

Report on Research Study on the Actual Utilization of Trademarks

Trademarks are the basis of consumer activities, as they provide consumers with clues to identify the providers of goods and services and to judge the quality of goods and services, etc. For businesses, on the other hand, trademarks are key to brand strategy, and trademark rights are gaining importance as a means of maintaining and strengthening customer trust.

Since the Japanese trademark system is based on the first-to-file system, it is necessary for a corporation or an individual to obtain its own rights to protect the trademarks it uses. However, only 35,000 of the total 3,365,000 SMEs (as of June 2021) have filed trademark applications in 2022 (about 1% of the total). In light of this, it cannot be said that awareness of the need to obtain trademark rights has spread into every corner of SMEs yet.

And considering that SMEs include not only manufacturers and sellers of products but also various other types of businesses, such as service providers, B to B businesses and start-ups, there are still many aspects of the actual utilization of trademarks by SMEs that are not yet clear.

In addition, in recent years the government has been focusing its efforts on the creation of start-ups. Although it can be said that trademark rights are essential intellectual property rights for startups to ensure stable business activities, there are many aspects of the actual utilization of trademarks by startups that have not been fully understood.

Therefore, this research study was conducted with the aim of clarifying the utilization of the trademark system by SMEs or start-ups, as well as specific examples of trademark utilization, especially from the perspective of the effectiveness of obtaining trademark rights and the diversity of users. Specifically, after conducting a survey of publicly disclosed information, a questionnaire survey and an interview survey were conducted to collect the real voices of companies and organizations that seem to be effectively utilizing the trademark system, which were then organized and analyzed.