

# World Expo 2020 - Licensing Opportunities and Challenges

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Dubai has already stated that it is to be the largest expo in history. In brief, the Expo is held every five years and is the world's largest and oldest world fair. Countries from all around the world participate and exhibit innovations and discuss and share ideas on issues of international importance. Amongst the many advantages for the hosting city, the World Expo is a strong catalyst for economic growth, and creates great investment opportunities.

The organizing committee involved with the Dubai Expo is fully aware of the responsibilities and challenges they are facing. To commemorate this big event they have chosen the theme "Connecting Mind, Creating the Future". The emirate, which has earmarked \$7 billion in capital spending for the event, has planned a 4.4 square kilometre exhibition site at Jebel Ali, close to the emirate's new Al-Maktoum International Airport. Hosting Expo 2020 is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and one that will be maximized to accelerate the growth of several industries in Dubai.

## **Licensing opportunities - Use of the Expo's marks**

Like any major event such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup and the Super Bowl, most revenues are generated from licensing around the event's trademarks, logos and slogans. For the purpose of the bid, and in order to gather votes, use of the Expo 2020 logo was freely allowed. However now that Dubai has been chosen as the host city, significant market share can be achieved through the use of the logo and distributors are vying to be exclusive licensees for the purpose of producing and offering goods and services displaying the Expos 2020 design and slogans. As an acting duty of the special committee set up for the Expo 2020 events, the organizers are required to find official commercial partners, sponsors, suppliers and licensees allowing them use of the trademarks and slogans associated to Expo 2020. Finding appropriate commercial partners, sponsors, suppliers and licensees is not an easy task, since as in any commercial relationship in order for a business collaboration to succeed, a common vision needs to be shared, and significant preparation and vigilance before, during and after such an event is required.

Similar to the countries who have in the past hosted the Olympic games and Expo events, the UAE is likely to enact specific legislation to protect a number of words and logos associated with the Expo. As with any major event, there is a real prospect of companies who are not official sponsors or commercial partners attempting to use the event's IP for their own gain without paying sponsorship fees. This is often referred to as 'piggy-backing' or 'ambush marketing'.

## **How to effectively protect the brand**

IP protection comprises of Trademark, Copyrights, Industrial Designs and Patent protection. Through Expo 2020, we will witness an influx of goods and services emerging into the market to take advantage of the expected 25 million Expo visitors. The best way to combat counterfeiting and unauthorized sellers is to register all trade names, marks, designs, logos and slogans so that they are enforceable in case of infringement. The brand owners must then closely monitor the activities taking place in the market. The brand owners as well as the sponsors and licensees share an equal duty of vigilance in order to safeguard

their interests.