, there is shown a modified embodiment of the present dual value document. The multiple value document 40 shown in FIG. 4 is substantially similar to the dual value document 10 but comprises in addition to a middle section 42 and connected but detachable end sections 44 and 46, an additional middle section 48 disposed between the middle section 42 and one of the detachable end sections 46. The document 40 is divided into the sections by lines of division 50, 52 and 54, the sections preferably being substantially equal in size and rectangular in shape. Although the document is preferably

rectangular, it should be apparent that the document can also be triangular, circular, diamond shaped or cross shaped.

Printed matter 56 is located on the middle section 42 and areas of printed matter 58 and 60 are located respectively on both the middle section 42 and end section 44 and extending across the line of division 50 and on both the end section 46 and the additional middle section 48 and extending across the line of division 54. As in the embodiment of FIG. 1, the printed matter 58 typically indicates that a document or coupon 64 consisting of the sections 42 and 44 is redeemable for 50 trading stamps and the printed matter 60 indicates that a document or coupon 66 consisting of the sections 46 and 48 is redeemable for a ten cent discount. Additionally, printed matter 62 is located on both the middle section 42 and additional middle section 48. This printed matter 62 indicates, for example, that a document or coupon 66 consisting of the sections 42 and 48 is redeemable for a small gift. Thus, the document 40 may be divided into three redeemable coupons or documents 64, 66 and 68.

As above stated, the multiple value document 40 is used by detaching the documents or coupons 64, 66 or 68 corresponding to the option selected by the consumer. In this case, where the consumer is given a choice of three options, the options include a cash discount, trading stamps, or a small gift, e.g. two razor blades where a razor is the product being sold. It is also contemplated that the consumer can produce three contiguous sections of the multiple value document 40 and receive two options instead of one, if desired by the coupon issuer. For example, the consumer might present sections 42, 44 and 48 and receive both 50 trading stamps and a small gift. Moreover, the consumer could produce the entire document 40 and receive the trading stamps and the cash discount.

In FIG. 5 of the drawings, there is shown a document carrier generally designated by the reference numeral 80. The document carrier comprises a pair of cover sheets 82 and 84 containing therebetween a plurality of dual value documents 86 similar to the dual value document 10 shown in FIG. 1 or the multiple value document 40 shown in FIG. 4. However, an additional stub 80 is connected to one end section 90 of each document 86 and is separated therefrom by a line of weakness 92 to permit detaching the document 86 from the carrier 80. Preferably, the cover sheets 82 and 84 are fabricated from an integral, relatively elongated blank which is folded transversely of its long dimension into equal segments to form the covers concurrently. The documents 86 can also be formed from integral, relatively elongated blanks similarly to the covers and folded transversely to their long dimensions into documents of equal size. Staples or similar fasteners 94 are employed to secure a plurality of the dual value documents 86 to the covers 82 and 84. A document carrier 80 of the type shown is advantageous to the coupon issuer as it enables the coupons to be distributed at a lower cost and with less handling and results in a greater rate of redemption. The coupons may be more easily transported when contained in a carrier, e.g. in a woman's purse, and more easily reviewed and redeemed by the consumer.

It should be noted that regardless of the form in which the dual or multiple value documents are distributed, it is preferable that the coupons selected from the

documents are of a standard size recommended by the Grocery Manufacturers of America, e.g. 2- 5/8 inches in width by 6-1/8 inches in length, in order that the coupons are more easily handled by merchants and more readily redeemed by consumers.

Thus, the present invention provides a dual value document which may be readily used in the form of redeemable coupons of the type commonly distributed by merchants and manufacturers. The documents of the present invention give the consumer a choice of receiving any of several options directly from the merchant. Typically, the consumer may receive trading stamps, a cash discount on the merchandise purchased, or a small gift. On the other hand, the document is arranged such that the fraudulent obtaining of more than one option is prevented.

We claim:

1. A dual value document, comprising a sheet of flexible material having a middle section and first and second connected and detachable end sections defined by lines of division, the middle section and the first end section having cooperating printed matter thereon spanning the line of division therebetween to indicate that a document consisting of the middle section and the first end section has one value, the middle section and the second end section having cooperating printed

matter thereon spanning the line of division therebetween to indicate that a document consisting of the middle section and the second end section has a different value, the cooperating printed matter on the middle section and the first end section being rendered undecipherable should the first end section be detached, and the cooperating printed matter on the middle section and the second end section being rendered undecipherable should the second end section be detached.

2. A multiple value document in accordance with claim 1, further comprising an additional middle section of the sheet of flexible material, the additional middle section being connected to the first-mentioned middle section and one of the detachable end sections and being defined by lines of division, the additional middle section and the first-mentioned middle section having cooperating printed matter thereon spanning the line of division therebetween to indicate that a document consisting of said additional middle section and the first-mentioned middle section has a different value than either of the above-mentioned documents, the cooperating printed matter on the additional middle section and the first-mentioned middle section being rendered undecipherable should those sections be detached.

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