

AI SUMMIT



Verification Before Visibility: Managing Risk at Exhibitions

Wednesday Wisdom
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1. Introduction[1]:

Exhibitions are more than just industry gatherings; they are curated theatres of innovation, credibility, and trust. Every stall, prototype, and live demonstration is designed to broadcast a single, powerful message: authenticity. But what happens when the curtain is pulled back to reveal that the display is not what it appears to be?

Recently, Galgotias University[2] found itself under the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. The university showcased 'Orion,' a robotic dog presented as a product of its Centre of Excellence. However, the applause was short-lived. Soon media and participants pointed out striking similarities to mass-produced Chinese models, sparking a debate that moved rapidly from technical specs to something of far more fragile institutional credibility.

When a "homegrown" breakthrough is revealed to be a rebranded import, the damage isn't just local. It casts a shadow of doubt over every legitimate student project and faculty achievement within that institution[3].

Every month, thousands of trade fairs, academic showcases, and cultural markets take place across the country. From "handwoven" Pashmina shawls and "authentic" Kolhapuri chappals to artisanal crafts and new-age technologies. Many products carry the weight of Geographical Indication (GI) status, heritage value, or "Make in India" branding. But beneath the glossy signage, a critical question lingers: **How often are these claims actually verified?**

[1] The article reflects the general work of the author on the date of publication and the views expressed are personal. No reader should act on any statement contained herein without seeking detailed professional advice.

[2] <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/ai-summit-galgotias-universitys-booth-was-bigger-than-that-of-four-iits-how-much-did-the-scandal-hit-varsity-pay-11771638444321.html>

[3] <https://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/vir-das-reacts-to-galgotias-university-ai-summit-robotdog-fiasco-encourages-everyone-to-adopt-an-indie-dog-101771413991550.html>



Too often, authenticity is treated as a marketing label rather than a verifiable fact. In the rush to fill exhibition halls, the rigorous vetting process, the "due diligence" is frequently bypassed in favour of visual appeal. This is a risk which can affect every exhibition's **legal and reputational liability**.

2. Beyond Optics: The Cost of Unverified Claims

The consequences of misplaced trust are rarely confined to embarrassment.

- **If a product's origin is falsely claimed, questions of misrepresentation arise**
- **If ownership is unclear, intellectual property disputes follow**
- **If consumers are misled, regulatory action may follow**

What begins as a showcase can quickly turn into a compliance problem. From a legal standpoint, exhibition displays are not casual statements but they are representations made to the public. In many cases, they influence commercial decisions. That makes them legally significant.

False or misleading claims may trigger following:

- contractual disputes for misrepresentation
- consumer protection complaints for deceptive practices
- intellectual property infringement claims
- or regulatory scrutiny for unfair trade practices

Even where no formal proceeding is initiated, the reputational fallout can be immediate. Social media radar, press coverage, and stakeholder distrust can damage an organiser more quickly than any court order. For institutions, startups, or trade bodies, credibility is capital. Once eroded, it is extraordinarily expensive to rebuild.

3. The Due Diligence Gap

Most exhibition failures do not stem from deliberate deception. They arise from something far more mundane - complacency. Most often the

- Deadlines are tight.
- Participants register late.
- Organisers rely on informal assurances.
- Documentation is skipped for convenience.

Products arrive, booths are set up, banners go live and verification quietly disappears from the process. Exhibitors often assume that responsibility lies solely with the vendor or participant making the claim. Legally and practically, that assumption is flawed. The moment an organiser provides space, branding, and institutional backing, it shares the risk attached to those claims.



Stage	Key Question	Risk if ignored	Recommended Safeguard	Legal/Practical Benefit
Ownership	Who owns the product or technology?	Ownership disputes, takedown demands, litigation	Written ownership declaration	Establishes chain of title and accountability
Origin Claims	Is the “developed in-house / indigenous / GI / licensed” claim substantiated?	Misrepresentation, consumer complaints, reputational harm	Documentary proof (invoices, GI certificate, development records)	Reduces exposure to deceptive trade practice allegations
Intellectual Property	Are patents, copyrights, trademarks, or designs properly registered or licensed?	IP infringement claims, injunctions, damages	Copies of registrations or licence agreements	Demonstrates lawful use and good-faith compliance
Third-Party Content	Does the product incorporate third-party components or software?	Unauthorized use, contractual breaches	Disclosure of third-party dependencies	Clarifies liability boundaries
Representations	What exactly is being promised to visitors or investors?	Claims of false advertising or inducement	Written representations and warranties in agreements	Creates contractual recourse



Liability Allocation	Who bears risk if a claim turns out false?	Organiser dragged into disputes	Detailed Indemnity clauses to be incorporated in agreement	Shifts financial risk to responsible party
Documentation	Are claims supported by records? Or whether all Compliance documents are available	Inability to defend allegations	Mandatory document submission before approval	Enables demonstrable due diligence
Display Controls	Can organisers intervene if something is misleading?	Continued public harm and regulatory action	Right to inspect, modify, or withdraw exhibits	Immediate corrective control
Disclaimers	Are collaborative or sourced products clearly labelled?	Visitor confusion, implied endorsement issues	Clear booth-level disclaimers can be incorporated in materials provided to visitors and guests to clarify that the products displayed within stalls are owner's purview exclusively	Limits implied liability
Monitoring	Is there oversight during the event?	misrepresentation after set up of booths	Compliance checks during exhibition	Preventive risk management



When treated as a checklist rather than an afterthought, due diligence becomes less of a legal burden and more of an operational safeguard.

5. Conclusion: Verification Is Not Optional

Every display, claim, and demonstration is a representation to the public and representations carry legal as well as reputational consequences. When authenticity is assumed rather than verified, many risks come along. Most exhibition failures are not caused by fraud. They arise from skipped check lists, informal assurances, and the mistaken belief that responsibility lies only with the exhibitor. It does not.

Due diligence, therefore, is not paperwork or procedural delay. It is fundamental risk management a set of simple safeguards that protect not only against liability, but against the far greater loss of trust.

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