

# “Patent marking” as a signaling strategy: Impacts on perceived product innovativeness and innovation adoption

Jamal Eddine Azzam\*, David H. Henard\*\* and Stéphane Salgado\*

\*Toulouse School of Management, University Toulouse Capitole,  
TSM Research UMR 5303 CNRS (Toulouse, France)

\*\*North Carolina State University – Department of Business Management (Nelson Hall, USA)

## Abstract

### • *Research purposes*

Patent marking allows companies to communicate information to consumers about inventions implemented in their products. However, no research explored how customers react to such signalling strategy. This article explores under which conditions the patent marking acts as a signalling or communication strategy to promote the adoption of innovative products.

### • *Method*

An experimental study, based on products of different categories, was conducted with a representative sample of the French population (N=547).

### • *Results*

We show that patent marking enhances the perception of the constitutive dimensions of perceived product innovation (i.e., novelty and utility) by activating an inference in consumers' minds about the firm's ability to develop inventive, non-imitative, and technically superior products. As a result, consumers respond favourably, in terms of purchase intentions and propensity to pay a premium price, to products subject to patent marking. Our results also show that these effects vary according to consumer profile.

### • *Managerial implications*

Our results suggest that managers and entrepreneurs can use the patents protecting inventions embedded in their innovative products to make observable the technological benefits and attributes of the latter and thus facilitate their adoption by consumers.

### • *Originality*

The originality of this article is twofold. On the one hand, it suggests patent marking as a novel strategy for signalling innovative products and explains to what extent it contributes to the construction of their innovativeness as perceived by consumers. On the other hand, it shows that patent marking allows crossing the chasm separating the niche market from the mass market by promoting the adoption of innovation by pragmatic consumers.

• **Keywords:** innovative products adoption, patent marking, signalling theory, patents, marketing strategy.

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To contact the author: jamal-eddine.azzam@tsm-education.fr ; stephane.salgado@tsm-education.fr

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