



Press Release

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Hard pressed shoppers being “duped” by similar packaging, new research reveals

A new study commissioned by the British Brands Group reveals compelling evidence that shoppers are being tricked into buying products whose packaging closely resembles that of leading brands.

According to the largest ever survey of its kind, a staggering one in three shoppers interviewed admitted to having accidentally bought the wrong product because its packaging was similar to that of a well known brand.

There was also irrefutable evidence that similar packaging brings to mind the original product, with 65% of consumers agreeing that it can be confusing or misleading when the packaging of two grocery products looks similar.

Similar packaging imitates key elements of the presentation of familiar and trusted brands. The use of these distinctive features clearly misleads consumers into believing that the copy actually is the brand or is connected with the brand manufacturer.

John Noble, Director of the British Brands Group commented: “This research proves what we have known for a long time: products that hijack established brand identities trick consumers into buying them.”

“More than ever in these difficult economic times, shoppers need both value for money and the reassurance that comes from buying a brand which they trust will deliver on its promises. Exposing consumers in such a blatant way to misleading alternatives demonstrates a cynical approach.”

The survey also found that shoppers are keen to see clear packaging, with 64% of those interviewed believing that similar packaging suggests a connection that did not exist with a leading brand. The top three reasons given by shoppers for why they perceive packaging to be similar were colour (79%), overall design (60%) and shape (54%).

David Haigh, Chief Executive of Brand Finance commented: “Branded products owe as much to their packaging design as to their brand names. Their owners invest vast amounts to differentiate themselves, build consumer goodwill and brand value. Copying unfairly expropriates that goodwill and steals value. It is tantamount to theft.”

The research suggests that packaging products to resemble closely familiar brands may breach new consumer protection regulations. The British Brands Group is calling on the OFT and Trading Standards to investigate and take action where breaches occur. In other European countries, companies are better able to take action themselves.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Study

The research is the largest of its kind (the next largest was undertaken by the then Consumers' Association in 1998). Carried out by BMRB between 8th January and 1st February 2009, it comprised two parts: face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of 1,199 UK grocery shoppers; and on-line research amongst a sample of between 920 and 946 grocery shoppers.

Ten branded products were researched in the on-line study. Each branded product was compared with a product deemed to have similar packaging to the brand (the test product), and separately, with a different product in the same product category, but in more distinctive packaging (the control). There was a variety of "control" products, from products perceived to be very distinctive, to those that were just slightly more distinctive than the similar (test) product.

2. Examples of packaging researched



Two of the ten products researched, deemed by shoppers to be the most similar in look.

3. Examples of products in similar packaging to familiar brands

A selection of products in packaging very similar to familiar brands, sourced from store visits in 2008, can be found at www.britishbrandsgroup.org.uk/pages/similar-packaging.

4. Consumer protection legislation

The new Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations, introduced in May 2008, considers the following to be, in all circumstances, unfair:

Promoting a product similar to a product made by a particular manufacturer in such a manner as deliberately to mislead the consumer into believing that the product is made by that same manufacturer when it is not. (Schedule 1, Clause 13)

5. British Brands Group

The British Brands Group was founded in 1994 as a non-profit-making membership organisation to speak on behalf of brand manufacturers and to deepen understanding of how brands benefit consumers, society and the economy through the provision of choice, value for money and innovation. For more information please visit the website: www.britishbrandsgroup.org.uk.

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