

Practice Paper

Distinctiveness –
Mixed Marks containing descriptive/non-
distinctive words

**Dirección Nacional de la Propiedad Industrial
Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Minería
Uruguay**

Note from the IP Office:

This Practice Paper has been prepared in line with the Common Communication resulting of the Common Practice of Trade Marks developed by the European Union Intellectual Property Network (EUIPN) and aimed to give guidance for the examination procedures on how to examine mixed* marks containing descriptive/non-distinctive words passing the absolute grounds for refusal because the figurative element renders distinctiveness.

This document has been tailor-made to the specificities of Uruguay, providing an overview of the Office' quality standards for the applications received.

This Practice Paper, adopted at national level, is made public with the purpose of further increasing transparency, legal certainty and predictability for the benefit of examiners and users alike.

**Explanatory Note: a different terminology is used in Uruguay and the European Union as regards to the type of mark subject of this practice, namely mixed mark in the case of Uruguay (this will be the terminology used throughout this Practice Paper), and figurative mark in the case of the European Union (this is the terminology used in the Common Communication referred to above, which reflects the Common Practice developed by the EUIPN).*

For the purpose of this practice document, all the marks are considered mixed marks.

1. BACKGROUND

This Practice is in relation to when a mixed mark, containing purely descriptive/non-distinctive words, passes the absolute grounds examination because the figurative element renders sufficient distinctive character.

This Practice is made public through this Practice Paper with the purpose of further increasing transparency, legal certainty and predictability for the benefit of examiners and users alike.

The following issues are out of the scope of the project:

- *Language issues: consider for the sake of the project that the word elements are totally descriptive/non-distinctive in your language.*
- *Interpretation of disclaimers: the practice does not affect the acceptance or interpretation of disclaimers by the IP offices.*
- *Use of the trade mark (including acquired distinctiveness and how the mark is actually used in trade).*



2. THE PRACTICE

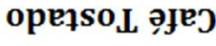
The following text summarizes the key messages and main statements of the principles of the Practice Paper. The complete text can be found at the end of this document.

In order to determine if the threshold of distinctiveness is met due to the figurative features in the mark the following criteria are considered:

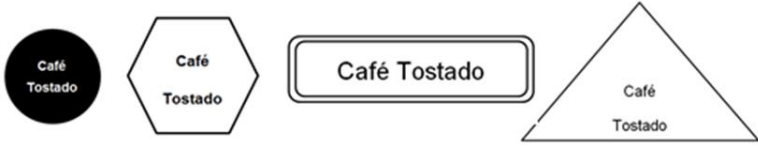
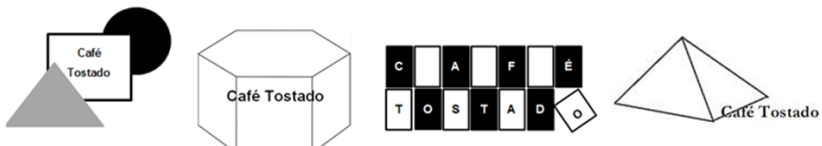


Note: The signs containing «Café Tostado» seek protection for **coffee in Class 30, the signs containing «Sardina fresca» and «Sardinas» seek protection for **sardines** in Class 29, the sign containing 'DIY' seeks protection for **kits of parts for assembly into furniture** in Class 20, the signs containing «Servicios de control de plagas» seek protection for **pest control services** in Class 37, and the sign containing «Servicios de asesoramiento legal» seeks protection for **legal services** in Class 45.*

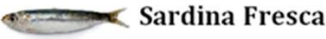





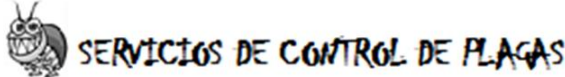




WITH RESPECT TO THE WORD ELEMENTS IN THE MARK

<p>Criterion</p>	<p><i>Typeface and font</i></p>
<p>Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, descriptive/non-distinctive word elements appearing in basic/standard typeface, lettering or handwritten style typefaces – with or without font effects (bold, italics) – are not registrable. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Sardina Fresca <i>Sardina Fresca</i> SaRdina FrEsca <i>Café Tostado</i> Café Tostado Café Tostado </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where standard typefaces incorporate elements of graphic design as part of the lettering, those elements need to have sufficient impact on the mark as a whole to render it distinctive. When these elements are sufficient to distract the attention of the consumer from the descriptive meaning of the word element or likely to create a lasting impression of the mark, the mark is registrable. <p><u>Distinctive examples:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p>
<p>Criterion</p>	<p><i>Combination with colour</i></p>
<p>Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mere ‘addition’ of a single colour to a descriptive/non-distinctive word element, either to the letters themselves or as a background, will not be sufficient to give the mark distinctive character. Use of colours is common in trade and would not be seen as a badge of origin. However, it cannot be excluded that a particular arrangement of colours, which is unusual and can be easily remembered by the relevant consumer, could render a mark distinctive. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p>
<p>Criterion</p>	<p><i>Combination with punctuation marks and other symbols</i></p>
<p>Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, the addition of punctuation marks or other symbols commonly used in trade does not add distinctive character to a sign consisting of descriptive/non-distinctive word elements. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"> “Café Tostado” SardinaFresca.™ </p>

Criterion	<i>Position of the word elements (sideways, upside-down, etc.)</i>
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, the fact that the word elements are arranged in vertical, upside-down or in one or more lines is not sufficient to endow the sign with the minimum degree of distinctive character that is necessary for registration. <u>Non-distinctive examples:</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin: 10px 0;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Café Tostado</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Café Tostado</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>C a f é T o s t a d</p> </div> </div> However the way in which the word elements are positioned can add distinctive character to a sign when the arrangement is of such a nature that the average consumer focuses on it rather than immediately perceiving the descriptive message. <u>Distinctive examples:</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin: 10px 0;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>T O S T C A F É D O</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>C A F É D O T O S T</p> </div> </div>

WITH RESPECT TO THE FIGURATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE MARK

<p>Criterion</p>	<p><i>Use of simple geometric shapes</i></p>
<p>Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive or non-distinctive verbal elements combined with simple geometric shapes such as points, lines, line segments, circles, triangles, squares, rectangles, parallelograms, pentagons, hexagons, trapezia and ellipses are unlikely to be acceptable, in particular when the above mentioned shapes are used as a frame or border. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the other hand, geometric shapes can add distinctiveness to a sign when their presentation, configuration or combination with other elements creates a global impression which is sufficiently distinctive. <p><u>Distinctive examples:</u></p> 
<p>Criterion</p>	<p><i>The position and proportion (size) of the figurative element in relation to the word element</i></p>
<p>Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, when a figurative element that is distinctive on its own is added to a descriptive and/or non-distinctive word element, then the mark is registrable, provided that said figurative element is, due to its size and position, clearly recognizable in the sign. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p>Café Tostado  <i>Sardina Fresca</i></p> <p><u>Distinctive example:</u></p> 

Criterion	<i>Whether the figurative element is a representation of, or has direct link with, the goods and/or services</i>
Practice	<p>➤ A figurative element is considered to be descriptive and/or devoid of distinctive character whenever:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a true-to-life portrayal of the goods and services. - It consists of a symbolic/stylised portrayal of the goods and services that does not depart significantly from the common representation of said goods and services. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p>  </p> <p><u>Distinctive examples:</u></p> <p> </p> <p>➤ A figurative element which does not represent the goods and services but has a direct link with the characteristics of the goods and services will not render the sign distinctive, unless it is sufficiently stylised.</p> <p><u>Non-distinctive example:</u></p> <p> SERVICIOS DE CONTROL DE PLAGAS</p> <p><u>Distinctive example:</u></p> <p> SERVICIOS DE CONTROL DE PLAGAS</p>
Criterion	<i>Whether the figurative element is commonly used in trade in relation to the goods and/or services applied for</i>
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, figurative elements that are commonly used or customary in trade in relation to the goods and/or services claimed do not add distinctive character to the mark as a whole. <p><u>Non-distinctive examples:</u></p> <p>   </p>

WITH RESPECT TO BOTH THE WORD AND FIGURATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE MARK

Practice

How combinations of the criteria affect distinctiveness

- In general, a combination of figurative elements and word elements, which if considered individually are devoid of distinctive character, does not give rise to a distinctive mark.
- Nevertheless, a combination of such elements when considered as a whole could be perceived as a badge of origin due to the presentation and composition of the sign. This will be the case when the combination results in an overall impression which is sufficiently far removed from the descriptive/non-distinctive message conveyed by the word element.

Examples: In order for a sign to be registrable, it must have a minimum level of distinctiveness. The purpose of the scale is to illustrate where that threshold is. The examples below from left to right contain elements with an increasing impact on the distinctiveness of the marks, resulting in marks which are either non-distinctive in their totality (red column) or distinctive in their totality (green column).

<p>1.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	

It should be noted that an applicant will not obtain exclusive rights on descriptive/non-distinctive words, when it is the figurative element that renders the mark distinctive as a whole. The scope of protection is limited to the overall composition of the mark.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding three interlocking puzzle pieces. The person is wearing a light-colored suit jacket and a white shirt. The puzzle pieces are light blue and are being held in a way that they appear to be coming together. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the puzzle pieces.

The Practice

**Distinctiveness –
Mixed marks containing
descriptive/non-distinctive words**

Index

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.	THE PROJECT SCOPE	1
3.	THE PRACTICE	2
3.1	Descriptive/non-distinctive words	2
3.2	What are the figurative thresholds for passing the absolute grounds examination?... 3	
A.	With respect to the word elements of the mark	3
A.1.	<i>Typeface and font</i>	3
A.2.	Combination with colour	6
A.3.	Combination with punctuation marks and other symbols	7
A.4.	Position of the word elements (side-ways, upside-down, etc.)	8
B.	With respect to the figurative elements in the mark	9
B.1.	Use of simple geometric shapes	9
B.2.	The position and proportion (size) of the figurative element in relation to the word element	11
B.3.	The figurative element is a representation of, or has a direct link with, the goods and/or services	12
B.4.	The figurative element is commonly used in trade in relation to the goods and/or services applied for	16
C.	How do combinations of the above criteria affect distinctiveness?	17

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is the reference for IP offices, user associations, applicants and representatives on the Practice determining when a mixed mark containing purely descriptive/non- distinctive words passes the absolute grounds examination because the figurative element renders the mark as a whole with sufficient distinctive character. It will be made widely available and will be easily accessible, providing a **clear and comprehensive explanation of the principles on which the Practice is based**. These principles will be generally applied, and aimed at covering the large majority of the cases.

2. THE PROJECT SCOPE

It is in the public interest to prevent the registration of a mark which is incapable of distinguishing the goods and/or services for which registration is sought from those of other undertakings.

The **scope** of the document is as follows:

*“The objective of this document is to find a practice in relation to when a **mixed mark**, containing **purely descriptive/non-distinctive words**, passes the **absolute grounds** examination because the figurative element renders **sufficient distinctive character**.”*

The following issues are out of the scope of the project:

- *Language issues: consider for the sake of the project that the word elements are fully descriptive/ non-distinctive in your language.*
- *Interpretation of disclaimers.*
- *Use of the trade mark (including acquired distinctiveness and how the mark is actually used in trade).*

In order to determine if the threshold of distinctiveness is met due to the figurative features in the mark the following criteria are considered:

- With respect to the **word** elements in the mark:
 - Typeface and font
 - Combination with colour
 - Combination with punctuation marks and other symbols
 - Position of the word elements (sideways, upside-down, etc.)

- With respect to the **figurative** elements in the mark:
 - Use of simple geometric shapes
 - The position and proportion (size) of the figurative element in relation to the word element
 - Whether the figurative element is a representation of, or has a direct link with, the goods and/or services
 - Whether the figurative element is commonly used in trade in relation to the goods and/or services applied for.

- With respect to **both** the word and figurative elements in the mark:
 - How combinations of the criteria affect distinctiveness.

3. THE PRACTICE

3.1 Descriptive/non-distinctive words

For the purpose of this practice, the word elements in the mark are deemed to be fully descriptive/non-distinctive, as the main purpose is to converge the approach on when the addition of a figurative element renders the mark as a whole sufficiently distinctive, thus enabling the mark to perform its essential function and pass the absolute grounds examination.

For a trade mark to possess **distinctive character**, it must be capable of fulfilling its **essential function**, namely to **guarantee the identity of the commercial origin** of the marked goods and/or services **to the consumer or end-user** by enabling him, without any possibility of confusion, to **distinguish the goods or services from others which have another origin**, thus to repeat the experience, if proved to be positive, or to avoid it, if proved to be negative.

Indissociable from the capability of a trade mark to **perform its essential function** is that of ensuring that **descriptive signs or indications relating to the characteristics** of goods or services in respect of which registration is sought may be **freely used by all** traders offering such goods and/or services, preventing such signs and indications from being reserved to one undertaking alone because they have been registered as trade marks.

Distinctiveness must be assessed, first, by reference to the goods or services in respect of which registration is sought and, second, by reference to the perception of the relevant public.

3.2 What are the figurative thresholds for passing the absolute grounds examination?

Despite containing purely descriptive/non-distinctive words, a mixed mark can still pass the absolute grounds examination if there are other elements in the mark which render the mark distinctive as a whole.

However, the distinctiveness of a trade mark which contains descriptive/non-distinctive word elements cannot rely on figurative elements which have no distinctive character in their own right or are minimal in nature, unless the resulting combination is distinctive as a whole.

For the purpose of determining the distinctive character endowed by the figurative elements in the sign, the following criteria were agreed:

A. With respect to the word elements of the mark

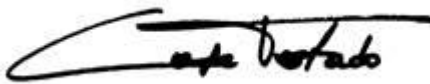
***A.1* Typeface and font**

- In general, descriptive/non-distinctive word elements appearing in basic/standard typeface, lettering or handwritten style typefaces— with or without font effects (bold, italics) – are not registrable.
- Where standard typefaces incorporate elements of graphic design as part of the lettering, those elements need to have sufficient impact on the mark as a whole to render it distinctive. When these elements are sufficient to distract the attention of the consumer from the descriptive meaning of the word element or likely to create a lasting impression of the mark, the mark is registrable.

Examples

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<i>Basic typefaces, with or without font effects (bold, Italics)</i>	<p>Café Tostado <u>Café Tostado</u> <i>Café Tostado</i> Café Tostado CAFÉ TOSTADO Café Tostado <i>Café Tostado</i></p>	Class 30: Coffee
<i>Slight font variations (i.e. word in bold)</i>	<p>Café Tostado <i>Café Tostado</i></p>	Class 30: Coffee
<i>Handwritten and handwriting style typefaces</i>	<p><i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Café Tostado</i></p> <p><i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Sardina Fresca</i></p> <p><i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Sardina Fresca</i></p>	Class 30: Coffee Class 30: Coffee Class 29: Sardines Class 30: Coffee Class 29: Sardines
<i>Lower case + capital letters</i>	SardinaFRESCA	Class 29: Sardines
<i>Standard typeface + italics</i>	Sardinafresca	Class 29: Sardines





<i>Internal capitalization of letters which does not affect the meaning of the word element</i>	SaRdina FrESca	Class 29: Sardines
<i>Typeface with a certain peculiarity, but remaining largely normal</i>	Café Tostado Sardina Fresca	Class 30: Coffee Class 29: Sardines

Distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<i>Handwritten lettering which is stylized to the extent that it is illegible, i.e., no descriptive meaning can be extracted.</i>		Class 30: Coffee
<i>Typeface with sufficient degree of stylization, with the possibility of interpreting the individual characters in different ways.</i> <i>* 'DIY' stands for 'do-it-yourself', and is considered a non-distinctive word element in relation to the goods for which protection is sought.</i>	DIY	Class 20: Kits of parts for assembly into furniture
<i>Graphically designed typeface, Some letters are harder to recognize.</i>	CAFE TOSTADO	Class 30: Coffee

A2 Combination with colour

- It must be borne in mind that, whilst colours are capable of conveying certain associations of ideas, and arousing of feelings, they possess little inherent capacity for communicating specific information, especially since they are common and widely used, because of their appeal, in order to advertise and market goods or services, without any specific message.
- Save in exceptional cases, colours do not initially have a distinctive character.
- The mere ‘addition’ of a single colour to a descriptive/non-distinctive word element, either to the letters themselves or as a background, will not be sufficient to give the mark distinctive character.
- Use of colours is common in trade and would not be seen as a badge of origin. However, it cannot be excluded that a particular arrangement of colours, which is unusual and can be easily remembered by the relevant consumer, could render a mark distinctive.

Examples

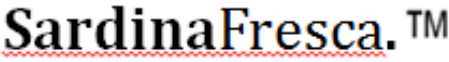

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<i>Addition of one single colour to a basic/ normal typeface (Coloured letters).</i>		Class 30: Coffee
<i>Addition of one single colour to a basic/ normal typeface (Coloured background or frame).</i>		Class 30: Coffee
		Class 30: Coffee
<i>Addition of one single colour to a basic/ normal typeface (Coloured outline).</i>		Class 30: Coffee

<p><i>Addition of one single colour to a basic/ normal typeface (Gradient colour).</i></p>		<p>Class 30: Coffee</p>
<p><i>In this example, the application of many different colours to the lettering may catch the eye of the consumer, but it will do nothing to help the consumer to distinguish the goods and/ or services of one undertaking from those of others, as the particular arrangement of colours will neither be perceived nor remembered by the consumers.</i></p>		<p>Class 30: Coffee</p>

A.3 Combination with punctuation marks and other symbols

- In general, the addition of punctuation marks or other symbols commonly used in trade does not add distinctive character to a sign consisting of descriptive/non distinctive word elements.

Examples


Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<p><i>Addition of a full stop or a trade mark sign does not add distinctive character to the sign.</i></p>		<p>Class 29: Sardines</p>
<p>Addition of quotation marks does not add distinctive character to the sign.</p>		<p>Class 30: Coffee</p>

A4 Position of the word elements (side-ways, upside-down, etc.)

- The way in which the word elements are positioned can add distinctive character to a sign when it is capable of affecting the consumer's perception of the meaning of said word elements. In other words, the arrangement must be of such a nature that the average consumer focuses on it rather than immediately perceiving the descriptive message. In general, the fact that the word elements are arranged in vertical, upside-down or in one, two or more lines is not sufficient to endow the sign with the minimum degree of distinctive character that is necessary for registration.

Examples

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<i>Text in two or more lines read from left to right.</i>	Café Tostado	Class 30: Coffee
<i>All the text is upside-down.</i>	Café Tostado	Class 30: Coffee
<i>All the text is vertical.</i>	C a f é T o s t a d o	Class 30: Coffee

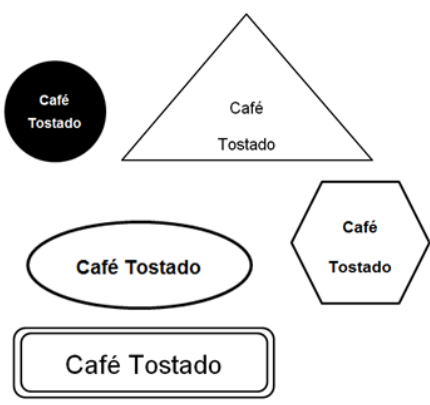
Distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/services
<p><i>The text is presented in an original manner</i></p> <p><i>The particular configuration is capable of affecting the consumer's perception of the word elements.</i></p>		Class 30: Coffee

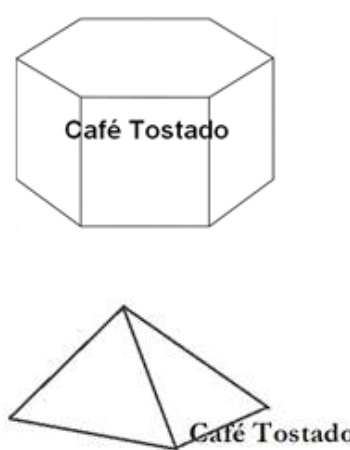
B. With respect to the figurative elements in the mark

B.1 Use of simple geometric shapes

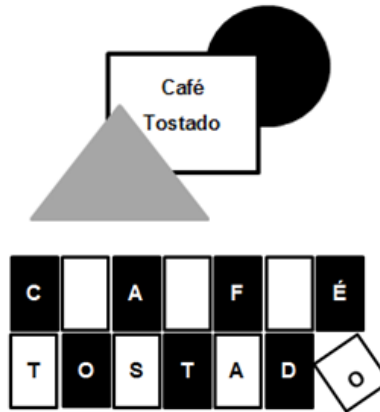
- Descriptive or non-distinctive verbal elements combined with simple geometric shapes such as points, lines, line segments, circles, triangles, squares, rectangles, parallelograms, pentagons, hexagons, trapezia and ellipses [the list of simple geometric shapes is not exhaustive] are unlikely to be acceptable, in particular when the above mentioned shapes are used as a frame or border.
- This is because a geometric shape which merely serves to underline, highlight or surround the word element will not have sufficient impact on the mark as a whole to render it distinctive.
- On the other hand, geometric shapes can add distinctiveness to a sign when their presentation, configuration or combination with other elements creates a global impression which is sufficiently distinctive.

Examples

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<p><i>Examples of simple geometric shapes which are used <u>as a frame or border</u>, not considered to be acceptable.</i></p>	 <p>The image shows five different geometric shapes used as frames for the text 'Café Tostado': a black circle, a triangle, an oval, a hexagon, and a rounded rectangle. Each shape contains the text 'Café Tostado' in a simple, sans-serif font.</p>	<p>Class 30: Coffee.</p>

Distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<p><i>Examples of a particular configuration of non-distinctive word elements with a simple geometric shape which renders the mark acceptable in its totality because of the special arrangement of how the words are overlapping the simple geometric shapes as well as the relatively large size of the shapes as compared to the words so that the shape is not merely seen as underlining, highlighting or surrounding the words, but a global impression is being created that is sufficiently distinctive. It is assumed that the figurative elements are not representations of packaging.</i></p>	 <p>The image shows two 3D geometric shapes where the text 'Café Tostado' is integrated into the structure. The first is a hexagonal prism with the text on the front face. The second is a triangular pyramid with the text on the front face.</p>	<p>Class 30: Coffee</p>

Examples of particular combinations of geometric shapes with descriptive words, which render each of the marks distinctive as a whole.




Class 30: Coffee

B.2 The position and proportion (size) of the figurative element in relation to the word element

- In general, when a figurative element that is distinctive on its own is added to a descriptive and/or non-distinctive word element, then the mark is registrable, provided that said figurative element is, due to its size and position, clearly recognizable in the sign.

Examples

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<i>The red device appearing on the letter 'i' is hardly recognizable.</i>		Class 29: Sardines.
<i>Figurative element is so small that is not recognizable.</i>		Class 30: Coffee.

Distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<i>Figurative element is distinctive in itself and large enough to be recognized in the mark as a whole.</i>		Class 30: Coffee.

***B.3* The figurative element is a representation of, or has a direct link with, the goods and/or services**

As a general rule, the mere combination of elements, each of which is descriptive of characteristics of the goods and services in respect of which registration is sought, without introducing any unusual variations, itself remains descriptive and cannot result in anything other than a mark consisting exclusively of signs and indications which may serve, in trade, to designate characteristics of the goods and services concerned.

However, such a combination may not be descriptive, provided that it creates an impression which is sufficiently far removed from that produced by the simple combination of those elements with the result that it is more than the sum of its parts.


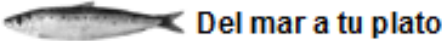
- In some cases the figurative element consists of a representation of the goods and services claimed. In principle, said representation is considered to be descriptive and/or devoid of distinctive character whenever:
 - It is a true-to-life portrayal of the goods and services
 - It consists of a symbolic/stylised portrayal of the goods and services that does not depart significantly from the common representation of said goods and services;




In other cases the figurative element may not represent the goods and services but may still have a direct link with the characteristics of the goods and/or services. In such cases the sign will be considered non-distinctive, unless it is sufficiently stylised.



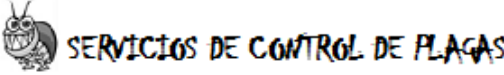
Examples

In the following examples, the marks resulting from the combination of a non-distinctive/descriptive figurative element and a non-distinctive/descriptive word element do not create an impression which is more than the sum of its parts.

Whether the figurative and/or the word elements are considered descriptive or non-distinctive the outcome will be the same.

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<p>Descriptive figurative element + descriptive word element.</p> <p><i>The figurative element shows the picture of a sardine, and therefore a true-to-life portrayal of the goods. Neither the typeface (basic/standard), the position of the word elements, the overall composition of the mark, nor any other elements endow the mark with the required minimum degree of distinctive character.</i></p>		Class 29: Sardines
<p>Descriptive figurative element + non-distinctive word element.</p> <p><i>The figurative element shows the picture of a sardine, and therefore a true-to-life portrayal of the goods. Neither the typeface (basic/standard), the position of the word elements, the overall composition of the mark, nor any other elements endow the mark with the required minimum degree of distinctive character.</i></p>		Class 29: Sardines





<p>Non-distinctive figurative element + non-distinctive word element.</p> <p><i>The figurative element shows a typical sardine tin, which is commonly used in trade as a packaging for sardines, and therefore consists of a symbolic/stylised portrayal of the goods that does not depart significantly from a common representation of said goods. Neither the typeface (basic/standard), the position of the word elements, the overall composition of the mark, nor any other elements endow the mark with the required minimum degree of distinctive character.</i></p>	 Del mar a tu plato	<p>Class 29: Sardines</p>
<p>Non-distinctive figurative element + descriptive word element.</p> <p><i>The figurative element shows a typical sardine tin, which is commonly used in trade as a packaging for sardines, and therefore consists of a symbolic/stylised portrayal of the goods that does not depart significantly from a common representation of said goods. Neither the typeface (basic/standard), the position of the word elements, the overall composition of the mark, nor any other elements endow the mark with required minimum degree of distinctive character.</i></p>	 Sardinas	<p>Class 29: Sardines</p>
<p><i>The figurative element does not represent the services but still has a direct link with the characteristics of the services. The sign is not sufficiently stylised.</i></p>	 SERVICIOS DE CONTROL DE PLAGAS	<p>Class 37: Pest control services</p>

Distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<p><i>Exception: a special combination/ composition (overall distinctiveness of two descriptive/ non-distinctive elements together).</i></p> <p><i>By using sardines as the letters 'F' and 'i' this sign creates an impression which is sufficiently far removed from that produced by the mere combination of non-distinctive/ descriptive figurative and word elements, being more than the sum of its parts.</i></p>		Class 29: Sardines
<p><i>Distinctive figurative element + descriptive word element.</i></p> <p><i>The figurative element consists of a walking fishbone, and therefore a symbolic/ stylised portrayal of the goods that departs significantly from a common representation of said goods.</i></p>		Class 29: Sardines
<p><i>The figurative element has a direct link with the characteristics of the services, but the sign is sufficiently stylised.</i></p>		Class 37: Pest control services

B.4 The figurative element is commonly used in trade in relation to the goods and/or services applied for

- In general, figurative elements that are commonly used or customary in trade in relation to the goods and/or services claimed do not add distinctive character to the mark as a whole.

Examples

Non-distinctive		
Reasoning	Sign	Goods/Services
<p><i>The claimed mark would be understood by the relevant public as a clear and direct indication of quality and not as an indication of the origin of the goods.</i></p> <p><i>The figurative elements are devoid of any striking, unusual or original features and will simply be seen as a common label which will not be retained by the average consumer as distinctive.</i></p>		Class 30: Coffee
<p><i>Coloured price tags are commonly used in trade for all kinds of goods, and the combination with the descriptive word elements is not sufficient to render the mark distinctive.</i></p>		Class 29: Sardines
<p><i>Price tags are commonly used in trade for all kinds of goods.</i></p>		Class 30: Coffee
<p><i>The 'scales of justice' are commonly used in trade for legal services.</i></p>	<p>SERVICIO DE ASESORAMIENTO LEGAL</p> 	Class 45: Legal services

C. How do combinations of the above criteria affect distinctiveness?

- In general, a combination of figurative elements and word elements, which are – considered individually – devoid of distinctive character, does not give rise to a distinctive mark.
- Nevertheless, a combination of such elements when considered as a whole could be perceived as a badge of origin due to the presentation and composition of the sign. This will be the case where the combination results in an overall impression which is sufficiently far removed from the descriptive/non-distinctive message conveyed by the word element.

The following table contains a selection of examples all of which contain combinations of the individual criteria assessed in the previous sections of the Practice document. The combinations presented under the red column are those which, in view of their simplicity and/or common nature, do not lead to a finding of distinctiveness. In contrast, the combinations presented under the green column are considered to be distinctive.

Examples:

In order for a sign to be registrable, it has to have a minimum level of distinctiveness. The purpose of the scale is to illustrate where that threshold is. The examples below from left to right contain elements with an increasing impact on the distinctiveness of the marks, resulting in marks which are either non-distinctive in their totality (red column) or distinctive in their totality (green column).

<p>1.</p> <p><i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Café Tostado</i> <i>Café Tostado</i></p>	<p>CaFé 7oStAdO</p> <p><u><i>Ca!é TostadO</i></u></p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Café Tostado (in a rounded rectangle)</p> <p>Café Tostado (in an oval)</p> <p>Café Tostado (in a pink circle)</p> <p>Ca fé Tos tado (on a grey tilted rectangle)</p>	<p>Café Tostado (with a slash through the word)</p> <p>Café Tostado (with 'Café' in a green pentagon and 'Tostado' in a green square)</p> <p>Café Tostado (with a triangle inside a circle and a vertical dotted line)</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Sardina fresca (with a fish icon)</p> <p>Sardina Fresca (with a fish icon)</p> <p>Sardina Fresca (with a fish icon in a circle)</p> <p>SARDINA FRESCA (with a fish icon)</p>	<p>Sardina fresca (with a fish icon)</p> <p>Sardina Fresca (with a guitar icon)</p> <p>SARDINA FRESCA (with a fisherman icon)</p>

Row 1:

From left to right, the first example combines basic/ standard typeface with a word in bold and positioning of the word elements. In the following case adding the colour red might take it a step further, but the combination (i.e. standard typeface, positioning of word elements and one colour) still does not give rise to a distinctive mark. In the third example the addition of a number of colours adds something extra but still its presentation and composition does not create an overall impression which is sufficiently far removed from that produced by the simple combination of those elements, besides consumers are unable to remember too many colours and their sequence. The fourth example combines basic/ standard typeface, positioning/ size of word elements and two colours, which still remains non-distinctive.

The combination of figurative elements in the two distinctive examples on the right side when considered as a whole can be perceived as a badge of origin due to the presentation and composition of the sign, creating a visual impression that is sufficiently far removed from the descriptive/ non-distinctive message conveyed by the word elements.

Row 2:

From left to right, the first two examples in this set combine simple geometric shapes used as frames (rectangular and oval shape respectively) with basic/ standard typeface, followed by basic/ standard typeface combined with circular shape, colour and positioning of word elements. The following example combines the irregular arrangement of basic/ standard typeface word elements with an angled rectangle and colour. None of these three examples create an overall impression which is sufficiently far removed from that produced by the simple combination of those elements.

On the right-side column, non-arbitrary combinations of shapes in combination with colour and position of the word elements create a visual impression which is sufficiently far removed from the descriptive/ non-distinctive message conveyed by the word element. This enables the mark in totality to be perceived as a badge of origin due to the presentation and composition of the sign.

Row 3:

From left to right, this set of examples begins with a true to life portrayal of the goods combined with two basic typefaces and font effects, followed by the addition of positioning of the word elements and colour, and subsequent addition of geometrical shape to the combination, and ending with typeface slightly stylized but still remaining largely normal. None of these examples create a visual impression that is sufficiently far removed from the descriptive/ non-distinctive message conveyed. As a result, these marks will not be perceived as badges of origin.

On the right side of the line, the presentation and composition of the marks, and on the far right the presence of a recognizable figurative element which is distinctive on its own right, endows the marks with the required minimum degree of distinctive character.

Practice Paper