VLP Partner Char Pagar Quoted in Law360 Article “Rio Olympics Pose Tantalizing Minefield for Advertisers”

VLP Partner Char Pagar was quoted in the *Law360* article, “Rio Olympics Pose Tantalizing Minefield for Advertisers.” The article analyzes some key issues facing advertisers as they look to capitalize on the millions of viewers who will be watching the Summer Olympic Games in Rio kicking off this Friday.

The Olympics should be an advertiser’s dream, with potentially billions of viewers around the world watching their countries compete. However, companies need to be careful as they approach advertising strategies surrounding the Olympics so as to avoid infringing on trademarks and sponsorship deals. While the IOC has relaxed some rules surrounding athlete sponsors and advertising, it is still aggressively monitoring the use of its trademarks.

According to Char Pagar, “I’m sure there are companies who are having those discussions right now – how to take advantage of the conversation that is going on when the Olympics begins without crossing that line of usurping IOC or USOC intellectual property.”

The IOC and USOC are well-known for enforcing their intellectual property rights, and that doesn’t stop at the use of the word Olympics or the interlocking rings symbol. They also own the rights to phrases such as “Olympiad,” “Go for the Gold” and “Let the Games Begin.”

While there are only a few Worldwide Olympic Sponsors who can capitalize on the trademarked Olympic words and phrases, the relaxed rules surrounding athlete endorsement deals do allow some nonofficial sponsors of individual athletes to use those Olympic athletes in generic advertising that does not use any Olympic marks. Ms. Pagar noted that this kind of nonofficial sponsor advertising had to be approved in January, so companies who planned ahead with their marketing strategies should already have those approvals in place.

She also notes that these relaxed rules, regarding sponsors of Olympic athletes who are not official sponsors could result in some pressure on the IOC and the USOC from the companies who have paid a lot of money to be official sponsors. Such pressure – if there is any – has not been publicly mentioned by either official sponsors or the IOC/USOC.

“I think it will be interesting to see this year that sort of balance between wanting to be a part of the conversation when you are an advertiser and also not wanting to create liability for yourself. I think it will be interesting to see how that plays out this year,” Ms. Pagar concluded.