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# **GUIDELINES FOR TRADEMARK EXAMINATION**

**International Trademark Association**

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## **DISCLAIMER**

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# **GUIDELINES FOR TRADEMARK EXAMINATION**

Examination Guidelines Subcommittee  
Trademark Office Practices Committee  
Revised 2025

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# INTA GUIDELINES FOR TRADEMARK EXAMINATION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide general guidelines on a full range of issues related to the examination of applications for trademark registration. These Guidelines are not intended to be limited to the trademark law of any specific territory; rather, they follow generalized conceptual lines. These Guidelines are meant to reflect various international systems in an effort to harmonize trademark law. INTA supports all efforts at harmonizing trademark rules and practices and encourages Trademark Offices to follow such projects closely (*See*: work of TM5 as an example). These Guidelines are intended to serve as a reference document for trademark examination and registration, particularly for Trademark Offices.

### 1.2 Referenced Legislation, Agreements and Treaties

These Guidelines have been prepared taking into consideration the concepts and best practices of the legislation of relevant jurisdictions as well as appropriate international treaties and agreements (*See*: Footnote 1 below for referenced laws and treaties<sup>1</sup>). INTA encourages the organization of examination proceedings to accord with the referenced legislation, agreements, and treaties, and in jurisdictions where applicable, relevant requirements of the Madrid Agreement and/or Protocol.

## 2. PRE-APPLICATION

### 2.1 Third Party Searching

Trademark Offices should provide access to current records of existing marks so applicants and the general public may search the records to identify existing marks that may pose a conflict to a proposed mark. These records should be made available online or using generally acceptable

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<sup>1</sup> Referenced laws and treaties:

- The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, 1994, as amended on 23 January 2017 (TRIPs)
- The Model Law for Developing Countries on Marks, Trade Names and Acts of Unfair Competition of 1967 (produced by the World Intellectual Property Organization)
- The Trademark Law Treaty of 1994
- The Singapore Treaty on the Law of Trademarks, adopted by WIPO in March 2006
- Directive (EU) 2015/2436 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 December 2015 to approximate the laws of the Member States relating to trademarks
- The United States Trademark Act of 1946 (the Lanham Act)
- The Madrid Agreement concerning the International Registration of Marks, as amended on 28 September 1979 (Madrid Agreement)
- The Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks, as amended on 12 November 2007 (Madrid Protocol)
- Paris Union and WIPO Joint Recommendation Concerning Provisions of Well Known Marks, adopted in 1999
- Canadian Trade-Marks Act, 1985, as amended on 28 June 2021

technologies and should be organized to allow for ease in discovering potential conflicting marks including at least:

- Trademark as claimed by the applicant and/or registrant;
- Classes covered in the application or registration as well as the goods and/or services protected;
- Full name of the applicant and/or registrant;
- Application filing date and date of registration; and
- Status of the application or registration.

## **2.2 Classification Systems**

For providing harmonization across jurisdictions, generally accepted classification systems, such as the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks (“Nice Classification”) should be used to classify goods and services, and the International Classification of the Figurative Elements of Marks (Vienna Classification), should be used to classify marks containing figurative elements (device (design) marks).

Trademark Offices may wish to use and make available to their users the WIPO’s Goods and Services Manager database, TMClass or other classification tools for guidance on classification principles and precedents as well as for harmonization purposes.

## **3. APPLICATION**

### **3.1 Communication with the Trademark Office**

Trademark Offices are encouraged to be flexible in allowing communications by applicants, their representatives, and the general public by various readily available means, including telephone, e-mail or acceptable new technologies.

### **3.2 Filing**

Trademark Offices should allow for the receipt of applications and prosecution documents by hand, by post, by e-filing, and by other means of electronic transmission, and/or other means using generally acceptable technologies. Paperless and electronic transmission is strongly encouraged. Payment of fees should be allowed by cash, check, credit card, EFT, deposit account and/or other admissible means. The Trademark Office should issue confirmation of receipt of the application and fees, regardless of the means of transmission and payment.

### **3.3 Response Time**

Trademark Offices should examine the application and issue a notification of objections to registration, if any, within a reasonable period at the appropriate stage in the procedure according to the particular law of each country. The applicant should be provided with a time period of a

minimum of ninety (90) days within which to respond to any objections issued by the Trademark Office. One reasonable extension of this term is recommended.

#### **4. MULTI-NATIONAL APPLICATIONS**

Existing mechanisms that allow for the submission of a single application resulting in registrations that provide protection in multiple jurisdictions are encouraged.

(*See*: Footnote 2 below for a complete list of existing mechanisms<sup>2</sup>).

##### **4.1 National Examination**

INTA supports the Madrid Protocol and harmonization efforts under multilateral treaties and can provide assistance to countries in their consideration of adherence to them.

#### **5. SCOPE OF EXAMINATION**

##### **5.1 Determined by Trademark Office**

In all cases, the scope of examination, as well as the criteria by reference to which the examination is conducted, will be determined by the substantive law under which a Trademark Office operates. Each Trademark Office should publish its jurisdiction's statutory laws and regulations, guidelines, practice notes, and requirements, and make them freely available to the public<sup>3</sup>.

##### **5.2 INTA Recommendation on Examination**

INTA supports full pre-registration examination. Examination of the application should be made on absolute grounds and, if consistent with local trademark law, on relative grounds. Concepts such as descriptiveness, lack of distinctive character, generic trademarks, and bad faith should be considered during the absolute grounds examination, which is more fully discussed in Section 7. of these Guidelines. Concepts such as likelihood of confusion, similarity of marks, and similarity of goods and/or services should be considered during the relative grounds examination, which is more fully discussed in Section 8. of these Guidelines.

With a view toward timely and efficient examination, rules should be implemented to assure efficient, consistent positions and to avoid multiple rejections on the same bases as previously overcome and to avoid withdrawals of approvals issued. Whenever possible, all objections to an application should be raised in a single office action.

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<sup>2</sup> Such mechanisms include:

- The Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks
- The "Organisation de la Propriété Intellectuelle" (OAPI)
- The Banjul Protocol on Marks
- The European Union Trade Mark (EUTM)
- Benelux Trademark

<sup>3</sup> The INTA Country Guides (<https://www.inta.org/practice-guide/country-guides/>) can be accessed by members of INTA to review examination policies worldwide.

INTA supports the availability of low cost, accessible opposition procedures, and suggests that a period of sixty (60) days is allowed to file oppositions after publication, especially when substantive arguments are required to be included in the initial opposition documentation. INTA recommends providing for at least one reasonable extension of the opposition deadline if the initial period is less than sixty (60) days.

## **6. FORMALITIES EXAMINATION**

Trademark Offices should examine applications to confirm that they contain the essential minimum data specified by the local trademark law. These data include:

- Applicant Details;
- Representation of the Mark; and
- Specification of Goods and/or Services, including classification.

In some cases, examination may be required of Paris Convention or other priority claims; however, applications made according to the Madrid Agreement or Madrid Protocol that claim priority should receive priority “without requiring compliance with the formalities prescribed” in Article 4D of the Paris Convention<sup>4</sup>.

If the applicable trademark law requires a “use” or “intent-to-use” basis for filing, examination of this formality is required.

There are also certain additional formalities requirements for special types of marks. For a discussion of requirements for Collective and Certification marks, see Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

### **6.1 Representation of the Mark**

It is recommended that Trademark Offices require that a mark be represented in a format that is clear, precise, and easily understandable, using generally accepted technologies. If the application also includes a description of the mark, then the representation and the description should be consistent.

The Trademark Office should provide a mechanism for the trademark owner to update the representation of the mark to reflect current technology on renewal of the registration. Any description of the mark can be amended if the amendment does not materially alter the character of the mark as originally filed, and the description remains consistent with the representation.

It is recommended that Trademark Offices require a simple identification of the type of mark covered by an application. Examples include word marks, three-dimensional marks, color marks, sound marks and moving-image marks. The identification of the type of mark may be amended after filing, for example, to conform with the types of marks available in a particular jurisdiction.

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<sup>4</sup> Madrid Agreement, Madrid Protocol Article 4(2).

The types of marks described below are among those that may be deemed registrable as of the date of these Guidelines, and the suggested means of their representation is provided. This list is not exhaustive. As technological advances and marketing customs develop, additional types of marks should be considered for registration.

Non-traditional marks may fall within more than one type of mark. Applications for trademarks that consist of a combination of two or more trademark types must meet the minimum requirements for each trademark type. For example, an application for a trademark that is the combination of a position mark and a color mark.

### **6.1.1 Word Marks**

A word mark, also known as a standard character mark, is a typewritten mark with elements including letters (either lower or upper case), words (either in lower- or upper-case letters), numerals or standard typographic characters.

A word mark should be represented by submitting a reproduction of the mark in standard script and layout, without any graphic feature or color. Standard script is the standard typeface chosen by a Trademark Office for presentation of word marks that do not include any stylization or design, and standard layout is the presentation of a word mark written across a single line.

#### Examples:

**US 1914028** (Classes 9, 16, 41, 42)

**INTA**

**CA 539838** (Classes 9, 16, 41, 42)

**INTERNATIONAL TRADEMARK ASSOCIATION**

### **6.1.2 Device (Design) Marks**

A device (design) mark, also known as a figurative mark, is a mark consisting of figurative or graphical elements, literal elements presented in non-standard characters, or a combination of literal, figurative and/or graphical elements.

It is recommended that Trademark Offices accept and publish a graphical representation of a device (design) mark, in color if applicable, filed using generally accepted technologies. The representation should show accurately all elements of the mark.

If color(s) are claimed as part of a device (design) mark, this should be stated in the application and the representation should show accurately the color(s) claimed.

If a Trademark Office does not accept and publish applications in color, then a literal description of the color(s) claimed as part of the mark should be filed and the applicant may also provide a reference to accepted color definitions standards or identification systems.

Examples:

*Mark with Literal Element:*

US 1937357 (Class 42)



*Mark without Literal Element:*

US 98707499 (Classes 21, 25, 35, 41, 43)



Mark Description: The mark consists of an image that resembles a stained glass window.

### **6.1.3 Three-Dimensional Marks**

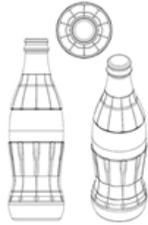
A three-dimensional mark is a mark consisting of, or extending to, a three-dimensional shape, including containers, modes of packaging, packaging configurations, or the product itself or its appearance as well as shapes that contain other elements, such as word elements, figurative elements, or labels.

The representation of a three-dimensional mark should include sufficient views to capture all of the content claimed as part of the mark and for the shape to be clearly identified. If possible, any non-distinctive portion of an otherwise distinctive three-dimensional mark should not be included in the official representation of the mark. If a non-distinctive portion must be included for reference, such as for placement or orientation, the scope of the trademark and the non-distinctive portion should be clearly indicated. For example, the claimed portion of the mark can be represented in solid lines, while any unclaimed portion can be represented in broken lines.

Examples:

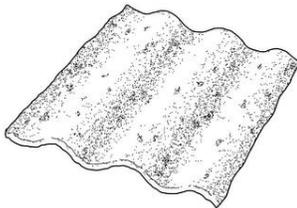
Product Container and Product Itself:

**EM 010532653** (Classes 06, 21, 32)



Product Itself:

**US 3293236** (Class 30)



Mark Description: The mark consists of the configuration of a crisp snack.

#### **6.1.4 Color Marks**

A color mark is a trademark consisting exclusively of a single color or a combination of colors. What is protected is the color and, in the case of more than one color, the systematic arrangement and combination of the colors. If the mark contains other elements, such as words or graphical depictions, it is not a color mark but a device (design) mark.

It is recommended that Trademark Offices accept and publish a visual representation of the color or colors without contours. Where there is more than one color, the reproduction must show the systematic arrangement and combination of the colors. In addition, Trademark Offices may accept a literal description of the color or colors, and/or, a reference to accepted color definition standards or identification systems. If the mark is to be limited to a particular shape, position or confinement, this should be specifically identified in the visual representation and the trademark may also be identified as a position mark.

If a Trademark Office does not accept and publish applications in color, then a literal description of the mark should be filed, and the applicant may also provide a reference to accepted color definitions standards or identification systems.

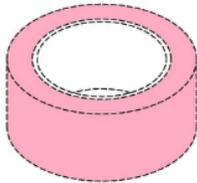
Any literal description of the mark should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible, and intelligible. For example, a description of the mark as “navy blue” is sufficiently precise. For

marks consisting of a combination of colors, the description should also detail the combination of colors and/ or the systematic arrangement of the colors.

Examples:

Single Color Applied to a Product:

**US 3165001** (Class 17)



Mark Description: The mark consists of the color pink as applied to adhesive tape in its entirety. The goods comprise an adhesive sealing tape that is used in building construction to seal cracks, joints, and tears. The dotted outline of the goods is intended to show the position of the mark on a roll of the goods and is not part of the mark.

**AU 1913979** (Class 17)



Mark Description: The mark consists of the colour PINK as applied to the goods as shown in the representation attached to the application form.

Single Color Applied to Services:

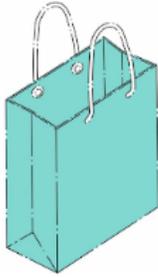
**US 5568034** (Class 39)



Mark Description: The mark consists of the color green (PMS 553) as applied to vehicles used in connection with the distribution services.

Single Color Applied to Packaging:

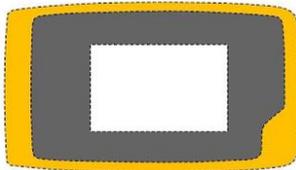
**US 2416795** (Classes 03, 08, 14, 16, 18, 21, 35)



Mark Description: The mark consists of a shade of blue often referred to as robin's-egg blue which is used on bags. The matter shown in broken lines represents bags of various sizes and serves to show positioning of the mark. No claim is made to the shape of the bags.

Combination of Colors:

**US 7424687** (Class 9)



Mark Description: The mark consists of the color yellow applied to outside rectangle and the color gray applied to the next inner rectangle of the goods. The matter in dotted lines shows the position of the mark and is not part of the mark.

### 6.1.5 Sound Marks

A sound mark is a trademark consisting exclusively of a sound or combination of sounds.

Wherever possible, representation of a sound mark should consist of a digital sound file and the Trademark Office should accept these files and have the necessary technology for storing and listening to the file as well as allowing any interested party to have free access to both the representation of the mark and the digital sound file.

The following are representation forms for sound marks that may be included along with a digital sound file:

- Musical notation and/or description of the sound in words;
- The instrument(s) on which the music is played;
- Graphic (electronic) measurement of the volume and character of the sound; and

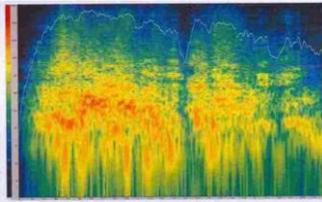
- A combination of any of the above, provided they are consistent.

Where the Trademark Office cannot accept digital sound files, because of technology limitations, the Trademark Office should accept and should require that the representation consist of either the musical notation or a written description of the sound in words. Where the sound may be only partially represented by visual notation, a clarifying description in words of the sound in the application should be included. Any description should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible, and intelligible. The instrument(s) on which the music is played should also be included if it forms part of the mark (the title of the piece of music is not precise enough).

The applicant should be required to submit the digital sound file, description, musical notation or other alternative form of representation with the application.

Examples:

**EM 05170113** (Classes 09, 38, 41, 42)



Digital Sound File: *See:* Registration record on European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) website.

Mark Description: The sound mark is a sound of a lion roar having a duration of approximately 2.5 seconds. It is composed of two successive roars (0 to around 1.4s and 1.4 to 2.6), the second one having a slightly lower amplitude. The sound is non-harmonic, has fast (>15Hz) non-periodic amplitude envelope modulation (perception of sound roughness) and has dominant frequency content in the low and low-medium range (approximate -6dB range: 40 to 400 Hz for both roars with a peak at 170 Hz for the first one and a peak at 130 Hz for the second one). The perceived dominant frequency range (related to the spectral centroid) of the first roar increases until around 0.35s and decreases afterwards. In the second roar, it increases until around 1.7s, decreases until around 2.2s, increases again until around 2.3s and decreases afterwards.

**HK 305665915** (Class 9)



Digital Sound File: *See:* Registration record on Hong Kong Intellectual Property Department website.

Mark Description: The trademark is a sound mark. The mark consists of a five note audio progression consisting of a three chord build in C, F, G and click for the first note, followed by the four notes C, F, C and G.

### **6.1.6 Scent Marks**

A scent mark is a trademark consisting exclusively of an olfactory characteristic or specific aroma.

Representation of a scent mark should consist of a detailed written description of the mark in commonly understood language and avoiding scientific, technical or chemical terms, sufficient to convey the identity, nature and scope of the scent clearly and unambiguously and permit its differentiation from other scents, without the need for supporting samples.

Example:

**US 5467089** (Class 28)

Mark Description: The mark is a scent of a sweet, slightly musky, vanilla fragrance, with slight overtones of cherry, combined with the smell of a salted, wheat-based dough.

### **6.1.7 Flavor Marks**

A flavor mark, also known as a taste mark, is a trademark consisting exclusively of the taste applied to an edible or non-edible object or part thereof.

Representation of a flavor mark should consist of a detailed written description of the mark in commonly understood language and avoiding scientific, technical or chemical terms, sufficient to convey the identity of the flavor clearly and unambiguously and permit its differentiation from other flavors, without the need for supporting samples.

Fictional Example:

(Class 16)

Mark Description: The mark consists of a mint flavor on the adhesive band of an envelope.

### **6.1.8 Touch Marks**

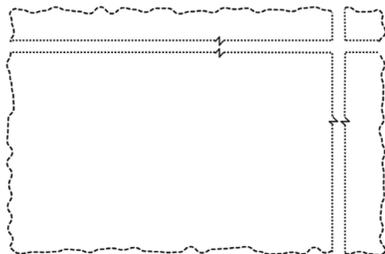
A touch mark, also known as a texture or tactile mark, comprises the feel of the surface of an object or part of an object or its packaging that has a recognizable structure or texture.

Representation of a touch mark should consist of a detailed written description of the mark, sufficient to convey the identity of the tactile quality, texture or touch characteristic clearly and unambiguously and permit its differentiation from other touch characteristics, without the need for supporting samples.

A visual representation of the texture may also be included if that would add clarity to the description.

Example:

**CA 1192334 (Class 14)**



Mark Description: The mark consists of a frayed cardstock texture applied to the edges of a card. The stippled line in the drawing is not a feature of the mark but is a representation of how one type of the frayed texture may appear in visual form on a card. The object shown in stippled lines does not form part of the trademark but is included merely to show the texture. The mark is a sensory, touch mark. The dotted lines are not a feature of the mark but are included merely to show that the card having the frayed texture can have different dimensions.

### **6.1.9 Moving Image Marks**

A moving image mark, also known as a motion mark, is a trademark comprising, in whole or in part, a moving image. This can include a sign depicting a movement or series of moments, or a change in the position of the elements of the mark, a change of color, or the replacement of one image by another.

Wherever possible, representation of a moving image mark should consist of a digital video file of the moving images and the Trademark Office should accept these files and have the necessary technology for storing and viewing the file as well as allowing any interested party to have free access to both the representation of the mark and the digital video file.

For publication purposes and to provide a permanent depiction of the mark in the event of technology changes, the applicant should provide (i) a series of graphic or photographic images that represent the motion ordered sequentially, through which the movement should be perceptible and (ii) a written description of the images, the movement, and the fraction of time which elapses between each frame.

If a Trademark Office cannot accept a digital video file, because of technology limitations, then representation of the mark should comprise (i) a series of graphic or photographic images that represent the motion ordered sequentially, through which the movement should be perceptible and (ii) a written description of the images, the movement, and the fraction of time which elapses between each frame.

Any description should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible, and intelligible.

Example:

CA 1799791 (Classes 09, 35, 39, 41, 42, 43, 45)



Digital Video File: *See:* Registration record on Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) website.

Mark Description: This single trade-mark consists of the motions of objects depicted in the colors blue, red, yellow and green, all on a white background. These motions break down into a series of steps. Step 1: The word "Google" appears, with each letter depicted in a different colour—namely, blue, red, yellow, blue, green and red, from left to right respectively. Step 2: Each letter in the word "Google" then shrinks into a solid circle, with the second "g" and the "e" disappearing completely, with the remaining group of four small solid colored circles (being of the same size, and depicted in the colours blue, red, yellow and green, from left to right respectively) contracting to the center of the visual plane. Step 3: The group of four small solid colored circles perform a small half undulation (starting with the leftmost circle and proceeding from left to right), each consecutively moving downwards a distance of approximately one half of its own radius.

### 6.1.10 Gesture Marks

A gesture mark is a type of moving image or motion mark but is sometimes identified separately, comprising bodily movements, which include movement of the hands, face or body to communicate an idea or message.

Wherever possible, representation of a gesture mark should consist of a digital video file of the moving images in digital or physical format and the Trademark Office should accept these files and have the necessary technology for storing and viewing the file as well as allowing any interested party to have free access to both the representation of the mark and the digital video file.

For publication purposes and to provide a permanent depiction of the mark in the event of technology changes, the applicant should also provide (i) a series of graphic or photographic images that represent the motion ordered sequentially, through which the movement should be perceptible and (ii) a written description of the images, the movement, and the fraction of time which elapses between each frame.

If a Trademark Office cannot accept a digital video file, because of technology limitations, then representation of the mark should comprise (i) a series of graphic or photographic images that represent the motion ordered sequentially, through which the movement should be perceptible and (ii) a written description of the images, the movement, and the fraction of time which elapses between each frame.

Any description should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible, and intelligible.

Example:

US 6918552 (Class 44)



Digital Video File: *See:* Registration record on United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) website.

Mark Description: The mark consists of a motion, namely, a beige cupped, palm- down hand moving down towards the cupped, upturned palm of a second beige hand below. The top hand traces the palm of the bottom hand. The tracing motion starts at the base of the palm near the wrist and moves across the palm to its center so that the fingers of both hands are parallel to each other by the end of the motion. The hands are in front of a yellow and green flower field and green and beige hill with a light blue sky behind the hill.

### 6.1.11 Hologram Marks

A hologram mark is comprised of 3D images made by the interference of light beams from a laser or other coherent light source. Although a hologram mark may appear as a single image, it can also appear as different images when viewed from different angles.

Representation of a hologram mark should consist of a digital video file of the moving images and full range of motion of the hologram. It is also recommended that the applicant provides a graphic or photographic reproduction containing the views necessary to identify sufficiently all the

material features of the mark and the holographic effect in its entirety, including all its various images when viewed from different angles. This is for publication purposes and to provide a permanent depiction of the mark in the event of technology changes.

If a Trademark Office cannot accept a digital video file, because of technology limitations, then representation of a hologram mark should comprise a graphic or photographic reproduction containing the views necessary to identify sufficiently all the material features of the mark and the holographic effect in its entirety, including all its various images when viewed from different angles.

Whenever possible the digital video file or other acceptable representation for the mark should be publicly available to allow any interested party free access to both the representation of the mark and the digital video file.

Example:

**EM 017993401** (Class 9)

Digital Video File: *See:* Registration record on European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) website.

#### **6.1.12 Position Marks**

A position mark is a graphic element or color appearing or fixed in a specific position on an object or part of an object.

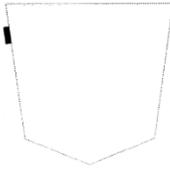
Graphic representation of a position mark should comprise a picture or drawing showing the specific shape, position, and orientation of the mark on the object or part of the object, as well as its size and proportion with respect to the relevant object, and a literal description, which should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible and intelligible. In order to define the scope of protection the mark, the mark should be clearly differentiated in the representation from the unclaimed portion of the object. For example, the claimed portion of the mark can be represented in solid lines, while the unclaimed portion or positioning context can be represented in broken lines.

If color is a feature of a position mark, the color(s) should be depicted in the representation in the location, order and arrangement they appear in the mark. If a Trademark Office does not accept and publish applications in color, then a literal description of the location, order and arrangement of the color(s) should be filed, and the applicant may also provide a reference to accepted color definitions standards or identification systems.

## Examples:

### Position Mark:

**EM2287613** (Class 25)



Mark Description: The trademark consists of a rectangular label, made of textile, sewn into and protruding from the upper part of the left-hand seam of the rear pocket of trousers, shorts or skirts.

### Position Mark Including Color:

**EM 8845539** (Class 25)



Mark Description: The trademark consists of the colour red (Pantone 18.1663TP) applied to the sole of a shoe as shown (the outline of the shoe is therefore not part of the trademark but serves to show the positioning of the trademark).

## **6.1.13 Pattern Marks**

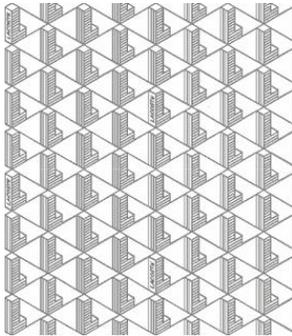
A pattern mark is a series or set of visual elements that are repeated regularly on the surface of an object.

The representation of a pattern should show both the visual elements and the pattern of repetition. The representation may include a description detailing the elements of the pattern as well as how the elements are repeated regularly. The description of the mark must be consistent with the representation.

If color is a feature of a pattern mark, the color(s) should be depicted in the representation in the location, order, arrangement, and repetition they appear in the mark. If a Trademark Office does not accept and publish applications in color, then a literal description of the location, order and arrangement of the color(s) should be filed, and the applicant may also provide a reference to accepted color definitions standards or identification systems.

Example:

**EM 1797479** (Classes 3, 9, 14, 18, 24, 25)



### **6.1.14 Multimedia Marks**

A multimedia mark is a trademark consisting of the combination of image(s) and sound(s).

Wherever possible, representation of a multimedia mark should consist of a digital video file containing both the moving image(s) and sound(s) and the Trademark Office should accept these files and have the necessary technology for storing, viewing and listening to the file as well as allowing any interested party to have free access to the both the representation of the mark and the digital video file.

It is also recommended that the representation includes a written description of any movement, and a series of graphic or photographic images that represent the motion ordered sequentially, through which the movement should be perceptible and a statement with each frame indicating the corresponding fraction of time which should elapse. This is for publication purposes and to provide a permanent depiction of the mark in the event of technology changes.

The following may also be included to represent any sound:

- Musical notation and/or description of the sound in words;
- The instrument(s) on which the music is played;
- Graphic (electronic) measurement of the volume and character of the sound; and
- A combination of any of the above, provided they are consistent.

If a Trademark Office cannot accept a digital video file, because of technology limitations, then representation of the mark should be filed for publication purposes and to provide a permanent depiction of the mark, and should comprise:

- A written description of the movement, series of images that represent the motion, together with associated statements, as described above;

- Either the musical notation or a written description of the sound in words; and
- A description of how the movement and sound work together to create the overall effect.

Where the sound may be only partially represented by visual notation, a clarifying description in words of the sound in the application should be included. The instrument(s) on which the music is played should also be included if it forms part of the mark (the title of the piece of music is not precise enough).

Any description should be clear, precise, self-contained, easily accessible, and intelligible.

The applicant should be required to submit the digital file, description, musical notation or other alternative form of representation with the application.

Example:

**UK 3437892** (Classes 9, 38, 41)

N Logo Animation (sound + motion) (short)

Digital Sound and Video File: *See:* Registration record on United Kingdom Intellectual Property Office (UKIPO) website.

## **6.2 Classification**

INTA recommends adoption of the Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks (1957, as amended), which provides a generally accepted system of classification of goods and services (“Nice Classification”).

### **6.2.1 Description of the Goods or Services**

The goods and/or services in an application should be described clearly, with specificity, so it can be readily discerned the goods/services sought to be protected. The description of goods/services selected and utilized by the applicant should be accepted unless:

- It would be unclear to the public what the goods/services in the registration protects; or
- Goods or services clearly are misclassified according to the applicable governing classification system, in which case a proper reclassification should be permitted and proposed by the Examiner.

### **6.2.2 Use of Class Headings or Prescribed Lists of Goods and Services Discouraged**

While some Trademark Offices accept the “class heading” of the Nice Classification as an acceptable listing of goods and services, INTA discourages the use of class headings or other

general formulas which are not clear and specific as indicated in Section 6.2.1. INTA also discourages the use of prescribed lists of goods and services, because, among other things, such lists may force applicants to include goods and/or services in applications that are unrelated to the applicants' actual goods and/or services and may also prevent the inclusion of relevant goods and/or services in applications. In addition, prescribed lists are discouraged because applicants should be able to use the same description in multiple jurisdictions provided such descriptions are clear and specific.

### **6.2.3 Use of “All Goods/Services in the Class” Discouraged**

The specific goods or services should be clearly identified in an application for registration. INTA discourages use of the phrase “all goods/services in the class” as a permitted definition of goods or services in applications, because, among other things, a class may include a wide range of disparate goods/services many of which may be unrelated to the applicant's actual goods or services. In addition, classifications may change over time, thereby creating ambiguity as to the scope of the protected goods/services if they are merely identified as “all goods/services in the class.”

### **6.2.4 Retailing of Goods**

INTA recommends that Trademark Offices permit registration of the service of retailing goods (identified as “retail services” or “retail store services”) and that such services be classified consistently in class 35 according to the Nice Classification.

### **6.2.5 Family Marks**

A family of marks should be recognized. In order to constitute a family of marks, a group of marks must have a recognizable common characteristic and be used in such a way that the public associates not only the individual marks, but also the common characteristic of the family of marks, with the trademark owner. Simply using a series of similar marks does not in itself establish the existence of a family; there must be a recognition among the purchasing public that the common characteristic is indicative of a common origin of the goods.

A family of marks should be recognized when the pattern of usage of the common element is sufficient to be indicative of the origin of the family.

In order to claim a family of marks, an owner must demonstrate that the mark(s) asserted to comprise the family has been used and advertised in promotional material or used in everyday sales activities in such a manner as to create common exposure and thereafter recognition of common ownership based upon a feature common to each mark.

## **6.3 Other Types of Marks**

### **6.3.1 Collective Marks**

INTA encourages the registration of collective marks which are used or intended to be used by members of a cooperative, an association, or other collective group or organization. The mark must be owned by the collective entity even though the members use it individually. The collective

entity itself may advertise or promote under the mark the goods or services of its members and may use it itself if it is used at the same time by the members in accordance with the regulations governing the use of the collective mark.

An applicant should include the following information in an application to register a collective mark:

- A statement that the application is for a collective mark;
- A statement of the class of persons entitled to use the mark, their relationship to the applicant, and the requirements of membership of the applicant association; and
- If proof of use is required, the applicant should indicate first use dates of the mark and whether the first use was by a member of the applicant.

A Trademark Office may require a statement that the applicant is exercising or will exercise legitimate control over use of the mark by its members and a description of the regulations and standards governing the collective mark's use, which set forth the precise manner in which the applicant intends to control use of the mark by its members.

If proof of use is required, specimens of use of the collective mark should show use of the mark by a member on the member's goods or in the sale or advertising of the member's services. Specimens must be examined to ensure that the mark functions in such a way that it is clear the mark is a symbol of membership in the applicable cooperative, collective, group or organization.

### **6.3.2 Certification Marks**

A certification mark is any word, name, symbol, or device, or any combination thereof owned by one person and used by others in connection with their goods or services to certify one or more characteristics of their goods or services. Such characteristics may include geographic origin, materials, mode of manufacture, quality, accuracy, or that the work or labor on the goods or services was performed by members of a union or other organization. INTA encourages the registration of certification marks.

Because a certification mark serves to certify characteristics rather than identify the individual source of the goods or services, an owner should not be permitted to use a certification mark in the course of trade.

When filing an application to register a certification mark in addition to the filing particulars, the applicant should include statements that support the issuance of a mark to act as symbol of guarantee or certification and not as an indicator of source or origin of goods and services. For example, the U.S. requires the following:

- A statement that the mark will be used by a party other than the applicant and that the applicant does not or will not engage in the marketing or production or any goods/services to which the mark is applied except to advertise or promote recognition of the certification program or of the goods or services that meet the certification standards of the applicant;

- A statement that the mark will certify the qualities or characteristics of the goods/services and not indicate the individual source of the goods/services;
- Documentation setting forth the standards or criteria used by the applicant to control use of the mark and to demonstrate that the applicant is engaged in a certified program;
- A certification statement that identifies the characteristics of the goods/services certified or to be certified; and
- A statement that the applicant does not and will not engage in discriminatory practices which would bar use of the mark by third parties who meet the standards established by the owner.

If proof of use is required, the applicant should provide the dates of the applicant's authorized user's first use of the mark and a statement that the first use was by the applicant's authorized user. Specimens should be examined to ensure that the mark certifies a region or other origin, materials, mode of manufacture, quality, accuracy, or other characteristics of such goods or services or that the work or labor on the goods or services was performed by members of a union or other organization. Specimens must be examined to ensure that the mark functions in such a way that the buyers are likely to recognize the mark as a symbol of guarantee or certification.

#### **6.4 Amendment to Application**

Applicants should be permitted to amend the formalities data, which may be administrative or substantive in nature, and may be in the form of a change, an addition, a deletion, or a correction of small typographical errors. Examples include a change or correction of address, a change of ownership or, a restriction to the specification of goods or services. An amendment may be requested in writing, by telephone, or electronically, such as online or by email.

In some instances, a Declaration or Affidavit to support the written amendment might be required, for example, if registration is being allowed on an amended basis relating to acquired distinctiveness. However, formalities such as notarization and legalization should not be required.

Generally, if an amendment is required to correct an administrative error made by the Trademark Office, it should be allowed at any time and at no extra expense. Examples include amendment to the applicant's address, amendment to the classification or specification of goods, or correction of the filing date.

##### **6.4.1 Amendments to the Mark**

An amendment to the mark in an application should not be allowed at any time if it would materially alter the character of the mark as originally filed. The general test of whether an amendment is a material alteration is whether the mark would have to be re-advertised in order to fairly give notice to the public for purposes of opposition or cancellation, or whether the mark would require an additional search in countries where searches are conducted. Examples of amendments that should be allowed are the correction of small typographical errors or the deletion from the drawing page of informational matter, which is not a component of the mark itself, such as the size, contents, volume, or weight of the product.

## **6.5 Priority Claim**

When an applicant claims priority under the Paris Convention, the rules set by the Convention must be followed.

The priority claim must indicate the date and country of the previous application(s) that form(s) the basis for the priority claim (the “original application(s)”). Priority must be claimed at the time the application is filed. The Trademark Office may request the submission of a certified copy of the priority document and its translation to verify the priority data.

INTA recommends that:

- The applicant is allowed to claim the priority of one or more previous trademark applications (e.g., the priority of several single class applications can be claimed for one multiclass application) if the mark and the representation of the mark is identical in all claimed applications.
- The Trademark Office accepts partial priority claims, namely, a priority for only some of the goods or services covered by the original application(s).
- The applicant is allowed to amend the type of mark if the type of mark as indicated in the original application(s) is not available in the country in which the priority application has been filed.
- The applicant is allowed to amend the representation of the mark submitted in the original application(s) to conform to the representation required by local practice if the local rules or regulations do not permit filing the priority application with the representation of the mark in the original application(s).
- Trademark Offices should make every reasonable effort to uphold the validity of priority claims whenever feasible.

## **7. ABSOLUTE GROUNDS EXAMINATION**

### **7.1 Principles for Assessing Trademarks on Absolute Grounds**

#### **7.1.1 The Mark Must be Examined as a Whole**

The mark should not be dissected and the individual elements which comprise the mark should not be examined separately.

Certain elements of the mark may be disclaimed (where allowed), but it is the overall impression of the mark that should be considered.

The fact that a mark includes a non-distinctive element(s) should not be a bar to registration of the mark if the mark also includes distinctive elements.

## **7.1.2 Examination of Goods or Services**

A mark should not be examined in the abstract but in light of the goods and services applied-for.

## **7.1.3 Relevant Public**

For purposes of examination, the relevant public is the average consumer of the goods or services applied-for, and not the general public.

## **7.2 Distinctiveness**

A mark is distinctive if it is capable of distinguishing the goods or services of the owner from the goods and services of others, even when the source or origin may not be explicitly known. Distinctiveness is needed for registration of any sign as a trademark. Distinctiveness may be inherent or acquired. If the mark is not inherently distinctive, it can be registered upon a showing of acquired distinctiveness (except for generic signs). If a jurisdiction deems through legislation, rules or regulations that a particular type of non-traditional mark is not inherently distinctive, registration should be permitted if the applicant can demonstrate that through use the mark has acquired distinctiveness or secondary meaning.

The material date for assessing the inherent distinctiveness of a mark is the filing date of the application.

In jurisdictions where trademark rights are acquired through registration, the material date for assessing acquired distinctiveness of a mark is the filing date of the application. In jurisdictions where trademark rights are based primarily on use rather than registration, the material date for accessing acquired distinctiveness is the date the applicant makes the assertion of acquired distinctiveness, which can be either when the application is filed or during prosecution of the application.

### **7.2.1 Inherent Distinctiveness**

#### **7.2.1.1 Descriptive Terms**

##### **7.2.1.1.1 Definition**

Descriptive terms are those that describe the kind or nature of an ingredient, quality, characteristic, feature, purpose, function or use of the specified goods or services. The reason for assessing whether a term is descriptive for purposes of registration is that, in the course of trade, anyone should be able to use words which describe a product or service.

##### **7.2.1.1.2 Imagination**

A trademark is not descriptive when applied to the goods and services at issue if it requires imagination to determine an ingredient, quality, characteristic, feature, purpose, function or use of the specified goods or services.

### **7.2.1.1.3 Test**

The test to be applied is: Does the relevant public understand the term to clearly describe an ingredient, quality, characteristic, feature, purpose, function or use of those goods or services?

### **7.2.1.1.4 Word Marks**

#### **7.2.1.1.4.1 Letters, Numerals and Combinations Thereof**

Signs consisting of letters and/or numerals should be registrable, and the above principles should be applied. Irrespective of the total number of letters/numerals in the sign at issue, it will not be registrable if it is descriptive (as defined above), unless there is a showing of acquired distinctiveness. Alphanumeric marks do not have to be pronounceable to be protected.

#### **7.2.1.1.4.2 Laudatory Marks**

Laudatory marks contain an expression about the sole quality of the product or service. Laudatory marks are considered descriptive but may be registrable if there is a showing of acquired distinctiveness.

#### **7.2.1.1.4.3 Names of Colors**

Word marks that consist of the name of a color are registrable unless such color is descriptive of an ingredient, quality, characteristic, feature, purpose, function or use of the goods and services at issue.

#### **7.2.1.1.4.4 Phonetic Equivalents**

A deviant spelling of a descriptive term can under certain circumstances render the term distinctive.

#### **7.2.1.1.4.5 Combination of Words**

A descriptive term can be registrable when combined with an additional element if the overall impression produced by the combination of such elements is distinctive.

#### **7.2.1.1.4.6 Slogans**

As a combination of words, a slogan is registrable, and registration of a mark should not be refused solely on the grounds that it is a slogan. Stricter examination criteria should not be applied to slogans. If a slogan is descriptive, it can be registered with a showing of acquired distinctiveness.

### **7.2.1.1.5 Device (Design) Marks**

The above principles also apply to device (design) marks.

### **7.2.1.2 Generic Terms**

Generic terms consist of the common name of a product or service. Terms which are generic should not be considered a trademark and should never be registered. Such generic terms can include former trademarks (such as ESCALATOR or ELEVATOR) that are in common use as the name of a type of product by multiple sources. Such terms do not function as source identifiers and should be left free for use by all traders. Examiners should not consider marks to be generic if an applicant can prove that the mark covers merely the preferred “brand” of a particular type of product or service, i.e., there is still recognition by relevant public of the mark as a particular source of goods or services. This will allow for preservation of well-known marks, which are in danger of becoming generic. Where an applied-for mark is well known through extensive use, but has never been registered, consideration can be given to policing efforts by the applicant as relevant in an evaluation of whether the mark is presently generic or is still functioning as a trademark to identify source.

### **7.2.1.3 Surnames**

In some territories, a surname is capable of registration as a trademark without condition as it is considered inherently distinctive. Registration of a mark should not be refused solely on the grounds that it consists of a surname. If the mark meets the distinctiveness criteria, it should be allowed registration despite it may also be a surname.

In other territories (e.g., US, Canada...), where a surname is not considered inherently distinctive, a surname is capable of registration as a trademark if it is not considered primarily merely a surname. In these jurisdictions, even if a surname is primarily merely a surname, registration should be allowed upon demonstration of acquired distinctiveness.

If a surname also has another meaning that is equally or more dominant in the applicable language, the mark is not merely a surname and thus a surname objection should not be raised by the Examiner.

#### **7.2.1.3.1 The Surname Alone**

In evaluating whether the primary significance of a term is a surname, rather than a source indicator, reference resources such as telephone directories, census data, Internet searches, etc., should be taken into account.

The same considerations should be applied when the mark under consideration appears with grammatical elements, such as plurals or possessives. Once evidence of surname significance is produced by the Examiner, the applicant should be able to demonstrate that the word has another significance which is more or equally prominent.

### **7.2.1.4 Marks Consisting of, or Containing, Geographical Terms**

In evaluating whether to register a term demonstrably having geographical significance, the Examiner must initially evaluate whether the relevant public in the jurisdiction where protection is sought would connect the term with the geographical origin of the goods/services claimed in the application. In this evaluation, the Examiner should consult appropriate geographical dictionaries,

atlases, and databases related to the goods or services to determine if there is an association between the goods or services and the geographical location.

Registrability of a mark consisting of, or containing, a geographical term should not be assessed in the abstract but in light of the goods and services for which protection is sought. Additionally, registrability should be determined in respect of the jurisdiction where protection is sought.

Example: CORONDA may not be registrable for strawberries in Argentina (because Coronda is a geographical area in Argentina having a reputation for growing higher quality strawberries) but it would be registrable for clothing, and might also be registrable for fruits or even strawberries in other jurisdictions (where the relevant public is not aware of the existence of Coronda, Argentina, and its reputation related to strawberries).

#### **7.2.1.4.1 Geographical Terms that do not Indicate Geographical Origin of Goods or Services and are Arbitrary in Relation to the Claimed Goods/Services.**

Many marks are geographical terms but do not serve as an indication of the geographical origin of the goods/services or relate to the goods/services in any way. In such cases, registration should be allowed without proof of acquired distinctiveness.

Example: NORTH POLE for bananas

Here the mark, although it is widely known as a geographical location does not serve to relate the goods to the location in the mind of the relevant public and therefore does not serve as an indication of geographical origin of the goods. In this type of situation, the mark should be treated as an arbitrary designation, which should be registered without proof of acquired distinctiveness, because any geographical meaning is clearly not related to the goods.

#### **7.2.1.4.2 Geographical Terms that do not Primarily Indicate Geographical Origin but Suggest a Desirable Quality of the Claimed Goods/Services.**

When the geographical term suggests, for example, that the product is stylish or of high quality, but does not serve primarily to indicate the geographical origin of the goods/services for which protection is claimed. In such cases, registration should be allowed without proof of acquired distinctiveness.

Example: HYDE PARK for men's suits

#### **7.2.1.4.3 Geographical Terms that Primarily Describe the Geographical Origin of the Claimed Goods/Services.**

Where a mark serves primarily to indicate geographical origin of the goods/services, and in any case where the term is needed by multiple producers/providers of goods/services in the region to indicate origin due to a reputation in the region for producing/rendering goods/services of a particular character or quality, registration should not be allowed.

Particular care in this regard should be taken where the goods claimed in the application are natural produce or other food products.

Example: FLORIDA for oranges

#### **7.2.1.4.4 Geographical Indications**

Marks consisting of, or containing, geographical indications, or their translation(s) into the official language(s) of the jurisdiction where the application is filed, are not registrable provided that the following conditions are met:

- The geographical indication is protected in the country of origin;
- The geographical indication has not become the usual designation of the product in the country where protection is sought by the time the application is filed; and
- The geographical indication does not conflict with other existing property rights, including trademarks.

Conflicts between geographical indications and trademarks should be resolved by applying the principles of territoriality, exclusivity, and priority. A validly registered prior mark should prevail against a later geographical indication and vice versa.

##### **7.2.1.4.4.1 Additional Protection for Geographical Indications for Wines and Spirits.**

In the case of marks claiming protection for wines and spirits which consist of, or contain, a geographical indication, registration should be refused even if the trademark does not deceive the public as to the origin of the goods.

However, trademarks for wines and spirits should not be refused registration solely on the grounds that they consist of, or contain, a geographical name, except if such geographical name is a geographical indication and the conditions set out in section 7.2.1.4.4. are met.

#### **7.2.2 Modification by Disclaimer**

##### **7.2.2.1 The Purpose of Disclaimer**

In territories where disclaimers are permitted or required, disclaimers may serve as a means of highlighting that no exclusive rights are granted over certain nondistinctive components of a mark that otherwise would be distinctive and registrable as a whole. Examples of such nondistinctive components that may be incorporated in an otherwise distinctive mark include descriptive or generic matter, terms common to the trade, geographical terms, and surnames not having trademark significance.

##### **7.2.2.2 Voluntary and Mandatory Disclaimers**

In territories where disclaimers are permitted, the disclaimer may be voluntary or mandatory, depending on the situation and the territory. Where voluntary disclaimers are permitted, the applicant may disclaim components of the mark, provided the mark, as a whole, is not disclaimed. Where mandatory disclaimers are required, Examiners may ask for the disclaimer of any component of a trademark which is not independently registrable, for example, due to its

descriptiveness or its being generic (see Section 7.2.11 and 7.2.12). If disclaimers are mandatory under the applicable law, the authority should have clear rules on what is required (e.g., what happens in cases of compound words, etc.) and those rules should be applied consistently.

### **7.2.2.3 The Effect of Disclaimers**

The addition of a disclaimer should not, on its own, be sufficient to overcome substantive objections to the registration of the trademark, for example, when (i) the whole of a mark is descriptive or generic; or (ii) the mark is scandalous, deceptive, or confusingly similar to a third-party mark.

Disclaimers should not prejudice or affect the right of a registrant (a) to defend its mark through passing off or other common law remedies or unfair competition or (b) to seek registration, without disclaimer, of a previously disclaimed component.

A disclaimer is a concession that the disclaimed component is not per se inherently distinctive and is one factor to be weighed in determining confusion. However, in an infringement analysis, it is the totality of the components of a mark that must be considered, including any disclaimed components.

### **7.2.2.4 Disclaimer of Descriptive or Generic Terms**

Where permitted or required, disclaimers should be entered in the following or a similar form:

“No claim is made to the exclusive right to use “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” apart from the mark as shown.”

Each individual descriptive or generic component (words or designs) should be separately disclaimed.

## **7.2.3 Assessment of Acquired Distinctiveness**

Distinctiveness is required for registration of any sign as a trademark. If the mark is not inherently distinctive, it can be registered upon a showing of acquired distinctiveness (except for generic signs). A claim of acquired distinctiveness may apply to a portion of a mark. The standards for establishing acquired distinctiveness are the same whether the claim of distinctiveness pertains to the entire mark or to a portion thereof.

A mark is deemed to have acquired distinctiveness (or secondary meaning) when a significant portion of the relevant public perceives the mark as one which distinguishes the goods and services of the applicant from those of others, even when the source or origin may not be explicitly known. Distinctiveness is acquired through substantially exclusive and continuous use of the mark. When that happens, the secondary meaning dominates any descriptive, geographic or surname significance.

If a jurisdiction deems through legislation, rules or regulations that a particular type of non-traditional mark is not inherently distinctive, registration should be permitted if the applicant can demonstrate that through use the mark has acquired distinctiveness or secondary meaning.

Applicants may provide the following information or materials or rely on any of the below factors to establish that the mark has acquired distinctiveness:

- Specimens of the mark as used;
- Sales volume or revenue;
- Market share data;
- Length and scope of use prior to filing date or the date of the claim of acquired distinctiveness, as applicable;
- Geographic area of sales of goods or provision of services;
- Extent of advertising (value and volume);
- Degree of awareness among the relevant public that the mark indicates the applicant as the source (e.g., surveys, third-party media references, awards, statements by customers and retailers, statements from professional or trade associations or others in the industry);
- Relevant case law precedents confirming the acquired distinctiveness of the mark; and
- Any other information, materials or factors which can be relevant to the specific case.

The above is a non-exhaustive list, and Examiners should require only the materials and information and apply only the criteria which are relevant to the specific case. The assessment of acquired distinctiveness should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the type of mark and the designated goods or services.

If the Examiner issues an initial refusal based on a lack of distinctiveness, the Examiner should provide the applicant with reasonable guidance as to the information, materials and/or factors which could be relevant to establishing acquired distinctiveness and overcoming the objection.

### **7.3 Scandalous Marks**

If applicable and not unconstitutional (e.g., under a Free Speech clause), trademarks that are contrary to morality or public order can be excluded from registration. The test for registrability should be whether a substantial body of the population in the applicable territory would understand the mark applied-for as going directly against the basic moral norms of society or contravene the state of law. A refusal on that ground should carefully balance the right of traders to freely employ words and/or images in the signs they wish to register as trademarks against the right of the public not to encounter scandalous, disparaging, or immoral trademarks.

Where the Examiner believes that the mark falls within the above definition, the Examiner should issue an objection and provide reasons for deeming a term immoral or against the public order and the applicant should be permitted to submit arguments and/or supporting evidence to the contrary to overcome the objection.

## **7.4 Deceptive and Misdescriptive Marks**

A “deceptive mark” is one that misdescribes something about the applied-for product or service such that the purchaser is likely to believe the misdescription actually describes the product/service and such misdescription is likely to affect the relevant public’s decision to purchase the product/service.

An important criterion is whether there is any real potential for deception of the public. The test is whether there is a real prospect of a purchaser of the goods/user of the service would be misled as to the characteristics and or nature of the goods/services.

In order to determine whether a trademark is deceptive, it is first necessary to determine whether the term is descriptive of some goods/services. The test may be whether the trademark (or a term within the trademark) conveys an immediate idea of, for example, an ingredient, quality, characteristic, function or feature of the goods or services. If the term immediately conveys such an idea, but the idea is false, although plausible, then the trademark is deceptive and is unregistrable.

It is important to consider whether the idea is plausible. Arbitrary or fanciful trademarks should not be excluded from registrability by the application of this test.

A trademark may be misdescriptive without being deceptive. The trademark will only be considered deceptive if purchasers of the goods/users of the services are likely to be deceived into purchasing the product/services by the misdescription.

A more detailed test may involve establishing:

- Whether the trademark misdescribes the goods; and if so,
- Whether a reasonable prospective purchaser is likely to take literally the misdescription and base his purchase decision on it.

A deceptive mark should not be registered. A misdescriptive mark may be registrable with a showing of acquired distinctiveness (secondary meaning).

## **7.5 Flags, Coats of Arms, Emblems, Official Signs, Abbreviations, and Names of International Intergovernmental Organizations**

There are provisions in the Paris Convention Article 6ter regarding the registrability of flags, coats of arms, emblems, and official signs, etc. as trademarks or elements of trademarks. Art. 6ter Paris Convention is a provision of public interest; it aims at protecting national public signs and signs of IGOs (including their reputation) against their misuse by traders. The member states of the Paris Convention are free to apply these provisions also to service marks.

A trademark may not be registered if it includes, or imitates from a heraldic point of view, armorial bearings, flags, and other State emblems, official signs and hallmarks indicating control and warranty adopted by countries member of the Paris Convention. The provision applies equally to armorial bearings, flags, other emblems, abbreviations, and names of international

intergovernmental organizations. The country, state or IGO whose emblems, official signs and hallmarks are involved may be allowed to register such signs in their own name or permit registration in the name of a licensee.

## **7.6 Functionality**

A mark should be registrable unless it consists entirely of an essential feature of a product or service. A single functional element among a combination of elements, however, should not necessarily defeat an application. Registration of the mark should be refused only if the functional elements dominate the mark.

If the mark is purely functional, the mark should be refused registration. In such instances, functionality cannot be overcome by acquired distinctiveness.

## **7.7 Issues Specific to Non-Traditional Marks**

A sign consisting of a three-dimensional shape, product configuration, mode of packaging, color, combination of colors, sound, scent, taste or flavor, touch or texture, moving image, gesture, hologram, position, pattern, or multimedia combination of any of the foregoing, is considered a non-traditional mark. It is encouraged that Trademark Offices provide clear guidelines regarding the application requirements for registration of non-traditional marks.

INTA acknowledges that, like any other type of mark, non-traditional marks can function as identifiers of source or origin. And, like any other type of mark, non-traditional marks must be distinctive to be registrable. Therefore, no stricter criteria should be applied when assessing the distinctiveness and registrability of non-traditional marks.

A non-traditional mark may be inherently distinctive without the need to submit evidence of distinctiveness at the time of filing or after. A non-traditional mark which is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected (i.e., not typically associated with the applied-for goods or services) is inherently distinctive and registrable for such goods or services without a showing of acquired distinctiveness. However, if a sign is typically associated with the applied-for goods or services it is not inherently distinctive.

If it is determined that a particular mark is not inherently distinctive, registration should be permitted if the applicant can demonstrate that through use the mark has acquired distinctiveness or secondary meaning.

Similarly, if a jurisdiction deems through legislation, rules or regulations that a particular type of non-traditional mark is not inherently distinctive, registration should be permitted if the applicant can demonstrate that through use the mark has acquired distinctiveness or secondary meaning. For example, although color or a combination of colors can be inherently distinctive of goods or services if they are not the “natural” or commonplace color or color combination of the applied-for goods or services, in jurisdictions where a single color or a combination of colors is deemed by law or practice to lack inherent distinctiveness, registration should be permitted upon a showing of acquired distinctiveness.

The guidelines in 7.6 concerning functionality apply to non-traditional marks.

## **7.7.1 Three-Dimensional Marks**

### **7.7.1.1 Distinctiveness**

A three-dimensional mark which is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected with respect to the applied-for goods or services is inherently distinctive and registrable. Even if the shape or configuration is a common shape (e.g., a circle or cone), the mark may be inherently distinctive if the shape or configuration is not the ordinary or usual shape or configuration of such goods or services.

For example, a container featuring the shape of a pyramid for beverages can be considered inherently distinctive because it is not the usual shape of a container for such goods. In contrast, a container consisting of the shape of a cone for ice-cream is unlikely to be inherently distinctive because cone shapes are commonly associated with these goods.

### **7.7.1.2 Functionality**

Three-dimensional signs which consist of the shape of a product are registrable if such shape does not result from the nature of the product or if it is not necessary to obtain a technical result (i.e., if it is not purely functional).

The mere fact that the shape may have some utilitarian purpose should not per se disqualify it from registration as a trademark.

If an objection to registration based on functionality is raised by the Examiner, the applicant should have the opportunity to present evidence in support of registration, including evidence of the existence of multiple alternative suitable shapes in use in the marketplace, which can be produced at comparable cost.

Example: A container consisting of the shape of a bell for toothpaste is inherently distinctive, since such shape is unusual as the packaging for toothpaste and the shape does not have a clear functional purpose.

## **7.7.2 Color Marks**

### **7.7.2.1 Distinctiveness**

A color or combination of colors should be considered inherently distinctive and registrable if it is not the “natural” or commonplace color or color combination of the goods or services applied-for. A color or combination of colors which is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected with respect to the applied-for goods or services is inherently distinctive.

Example: Yellow color is distinctive for vehicle tires because it is not the usual color associated with tires, but it is not distinctive for bananas, since yellow is the natural color of bananas.

Example: The combination of colors red, white and blue is distinctive for financial planning services because it is an arbitrary combination not typically associated to financial

planning services, but it is not distinctive for barber shop services, since the combination of these colors is a commonplace combination in the industry.

### **7.7.2.2 Functionality**

A color is registrable if it is not purely functional with respect to the applied-for products or services.

Example: Bright orange, yellow or lime-green are non-functional for a wide variety of products such as cookies, perfume, but may be deemed functional when used on safety vests, since these colors are typically used for such garments because of their higher visibility. Similarly, the color red is purely functional for traffic stop signs because the color serves to mean “stop” in the context of traffic, but the color red is not functional when used as a source identifier for many other products or services.

### **7.7.3 Sound Marks**

#### **7.7.3.1 Distinctiveness**

A sound mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected. A sound or series of sounds that is not the sound typically made by the applied-for goods or services in their normal operation is inherently distinctive and registrable as a mark.

Example: The sound of an automobile horn used to identify confectionery products is inherently distinctive.

#### **7.7.3.2 Functionality**

A sound is registrable if it is not purely functional with respect to the applied-for goods or services. However, a sound that is typically made by the applied-for goods in the normal course of their operation is functional and not distinctive.

For example, a series of repeated clicks may be registrable for eyewear because such sound is unrelated to any function of the product. In contrast, the sound of an automobile horn would not be inherently distinctive for vehicles.

### **7.7.4 Scent Marks**

#### **7.7.4.1 Distinctiveness**

Although some goods have a natural scent or are expected to have a scent, a scent is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected.

Examples of scents that can be inherently distinctive marks include:

- A scent applied to goods or services that are not typically scented.

- A scent that is not the scent of the applied-for goods or services in their typical or natural state.
- A scent that is unusual for the applied-for goods or services.

#### **7.7.4.2 Functionality**

A scent is registrable if it is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected and not purely functional with respect to the applied-for goods or services. A scent that has no impact on and does not emanate from the performance, efficacy or other key features of the goods or services is not functional.

Some types of goods or services typically have a scent which is intended to enhance their attractiveness (such as cleaning products or toiletries) or for safety purposes (such as scent added to naturally odorless gases). If the scent purely functions as an odor eliminator or enhancer, or if added for safety, it may have a purely functional purpose.

Example: A mark that is the scent of vanilla applied to wallpaper is inherently distinctive and non-functional, since there is no correlation between the mark and the applied-for goods. However, vanilla scent as applied to air fresheners or aromatic oils, is unlikely to be distinctive, and likely considered functional, since a pleasing scent is a commonplace feature of these goods.

### **7.7.5 Flavor Marks**

#### **7.7.5.1 Distinctiveness**

A flavor or taste is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected such as a flavor or taste applied to goods that do not typically have any flavor or are tasteless.

#### **7.7.5.2 Functionality**

A flavor or taste is registrable if it is not purely functional with respect to the applied-for goods or services. A flavor or taste that has no impact on and does not emanate from the performance, efficacy or other key features of the product is not functional.

Example: Mint flavor on the adhesive band of an envelope is neither expected or usual and does not serve any specific purpose (function) with respect to the product, therefore, it is distinctive and non-functional, thus registrable for said goods. The same flavor would not be distinctive and is functional with respect to chewing gum, ice cream and many other food products because it is an expected flavor of such products.

Example: A bitter or sour taste applied to nail polish for discouraging a nail-biting habit is functional and unregistrable.

## **7.7.6 Touch Marks**

### **7.7.6.1 Distinctiveness**

A touch or texture mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected.

### **7.7.6.2 Functionality**

A texture which is not purely functional is registrable. A touch or texture that has no impact on and does not emanate from the performance, efficacy or other key features of the goods or services is not functional.

A texture may be considered functional if it is of primary importance for the use or purpose of the goods or a part thereof.

Example: A mark consisting of a waffle type texture applied to the surface of a file folder or binder may be registrable, because the texture is not commonly found on file folders and does not have a functional purpose for the goods.

## **7.7.7 Moving Image Marks**

### **7.7.7.1 Distinctiveness**

A moving image mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected. A moving image mark consisting of a sequence of actions or movements made by or in connection with a product or services (even if in their normal operation) is inherently distinctive if the applied-for goods or services are unrelated to such sequence of actions or movements.

Example: The animation of a shooting star applied to identify coffee makers is inherently distinctive, since there is no expected correlation between a shooting star and the goods.

### **7.7.7.2 Functionality**

A moving image mark is registrable unless it provides a description of the goods or services, is necessary to obtain a technical result, or conveys instructions about the operation of the applied-for goods or services.

## **7.7.8 Gesture Marks**

### **7.7.8.1 Distinctiveness**

A gesture mark comprising bodily movements which communicate an idea or image is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected.

Example: A mark consisting of a flapping movement of the arms that imitates a bird flapping its wings is distinctive with respect to a wide variety of goods or services, e.g., clothing, food, entertainment or sport activities.

### **7.7.8.2 Functionality**

A gesture mark is not functional if it provides a description of the goods or services, is necessary to obtain a technical result, or conveys instructions about the operation of the applied-for goods or services.

Example: A mark consisting of the movement of an opening and closing hand is not functional with respect to a wide variety of goods or services but may be deemed functional for audio or video devices, as the gesture may be necessary to turn on and off the devices (e.g., touchless technology).

### **7.7.9 Holograms**

#### **7.7.9.1 Distinctiveness**

A hologram is inherently distinctive if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected. A hologram is inherently distinctive and registrable if it is not the ordinary or usual shape, design, or form of ornamentation for the applied-for goods or services.

Example: A hologram that reflects the spectrum of color consisting in a pattern of oblique, parallel lines applied to a label for beverages is distinctive and non-functional for such goods.

#### **7.7.9.2 Functionality**

Even though holograms often serve a functional purpose (e.g., security), a visually distinctive hologram with a functional purpose can be inherently distinctive and registrable.

Example: A hologram that reflects the spectrum of color consisting in a pattern of oblique, parallel lines applied to a label for beverages is distinctive and non-functional such goods.

### **7.7.10 Position Marks**

#### **7.7.10.1 Distinctiveness**

A position mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected. A mark comprised of a graphic element or color appearing or fixed in a specific position the goods is inherently distinctive if the graphic element or color are inherently distinctive and the position on the goods is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary or unexpected for the type of goods or services.

Examples of position marks include:

- A star placed in the center of an audio speaker.
- Red soles on footwear.
- A red tab on the upper right side of a back pocket of trousers.

### **7.7.10.2 Functionality**

A position mark is not functional unless its placement changes the functionality of the goods or services, achieves a technical result, or conveys instructions about the operation of the applied-for goods or services.

### **7.7.11 Pattern Marks**

#### **7.7.11.1 Distinctiveness**

A pattern mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected. Even though consumers are accustomed to seeing patterns on clothing and other fashion items and accessories, textiles and paper goods (for example), a pattern can be registrable for these types of goods if it serves as a source identifier. It is generally easier for a more unique pattern to serve as a source identifier than one that is less unique.

Example: A pattern consisting of a fanciful or arbitrary systematic arrangement of flowers, circles and bars is inherently distinctive even if the applied-for goods are expected to feature some pattern or design.

Example: While plaid patterns are typical in the context of clothing, a plaid pattern may be registrable upon a showing of acquired distinctiveness.

#### **7.7.11.2 Functionality**

A pattern mark is not functional unless the pattern is essential to the operation or use of the applied-for goods or services or conveys instructions about the operation of the applied-for goods or services. Although some goods are expected to feature some kind of pattern for decorative or ornamental purposes, this does not mean that all patterns are purely functional.

Example: A pattern consisting of a fanciful or arbitrary systematic arrangement of flowers, circles and bars applied to a handbag may be ornamental, but because it is not necessary for the operation or use of the handbag, it is not functional.

Example: A grid pattern on graph paper is essential to use of the graph paper and, therefore, functional. Similarly, a pattern on a product that illustrates how to operate the product would be considered functional and not inherently distinctive.

## **7.7.12 Multimedia Marks**

### **7.7.12.1 Distinctiveness**

A multimedia mark is inherently distinctive and registrable if its application to the applied-for goods or services is fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected.

Since multimedia marks consist of a combination of moving images and sound, the criteria for assessing distinctiveness of moving images and sound marks apply to multimedia marks, as per sections 7.7.3 and 7.7.7 above. Therefore, a mark which comprises a sound and a sequence of images or movements is registrable where both the sound and the moving images are fanciful, uncommon, arbitrary, or unexpected with respect to the applied-for goods or services.

Example: A mark combining the motion of a parrot flapping its wings and squawking is distinctive and non-functional with respect to telecommunications services.

### **7.7.12.2 Functionality**

Since multimedia marks consist of a combination of moving images and sound, the criteria for assessing functionality of moving images and sound marks apply to multimedia marks, as per sections 7.7.3 and 7.7.7 above. A multimedia mark is non-functional if the images and sound together do not describe the goods or services or serve a technical, operational, or instructional purpose.

## **8. RELATIVE GROUNDS EXAMINATION**

If during prosecution of an application, a Trademark Office conducts a relative examination for similar prior marks, a determination of likelihood of confusion should not be based solely upon classification of goods/services, but rather the examination of marks should include an analysis of the actual goods/services claimed and the usual conditions or circumstances under which the purchasing public encounters the goods/services, under the respective marks in the marketplace. The same analysis should apply where a country has adopted a likelihood of association provision concerning prior marks.

### **8.1 Search - Compiling a Group of Similar Marks**

If a mark (“claimed mark”) meets registrability requirements following absolute examination, a search should be undertaken to determine the existence of (i) similar marks in respect of goods/services identical or related to those of the application of the claimed mark, or (ii) similar marks that have been granted the famous status (if available) by the Trademark Office. Similarity of marks should be assessed against a search of marks which are (i) currently registered in that jurisdiction, or (ii) the subject of prior applications for registration in that jurisdiction.

If a similar mark is located by the search (“located mark(s)”), the Examiner must, considering all marks in their entirety, evaluate whether the goods or services to be provided under the claimed mark are likely to be confused as authorized by the owner of the located mark(s) or originating from the same source as the goods sold or services provided under the located mark(s). If in the Examiner’s judgment, confusion of the relevant segment of the purchasing public is likely to occur

according to the standards listed below, the located mark(s) should be cited to the applicant in a written statement as a bar to the registration of the claimed mark. The same analysis should apply where a jurisdiction has adopted a likelihood of association provision concerning prior marks.

This search is also recommended when the Trademark Office does not examine relative grounds ex officio. In this case, the search results should be sent to the applicant for informational purposes only to give the applicant the option of withdrawing the application before it is published.

## **8.2 Examination - Factors Involved in Assessing Likelihood of Confusion**

The suggested factors to be included in an evaluation of likelihood of confusion are as follows:

### **8.2.1 Comparison of the Appearance, Sound, Connotation and Commercial Impression of the Marks**

Marks should be compared in their entirety and not dissected into elements unless these elements are likely to cause confusion as to the source of the goods/services associated with the respective marks. For example, similarities in the beginnings of the marks, and differences of only one or two letters between the marks should be taken into account.

The comparison should take into consideration the relative strength of the components of a prior mark in assessing whether registration of a later applied-for mark is likely to cause confusion with the prior mark. The existence of an identical or closely similar distinctive mark should normally bar registration of a subsequently applied-for mark, unless other factors, such as, but not limited to, the nature of the pertinent goods or services, channels of trade, and sophistication of the relevant public, are such that confusion would be unlikely.

If a located mark shows additional matter, including but not limited to a house mark, or matter which is descriptive or suggestive of the goods or services, it should not automatically lead to a finding of non-confusion. The same thoughtful analysis should apply where a jurisdiction has adopted a likelihood of association provision concerning prior marks.

When comparing composite marks composed of both words and devices (designs), either portion may generally be considered to be dominant and/or strong, and there should be no definite rule on this issue. The strength or attractiveness (i.e., comparative size of the device (design) element and meanings) of the word(s) and the device portions of the particular mark(s) in relation to the goods or services must be evaluated. In some cases, a distinctive design may clearly function as the dominant portion of a mark.

### **8.2.2 Fame of the Earlier Mark**

If a register of famous marks is provided by the national legislation, the Examiner should use this register in the examination of relative grounds and cite identical or similar famous marks as bar to the registration of marks that constitute a reproduction, imitation, or translation of a registered famous mark. A refusal should be made irrespective of whether the goods or services of both marks are similar.

If a register of famous marks is not provided by national legislation, the Examiner should refuse to register marks that constitute a reproduction, imitation, or translation of a mark considered well-known in the relevant sector of the public in the relevant territory, whether or not registered, for identical or similar goods or services as those goods or services provided by the owner of the well-known mark. The Examiner should also refuse to register marks that constitute a reproduction, imitation, or translation of a registered mark considered well-known in the relevant sector of the public in the relevant territory for goods or services which are not similar to the registered goods or services of the well-known mark if use of the applied-for mark in relation to those goods or services would indicate a connection between the applied-for goods or services and the owner of the registered well-known trademark and damage the interests of the owner of the well-known mark.

Where national legislation provides for relative review, the Examiner should exercise this authority through *ex officio* action. Irrespective of whether national legislation provides for relative review, an opposer should be able to rely on the fame of opposer's mark as a basis for the opposition of an applied-for mark.

### **8.2.3 Comparison of Goods and Services**

An additional factor in determining whether granting the registration of similar marks is likely to lead to confusion among the relevant public is a comparison of the similarity or dissimilarity and type of goods or services described in a located mark.

However, there should be no *per se* refusal to register because two similar marks are to be used on or in connection with goods/services which are similar or are in the same or related classes. In a fair evaluation of all relevant confusion factors, including usual conditions or circumstances around the goods/services at issue in the marketplace, the factor of similar or related goods/services may not be dispositive.

Additionally, where the goods/services of the claimed mark and located mark(s) are dissimilar, the Examiner should consider in the confusion analysis that in some cases (e.g., soaps and fragrance), goods emanating from a single source are sold commonly to the same purchaser group in a complementary or pre-packaged way.

### **8.2.4 Comparison of Trade Channels**

This factor should measure the likelihood of whether the same purchasers will encounter the goods/services of the claimed mark and the located mark. The relevant determination of the respective trade channels should consider the usual market conditions for the goods/services at issue of the respective marks. The facts of each case should be evaluated concerning confusion. No specific formula of products meeting in the trade, manufacturing, wholesaling, or retailing market should *per se* prohibit concurrent registration of the similar marks, whether or not the goods upon which the marks being used, are related. For example, in very sophisticated markets or for very expensive items where a purchaser is likely to make a careful purchase decision, goods may generally be sold under somewhat similar marks without consumer confusion, as compared with inexpensive goods, which are more likely to be purchased on impulse, without careful examination by the purchaser as to source or origin.

### **8.2.5 Status of the Register and Concurrent Use**

If multiple marks containing a similar word or design element can and have co-existed on the Register and there is evidence they have been used in the marketplace in the name of different proprietors without apparent confusion among the relevant purchasers, this may favor the applicant for registration of an additional such mark. In countries having provisions for opposition proceedings, the owners/users having earlier rights than the applicant will have an opportunity to object to additional registrations.

### **8.2.6 The Variety of Goods on Which a Mark is or is not Used (House Mark, “Family” Mark, Product Mark)**

The owner of a house mark used on a wide variety of products and/or services, or of a family of marks used on goods and/or services sold and advertised together, may be considered as having more latitude to exclude second comers from the registration of similar marks than the owner of an ordinary mark which is not well known. This is especially true if the applied-for mark has not already become well known through use at the time of the application.

### **8.2.7 Any Other Established Fact Probative on the Issue of Whether the Claimed Mark is Likely to be Confused with the Cited Mark(s)**

The classifications or subclassifications, by themselves, of the goods or services of the respective marks should not be considered a fact-probative issue to determine whether a likelihood of confusion exists with the cited marks.

The mark may be examined for any other fact probative issue(s) to determine a likelihood of confusion with cited marks.

It is advisable to delineate the range of external factors that Examiners may (or may not) take into account during examination in the determination of likelihood of confusion. The permissible factors may be those which are intrinsic to the very nature of the goods/services and/or which affect the impact that the similarity of marks and goods and/or services has on the relevant public. Extraneous factors that relate to the purchasing practices and degree of care paid by the relevant public when acquiring goods or services can be considered but should be assessed without reference to the details of particular differentiating steps which the trader might choose to take in relation to the goods and services.

### **8.2.8 Notification of Owner of Earlier Marks**

A notice of the mark to be approved for registration may be made available publicly, or alternatively, forwarded to the owner(s) of earlier marks prior to approval for registration in those jurisdictions where the Trademark Office does not examine relative grounds ex officio. This will provide notice to the owner(s) of earlier marks of a potentially confusing mark, which could be opposed or otherwise objected to according to the provisions within the jurisdiction.

### **8.3 Trademarks with a Reputation**

In jurisdictions that examine marks on relative grounds, the Examiner should decline to register marks that, without due cause, would take unfair advantage of or be detrimental to the distinctive character of the repute of a registered third-party mark that has a reputation in the relevant sector of the public in the relevant territory. The refusal should be made irrespective of whether the goods or services of both marks are similar. Regardless of whether a Trademark Office examines applications on relative grounds, an opposer should be permitted to raise a mark with a reputation as a proper ground for opposition whether or not the mark with a reputation is registered in the jurisdiction.

## **9. OBSERVATIONS PROCEDURE / LETTER OF PROTEST**

### **9.1 General**

It is recommended that Trademark Offices implement an observations or letter of protest process whereby third parties (“Protestors”) may bring to the applicable Trademark Office’s attention facts that would support a refusal of registration on relative and absolute grounds, through certain mechanisms, such as the observation procedure of the EUTM or letter of protest practices of the USPTO (collectively, “Observations”). The Trademark Office should consider whether to put the Observations before the Examiner for consideration. Trademark Offices may set a modest fee for the filing of Observations.

Observations are highly recommended because they create a mechanism for a more thorough and detailed examination procedure by offering the public a tool to bring facts affecting determinations of registrability to the Examiner’s attention. Through more thorough examination and submissions by Protestors, Observation procedures may reduce caseload on opposition tribunals.

Acceptable reasons on which to base Observations may include:

- Absolute grounds (see Section 7 above);
- Bad faith filing;
- Nuisance Repeat Filing (as defined under Section 12.1);
- Likelihood of confusion with a registered mark, (in instances where there is a relative-grounds examination); and
- The applied-for mark is a registered geographical indication in the relevant country.

Observations should be factually-based, and as such, contain proof and support of the information regarding the facts set forth as to non-registrability of the applied-for mark. Observation procedures should be crafted such that they cannot be used purely to delay registration or to present purely adversarial arguments. As such, Observations should not be used as a means to present arguments more appropriately presented in an opposition proceeding. Rather, the focus of the Observations should be to bring facts that are considered by Trademark Office Examiners in

examining registrability on absolute grounds and if applicable, relative grounds, to the Examiner's attention during examination.

The trademark applicant is informed of the Observation if the Observation is considered on the merits by the Trademark Office. The Protestor does not become a party to the further prosecution of the trademark application, but the Protestor should be informed of the results of the Observation.

It is recommended that Observations must be made within a specified time period (e.g., before publication, before opposition period ends, etc.). Observations should not stay the time period for filing an opposition or any other remedy.

Regardless of treatment of a filed Observation by the Trademark Office (whether allowed or denied in whole or part), the Observation should not affect remedies available to the Protestor (e.g., opposition, cancellation or, invalidation proceeding, or civil court action, etc.).

## **10. CONDUCT OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN TRADEMARK OFFICE AND APPLICANT**

### **10.1 Applicant's Opportunity to Overcome the Examiner's Citation of Similar Marks**

After the assessment of the Examiner of marks believed to be confusingly similar, the applicant for registration of the claimed mark must then be given an opportunity to rebut the Examiner's determination of the non-registrability of the claimed mark, by submitting to the Trademark Office evidence/arguments that no likelihood of confusion exists. Any such rebuttal will be taken into due account by the Examiner, who will issue a further assessment.

#### **10.1.1 Amendment**

If local law allows, there should be provision prior to publication for the applicant to limit the claimed goods/services as an attempt to overcome a likelihood of confusion.

#### **10.1.2 Argument**

The applicant should have an opportunity to submit specific written arguments that the factors and evidence considered in the evaluation of the likelihood of confusion have not been properly evaluated by the Examiner, and that, therefore, there is no likelihood of confusion. Provisions for such written arguments should include the possibility for submission of physical or documentary evidence, including statements of persons with actual knowledge of the goods/services concerned.

Also, provision should be made for a telephone or personal interview with the Examiner wherein it is possible to present oral arguments against a likelihood of confusion.

The Trademark Office should consider all arguments and information submitted by the applicant before marking a final determination on registrability.

### **10.1.3 Consent**

A Trademark Office will, if local legislation provides, accept a letter of consent for registration of a claimed mark from the owner of a cited mark to overcome a likelihood of confusion refusal.

If not expressly provided for by local laws, an applicant should be permitted to submit to the Trademark Office, and the Examiner should consider, a letter of consent for registration of an applied-for mark from the owner of a cited mark in response to a likelihood of confusion objection. In considering the letter of consent, the Examiner should assess any evidence addressing the following factors:

- That a significant period of concurrent use has passed with no evidence of actual confusion among the relevant purchasing public;
- That the applicant's goods/services are distinct from the goods/services of the cited marks;
- That the trade channels and/or the purchaser groups are different;
- That the applicant and the owners of the cited mark agree not to use the mark of the other on their own goods/services, and agree not to use their own mark on the goods/service of the other;
- That if confusion should occur, the owners of the respective marks will work together and take reasonable action(s) to promptly obviate such confusion; and
- Inclusion of any other relevant factors illustrating that in this specific case, a likelihood of confusion does not exist.

### **10.1.4 Provision for Appeal**

Where the applicant has presented all of its arguments and evidence against likelihood of confusion, but the Examiner issues a final refusal to register the claimed mark, an appeal to a higher authority should be available to the applicant, at which appeal the evidence on likelihood of confusion is evaluated de novo, where permitted by law.

## **11. PUBLICATION**

Once the ex-officio examination of the claimed trademark has been successfully completed, arrangements should be made for the application or registration to be published online and publicly accessible for opposition purposes.

### **11.1 Details to be Included in Publication Notice**

The publication notice should include a full representation of the mark and details of the elements of the mark that are being claimed, including but not limited to:

- A visual presentation of the mark;

- Trademark description, translation (if applicable), and color claim;
- Type of mark;
- Full details of the applicant;
- Class numbers from Nice Classification;
- Full list of goods and/or services as approved;
- Details of any disclaimer, limitation, or condition of registration;
- The date of application;
- The application number;
- The date of first use of the mark in each class, if applicable;
- Any convention priority claim;
- Filing basis (where applicable);
- An indication, if applicable, that the application was approved on the basis of distinctiveness acquired through use; and
- Representative for service.

## **12. EXAMINATION OF OPPOSITIONS**

In addition to the recommendation that marks can be examined for inherent registrability and likelihood of confusion with prior marks, it is also recommended that a period be provided for inter partes opposition proceedings.

Jurisdictions that do not examine trademark applications on relative grounds prior to registration should maintain or adopt pre-registration opposition proceedings to ensure that relative grounds can be considered prior to the registration of a trademark and to maintain the integrity of the Trademark Register.

### **12.1 Opposition Proceedings**

There should be a minimum term of sixty (60) days to file oppositions on appropriate grounds after publication of the application. Reasonable extensions of this term for a limited and defined maximum period are recommended. The parties shall also be permitted to place the opposition proceedings into a “cooling off,” suspension, or similar period to facilitate settlement negotiations.

There should also be some form of summary procedure in opposition proceedings involving Nuisance Repeat Filings to allow the matter to be brought to an expedited hearing (if needed or applicable) and decision. “Nuisance Repeat Filings” cover situations in which applicants can, and

sometimes do, file an application for the same mark for the same or virtually the same goods or services that was previously the subject of a successful opposition proceeding based on prior rights made under circumstances that are unchanged from a previously decided opposition between the same parties denying registration, where the passage of time, in and of itself, is not a sufficient change.

## **12.2 Standing / Entitlement**

Any person or entity having a genuine interest, appropriate grounds, and/or standing, including but not limited to the following should have standing to bring an opposition or other proceeding challenging registration of an applied-for mark:

- Having rights in a mark which is potentially confusing or may be damaged by registration of the published mark;
- Having rights in a mark which has already been used and is considered to have caused actual confusion with the goods or services of the opposer's mark;
- The published mark is inherently non-registrable (e.g., generic, merely functional, or descriptive), when and as permitted by local law; and/or
- Having claims based on fraud or dilution.

Payment of a uniform fee by the opposer (without discriminating between national and non-national opposers) should be required to deter frivolous oppositions.

## **12.3 Notice / Proceedings**

Opposition proceedings and filings should be non-confidential, provided that there are also appropriate mechanisms for protecting confidential documents and/or information contained in such documents.

The notice of opposition should be filed with the Trademark Office and should disclose the name and address of the opposer, the serial number or registration number of the mark being opposed, and the ground(s) for opposition.

## **12.4 Service / Notification**

The applicant should be promptly notified of a Notice of Opposition by the Trademark Office. Unless local law provides for the parties to notify each other, when a party makes a subsequent filing in the opposition, the Trademark Office should promptly notify the other party of that subsequent filing.

## **12.5 Answer**

Upon receipt of the Notice of Opposition, the Trademark Office should prescribe an appropriate time period for the applicant to file an answer or seek dismissal. A reasonable extension of the time period should be available to permit the parties to attempt a settlement to the extent that the

opposition cannot be suspended or halted via other mechanisms before the Trademark Office. The first such extension should be available without consent of the other party or approval by the Trademark Office, but further extensions would depend on consent of the other party and on approval by the Trademark Office.

The answer should state the applicant's defenses to each claim asserted and admit or deny the opposer's allegations. If the applicant is without knowledge or information sufficient to form a belief as to the truth of an allegation, the applicant should so state, which will serve as a denial. An answer should contain any affirmative defenses.

There should be a process for both the applicant and the opposer to submit evidence, arguments, and counterarguments in support of their positions.

## **12.6 Default**

In the event that the owner of a trademark application or registration does not respond to an opposition proceeding, the Trademark Office should issue a default judgment against the owner and deny or cancel registration. However, Trademark Offices should provide adequate safeguards to protect trademark owners from having their applications or registrations refused or canceled due to inadvertent non-response or frivolous filings.

## **12.7 Amendment of Opposition Pleadings**

There should be a procedure for amending opposition pleadings that adequately protects the parties' interest in a fair opposition proceeding. For example, early amendments in the opposition to cure good-faith mistakes should generally be allowed, as well as amendments based on discovery during the opposition proceeding, if discovery is permitted by local law. However, opposers should not be able to amend proceedings for the primary purpose of unfairly harassing applicants, such as by adding a new grounds of opposition at a late stage in the proceedings that was known or should have been known at an early phase.

Trademark Offices should establish published rules regarding the procedures and safeguards concerning amending oppositions. Each party should have the right to respond to any amended pleading filed by the other party.

## **12.8 Procedure**

The Trademark Office should specify rules of procedure and practice in inter partes proceedings. Such rules should be published and easily accessible to the parties.

Speed in resolving oppositions should generally be favored.

## **12.9 Consolidation of Proceedings**

Consolidation of proceedings should be permissible only where the cases to be consolidated involve the same or related parties and the issues are the same or substantially similar. For example, consolidation may be appropriate where a word mark and a composite mark which includes the word mark of the same applicant are published at or near the same time. Consolidation

of multiple party oppositions where several unrelated entities have opposed the same application is not recommended. However, it may be preferable to have oppositions against the same application heard by the same Examiner or board of examiners.

## **12.10 Suspension**

There should be a procedure for suspension of an opposition with consent of the parties or upon good cause. Suspension should be available if (i) a party or parties to a pending case are engaged in a civil action or another trademark proceeding (e.g., cancellation proceedings of a mark on which the opposition is based) before the same Trademark Office which may have a bearing on the case; (ii) there is pending before the Trademark Office or a civil court a motion which is potentially dispositive of the case; or (iii) there is good cause, upon motion or a stipulation of the parties approved by the Trademark Office or a civil court. The Trademark Office should be able to set a maximum time limit for consented suspension that is not dependent upon a civil action or another trademark proceeding.

## **12.11 Evidence**

The parties should have an opportunity to submit evidence supporting their position(s) in the opposition.

### **12.11.1 Timing of Submission**

The Trademark Office should prescribe a period of time for the parties to submit evidence. It is recommended that the period of time for submission of evidence in an opposition proceeding should be subject to time limits of ninety (90) days, with the possibility of obtaining an extension of time for an appropriate time period. If the opposer fails to enter evidence within the set time period or any permitted extension, the opposition should proceed with the facts on record, if any.

### **12.11.2 Evidence from Other Proceedings**

There should be a provision for determining admissibility of, and procedures for entering applicable evidence from other related proceedings, for example, a determination of the fame of either the opposer's or the applicant's mark.

### **12.11.3 Forms of Evidence**

The Trademark Office should establish rules for the submission and sufficiency of evidence, such as form of affidavits or declarations, legalization requirements, etc.

## **12.12 Sanction; Termination**

Failure to respond to the Trademark Office's procedures, including with respect to evidence requests, should subject the non-compliant party to sanction by the Trademark Office. A single failure to comply with procedures may, and a repeated failure should, result in termination of the proceedings in a manner adverse to the non-compliant party.

## **12.13 Motions and Briefs; Hearing**

### **12.13.1 Interlocutory Hearings/Motions**

If applicable, there should be a procedure for resolving interlocutory matters, including provision for dismissal after submission of an answer, or summary judgment after the close of evidence taking, either by way of motion or hearing. Expedious determination on the merits may be preferable unless there is a requirement to decide these procedural motions within a fixed period.

### **12.13.2 Final Brief and Hearing**

Opposition proceedings should be resolved by written brief and/or oral hearing, and a reasoned opinion by the Trademark Office. The Trademark Office should communicate to the parties the date by which it will render a decision, and it should render its decision by that date. If the Trademark Office is unable to render a decision by the noted date, it should communicate to both parties the new date by which it intends to render its decision. The Trademark Office should not take more than one (1) year from the last substantive factual or argument submission by the parties to render a decision on an opposition.

## **12.14 Appeal**

There should be provision for appeal for the party against whom an unfavorable decision is rendered (in whole or in part) within a given time limit (no less than sixty (60) days) of the date of notification of the written decision. Such appeals should be to either a board of examiners or judges within the Trademark Office, or to an administrative court or civil court of competent jurisdiction.

## **12.15 Status of Application on Termination of Proceeding**

If the appeal judgment is not adverse and not appealed further, on termination of a proceeding involving an application or registration (e.g., post-grant opposition), that application or registration returns to the status it had before the institution of the proceedings. If the judgment is adverse to the applicant or registrant, the application or registration stands refused in-whole or in-part based on the appeal decision without further action being required by the parties and all proceedings thereon are considered terminated.

## **13. CANCELLATIONS**

### **13.1 Cancellation Procedures**

A Trademark Office and/or an administrative mechanism should be offered to third parties to cancel an existing registration. As these Guidelines are for examination, please refer to other INTA documents for guidance regarding cancellation procedures.