



Plagiarism complaints Case study 1

Using someone else's paper as a template

Authors Alpha and Beta contacted the publisher (Elsevier) to complain that their paper A, a study of a particular regional product which had been published in Elsevier Journal A, had been published almost verbatim by an online journal B, by authors Gamma and Delta. Gamma and Delta substituted a different country name than the one used by authors Alpha and Beta, and although they substituted different numbers throughout the text of paper B they failed to change the figures used in one of the tables (retaining the data used in paper A). They also failed to cite author Alpha and Beta's previous research.

Prior to contacting Elsevier, Alpha and Beta contacted the editor of Journal B directly, who in turn contacted Gamma and Delta with the substance of the complaint. Gamma and Delta responded saying that "they really did not want to steal Alpha and Beta's work but just to use it as a template", and that "their academic environment is very competitive and sometimes researchers use research ideas of previous ones". In consultation with the editor of Journal A, the publishing editor contacted the editor of Journal B, saying the situation was unacceptable and demanding that the paper B be retracted. The editor of Journal B agreed to remove paper B from the website, but his request to Alpha and Beta to review a revised version of the paper from Gamma and Delta was refused.