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# Multigeneric Intertextuality in Advertising: Discourse Strategy from a Cognitive Perspective

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## Abstract

Advert recipients have wide-ranging experiences of perceiving other texts. When these experiences become the basis of perceiving advert messages, we speak of intertextuality operating as a discourse strategy. This paper studies multigeneric intertextuality in printed advertising, i.e. delivering an advert message through a register or text-form typical of other genres, for which discourse analysis and the genre studies perspective are adapted. From the cognitive linguistics perspective, it focuses on how the experience becomes the basis of building an emotive and attitudinal layer of meaning via exploring the recipient's mental space. The article studies cues signalling intertextual processing, specifically cues of socially determined discourses such as cooking recipes, warning signs, computer-mediated communication, scientific discussions or travel brochures, which may function as mental space inducing cues in the collected adverts. It also deals with how intertextuality in adverts can be scaled and how the level of explicitness relates to promoting various categories of products.

## Keywords

Advertising discourse, discourse strategy, genre, intertextuality, textual cue, mental space, low-involvement products.

## 1. Multigeneric intertextuality

Intertextuality as a textual and cultural term has often been the focus of interdisciplinary studies. As pointed out by Allen (2011, p.169), the literary theory perspective has been applied in connection with most cultural phenomena, such as novels, films, photographs and music (e.g. Trušník, 2013). The discourse perspective has often merged with the literary perspective (e.g. Vinklárek, 2013), linguistic perspective (e.g., Fairclough, 1992) and anthropological and sociological perspectives (e.g. Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000; Briggs and Bauman, 1992). This paper offers an interdisciplinary view of intertextuality as a discourse phenomenon looked upon from the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Its aim is to point out how a specific type of intertextuality enables a recipient's processing of the verbal message via

forming and exploring appropriate mental space.

Delivering an advertising message through a register or a text-form which is typical of other genres is a fairly frequent advertising practice. Such an occurrence can generally be labelled as intertextuality. Specifically, the phenomenon of other genres being represented in the genre of advertising is referred to as multigeneric intertextuality (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Gadavani, 2002; Nemčoková, 2012). This type of intertextuality can be illustrated by adverts containing recipes, instant messaging communication or warnings etc, such as a Campbell soup advert that promotes the product via what appears to be a typical warning sign printed on containers for hot beverages: "*Campbell's Microwavable Soup Bowls Caution: Contents are extremely delicious. When consumed at work, they may cause incoherent speech, mind-wandering*

and file-dropping. Inattention to urgent emails and sudden loss of interest in spread sheets may occur" (P2). The cues signalling the intertextual processing are expressions that conventionally appear in the situations that are intended to be introduced. They can be identified as cues of socially determined discourses. Verdonk (2002, p.62) implies that intertextuality of this kind appears when "particular expressions recur in different texts and so provide a link between them". Intertextuality is frequently used in advertising to produce a range of effects on the audience. According to Gadavani (2002, p.54), intertextuality as a discourse strategy can be used to produce the most effective discourse within a given context. Even though various advert recipients may perceive the adverts for various reasons, this paper works under the assumption that the prototypical advert recipient is a potential consumer of the promoted product. With such an audience in mind, intertextuality may be interpreted as being able to create the desired image of the advertised product and make the product memorable. Primarily, upon spotting the intertextual reference, the reader is given "the pleasurable sense of satisfaction at having spotted the allusion" (Verdonk, 2002, p.5). The recipient feels that they have fulfilled an intellectual task or a riddle by identifying the textual cues leading to another discourse. This elicits self-appreciation and enhances memorability. As stated by Robinson (2003, p.52), "things we enjoy (or even despise) always stick better in our memories than things about which we are indifferent. The strongest memories in our lives are always the ones that had the most powerful emotional impact on us". The effect of complimenting the recipient for their capacity is complemented by intertextuality replacing the advertising context for another, unrelated one. As a genre, advertising is frequently despised and consciously avoided. By introducing an intertextual reference the product is placed in a new and uncontroversial context. The recipient is "carried away" and perceives the advertising message in the language of a recipe, a text message, a scientific discussion or a travel brochure. Moreover, the product may be recalled with a repeated encounter of the same context, i.e. when reading a real cooking recipe, the recipient may recall the previously encountered advert.

Furthermore, intertextual references enable the recipients to become message co-

creators. Urbanová understands texts demonstrating intertextuality to be products of simultaneous text-creation and interpretation (2008, p.35). The recipients become co-authors of the intertextual advert messages when they recognise the evoked text and their own past experience of that text is reflected in their advert message-processing. This processing can be understood as filling recipients' mental space (c.f. Fauconnier, 1994; Lakoff, 2006; Geeraerts and Cyuckens, 2007; Nemčoková, 2011; Nemčoková, 2012). Intertextuality enhances the creating of an emotive response to an advert by allowing recipients to fill the mental space with their own associations and experiences of the previously encountered texts. The texts, when well chosen, associate positive feelings and allow the mental space to be filled with pleasant memories, recollections and the creative development of possibilities of the original texts.

## 2. Mixed genres in printed adverts

The corpus of printed consumer product adverts originally collected to survey the use of discourse strategies consists of over 400 samples. It contains all the product adverts collected from several issues of popular national American magazines, specifically *Vanity Fair*, *People*, *Star*, *OK* and *US Weekly*. By careful examination of the corpus, thirty-two ads were identified as containing textual cues reflecting the employment of multigeneric intertextuality. Over one half of all the adverts in this category (17 in total) promote packaged food, sodas and alcohol beverages; the other half equally represent cosmetics, cars, household utensils, watches, clothes and technology gadgets. This distribution points to the preference of genre-switching intertextuality as a discourse strategy promoting mostly inexpensive packaged products bought mostly in convenience stores, which Kim (2007, p.96) labels low-involvement products.

Discourse typical for cooking recipes, reviews, quizzes, questionnaires, internet sites, computer-mediated communication, tributes, travel brochures, yearbooks, warnings, scientific discussions, romantic stories, TV shows, reports, calendars etc. functions as mental-space-inducing cues in the collected adverts.

## 2.1 Adverts as recipes

The most frequently used transplanted text type into printed advertisement is cooking recipes, found in four adverts. It seems to be a logical outcome of the high figure of food and drinks adverts in this category (which is over 50 per cent). Foods and drinks are low-involvement products and so their utility value tends to be promoted through their unique selling proposition. By placing a recipe into an advert, the product is placed in a context that highlights its practicality. The recipient's attention is shifted to a situation where the advertised product is usable and at the same time ready to be explored and played with in a creative way (if the recipient is an avid cook) or easy to use (if the recipient needs instructions to stick with). This applies to food products that need processing as in example (1) promoting a semi-processed sauce. However, ready-to-eat food, e.g. party snacks in example (2), may be advertised through the recipe genre as well; the function of such use is different, however.

(1) *The meatball hero's hero. 100% Natural Prego Italian Sauce Traditional. A unique combination of sweet tomato taste and savory Italian seasonings is inside every jar of Prego Italian sauce. So you don't need to add a thing to liven up any Italian dish. It's in there. Prego Easy Meatball Parm Hero Prep: 5 min. Makes: 4 sandwiches. 2 cups Prego Traditional Italian Sauce, 16 (1 oz. each) frozen cooked meatballs, 4 long hard rolls, split, 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, Grated Parmesan cheese. 1. Heat sauce and meatballs in 3 qt. saucepan over medium-high heat to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Cook for 20 min or until meatballs are heated through, stirring occasionally. 2. Serve meatballs and sauce in rolls. Sprinkle with mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses. Dig in and enjoy. For more easy delicious recipes, just go to Prego.com. (Prego, P2)*

(2) *Recipe for a perfect viewing party. Follow this helpful recipe to make your next movie night with friends a hit. Gather your fellow movie-lovers and enjoy one of your favorite films with the classic big cheese snack, Cheez-It. Ingredients: One crowd-pleasing movie. A bunch of bowls (for the perfect group snack). One TV remote control. Cheez-It Baked Snack Crackers. The Big Cheeze. (Cheez-It, US3)*

In (1), the recipe is meant verbatim and highlights the practical value of the product. It strongly appeals to reason, as recipes as a genre give instructions, the following of which leads to a practical outcome – a meal. On the other hand, positively coloured words and suggestive expressions (“*hero*”, “*you don't need to add*”, “*unique combination*”, “*dig in and enjoy*”, “*delicious*”) add emotive value without adding content, which signals the recipe is not to be taken as its primary purpose would suggest; it is part of a genre exploring the use of emotions. The strong adherence to the features of the genre of recipes (with the list of ingredients, preparation time, yield and instructions) strongly appeals to reason. The appeal to emotions is milder, which is typical for advertising strategy for low-involvement products (c.f. Cook, 2001).

In (2) the instructions are not to be taken literally; the creative usage of the recipe genre strengthens the emotive value by figuratively adding playful, humorous and light-hearted tones to the message. (2) is an ad for a snack food – possibly the representative of what we are advised not to eat due to its high fat and sodium content and low (if any) nutritional benefits. Humour and reference to socially valued entertainment time with friends veil the existence of negative nutritional facts. The positive message is interposed through the unexpected genre of a recipe, complete with instructions, ingredients and measures. It may be suggested that an unexpected genre placement in this case catches the attention and functions as a mental space cue. It is also a buffer for the possibly negative features of snack food.

## 2.2 Website and computer-mediated communication in adverts

Almost all the adverts in the corpus contain a website reference in their signature lines. Nevertheless, including a *www* reference for the pragmatic purpose of further product search is not understood as employing intertextuality. The *imitation* of such reference employed to bring in the feeling of up-to-datedness, trendiness and modernity, on the other hand, is considered intertextual. Direct reference to product websites is a part of advertising discourse; the imitation of it implies the creation of mental space and processing the references in it; it changes contexts and introduces another level of meaning.

Three ads in the corpus imitate the form of a URL (two of which are listed below as examples). All three adverts imitate the URL only in their headlines, so the rest of the message is not intertextual. Two more adverts imitate the language and form of computer-mediated communication throughout the whole advert message (one of them is given as an example). They promote a car, hygienic products, cosmetics, a nutrition bar and a camera respectively.

(3) *Sony. Like.no.other Take a picture. Leave an impression. Seductively thin profile. Blazingly fast start-up and remarkably engineered with a dazzling 2.5" LCD screen, the T7 is another great innovation from Sony Cyber-shot cameras, digital from day one. From the moment you pull out the Sony Cyber-shot T7 digital camera, you'll be turning more than a few heads. Cyber-shot.* (Sony, VF9)

(4) *Ifyoucant-pronounceit-don't-eat-it.com SoyJoy. Eat like you mean it. Say no to preservatives. And believe in naturally nutritious nutrition bars. This is SOYJOY. All-new, all-natural. Whole soy. Dried fruit. And a home-baked taste. Look for us in the nutrition-bar aisle of your favorite store. Real is Revolutionary. SoyJoy.com* (SoyJoy, US2)

(5) *Grab life by the horns. Dodge. Avenge Internal Computer System. STEERING: listen up ppl, we're ina tight corner ESP: Electronic Stability Program at ur service! BRAKES: he hit the brakes hard ESP: im detecting slippage BRAKES: hydrolic break booster, work ur magic BOOSTER: NP im on it bro ABS: u r awesome. busy breaking L front and R rear ENGINE: lowering torque and throttle BTW ESP: yaw and lateral acceleration sensors activated. man im good :-)* TRACTION CONTROL: LOL giving rear wheels more traction ESP: gr8, cuz we r almost out of this corner ENGINE: yesssss! back on full throttle BRAKES: this is 2 easy IMHO ESP: cya l&r SEND SEE THE ALL-NEW AVENGER AT DODGE.COM/AVENGER (Dodge, P1)

Short words with no spaces separated only by punctuation marks or occasionally with no separation at all are forms that usually appear in URL coding. Capitalisation is missing in such text forms as well. A typical

attribute of websites is their dot-com (.com) domain suffix which denotes a generic unrestricted commercial website. Headlines composed in such a way (e.g. "*like.no.other*" and "*Ifyoucant-pronounceit-don't-eat-it.com*") function as textual cues; they signal the change of the context of the advert from traditional print advertising to an illusionary up-to-date internet world. This is a precursor to creating the appropriate mental space.

Example (3) resembles usage of a recipe for advertising food products: introducing a modern technology gadget by adding to it a feeling of high-tech trendiness seems very natural as much as promoting food through their usage in cooking. (4), however, adds up-to-datedness to a product that is considered trendy and fashionable in another sphere of life – a healthy lifestyle. The website name in (4) serves not only as a fashionable insertion but also as a pleasing, humour-invoking cue. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle seems to be boring at times: this advert stands out of the group as a humorous one in a trendy and creative way.

Example (5) imitates internet chat in both its formal layout and in employing typical chat language. In this advert, the communicating identities are parts of the car operating systems. They conduct a multi-sided talk the tone of which is informal, light-hearted and funny, as would possibly occur in a real-life internet chat. However, the topic of the chat is serious: the car (and consequently the driver) is having safety problems and the car parts communicate in order to ensure his/her safety. Formally, the chat dialogue turns are introduced by capitalised identity names (nicks) followed by a colon. On the lexical level, typical chat lingo functions as cues. This includes non-standard word forms of grammar use ("*u r*" – you are, "*ina*" – in a, "*im*" – I'm), words spelled without vowels ("*ppl*" – people), shortened and spelled in a conventionally informal way ("*ur*" – your, "*hydrolic*" – hydraulic, "*bro*" – brother, "*cuz*" – because, "*cya*" – see you), words with formal changes that add emotional marking ("*yesssss*" – yes), chat abbreviations or mixed numeric word-forms ("*gr8*" – great, "*2 easy*" – too easy, "*l&r*" – later). Informal expressions ("*work ur magic*", "*im on it bro*", "*man im good*") strengthen the funny easy-going tone. This lends the promoted product the appealing image of a professional who can deal with serious things in an easy way. At the same time, the introduced context of the internet chat, which is the basis of meaning creation in the mental space, is very trendy,

fashionable and appeals to a like-minded, young crowd.

### 2.3 Scientific style in adverts

Scientific papers rank among genres that are characterised as formal. When these are intertextually implanted in adverts, they evoke a serious and responsible attitude, trust, assurance and an atmosphere of critical thinking. The product gains characteristics of being well-thought-of, tested and approved, and thus of high quality. The following advert illustrates the point.

(6) *There's more to our sunscreen than the SPF number. Our sunscreen has Helioplex. Q. What is SPF? A. SPF (sun protection factor) is a rating for the level of protection against sun-burning UVB rays. But there's more to sunscreen than an SPF number. Our sunscreens with Helioplex have the added benefit of performance stabilizing technology for longer lasting UVA protection. It's unbeatable. Q. What is Helioplex? A. It's a new patented technology so advanced it helps sunscreens deliver exceptional UVA/UVB protection. How does it work? It's all in the balance. Sunscreens can lose the ability to block UVA rays over time. Neutrogena sunscreens, with Helioplex stabilizing technology, provide superior UVA protection that lasts. So broad-spectrum protection is balanced. Q. What's the difference between UVB and UVA? A. UVB rays can cause sunburn (think B = Burning rays) and that can lead to skin cancer. UVA rays (think A = Aging) penetrate deepest into the skin. They accelerate the signs of aging. After long-term exposure, skin may appear dry, lines and leathery. Q. Why Neutrogena? A. Because Neutrogena sun protection products, engineered with Helioplex technology, give you the exceptional broad-spectrum protection you and your skin deserve. It's the next generation in sun protection. Neutrogena. # 1 Dermatologist Recommended Suncare. (Neutrogena, P6)*

The advert is constructed in the form of a dialogue which enhances the involvement and participation of the recipient in co-authoring the advert's meaning. The questions in the dialogue are asked by an interested consumer, potentially much like the recipient her/himself. The questions

mostly address the meaning of the terms ("What is SPF?", "What is Helioplex?", "What's the difference between UVB and UVA?"). The last question ("Why Neutrogena?") is similarly short and simple so at first sight it seems to fall into the same category of questions. However, it only looks similar because it addresses reasons, not meanings, and instead of scientific terminology it asks about the product (the name of which sounds quite scientific). In that sense it can be considered suggestive (and thus perfectly fitting the advert genre). The questions gradually build up a logical reasoning structure, at the end of which the recipient learns reasons to obtain the product.

The answers to the questions are given by a specialist who sounds erudite, informative and patient. He/she explains the abbreviations (e.g. SPF as "sun protecting factor") and even though he/she uses scientific terminology and sentence structures typical for the scientific style, the answers are accommodated towards the general public by using neutral or informal expressions (e.g. "there's more to sunscreen", "It's unbeatable"). The advert text is much longer than the average advert text found in the corpus, which conforms to the style of scientific papers. (This seems to be also true for other adverts that give the impression of a scientific document). By evoking a style that is known for long texts, the recipient may be patient and willing to read much more than if another, non-scientific genre were used. More information can be placed in such an advert with little risk of losing the recipient's attention too early. The scientific genre evokes a serious and reliable image of the product. At the same time it situates the recipients into a setting where they are willing to keep their attention focused longer. Mental space is possibly filled with the desired constructs of a lecture, scientific discussion, learning and self-development.

### 2.4 Other genres in adverts

A substantial number of genres are intertextually explored in the corpus adverts. Each one appears to be represented by very few occurrences, however. This points to the creative exploration of a multitude of possibilities given by the socially conventionalised usage of language. The following examples are all unique instances of implanted non-advertising genres within the corpus.

(7) *CinnaMon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun. Try New Honey Bunches of Oats with Cinnamon Clusters. Real cinnamon baked into every crunchy cluster. One taste and you'll want it every day. Honey Bunches of Oats. There's a whole bunch to love.* (Honey Bunches, US3)

(8) *Location: anywhere & everywhere Post Office: www.splenda.com Weather: daily SPLENDA sprinkles Official Flower: sweet pea Destination: Splendaville. You won't find it on any map. But you will find it in iced tea. It's sweet and delicious but without all the calories to spoil the joy. SPLENDA No Calorie Sweetener tastes like sugar because it's made from sugar. Be Dazzled.* (Splenda, P6)

(9) *Campbell's Microwavable Soup Bowls. Caution: Contents are extremely delicious. When consumed at work, they may cause incoherent speech, mind-wandering and file-dropping. Inattention to urgent emails and sudden loss of interest in spread sheets may occur.* (Campbell, P2)

The adverts feature textual cues found in a calendar (7), an information travel brochure (8) and a warning sign (9). By exploring other genres, all these adverts seem to be creatively light-hearted and pleasant to read, playing humorous and harmless tricks on the recipients, nudging them to spot the resemblance and appreciate its witty placement in the advert context. This is the first positive-image attribute. At the same time, all the examples enable the filling of the mental space with the recipient's associations linked to personal experience or well-known situations. The calendar reference in (7) evokes regularity and the potential of everyday consumption of the promoted cereals. (8) explores the stereotypical descriptions of American destinations by listing several location characteristics and thus makes the product set in a home environment. (9) uses the strategy of surprising or shocking the recipient. It is based on a parody; what is implied breaks the rules of advertising practice, as warnings are not a usual promoting discourse tool. Once the recipients see "*Caution*", they probably expect to read a warning that can be found in similar contexts (e.g. "*Caution - the contents are extremely hot*"). The unexpected outcome in the form of a

warning against an "*extremely delicious*" product makes the advert boldly humorous. Lagerwerf (2007, p.1703) in a similar sense claims: "The effort people may have to come up with for a correct interpretation will result in their appreciating the trope, and hence the advertisement itself."

### 3. Multigeneric intertextuality scale

The presented adverts exhibit intertextuality cues in varying degrees, in a scale from the manifest to relatively indistinctive implementations. The criteria that strengthen the presence of various genres in the interpretation of the advert seem to depend on the attributes of the genres themselves. Recipients may recognise an intertextual reference easier if it relates to a genre that is highly specific. The specificity may relate to its form, content and frequency of occurrence in a speech community.

When the form of the text belonging to a genre is unique and rule-governed, spotting such text may be unrestrained. A recipe, for example, has a form which most frequently consists of a list of ingredients followed by instructions, processing details, the yield and variation options. Such a genre may be identified with relative ease, as in the following advert:

(10) *Campbell's make in minutes. Prep: 10 min. Bake: 35 min. Tuna Noodle Casserole. 2 cans (10 3/4 oz. each) Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup, 1 cup milk, 2 cups cooked peas, 2 cans (about 12 oz. each) tuna, drained, 4 cups hot, cooked medium egg noodles, 2 tbsp. dry bread crumbs, 2 tsp. butter, melted. 1. Stir soup, milk, peas, tuna and noodles in 3-qt. casserole. 2. Bake at 400degF. for 30 min. or until hot. Stir. 3. Mix bread crumbs with butter and sprinkle on top. Bake for 5 min. more. Makes 8 servings. Better For You Possibilities: Whole Grain: Use whole wheat noodles instead of egg noodles. Substitution Options: Use Campbell's 98% Fat Free or 25% Less Sodium instead of regular soup. M'm! M'm! Good! Casserole Possibilities.* (Campbell, P2).

The genre of a friendly conversation, on the other hand, does not display any such strict formal rules. It may take a while for the recipient to see the advert as an informal, friendly chat, and eventually, without deeper analysis, it may never be seen as

implementing intertextuality due to such lax form. The following advert illustrates the point.

(11) 'My color is so blah' 'I hate this faded look' 'I just did my color two weeks ago, and already it's dull.' Refresh it! Fanci-Full temporary hair rinse breathes new life into faded color. Use it as often as you like, and wash it off when you're ready. No ammonia. No peroxide. No mixing, No damage. Easy on, easy off. No commitment. Fanci-Full is available in a wide assortment of colors that refresh your color instantly. (Fanci-Full, S1)

Vocabulary and a typical sentence structure are strong text-type recognition cues. Certain words and phrases are unmistakably genre-specific. The more restricted their occurrence in a unique genre, the higher the probability of the genre being identified as an implanted text type. The Campbell's advert in example (9) is hard to overlook as a warning since "caution", "Contents are extremely ..." and "...may occur" are typical lexical elements of a warning sign, usually found on food containers. Some genres are not so strictly vocabulary-specific so their implementation may not be obvious to that degree. An informal talk, as in example (11), is, on the other hand, devoid of highly specific, unmistakably genre-constituent lexis.

When genre-marked forms and peculiar lexical items combine with a high frequency of occurrence of certain text types, the interpretation of an advert as being intertextually coded is very probable. The less genre-marked form and less genre-

restricted vocabulary an advert features, the lower probability there is that it will be processed as multigeneric intertextuality.

### Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to uncover how switching genres in adverts enables the formation and exploration of the mental space of the recipients, which is one of the possible ways of explaining the interpretation processes. Multigeneric intertextuality in adverts operates on several inter-related levels. It fills the mental space of the recipient by cues signalling the shift of the advertising context to a different one which the recipients may personally relate to and recognise from their previous experience or shared cultural knowledge. Simultaneously, such directed genre-switching helps create a positive emotional response among the recipients. These processes strengthen the memorability of the product and the possibility of its later recall. Moreover, the paper also confirms what Kuppens (2009, p.119) sees as another beneficial attribute of intertextuality in advertising practice: "The creativity, humor, and reflexivity that are typical for intertextual advertisements, constitute an exciting way of appealing to advertising-literate viewers who 'see through' classic advertising strategies. If viewers recognize the intertextual references, the advertisement may function as 'a source of ego enhancement'". That points to the possibility of intertextuality being a bridging feature between the recipient and the product, and also a psychological self-confidence building tool.

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### **Corpus material**

#### *Vanity Fair*

corpus mark and date of issue:

- VF1 October 2007
- VF2 September 2007
- VF3 June 2007
- VF4 April 2007
- VF5 March 2007
- VF6 February 2007
- VF7 November 2006
- VF8 September 2006
- VF9 November 2005
- VF10 October 2005

#### *People*

corpus mark and date of issue:

- P1 Style May 2007
- P2 March 5, 2007
- P3 December 25, 2006
- P4 November 13, 2006
- P5 July 17, 2006
- P6 July 10, 2006

#### *US Weekly*

corpus mark and date of issue:

- US1 December 24, 2007
- US2 April 23, 2007
- US3 October 16, 2006

#### *Life&Style*

corpus mark and date of issue:



LS1 May 7, 2007  
LS2 April 30, 2007  
LS3 August 28, 2006

*Star*

corpus mark and date of issue:  
S1 November 28, 2005

*OK*

corpus mark and date of issue:  
OK1 March 12, 2007

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