



Smart Ringleader: Could Ōura's Market Dominance Be Under Threat?

World IP Review

Sarah Speight

September 4, 2025

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It's the battle of the smart rings—those finger-worn health and fitness trackers—and Finnish brand Ōura is leading the charge.

The latest shot across the bows was filed by Ōura yesterday, September 3, with another complaint filed against rival Ultrahuman, this time alleging infringement of five US patents in Texas.

The move follows Ultrahuman's countersuit in India, after Ōura secured a ban on sales in the US of both Ultrahuman's and another rival's smart rings, after a finding of patent infringement by the US International Trade Commission (ITC).

Tensions have been building since 2023, when 'first mover' Ōura—which had an 80% market share in that same year—sued Ultrahuman, RingConn and Circular in the US.

Ōura, founded in 2013, was valued at \$5.2 billion in 2024—[more than double](#) its value since 2022 and is arguably the market leader in the smart ring category.

But has it employed overly aggressive IP strategies? And could its crown as the market leader now be under threat?

After the ITC filing, Ōura settled its dispute with French company Circular in June 2024, by granting a multi-year licence.

Still, Samsung, appearing nervous of potential competition, preemptively sued Oura in California for declaratory judgment on its Galaxy Ring, launched in 2024. This was dismissed and Samsung is appealing that decision at the Federal Circuit.

US ITC ban

The rivals—Indian startup Ultrahuman and Chinese company RingConn—received exclusion and cease-and-desist orders barring their smart rings and components from being imported into and sold in the US market.

On the same day (August 22), Ultrahuman retaliated with a countersuit at Delhi High Court, accusing Ōura of infringing its own Indian patent, covering the Ultrahuman Ring AIR, with the Ōura Ring 4.

In the manner of previous public campaigns by other brands ([Optis v Apple](#), [Kizik v Skechers](#)), Ultrahuman [said in a blog](#): “Threatened by our success, Ōura has blatantly copied our advanced intellectual property, including women’s health features, circadian health tools, and glucose monitoring platform, thereby benefiting from our investment in public health without a licence to do so.”

But the court swiftly dismissed this for failure to disclose key information from the ITC case regarding Ultrahuman’s patent validity, and ordered Ultrahuman to refile.

The patent at issue is Oura’s US 11,868,178, issued in January 2024, which describes “a finger-worn wearable ring device”.

Heavy is the head

Tech patent attorney [Josh Budwin](#), a principal at McKool Smith, argues that Ōura’s IP strategy is healthy rather than aggressive.

“Ōura was the first mover with the patents to protect its product. Ultrahuman and RingConn are later-comers seeking to ride Ōura’s coattails.”

Patents, he notes, are supposed to give innovators—here Ōura—market exclusivity for a limited time period.

“Both Ultrahuman and RingConn had a full and fair chance to challenge validity and infringement, in addition to ITC-specific issues,” Budwin says. “In my view, they were rightfully determined to be infringers of a valid patent.”

He adds: “Ultrahuman makes a big deal about the fact that Ōura actually acquired the patent—instead it prevailed on it. It wasn’t, as they call it, a ‘homegrown’ patent. Technically, that doesn’t matter, but the optics for that maybe aren’t so good at whatever the next step of the case happens to be.”

Budwin also points out that Ōura's '178 patent is subject to a post-grant review in the US, filed by Samsung. "So there's a significant likelihood that when that post-grant review decision comes out, it could hold the patent, including the claims that Ōura prevailed on, to be invalid."

'Knee-jerk reaction'

So how much of a threat to Ōura is Ultrahuman's countersuit in India?

Budwin views it as a "knee-jerk reaction by Ultrahuman seeking to get some 'home field' advantage."

Pointing to Ultrahuman's evidence at the ITC, Budwin says this was "fabrication to suggest it had a domestic presence in Texas when, in reality, it is a third-party facility."

In response to the ALJ's initial determination, Ultrahuman stated that it is already making 40% of its rings at a third-party facility in Plano, Texas, and aims to ramp that up to 80% or more.

Budwin notes that if Ultrahuman can supply its products from a domestic source, it falls outside the exclusion order, which only bans the importation of foreign goods.

He also suggests a possible link between the Delhi High Court dismissal and the Administrative Law Judge's [ALJ's] determination, which found Ultrahuman's CEO's testimony to be non-credible.

More preemptive strikes?

Given this background, and Ōura's victory, Samsung may be able to gain traction with the requisite threat of a suit, with respect to Ōura's '178 patent, suggests Budwin. "But, we don't know if Ōura and Samsung have reached any type of agreement or are simply awaiting the other to make a move."

There could be another challenger to Ōura, too. "Post-grant proceedings have to be filed within nine months after patent issuance," he states. "In late August, an unnamed third party filed a request for *ex-parte* re-examination with the patent office."

RingConn requested an *inter partes* review (IPR) of the '178 patent, but that was discretionarily denied in favour of the Samsung post-grant review.

"Basically, the patent office said the Samsung post-grant review and the ITC [decisions] will both be resolved before [then], therefore [it denied] the IPR," he adds.

"So there is this parallel attack at the patent office for Samsung and the post-grant proceedings, and potentially—even with the IPR being denied—a third type of proceeding at the patent office, this *ex-parte* review."