

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

American Airlines, Inc. v. Ladio Gastelum
Case No. D2022-1403

1. The Parties

The Complainant is American Airlines, Inc., United States of America (“United States”), represented by Greenberg Traurig, LLP, United States.

The Respondent is Ladio Gastelum, Honduras.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <usairwaysmastercard.com> is registered with Tecnologia, Desarrollo Y Mercado S. de R.L. de C.V. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on April 19, 2022. On April 20, 2022, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On May 5, 2022, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on May 5, 2022, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on May 9, 2022.

The Center sent an email communication in English and Spanish to the parties on May 5, 2022, regarding the language of the proceeding, as the Complaint has been submitted in English and the language of the registration agreement for the disputed domain name is Spanish. The Complainant submitted a request for English to be the language of the proceeding in an amended Complaint on May 9, 2022. The Respondent did not comment on the language of the proceeding.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on May 10, 2022. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was May 30, 2022. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on June 1, 2022.

The Center appointed Edoardo Fano as the sole panelist in this matter on June 7, 2022. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

The Panel has not received any requests from the Complainant or the Respondent regarding further submissions, waivers or extensions of deadlines, and the Panel has not found it necessary to request any further information from the Parties.

Having reviewed the communication records in the case file provided by the Center, the Panel finds that the Center has discharged its responsibility under the Rules, paragraph 2(a), "to employ reasonably available means calculated to achieve actual notice to the Respondent". Therefore, the Panel shall issue its Decision based upon the Complaint, the Policy, the Rules, and the Supplemental Rules and without the benefit of a response from the Respondent.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is American Airlines, Inc., a United States airline, owning several trademark registrations for US AIRWAYS, among which:

- United States Trademark No. 2360851 for US AIRWAYS and design, registered on June 20, 2000;
- United States Trademark No. 2368986 for US AIRWAYS and design, registered on July 18, 2000.

The Complainant operates on the Internet at the main website "www.aa.com", to which its domain name <usairways.com> redirects, as well as with many other domain names incorporating the trademark US AIRWAYS.

The Complainant also offers a variety of premium co-branded credit card products in connection with Mastercard.

The Complainant provided evidence in support of the above.

According to the Whois records, the disputed domain name was registered on January 7, 2021, and when the Complaint was filed the disputed domain name redirected to a website diverting Internet users to various third parties' websites through an affiliate advertising program.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant states that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to its trademark US AIRWAYS, as the disputed domain name wholly contains the Complainant's trademark with the addition of the term "mastercard".

Moreover, the Complainant asserts that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name since it has not been authorized by the Complainant to register the disputed domain name or to use its trademark within the disputed domain name, it is not commonly known by the disputed domain name and it is not making either a *bona fide* offering of goods or services or a legitimate

noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name.

The Complainant submits that the Respondent has registered the disputed domain name in bad faith, since the Complainant's trademark US AIRWAYS is internationally known in the airline field. Therefore, the Respondent targeted the Complainant's trademark at the time of registration of the disputed domain name and the Complainant contends that the use of the disputed domain name with the purpose of intentionally attempting to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to the Respondent's website by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's trademark as to the disputed domain name's source, sponsorship, affiliation or endorsement, qualifies as bad faith registration and use.

Finally, the Complainant suspects that the Respondent might also use the disputed domain name in connection with phishing or fraudulent email communications, since the MX records attached to the disputed domain name have been activated.

B. Respondent

The Respondent has made no reply to the Complainant's contentions and is in default. In reference to paragraphs 5(f) and 14 of the Rules, no exceptional circumstances explaining the default have been put forward or are apparent from the record.

A respondent is not obliged to participate in a proceeding under the Policy, but if it fails to do so, reasonable facts asserted by a complainant may be taken as true, and appropriate inferences, in accordance with paragraph 14(b) of the Rules, may be drawn (see, e.g., *Reuters Limited v. Global Net 2000, Inc.*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0441](#); *Microsoft Corporation v. Freak Films Oy*, WIPO Case No. [D2003-0109](#); *SSL International PLC v. Mark Freeman*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-1080](#); *Altavista Company v. Grandtotal Finances Limited et. al.*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0848](#); *Confédération Nationale du Crédit Mutuel, Caisse Fédérale du Crédit Mutuel Nord Europe v. Marketing Total S.A.*, WIPO Case No. [D2007-0288](#)).

6. Discussion and Findings

6.1 Language of Proceeding

According to paragraph 11(a) of the Rules, the Panel decides that the language of the proceeding will be English. The language of the Registration Agreement of the disputed domain name is Spanish. The Complainant has requested English to be the language of the proceeding since the disputed domain name consists of English characters and on the website at the disputed domain name the content is in English. The Panel finds that it would be not only unnecessary but also unfair, both economically and timewise, to request the Complainant to translate the Complaint. Furthermore, the Respondent did not comment to the Complainant's request to use English. See WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 4.5.1.

6.2 Substantive Issues

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy lists three elements, which the Complainant must satisfy in order to succeed:

- (i) the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights; and
- (ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name; and
- (iii) the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

The Panel finds that the Complainant is the owner of the trademark US AIRWAYS both by registration and acquired reputation and that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the trademark US AIRWAYS.

Regarding the addition of the term “mastercard”, the Panel notes that it is now well established that the addition of terms or letters to a domain name does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the trademark (see, e.g., *Aventis Pharma SA., Aventis Pharma Deutschland GmbH v. Jonathan Valicenti*, WIPO Case No. [D2005-0037](#); *Red Bull GmbH v. Chai Larbthanasub*, WIPO Case No. [D2003-0709](#); and *America Online, Inc. v. Dolphin@Heart*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0713](#)). The addition of the term “mastercard” does not therefore prevent the disputed domain name from being confusingly similar to the Complainant’s trademark. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

It is also well accepted that a generic Top-Level Domain (“gTLD”), in this case “.com”, is typically ignored when assessing the similarity between a trademark and a domain name. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has therefore met its burden of proving that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Complainant’s trademark, pursuant to the Policy, paragraph 4(a)(i).

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy requires the Complainant to prove that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name.

The Respondent may establish a right or legitimate interest in the disputed domain name by demonstrating in accordance with paragraph 4(c) of the Policy any of the following circumstances, in particular but without limitation:

- “(i) before any notice to you of the dispute, your use of, or demonstrable preparations to use, the domain name or a name corresponding to the domain name in connection with a *bona fide* offering of goods or services; or
- (ii) you (as an individual, business, or other organization) have been commonly known by the domain name, even if you have acquired no trademark or service mark rights; or
- (iii) you are making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the domain name, without intent for commercial gain to misleadingly divert consumers or to tarnish the trademark or service mark at issue.”

According to paragraph 4(a) of the Policy, the Complainant has the burden of proving the three elements of the Policy. However, satisfying the burden of proving a lack of the Respondent’s rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name according to paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy is potentially quite difficult, since proving a negative circumstance is always more complicated than establishing a positive one. As such, it is well accepted that it is sufficient for the Complainant to make a *prima facie* case that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in order to shift the burden of production to the Respondent. If the Respondent fails to demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in accordance with paragraph 4(c) of the Policy or on any other basis, the Complainant is deemed to have satisfied paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

The Complainant in its Complaint, and as set out above, has established a *prima facie* case that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. It asserts that the Respondent is not currently associated with the Complainant in any way, is not commonly known by the disputed domain name and is not making a *bona fide* offering of goods or services or a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name: the Respondent, in the website at the disputed

domain name, was diverting Internet users to various third parties' websites through an affiliate advertising program, an activity capitalizing on the Complainant's trademark and reputation.

The *prima facie* case presented by the Complainant is enough to shift the burden of production to the Respondent to demonstrate that it has rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. However, the Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant's *prima facie* case. The Respondent has not presented any evidence of any rights or legitimate interests it may have in the disputed domain name, and the Panel is unable to establish any such rights or legitimate interests on the basis of the evidence in front of it.

Moreover, noting that the Complainant offers a variety of premium co-branded credit card products in connection with Mastercard, the Panel finds that the composition of the disputed domain name carries a risk of implied affiliation as it effectively impersonates or suggests sponsorship or endorsement by the Complainant. See [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.5.1.

The Panel therefore finds that paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy has been satisfied.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy provides that "[...] for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, the following circumstances, in particular but without limitation, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith:

(i) circumstances indicating that [the Respondent has] registered or has acquired the domain name primarily for the purpose of selling, renting, or otherwise transferring the domain name registration to the Complainant who is the owner of the trademark or service mark or to a competitor of the Complainant, for valuable consideration in excess of its documented out-of-pocket costs directly related to the domain name; or

(ii) that [the Respondent has] registered the domain name in order to prevent the owner of the trademark or service mark from reflecting the mark in a corresponding domain name, provided that [the Respondent has] engaged in a pattern of such conduct; or

(iii) that [the Respondent has] registered the domain name primarily for the purpose of disrupting the business of a competitor; or

(iv) that by using the domain name, [the Respondent has] intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to [the Respondent's] website or other online location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of [the Respondent's] website or location or of a product or service on [the Respondent's] website or location".

Regarding the registration in bad faith of the disputed domain name, the reputation of the Complainant's trademark US AIRWAYS in the airline field is clearly established and the Panel finds that the Respondent likely knew of the Complainant and deliberately registered the disputed domain name in order to take unfair advantage of, abuse, or otherwise engage in behavior detrimental to the Complainant's trademark.

The Panel further notes that the disputed domain name is also used in bad faith since on the relevant website the Respondent is diverting Internet traffic to third parties' websites featuring advertising for unrelated products and services through an affiliate advertising program, with the purpose of intentionally attempting to create a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's trademark as to the disputed domain name's source, sponsorship, affiliation or endorsement.

The above suggests to the Panel that the Respondent intentionally registered and is using the disputed domain name in order to create confusion with the Complainant's trademark and attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its website in accordance with paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy.

Moreover, since the MX records attached to the disputed domain name have been activated, the Panel

deems that there is a risk that the disputed domain name could be used for phishing activities.

Finally, the Panel considers that the nature of the disputed domain name, which includes the Complainant's trademark in its entirety with the addition of the term "mastercard", consisting of a brand name often object of collaborations with the Complainant, further supports a finding of bad faith. See, [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.2.1.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has presented evidence to satisfy its burden of proof with respect to the issue of whether the Respondent has registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith.

The Panel therefore finds that paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy has been satisfied.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <usairwaysmastercard.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Edoardo Fano/

Edoardo Fano

Sole Panelist

Date: June 21, 2022