ABSTRACT

Treaties such as the Paris Convention and the TRIPS Agreement protect well-known marks around the world, but there is currently uncertainty as to whether these marks can be protected in the United States. While a signatory to those treaties, recent decisions in the Second and Ninth Circuits leave the circuits split on whether foreign well-known marks are protectable within the United States. Without a circuit harmonization, the United States remains in a hypocritical position, demanding treaty compliance from other nations while failing to meet its treaty obligations. The uncertainty is efficiently and effectively resolved with a statutory amendment to section 44 of the Lanham Act. Amending this section to explicitly provide for the protection of well-known marks brings the United States into compliance with its treaty obligations and furthers U.S. international intellectual property policy.
Imagine that you are traveling abroad and looking for a small slice of home. You find a McDonald’s restaurant and eat there. You then spend the rest of your vacation curled up in your hotel room sick from the food. Ordinarily, you would be able to contact McDonald’s corporate headquarters to complain, demanding compensation. In this case, however, you discover that McDonald’s has no restaurants in the country you were visiting and a local trademark pirate has taken advantage of your comfortable relationship with the McDonald’s brand, ruined your vacation, and risked your health. How could this have happened?

This situation demonstrates why the importance of trademarks cannot be overstated. A trademark serves to (1) identify a good or service to assure the consumer of the quality and origin of the product and (2) protect valuable business assets. Consumers are entitled to be free from deception and confusion in the marketplace. Businesses must protect their marks or find themselves victims of trademark pirates.

Like a normal trademark, well-known marks protect consumers and businesses. The global effect of a well-known mark, like McDonald’s, carries with it an additional need for global protection. Multiple treaties, to which the United States is a signatory, exist to protect well-known marks. Unfortunately, these marks receive

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1 4 J. THOMAS MCCARTHY, MCCARTHY ON TRADEMARKS AND UNFAIR COMPETITION §§ 3:4 (4th ed. 2008) (defining trademarks as a design which reflects the origin of the good or service and distinguishes it from others), 2:19 (positing that the goodwill created by a trademark is an intangible business asset and may have an appreciable value greater than those of the business’s tangible assets), 2:33 (“By insuring correct information in the marketplace, the [trademark] laws reduce losses caused by misunderstanding and deceit and thus permit consumers and merchants to maximize their own welfare confident that the information presented is truthful.”); see also Grupo Gigante S.A. de C.V. v. Dallo & Co., 391 F.3d 1088, 1094 (9th Cir. 2004) (“Trademark is, at it’s core, about protecting against consumer confusion and ‘palming off’.”).

2 Laboratorios Roldan, C. por A. v. Tex. Intl, Inc., 902 F. Supp. 1555, 1571 (S.D. Fla. 1995) (“The public is entitled to be free from deception and confusion.”); see also Mattel, Inc. v. MCA Records, Inc., 296 F.3d 894, 900 (9th Cir. 2002) (“[Trademarks are] the owner’s way of preventing others from duping consumers into buying a product they mistakenly believe is sponsored by the trademark owner.”)

3 Ann Gilson Lalonde, Don’t I Know You From Somewhere?: Protection in the United States of Foreign Trademarks That Are Well Known But Not Used There, 98 TRADEMARK REP. 1379, 1411 (2008) (asserting that allowing pirates to take advantage of the “substantial investment” businesses make in their trademarks is an inequitable policy).

4 Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property art. 6bis, Mar. 20, 1883, 21 U.S.T.
different levels of protection in global practice. Notably, unlike its co-signatories, the United States fails to afford protection to foreign well-known marks. If a global leader in intellectual property such as the United States does not protect foreign well-known marks, what protection can U.S. rights holders receive abroad?

The background section of this comment provides an overview of well-known marks, the relevant international treaties that regulate well-known marks, and the current status of U.S. protection of well-known marks. The analysis section compares the protections afforded to well-known marks by the United States, the European Union ("E.U."), and China. It also analyzes the U.S. circuit split in authority over the protection afforded well-known marks. The proposal suggests that an effective resolution is to amend the Lanham Act to explicitly incorporate necessary treaty provisions. This would align U.S. law with U.S. foreign policy, thus strengthening the United States’ global position on intellectual property rights by demonstrating a renewed commitment to honoring its obligations.

I. BACKGROUND

The “well-known marks doctrine” demands that a nation protect a foreign mark if the mark is well-known and recognized in that nation, even if the rights holder does not use or register the mark in that nation. Article 6bis of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property ("Paris Convention") is the primary source of protection for well-known marks in signatory countries, including the United States, the E.U., and China. Unfortunately, Article 6bis does not define well-known marks nor does it provide a determinative test to assist rights holders or courts. Consequently, application of the well-known marks doctrine around the world depends on the interpretation of each nation’s courts.


5 MCCARTHY, supra note 1, § 29:61 ("[The well-known marks doctrine is] a legal concept under which a trademark . . . is protected within a nation if it is well known in that nation even though the mark is not actually used or registered in that nation").

6 Id.; see also NUNO PIRES DE CARVALHO, THE TRIPS REGIME OF TRADEMARKS AND DESIGNS 207 (Kluwer Law Int’l 2006) (arguing the Paris Convention requires some clarification, particularly related to well-known marks).

7 Id.: see also MCCARTHY, supra note 1, § 29:62 (discussing that the Paris Convention leaves the definition of a well-known mark to local authorities); FREDERICK W. MOSTERT, FAMOUS AND WELL-KNOWN MARKS: AN INTERNATIONAL ANALYSIS 7 (Butterworths 1997) ("The Paris Convention does not, however, provide any definitions or criteria for establishing which trademarks qualify as well-known.").
world varies. Nonetheless, the Paris Convention urges that well-known marks protection must be made available in all member countries. 

Unlike the Paris Convention, neither the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks (“Madrid Agreement”) nor The Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks (“Madrid Protocol”) contain explicit well-known marks provisions. Implied protection for well-known marks, however, can be found in Articles 4 and 4bis of the Madrid Agreement and Article 4 of the Madrid Protocol. Both Madrid treaties explicitly provide that once a trademark has been registered in a member country, it is protected in all member countries as if it had been registered in each member country directly. The international registration replaces the national registration without prejudice to the granted rights. These treaties provide that priority to registered marks in one member country grants priority in all member countries, thus implicitly endorsing the well-known marks doctrine. 

The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (“TRIPS Agreement”) further endorses the well-known marks doctrine and mandates that Article 6bis of the Paris Convention applies to TRIPS Agreement signatory countries. Article 16 of the TRIPS Agreement grants the owner of a registered mark the exclusive right to protect that mark and requires that member countries adhere to Article 6bis of the Paris Convention when granting or denying trademarks. The TRIPS Agreement improves on the standard set out in the Paris Convention by setting two factors for identifying well-known marks. The first

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9 MCCARTHY, supra note 1, § 29:62 (“The Paris Convention leaves the definition of what is a well-known mark to the ‘competent authority’ of the nation in which protection is sought. Thus the scope of protection may vary from one country to another.”).
10 Paris Convention, supra note 4, art. 6bis.
12 See Madrid Agreement, supra note 11, arts. 4, 4bis.
13 See Madrid Protocol, supra note 11, art 4.
14 See Madrid Agreement, supra note 11, arts. 4, 4bis; Madrid Protocol, supra note 11, art. 4.
15 Madrid Agreement, supra note 11, art. 4bis.
16 Id.; Madrid Protocol, supra note 11, art. 4.
17 TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(3) (“Article 6bis of the Paris Convention (1967) shall apply, mutatis mutandis, to goods or services . . . ”); see also CARVALHO, supra note 7, at 141 (suggesting the TRIPS framers’ intent that Article 6bis from the Paris Convention would be complemented by the TRIPS Agreement); Laurinda Hicks & James Holbein, Convergence of National Intellectual Property Norms in International Trading Agreements, 12 AM. U.J. INT’L L. & POL’Y 769, 786 (1997) (commenting on the inclusion of well-known marks under article 16 the TRIPS Agreement and the further protection extended by the Agreement).
18 TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(1).
19 Id. at 16(2).
20 Id. at 16(2)-(3); see also MOSTERT, supra note 8, at 7–8 (asserting the TRIPS Agreement provides an important element to well-known marks protection by creating a determinative test for well-known status).
factor requires signatory countries to “take account of the knowledge of the 
trademark in the relevant sector of the public . . . .”21 The second factor focuses on 
whether “the interests of the [trademark] owner of the registered trademark are 
likely to be damaged . . . .”22 These two factors determine if a mark qualifies as well-
known.23

An additional international treaty which calls for the protection of well-known 
marks is the North American Free Trade Agreement (“NAFTA”). Article 1708(6) of 
NAFTA provides protection for well-known marks between NAFTA signatories.24 
NAFTA’s standard for determining whether a mark is well-known is similar to the 
TRIPS Agreement standard.25

A. Well-Known Marks v. Famous Marks

As an initial matter, one pervasive problem regarding well-known marks must 
be clarified. The well-known marks doctrine is not the same principle as the famous 
marks doctrine, derived from the Federal Trademark Dilution Act (“FTDA”).26 U.S. 
courts occasionally confuse well-known marks with famous marks.27 Famous marks 
appear in section 43(c) of the Lanham Act.28 This confusion, mercifully, is easily 
clarified because the well-known marks doctrine is separate and distinct from the 
famous marks doctrine. A well-known mark is known in the “relevant sector of the 
public,”29 a different standard than the broader “general consuming public”30

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21 TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (“In determining whether a trademark is well 
known, Members shall take account of the knowledge of the trademark in the relevant sector of the 
public.”).
22 Id. at 16(3)
   Article 6bis of the Paris Convention (1967) shall apply, mutatis mutandis, to 
goods or services which are not similar to those in respect of which a trademark is 
registered, provided that use of that trademark in relation to those goods or 
services would indicate a connection between those goods or services and the 
owner of the registered trademark and provided that the interests of the owner of 
the registered mark are likely to be damaged by such use.

Id.
23 CARVALHO, supra note 7, at 209 (suggesting the need for a definition of well-known 
marks and that inadequate control over the registration of similar marks and the treatment of well-known 
marks as “generic” were two of the issues that needed resolution by the TRIPS Agreement).
24 NAFTA, supra note 4, art. 1708(6).
25 Id.; TRIPS, supra note 4, art. 16.
27 ITC Ltd. v. Punchgini, Inc., 482 F.3d 135, 156 (2d Cir. 2007), cert. denied, 128 S. Ct. 288 
(2007) (asserting article 6bis of the Paris convention refers to famous marks, when the actual 
provision refers to well-known marks).
28 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining famous marks as those “widely recognized by the general 
consuming public”); see also MCCARTHY, supra note 1, § 29:61 (asserting that the well-known marks 
doctrine requires the mark to be sufficiently well-known in “the relevant sector of the public in the 
U.S.,” contrary to the famous marks doctrine, which requires a broader spectrum of knowledge 
under the Federal Trademark Dilution Act).
29 TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (emphasis added).
standard applied to famous marks under the FTDA. Furthermore, the doctrines attack different problems. The famous marks doctrine protects against dilution and dissimilar products, while the well-known marks doctrine creates a constructive presence in a market based on relevant consumer knowledge. Because the well-known marks doctrine is distinct from the famous marks doctrine and because this comment addresses well-known marks, the discussion of famous marks will be limited to prevent perpetuating the confusion that already appears in the case law.

B. Well-Known Marks in the United States

As a signatory to the Paris Convention, the Madrid Union, the TRIPS Agreement, and NAFTA, the United States acknowledges the well-known marks doctrine in principle. In the United States, statutory protection for trademarks is found in the Lanham Act. While explicit statutory protections for well-known marks do not exist in the Lanham Act, a broad reading of U.S. statutes, including the Lanham Act and the recently enacted Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act of 2007 ("PRO-IP Act"), creates the basis for protecting foreign well-known marks in the United States. Because U.S. statutes must be read broadly to find protection for well-known marks and because trademarks are enforceable in any of the circuit courts, well-known mark protection varies widely.

31 Compare TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (defining a mark as "well-known" if it is known within the "relevant sector of the public"), with 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining a mark as "famous" if it is widely recognized by the general consuming public of the United States).
32 See McCarthy, supra note 1, § 24:67.
34 Compare TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (defining a mark as "well-known"), with 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining a mark as "famous" if it is widely recognized by the U.S. public).
35 See generally Paris Convention, supra note 4.
37 See generally NAFTA, supra note 4 (recording the United States as a member of NAFTA); see also Hicks & Holbein, supra note 17, at 794 (denoting member countries to NAFTA must apply the well-known marks doctrine, determining whether such recognition exists by examining the relevant section of the consumer market).
38 Compare TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (defining a mark as "well-known"), with 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining a mark as "famous" if it is widely recognized by the U.S. public).
39 See generally NAFTA, supra note 4 (recording the United States as a member of NAFTA); see also Hicks & Holbein, supra note 17, at 794 (denoting member countries to NAFTA must apply the well-known marks doctrine, determining whether such recognition exists by examining the relevant section of the consumer market).
40 Compare TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (defining a mark as "well-known"), with 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining a mark as "famous" if it is widely recognized by the U.S. public).
41 Compare TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16(2) (defining a mark as "well-known"), with 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c)(2)(A) (defining a mark as "famous" if it is widely recognized by the U.S. public).
Congress understands the importance of trademarks in protecting consumers and businesses. When ratifying the aforementioned treaties which protect well-known marks, however, Congress did not enact legislation specifically recognizing well-known marks. Congress either did not realize the statutory language was unclear or felt sections 44(b) and 44(h) of the Lanham Act were sufficiently clear to allow protection of foreign well-known marks under the relevant ratified treaties. Thus, the Lanham Act as it currently exists does not provide clear direction of whether foreign well-known marks are entitled to protection in the United States.

As a result of this statutory ambiguity, there is a split of authority in the United States on the applicability of the well-known marks doctrine, which has led to inconsistent application and controversy. The Ninth Circuit in Grupo Gigante S.A. de C.V. v. Dallo Company held that the well-known marks doctrine applies within the United States. The Grupo court recognized that sections 44(b) and 44(h) of the Lanham Act grant foreign nationals of a country which is a member of a relevant treaty the ability to invoke the benefits of that treaty to protect their marks. In other words, U.S.-signed treaties have effect within the United States under section 44. The United States has signed treaties that protect well-known marks including the Paris Convention and the TRIPS Agreement. For that reason, among others, the Grupo court held that the well-known marks doctrine exists within the United States.

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43 Cf. 15 U.S.C. § 1126 (failing to provide an express section providing protection for well-known marks).
46 Maruti.com v. Maruti Udyog Ltd., 447 F. Supp. 2d 494, 500 (D. Md. 2006) (“The famous marks doctrine is a ‘controversial’ exception to the territoriality principle . . . .”)
47 Grupo, 391 F.3d at 1089–100 (ruling the well-known marks exception applies, even though the plaintiff’s Paris Convention claims were dismissed as duplicative of their Lanham Act claims).
48 15 U.S.C. § 1126(b) (2006); see also Mattel, Inc. v. MCA Records, Inc., 296 F.3d 894, 907 (9th Cir. 2002) (denoting that subsection (b) of section 1126 grants protection to foreign nationals against unfair competition based on the protections set forth in international trademark treaties); Toho Co. v. Sears, Roebuck & Co., 645 F.2d 788, 790–94 (9th Cir. 1971) (holding that the grant of protection against unfair competition is extended only to the extent necessary to give effect to the treaties); General Motors Corp. v. Ignacio Lopez de Arriortua, 948 F. Supp. 684, 689 (E.D. Mich. 1996) (agreeing with Toho’s interpretation of the Lanham Act’s incorporation of the Paris Convention and indicating the intent of the chapter was to provide “rights and remedies stipulated by treaties.”); Laboratorios Roldan, C. por A. v. Tex. Int’l, Inc., 902 F. Supp. 1555, 1568 (S.D. Fla. 1995) (suggesting that section 44 [section 1126(a) of the Lanham Act provides protection for trademarks against unfair competition inside the United States to trademark owners in countries that are members of the Paris Convention).
51 Grupo, 391 F.3d at 1106.
Conversely, the Second Circuit in *ITC, Limited v. Punchgini, Incorporated* held that the well-known marks doctrine is not specifically stated in, or absorbed into, the Lanham Act and is therefore inapplicable. The ITC court read the Lanham Act narrowly, stating that foreign well-known marks are not protectable without an express section of the Lanham Act incorporating treaty language or demonstrating an unambiguous Congressional intent to that effect.

Compounding the legislative and judicial difficulties concerning the well-known marks doctrine, U.S. foreign policy is inapposite to its domestic practice. The United States is a vocal advocate for the protection U.S. intellectual property abroad. At the same time, the vague statutory language in the Lanham Act and the circuit split in authority leaves foreign well-known marks without protection in some regions of the United States. Consequently, the United States is open to criticism for failing to fully meet its treaty obligations while demanding compliance by other co-signatories.

II. ANALYSIS

This section begins with a focused analysis of the U.S trademark system and its need to include concrete well-known marks protection. The section then progresses to a survey of well-known marks protection in the United States, the E.U., and China.

A. Why Protect Well-Known Marks?

As a signatory to several treaties that provide protection for well-known marks and a global advocate for intellectual property protection, the United States cannot remain hypocritical on its own shores while remaining hypercritical abroad. As a worldwide leader in intellectual property, the United States has historically been a strong advocate for intellectual property rights. For the United States to deny protection for a foreign well-known mark—in direct contradiction to its international obligations—the United States is open to criticism for failing to fully meet its treaty obligations while demanding compliance by other co-signatories.
This hypocritical position, admonishing other countries to “do as we say, not as we do,” fundamentally weakens the United States’ position as a leader in intellectual property in an increasingly connected world where goods and services flow across borders. To interpret international legal obligations as the Second Circuit does, denying protection despite important global considerations, weakens the United States’ ability to achieve its economic foreign policy objectives. Foreign countries and companies will be reluctant to help a nation that declines to provide the same protections it demands of others. Intellectual property rights have been, and will continue to be, an important topic in international relations; closing out foreign businesses in a recalcitrant fashion is unwise. While the United States remains vigilant about its own intellectual property rights abroad, another country would be within its rights file a World Trade Organization (“WTO”) complaint about the lack of appropriate protection for well-known marks in the United States under the TRIPS Agreement. A WTO complaint could require the United States to compensate the complainant country and might even result in the United States’ removal from WTO agreements. If the Second Circuit’s rejection of the well-known marks doctrine is adopted in other circuits, fellow WTO member countries may be inclined to file such a complaint.

50 See Paris Convention, supra note 4, art. 6bis (providing well-known marks protection); see also TRIPS Agreement, supra note 4, art. 16 (requiring members to apply Article 6bis of the Paris Convention); Madrid Agreement, supra note 11, arts. 4, 4bis (providing international registration and priority); Madrid Protocol, supra note 11, art. 4 (complementing the Madrid Agreement); NAFTA, supra note 4, § 1708(6) (mandating signatory countries to protect well-known marks).

51 See ITC, 482 F.3d at 164–65 (“[Petitioner] argues that the United States cannot expect other nations to protect famous American trademarks if United States courts decline to afford reciprocal protection to famous foreign marks.”); see also AIPLA Brief, supra note 44, at 10–11 (suggesting the Second Circuit decision in ITC puts the United States in violation of its treaty obligations).

52 ITC, 482 F.3d at 165 (“We acknowledge that a persuasive policy argument can be advanced in support of the famous marks doctrine.”); see also Frederick Mostert, Well-Known and Famous Marks: Is Harmony Possible in the Global Village?, 86 TRADEMARK REP. 103, 138–39 (1996) (arguing that both the consumer and manufacturer are damaged by piracy of well-known marks is an important issue).

53 See AIPLA Brief, supra note 44, at 10–11 (“[T]he United States may be subject to accusations that it is in breach of those [international treaty] obligations. Moreover, [the ITC] decision would undermine the efforts of the United States government in international negotiations to secure reciprocal protection for owners of well-known American marks in foreign countries.”).

54 Mostert, supra note 62, at 105 (commenting that intellectual property, including well-known trademarks is a “significant factor” in international trade relations).


56 See, e.g., WTO Dispute Settlement Procedures, supra note 57, arts. 22.2, 22.3, 22.4.

57 Id.

58 Cf. SPECIAL 301 REPORT, supra note 55, at 16–17 (reporting that the United States filed a WTO complaint against China).
The well-known marks doctrine is entirely consistent with the framework of trademark protection in the United States. The Lanham Act recognizes trademark rights on a “first to use” basis. This encourages businesses to arrive in the marketplace quickly to be able to use their marks. The Lanham Act is necessarily limited to application within the United States and, therefore, territorially limits registration and protection. The well-known marks doctrine is not an exception to this territoriality principle; it protects those foreign marks known by the “relevant sector of the public.” The older foreign well-known mark arguably already has priority if the relevant consuming public is aware of the foreign mark before a trademark pirate operates domestically. Because a foreign well-known mark is already known within the relevant market, it has a domestic market presence regardless of domestic use. The well-known marks doctrine essentially recognizes that foreign well-known marks have “constructive priority” over domestic marks. This idea squares nicely within the U.S. policy of “first in the marketplace” because even if the foreign well-known mark is not used domestically, the relevant domestic consumer base is already familiar with it.

Furthermore, protecting foreign well-known marks advances the two bedrock principles of trademark law: (1) protecting consumers from “palming-off” and (2) protecting businesses that invest time and money in their trademarks. A hypothetical best illustrates how protecting foreign well-known marks advances these key trademark principles.

Assume a Chinese company has invested significant resources in a trademarked soy sauce, Dragon Soy Sauce. Further assume that Dragon Soy Sauce is well-known in San Francisco, California, a consumer market within the United States, despite not being sold there. If a trademark pirate began producing a soy sauce using inferior materials and bearing the Dragon Soy Sauce trademark in San Francisco,
confused consumers could fall ill. Allowing the trademark pirate to use the Dragon Soy Sauce trademark clearly disregards the first principle above because it fails to protect U.S. consumers from the trademark pirate's palming-off. Furthermore, allowing this unscrupulous business practice impairs the authentic Chinese company's investment in its Dragon Soy Sauce trademark in two ways. First, Dragon Soy Sauce's reputation will be damaged by the confused consumers. Second, if the Chinese company begins selling the authentic Dragon Soy Sauce in the San Francisco area, it will find the trademark pirate has destroyed the good will Dragon Soy Sauce had developed and invested in. While protecting a foreign business's investment in a trademark in the United States may not seem particularly important in a solely domestic context, in an international context, it is extremely important. U.S. businesses must compete in an increasingly global marketplace and if the United States wants to protect U.S. well-known marks abroad, it must extend reciprocal protection to foreign well-known marks.

B. Second Circuit Application v. Ninth Circuit Application

The United States Court of Appeals for the Second and Ninth Circuits are currently split over whether foreign well-known marks are protectable under U.S. law. In Grupo, the Ninth Circuit applied the well-known marks doctrine within the United States, pointing to consumer fraud, among other concerns. Conversely, the Second Circuit disagreed in ITC, narrowly reading the language of the Lanham Act, foreclosing the application of the well-known marks doctrine within the United States.

Common arguments against reading the well-known marks doctrine into U.S. law include (1) even if section 44 of the Lanham Act incorporates international treaties into U.S. law, the protection extended is limited to the express bounds of the

78 Compare Grupo, 391 F.3d 1088, with ITC Ltd. v. Punchgini, Inc., 482 F.3d 135 (2d Cir. 2007).
79 Grupo, 391 F.3d at 1088 ( "While the territoriality principle is a long-standing and important tradition within trademark law, it cannot be absolute. [Such a rule] would promote consumer confusion and fraud. Commerce crosses borders. In this nation of immigrants, so do people." ); see also Bunch, supra note 39, at 230–31 (discussing the Ninth Circuit's application of the well-known marks doctrine in the United States, after finding the territoriality principle could be excepted when a foreign mark is famous enough inside the United States that priority cannot be denied).
80 ITC, 482 F.3d at 162; see also Bunch, supra note 39, at 231–32 ( "The Second Circuit disagreed [with the plaintiff's argument based on section 43(a)(1)(A) of the Lanham Act], noting that while Congress has amended federal statutes several times to implement provisions of the TRIPS Agreement, it has not added the portion regarding well-known marks doctrine to federal law." ); Petitioner's Reply Brief at 1, ITC Ltd. v. Punchgini, Inc., 128 S. Ct. 288 (No. 06-1722) 2007 WL 2406502 (arguing the Second Circuit's "restricted" reading of section 44 of the Lanham Act was incorrect).
81 ITC, 482 F.3d at 163 ( "[W]e do not ourselves discern in the plain language of sections 44(b) and (h) of the Lanham Act a clear congressional intent to incorporate a famous marks exception into federal unfair competition law." ); but see MCCARTHY, supra note 1, § 29-4 ( "Because the statute did not recognize the [well-known marks] rule in so many words, the [ITC] court concluded that it was not a part of U.S. federal law . . . . While the court recognized that cogent policy arguments existed . . . .")
other provisions of the Lanham Act, the Lanham Act does not expressly protect foreign well-known marks, and (3) the well settled territoriality principle precludes adoption of the well-known marks doctrine because the well-known mark doctrine is extraterritorial in nature. Each of these arguments will be rebutted in turn.

First, section 44(b) of the Lanham Act clearly states,

Any person whose country of origin is a party to any convention or treaty relating to trademarks...to which the United States is also a party...shall be entitled to the benefits of this section...to the extent necessary to give effect to any provision of such convention, treaty or reciprocal law, in addition to the rights to which any owner of a mark is otherwise entitled by this chapter.

Admittedly, section 44 grants to foreign nationals “the benefits of this section.” If the statute stopped there, the argument that the rights granted pursuant to an international treaty were limited to the explicit language of the Lanham Act might be persuasive. The statute does not, however, stop there. Section 44 further explicitly extends to foreign nationals rights of “any provision” of a binding treaty “in addition to” the Lanham Act rights to which the foreign national would “otherwise [be] entitled.” Thus, courts cannot look solely to the Lanham Act as the basis for trademark rights when binding international agreements are applicable.

Second, contrary to the ITC court’s reading, the plain language of section 44 of the Lanham Act does allow a foreign rights holder to protect its well-known mark in the United States under any applicable treaty to which the United States is a signatory. The Second Circuit declined to follow this interpretation, even after considering its own precedent in Empresa Cubana Del Tabaco v. Culbro Corporation. Empresa signaled that a foreign well-known mark could be protected under the Lanham Act to the extent necessary to give effect to any provision of such convention...
in the United States.\textsuperscript{88} Notwithstanding this seemingly clear precedent, the ITC panel of the Second Circuit ultimately foreclosed the application of the well-known marks doctrine, concluding that neither the plain language of section 44 of the Lanham Act nor any stated Congressional intent authorized protection for foreign well-known marks.\textsuperscript{89} The argument that the well-known marks doctrine is not incorporated into the Lanham Act\textsuperscript{90} misreads the Act because section 44 plainly grants rights to foreigners pursuant to any treaty to which the United States is a party, whether or not the treaty provisions are explicitly amended into the Lanham Act.\textsuperscript{91} Thus, the Lanham Act does, in fact, protect foreign well-known marks. The mere fact that the Lanham Act’s protection is not express does not change the fact that foreign well-known marks are protectable under the Act.

Third, the well-known marks doctrine is not contrary to the well-settled concept of territoriality in U.S. trademark law. The well-known marks doctrine does not extend protection to all foreign marks; only those that have already have a constructive presence in the marketplace by virtue of consumers’ collective knowledge of the mark. The doctrine recognizes that some foreign marks are sufficiently well-known domestically to warrant protection even if there is no use by a rights holder.\textsuperscript{92} The well-known marks doctrine does not disrupt the territorial framework of the Lanham Act because it only protects a foreign well-known mark within a “relevant sector of the public.”\textsuperscript{93} The “relevant consumer market” is usually a geographical and market segment classification, \textit{i.e.}, a territorial limitation or a categorical limitation for a particular type of good or service.\textsuperscript{94} Even if, in the latter case, the categorical protection extends throughout the entire United States, it is still limited to the territorial borders of the United States: the foreign well-known mark would be protected just as a domestic mark, which is used throughout the country.\textsuperscript{95}
Not only are the arguments in favor of the Second Circuit’s analysis unpersuasive, adopting the Ninth Circuit’s approach brings the United States into compliance with its international treaty obligations. Universal adoption of the Ninth Circuit’s approach harmonizes U.S. trademark law with respect to the well-known marks doctrine across jurisdictions. The ubiquitous availability of protection for foreign well-known marks across the United States has the ancillary benefit of eliminating the problem of forum shopping that currently exists as a result of the split between the Second and Ninth Circuits.

C. Well-Known Mark Protection by U.S. Trading Partners

Much as the individual states serve as laboratories of democracy to test the effectiveness of various civic proposals, the E.U. currently fulfills an analogous role as a laboratory of trademark law. The E.U. strongly protects foreign well-known marks. The E.U. member countries are all members to the Paris Convention, Madrid Agreement, Madrid Protocol, and TRIPS Agreement. E.U. countries are also signatories to the European Communities Trademark Harmonization Directive ("Harmonization Directive") which encourages further protection of well-known marks. Article 4(2)(d) of the Harmonization Directive specifically protects well-known marks while referencing article 6bis of the Paris Convention. Additionally, the European Community Trademark System ("ECTS") allows trademark rights holders to effectively enforce their trademark rights across the multiple countries in the E.U. economic zone. The Harmonization Directive and the ECTS initiatives dovetail to provide comprehensive protection for well-known marks of one E.U. member country in another, thus creating a single region in the E.U. for trademark protection purposes. The European system has proven increasingly popular as evidenced by the rising number of annual registrations.
Admittedly, the E.U.'s experiment of endorsing foreign well-known mark protection does not, without more, compel U.S. adoption of such protective measures. The fact that the E.U. system has been in place for more than fifteen years, however, does suggest that there is some wisdom to protecting foreign well-known marks. Coupled with compelling foreign policy arguments, the case for foreign well-known mark protection is plain. Even China, historically known as a safe-haven for trademark pirates, has adopted measures to protect foreign well-known marks.\(^{106}\)

China has improved its record protecting well-known marks\(^{107}\) since its accession to the Paris Convention,\(^{108}\) Madrid Agreement,\(^{109}\) Madrid Protocol,\(^{110}\) and the TRIPS Agreement.\(^{111}\) China's current trademark law does not significantly differ on paper from United States trademark law\(^{112}\) with the notable exception that China has enacted a series of measures specifically aimed at protecting foreign well-known marks.\(^{113}\) Chinese courts are increasingly willing to enforce these measures to protect foreign well-known marks.\(^{114}\)

Importantly, recent decisions for Nike\(^{115}\) and

\(^{106}\)\textit{William Alford, To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offense: Intellectual Property Law in Chinese Civilization} 86 (Stanford Univ. Press 1995) (denoting China's ignominious title as the "single largest pirate worldwide"); \textit{see also Andrew Mertwa, The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Modern China} 167 (Cornell Univ. Press 2005) (discussing China's reputation as a clearinghouse for counterfeit and infringing goods with annual losses in China from such activity surpassing a billion U.S. dollars and in China there are nearly twice as many fraudulent products on the market as legitimate).

\(^{107}\)\textit{Mertwa, supra} note 106, at 170 (listing a primary trademark issue in China has been the enforcement of foreign marks, with the Chinese arguing that many foreign marks are not "well-known" within the Chinese population and therefore not protectable); \textit{see also Bird, supra} note 58, at 340 (arguing the 1992 Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and China led the significant improvement in Chinese intellectual property law).

\(^{108}\)\textit{See Paris Convention, supra} note 4 (listing China's accession to the Paris Convention); \textit{see also Mertwa, supra} note 1, at 42 (reporting China became a signatory to the Paris Convention in 1985).

\(^{109}\)\textit{See Madrid Agreement, supra} note 11 (listing China as a signatory).

\(^{110}\)\textit{See Madrid Protocol, supra} note 11 (listing China as a signatory).

\(^{111}\)\textit{See TRIPS Agreement, supra} note 4 (listing China as a signatory member of the TRIPS Agreement); \textit{see also Mertwa, supra} note 106, at 126–27 (suggesting the TRIPS Agreement was a useful tool for the Chinese to draft their intellectual property laws and the Chinese had demonstrated a willingness to go "beyond TRIPS").


Starbucks\textsuperscript{116} demonstrate China's commitment to the protection of American well-known marks.

The Chinese adopted the well-known marks doctrine under significant U.S. pressure that China protect U.S. businesses.\textsuperscript{117} The United States continues to be a vocal critic of China. In fact, the United States has gone to the extreme length of registering a WTO complaint, citing China for its nonconformity with the TRIPS Agreement\textsuperscript{118} and its failure to enforce intellectual property rights.\textsuperscript{119} The recent changes to Chinese trademark law effectively protect a U.S. well-known mark in China (at least on paper), but the reverse is still not true.

III. Proposal

Protection under U.S. trademark law should not extend to every foreign mark: only those that are well-known in a relevant consumer market. A minor amendment to the Lanham Act providing for protection of foreign well-known marks is the optimal way to ensure nationwide enforcement of the well-known marks doctrine. A Lanham Act amendment has the additional benefit of furthering U.S. intellectual property foreign policy.

A. Minor Amendment to the Lanham Act Would Protect Well-Known Marks

A statutory amendment incorporating the well-known marks doctrine would definitively place the doctrine within the canon of U.S. trademark law. A statutory amendment is also the most efficient means of obtaining uniform protection of foreign well-known marks. The alternative would be for each regional circuit court to decide the issue and come to the same conclusion. Clearly, as evidenced by the split

\textsuperscript{115} Id. at 371; see also Nike Wins Counterfeiting Lawsuit Against Chinese Shoemakers, Aug. 21, 2007, http://english.sina.com/business/1/2007/0821/122479.html (describing the judgment as “the latest victory for foreign companies seeking protection from rampant theft of copyrights and other intellectual property in China”).

\textsuperscript{116} Greene, supra note 114, at 384–86; see also Xinhua News Agency, Starbucks China Copycat Punished, Jan. 5, 2007, www.china.org.cn/business/2007-01/05/content_1195163.htm (reporting the details of the judgment and infringement incident leading to Starbucks bringing suit).


\textsuperscript{118} SPECIAL 301 REPORT, supra note 55, at 16, 20–23.

\textsuperscript{119} SPECIAL 301 REPORT, supra note 55, at 20–23; see also TED FISHMAN, CHINA, INC.: HOW THE RISE OF THE NEXT SUPERPOWER CHALLENGES AMERICA AND THE WORLD 236–37 (Scribner 2005) (arguing that China’s enforcement of IP laws is arbitrary and the “local governments are either directly or indirectly involved in supporting the trade in counterfeit goods”).
in authority between the Second and Ninth Circuits, this option has not worked.\(^{120}\) Furthermore, even if uniform judicial recognition of the doctrine were still plausible, nationwide litigation in each of the regional circuits would consume valuable judicial resources. Such litigation would also take a great deal of time, allowing the current uncertainty to persist. A statutory amendment avoids all of these problems: it has an immediate and discernable effect.

**B. Section 44 is the Appropriate Place for an Amendment**

Amending section 44 of the Lanham Act would effectively protect foreign well-known marks. Some commentators have suggested a well-known marks provision would be better placed in section 43, the Federal Trademark Dilution Act ("FTDA").\(^{121}\) Adding the well-known marks doctrine to section 43 would only serve to further confuse the well-known marks and the famous marks doctrines.\(^{122}\) Section 44 of the Lanham Act relates to adherence to, and incorporation of, international treaties in U.S. trademark law.\(^{123}\) For that reason, section 44 is where a well-known marks provision should be located.\(^{124}\) An explicit well-known marks provision in the Lanham Act should be placed in a section that already animates international treaties.\(^{125}\) Doing so would give immediate effect to the well-known marks protection envisioned by the signatories to the relevant international treaties.

**C. Proposed Statutory Amendment**

Any amendment to the Lanham Act incorporating the well-known marks doctrine should be made to subsection (h) of section 44. Section 44(h) addresses the protections afforded to foreign rights holders. Section 44(b), on the other hand, identifies the parties who may invoke the protections of an international treaty or the Lanham Act. The well-known marks doctrine concerns the source of authority to protect a foreign mark: not the identity of the owner. Thus, the well-known marks doctrine is properly included in section 44(h). Section 44(h) should be amended to read as follows:

Any person designated in subsection (b) of this section as entitled to the benefits and subject to the provisions of this chapter shall be entitled to effective protection against unfair competition, including protection of well-known marks under any convention or treaty to which the United States is a party and which relates to trademarks, and the remedies provided in this


\(^{121}\) *Gilson Lalonde*, supra note 3, at 1423 (arguing a proposed amendment to section 43 of the Lanham Act as the best location to place the well-known marks exception into U.S. law).

\(^{122}\) See supra part I.A.


\(^{124}\) See id.

\(^{125}\) Id.
chapter for infringement of marks shall be available so far as they may be appropriate in repressing acts of unfair competition.

Adding this language definitively incorporates the well-known marks doctrine into U.S. law and provides a means of redress for rights holders. First, foreign rights holders whose countries are signatories to a relevant treaty qualify under section 44(b) to invoke the protections of section 44(h). Second, the specific language of "protection of well-known marks" clearly denotes which doctrine the amended statute animates. Finally, the new language clearly signals that the Paris Convention and the TRIPS Agreement have effect within the United States. This language quiets the argument that the well-known marks doctrine has not been explicitly adopted into U.S. law.

CONCLUSION

The current status of the well-known marks doctrine is uncertain. It is important that Congress resolves this uncertainty and brings U.S. trademark law in accord with the United States' international obligations. This places the United States in a stronger global economic position. U.S. law has always recognized the trademark policy of protecting consumers and businesses, and a definitive adoption of the well-known marks doctrine recommits the United States to those goals.

126 See AIPLA Brief, supra note 44, at 10–11 (arguing the United States will be accused of breaching international obligations, ultimately undermining United States efforts to secure intellectual property rights for American companies abroad).

127 See MCCARTHY, supra note 1, §§ 2:19, 2:33 (observing that trademarks serve as important source designators for consumers and a protectable investment for businesses and have been protected historically for that reason under U.S. law).