

Types of Intellectual Property: Trade marks

Trade marks are used for brand recognition. This can apply to goods or services, and allows distinctions to be made between different companies.

A trade mark can be used as a marketing tool so that customers can recognise the product of a particular company. *For example, McDonalds uses two golden arches.*

A trade mark is any sign that can identify the goods and services of one company from those of another. This might include words, logos, pictures or a combination of these.

Large sums of money are invested in devising trade marks to suit a particular product or service and to appeal to a particular market. Large sums are also spent on promoting trade marks or brands through advertising. Unauthorised use of a trade mark, known as infringement, means the rightful owner may lose business and the trust of their consumers. As a result, companies are extremely careful to ensure that their brands are protected and invest heavily in protecting a trade mark against unauthorised use.

Students setting up their own business may devise a name for their product or service that might even be registered as a trade mark. You can check for existing trade marks using the extensive database on the Intellectual Property Office website (www.ipo.gov.uk/tm)

Source: Intellectual Property Office

This information sheet is one of a series compiled to help students and graduates that are interested in enterprise and innovation. The series is available from our website below.

Need more help?

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