

A Tale of Two Coffee Brands: A Legal Study of Trademark Conflict in Starbucks v. Sardarbuksh

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This paper examines the trademark dispute between Starbucks and Sardarbuksh Coffee & Co. in India. The case focuses on the issue of “deceptive similarity,” where two brand names and logos may look or sound alike and confuse customers. Starbucks, a well-known international coffee brand, claimed that Sardarbuksh used a name and visual identity that were too similar to its own. This raised concerns about customer confusion and unfair advantage. The paper explains how Indian trademark law deals with such situations, especially under the rules related to likelihood of confusion and passing off. It also looks at how courts decide whether an average consumer would mistake one brand for another. In this case, the court found that the similarity between the two brands could mislead customers, and it asked Sardarbuksh to change its name. This study highlights the importance of protecting brand identity while also allowing fair competition in the market. It shows that even small similarities in name or design can lead to legal problems if they affect consumer perception. Overall, the case provides a useful example of how trademark law works in practice in India.