



Competition Law Association

British Group of the
Ligue Internationale du Droit de la Concurrence
(International League for Competition Law)

www.competitionlawassociation.org.uk
www.ligue.org

GOLDING ESSAY PRIZE 2026

The CLA is offering a prize of £1000 to be awarded for an essay submitted on the following topic:

The rise of lookalike products (those mimicking the packaging or presentation of established brands) has sparked legal and commercial debate in the UK. Cases like *M&S v Aldi* and *Thatchers v Aldi* highlight the tension between competitive pricing strategies and the protection of brand identity. Are lookalike products a legitimate competitive strategy or a threat to brand identity?

The rise of lookalike products such as those that mimic the packaging, presentation, or overall "get-up" of established brands has sparked legal and commercial debate in the UK. These products often aim to benefit from the market recognition of well-known brands while offering consumers lower prices. However, they raise complex questions about intellectual property rights and fair competition.

*Recent cases such as *M&S v Aldi* (concerning Colin the Caterpillar cakes) and *Thatchers v Aldi* (involving cider branding) illustrate the tension between retailers seeking to offer affordable alternatives and brand owners striving to protect their distinctive identity. English law does not prohibit lookalikes outright, but brand owners may rely on passing off, trade mark infringement, or unfair competition claims to challenge them.*

From a legal standpoint, the success of such claims often hinges on whether consumers are likely to be misled or whether the lookalike product unfairly exploits the reputation of the original. Commercially, the proliferation of lookalikes may dilute brand value and consumer loyalty, even if no direct confusion occurs. As the market continues to favour value-driven choices, the question remains: are lookalike products a clever competitive tactic or a creeping erosion of brand distinctiveness?

The **Golding Essay Prize** is open to any:

- student (whether currently based in the UK or in a foreign jurisdiction) but excluding any student currently practising as a qualified lawyer, whether full-time or part-time; or

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- trainee solicitor, pupil barrister, devil barrister (from Scotland) or trainee patent and trade mark attorney; or
- qualified solicitor or barrister with less than 2 years PQE.

The entry qualifications apply as at 31 March 2026.

The essay shall be of a maximum length of 5000 words (inclusive of footnotes) and the **closing date for submission of entries is 31 March 2026**. Entries should be formatted on A4 in at least 11 point font and 1.5 spacing with footnotes at the bottom of the page, and submitted in electronic form to the **CLA Secretary: Sharon Horwitz** (sharon.horwitz@cma.gov.uk).

Entrants should please place a code word instead of their real name on the essay and include both the code word and real name, with confirmation that the author satisfies the entry qualifications, in the covering e-mail.

The panel of judges will be:

Giles Parsons (Chair)

Browne Jacobson LLP

Dr Luminita Olteanu

University of Warwick

Jamie Muir Wood

Hogarth Chambers

The decision of the judges is final and the CLA reserves the right not to award the prize if the judges consider that no entry is of a sufficiently high standard or to divide the prize between two or more entries if the judges so decide.

The CLA encourages all entrants to consider submitting their entries for publication and may lend support to the submission of the winning entry. The winning entry must only be published if it is identified on publication as having won the CLA's Golding Essay Prize. All entrants agree not to submit their entries for publication until after the judges have announced their decision.

Kind regards

Sharon Horwitz
Secretary