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Copycat companies have duped many consumers into buying the wrong brands due to the extreme visual similarities between the copycat brands and the leading brands. Indeed many consumers have confessed to having bought copycat brands while thinking they have bought the leading brands. Leading brands have tried to use unique features to help their products stand out. However, copycat companies somehow still find ways on how to maneuver their ways such that their products still resemble the lead products significantly. It has a negative impact on the lead brand companies.

Despite the major research studies on copycat branding, no research has yet come up with objective measures that can be used to determine visual similarities. There are also no quantitative metrics to assess the risk of the similarities between leading and copycat brands. It has led the inability of academic application of a copycat research in managerial decision making and litigation involving the copycat branding. The major hypothesis of this journal is that copycat visual features contribute significantly to consumer confusion. The research uses both method and metric to quantify the resultant consumer confusion about leading brands and copycat brands using the visual similarity of the two different.

Three methods were used in this research. One of the methods included the use of a competing accumulator. The Research was based upon the theoretical foundation that consumers make a perpetual decision when they are making a decision on buying a product or not. This decision is made using alternative visual inputs. Competing accumulator models are based on the assumptions that each of these alternatives is placed in a neutral

threshold, and they have to compete to reach the threshold. This accumulator used buildup evidence on each alternative brands that have been collected from consumers when they are making decisions on whether to buy the copycat and predicts the accuracy with which the time that the consumer discovered that the product was a copycat. The second aspect of the methodology included a triangle test which had the objective of assessing both accuracy and speed with which consumers could distinguish between the leading and copycat brand.

Fifteen different products were used as data in the research. These products were mouthwash, raisin bran, adhesive bandages, hand sanitizers, allergy medicine, canned noodles, ketchup, chewy bars, corn flakes, dishwashing liquids, crackers, honey, mayonnaise, sports drinks, and tissues. For each product a leading and a market copycat brand were selected. The research also included an experimental copycat brand which was similar for both leading and market copycat brand. The participants included 99 undergraduate students who were paid to participate in the experiment. The participant's task involved being presented with three similar images for 300 milliseconds. Within that time, they were supposed to decide as accurately and as fast as possible which of the three products was the different one. The trials consisted of 30 trials for each participant. The visual similarity was computed through the use of color and texture. It is these similarities that were used in the competing accumulator.

The results indicated that the participants relied on global colors and textures to make decisions on whether to acquire a product or not. However, the results showed that participants relied on textures in making their

decisions compared to colors. The experiment's results showed that the accuracy for determining the market copycats were lower than that for determining experimental copycats. This difference was attributable to the fact that some participants were familiar with both the leading and the market brands, unlike the experimental copycat brands.

This research relates to the topic of decision making. In current times, there are various alternatives available to consumers in regard to a specific product. The consumer can hardly recognize a copycat brand as there are so many options available. Research shows that where there was a copycat brand consumers took more time in identifying the leading brand.

With these statistics in mind, appropriate decisions have to be made by manufacturers in regard to the branding of their products. In creating a product, each manufacturer must have its own unique brand. Branding is an important aspect of marketing decisions made by a company. It makes a product either attractive or not attractive for any consumer to want to buy. From a psychological point of view branding is important as it enables consumers to recognize and find the brands that they are familiar with and it guides the consumers on what product they should acquire. Dr. Jane Leighton & Dr. Geoff Bird, Marketers and manufacturers, therefore, have a vital role in decision making in regard to branding.

One of the important aspects in understanding consumers' decision to take up a product relies on the attention of the consumer. Attention is a vital aspect. If the product does not capture the consumer's attention, it is highly unlikely that the consumer will purchase the product. Also, research shows that the more attention a product gets, the less likely it is going to be bought

by the consumer. It is a very important aspect to the manufacturers and marketers of a certain product. The decision they make in regard to branding must be able to capture the consumer's attention to enable the consumer to want to acquire it.

Another aspect that decision making has is recognition. This is directly related to branding. The consumer in this case had familiarized himself with a particular brand either by having used it before or heard about it in several media. Recognition enables consumers make a very quick decision as more often than not when they go to the shop they have already made up their minds that that is the product that they are going to purchase. Satomura, Wedel, and Pieters show in their research that participants took less time in identifying leading brands as they were more familiar with them. The manufacturers in making a decision as to the branding of the product must be careful to choose a unique brand that will enable consumers distinguish their product from the rest.

The Research by Satomura, Wedel, and Pieters will, therefore, play a very important role in the line of decision making by manufacturers. It stresses the importance of distinct branding and gives the basis on which decisions can be made on whether to sue market copycat companies for infringement of copyrights and trademarks.

Works Cited

Satomura, Takuya, Michel Wedel and Rik Pieters. " Copy Alert: A Method and Metric to Detect Visual Copycat Brands." Journal of Marketing Research (2014): 1-13.