

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Salt+Pine, LLC v. Milissa Ching, Salt + Pine
Case No. D2025-5259

1. The Parties

Complainant is Salt+Pine, LLC, United States of America (“United States”), represented by The Milian Legal Group PLLC, United States.

Respondent is Milissa Ching, Salt + Pine, United States.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <saltandpine.com> (the “Domain Name”) is registered with GoDaddy.com, LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on December 16, 2025. On December 17, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Domain Name. On December 17, 2025, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response confirming that Respondent is listed as the registrant and providing additional contact details.

The Center verified that the 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 Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on December 23, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was January 12, 2026. Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified Respondent’s default on January 13, 2026.

The Center appointed Robert A. Badgley as the sole panelist in this matter on January 20, 2026. 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.

4. Factual Background

Complainant is a home staging and interior design company located in the state of Rhode Island, United States. According to the affidavit of one of Complainant's two owners, Complainant is a "top-rated business known throughout the state of Rhode Island". This affiant also states that, since 2022 Complainant has won various industry awards and has been featured in media publications. By way of example, annexed to the Complaint is a July 11, 2024 article in *FIXR* bearing the headline "50 Top Home Staging Experts", which article refers to Complainant, as well as a February 27, 2023 article in *The Bay* (a Rhode Island periodical) featuring Complainant and its services.

In the Complaint, Complainant alleges:

"Since its inception, Complainant has been featured in notable media outlets and publications including HGTV, Architectural Digest, The Bay, and Apartment Therapy. It has been recognized by RESA 2025 Home Staging Industry Awards, 'Top 100 Most Influential People in Real Estate Staging' 2025, FIXR 2025 'Top Expert Home Staging Industry', 'FIXR 50 Top Home Staging Experts Leading the Industry 2024, FIXR 30 Home Stagers Driving the Industry Forward 2023, Top 100 Most Influential People in Real Estate Staging' 2023, 'Top Ten Vacant Staging USA' 2024- 2025, 'Best Vacant Staging USA' 2023, 'Top Ten Vacant Staging Team USA' 2022." [...]

"Complainant also maintains an engaged social media presence, including an Instagram account with approximately 4.1K followers, and a Pinterest account that receives 24.6K monthly views. In addition, Complainant has earned thirty-one 5-star Google reviews, where satisfied customers consistently share positive feedback and appreciation for their services, with reviews dating back over four years to present."

Complainant provides various screenshots to corroborate the foregoing allegations.

Complainant registered the domain name <saltandpinehome.com> on April 3, 2021, and has used that domain name to promote its business (since at least December 2021, according to Internet Web Archives¹).

Complainant holds a registered trademark with the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("USPTO") for the word mark SALT + PINE, USPTO Reg. No.7,879,810, registered on August 5, 2025 in connection with, among other things, "Home staging consultation, namely, temporary interior and exterior home decoration consultation for the purpose of making homes more appealing to prospective buyers; Interior design consultation", with an April 16, 2021 claimed date of first use in commerce.

The Domain Name was first registered on July 21, 2011. Complainant alleges that the Domain Name was "registered July 21, 2011 by a prior user, on information and belief, which appears to be unaffiliated with Respondent registered July 22, 2025 by Respondent, whose previous domain [name] was [<saltxpine.com>]".

The Whois record for the Domain Name shows July 22, 2025 as an "Updated Date", but an Updated Date in the Whois record does not necessarily indicate that the Domain Name registrant has changed. Respondent has not denied the allegation that it first acquired the Domain Name on or around July 22, 2025 from a previous owner.

The Domain Name resolves to a website promoting Respondent's interior design business, emphasizing that Respondent serves the Pacific Northwest area (Respondent's home state of Washington is located in the northwest corner of the 48 contiguous United States.)

¹ Noting in particular the general powers of a panel articulated inter alia in paragraphs 10 and 12 of the Rules, it has been accepted that a panel may undertake limited factual research into matters of public record if it would consider such information useful to assessing the case merits and reaching a decision. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition (["WIPO Overview 3.0"](#)), section 4.8.

Complainant asserts that Respondent is a direct competitor of Complainant in the field of interior design and home décor. Complainant also alleges:

“Using the query ‘salt+pine interior design’ Google returned both parties’ websites in consecutive search results, creating a visual and industry association that is likely to confuse an ordinary consumer, and showing that Complainant and Respondent are direct competitors.”

The screenshot of the Google search is annexed to the Complaint.

Complainant alleges:

“Respondent has only recently adopted the SALT+PINE in 2024. On information and belief, Respondent previously conducted business under her own name, Milissa M. and in connection with Oak Hearth Homes.”

One of the pages on Respondent’s website states, under the header “Meet the Founder, Milissa M.”:

“As a New England native, Milissa fell in love with interior design while attending college in Boston. She realized early on that the home is the backdrop of everyday life and should be equal parts beautiful and functional. She loves creating spaces where families and friends come together.”

“Milissa has worked with the best of the best throughout her career including starting and running a successful design/build firm behind a hit HGTV show and partnering with top builder and remodeler, Oak Hearth Homes before launching her own interior design firm Salt + Pine NW.”

Complainant alleges further:

“On August 13, 2025, Complainant’s counsel served a cease-and-desist letter to Respondent via both e-mail and USPS Certified Mail, expressly notifying Respondent of its unlawful conduct; while the e-mail was returned undeliverable, the certified mail receipt confirms delivery. Despite this clear notice, Respondent took no corrective action. On August 22, 2025, Complainant’s attorneys sent direct messages to Respondent’s business and personal Instagram accounts, both of which were met with deliberate obstruction. Specifically, Respondent responded by blocking the law firm rather than addressing the infringement. Further, in September 2025, Complainant submitted formal takedown requests through Houzz, Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram. Rather than cease its infringing activity, Respondent continues its misconduct by persisting in the unauthorized use of the saltandpine domain and mark.”

5. Parties’ Contentions

A. Complainant

Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the Domain Name. Among other things, Complainant asserts:

“There was no legitimate reason for Respondent to decide to adopt a name identical to Complainant’s established mark. By the time Respondent sought to change the name of its business in 2024 and register the domain name on July 22, 2025, Complainant had already established trademark rights, including a registered trademark with the [USPTO]. Clearly, Respondent targeted Complainant and its brand, seeking to adopt and use a domain name identical to that of Complainant to trade off the goodwill of Complainant.”

“When a user types in the domain name [‘www.saltandpine.com’], they are brought to the homepage for Respondent. At that site, Respondent is clearly advertising its own interior design and home décor services, and using the name and mark SALT + PINE, in the same manner in which Complainant’s mark is registered, namely with the ‘+’ instead of the word ‘and’.”

B. Respondent

Respondent did not reply to Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy lists the three elements which Complainant must satisfy with respect to the Domain Name:

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

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

The Panel concludes that Complainant has rights in the trademark SALT + PINE through registration and use demonstrated in the record. The Panel also concludes that the Domain Name is confusingly similar to that mark. The mark is clearly recognizable within the Domain Name even though the Domain Name replaces the plus sign (“+”) with the word “and”.

Complainant has established Policy paragraph 4(a)(i).

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Pursuant to paragraph 4(c) of the Policy, Respondent may establish its rights or legitimate interests in the Domain Name, among other circumstances, by showing any of the following elements:

- (i) before any notice to you [Respondent] 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 [Respondent] (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 [Respondent] 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.

This is a difficult case, but not all difficult cases should result in the denial of a UDRP complaint, even while recognizing and accepting the maxim that the UDRP was designed to address clear cases of cybersquatting.

The Panel concludes, on the record provided, that Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the Domain Name. Respondent has not come forward, either in response to Complainant's cease-and-desist missives or in response to this UDRP Complaint, to articulate and substantiate any bona fide she may have vis-à-vis the Domain Name.

It appears from the undisputed record that Respondent operates an interior design business similar to Complainant's business, and it even appears that Respondent's business is real. On the other hand, there is nothing in the record to explain why Respondent should register a domain name nearly identical to the registered trademark of another firm in her very area of commerce (even if separated by more than 2,000 miles).

By her own account (her website content), Respondent states that she is from New England (where Rhode Island is located), that she has had a lifelong passion for home interior design and décor, and that she has worked with “the best of the best” in her industry. Given the fact that Complainant’s SALT + PINE business has garnered a number of industry awards in recent years, and given Respondent’s extensive experience in this field, and given the fact that the combination of the words “salt and pine” does not seem to have any obviously descriptive relationship to interior design and home décor, the Panel finds it more likely than not that Respondent did not just come upon this combination and this Domain Name on her own. It is, rather, that Panel’s finding that Respondent more likely than not was aware of Complainant’s mark when registering the Domain Name.

If this is an ultimately erroneous conclusion, the error could easily have been pointed out by Respondent, if she had replied to Complainant’s cease-and-desist missives, or, later, if she had replied to this UDRP Complaint. It strikes the Panel that the owner of a real business – as Respondent’s appears to be – does not typically duck serious accusations made by the lawyers of her potential or actual competitors. The Panel also took into account that Respondent does market her services using Complainant’s exact mark SALT + PINE (i.e. replacing the “and” with a plus) on her website, being an unusual combination for In these circumstances, at some point Respondent’s silence weighs against Respondent.

For instance Respondent has not come forward to show that she in fact has been the owner of the Domain Name since its original registration on July 21, 2011 (which fact would have defeated the Complaint by itself). Likewise, Respondent could have come forward to show that her adoption of the words “salt and pine” was innocent and had nothing to do with Complainant’s mark. Put another way, the Panel cannot escape the conclusion that, if Respondent had any legitimate interest in the Domain Name, it would have been easy enough for her to come forward and establish it. As things stand, though, it looks more likely than not that Respondent was motivated by the desire to trade off the renown of another firm’s mark, presumably to enhance the volume of her own business. Such conduct is not legitimate within the meaning of the Policy.

Complainant has established Policy paragraph 4(a)(ii).

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy provides that the following circumstances, “in particular but without limitation”, are evidence of the registration and use of the Domain Name in “bad faith”:

- (i) circumstances indicating that Respondent has registered or has acquired the Domain Name primarily for the purpose of selling, renting, or otherwise transferring the Domain Name registration to Complainant who is the owner of the trademark or service mark or to a competitor of that Complainant, for valuable consideration in excess of its documented out of pocket costs directly related to the Domain Name; or
- (ii) that 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 Respondent has engaged in a pattern of such conduct; or
- (iii) that 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, Respondent has intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to Respondent’s website or other online location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with Complainant’s mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of Respondent’s website or location or of a product or service on Respondent’s website or location.

The Panel concludes, largely for the reasons laid out above in the “Rights or Legitimate Interests” section, that Respondent has registered and used the Domain Name in bad faith, within the meaning of the above-quoted Policy paragraphs 4(b)(iii) and 4(b)(iv).

The Panel further notes that, according to Internet Web Archives, a version of the website similar to Respondent's current website appeared at the Domain Name at least as early as in April 2025² (and prior to that date, to the extent the Panel is able to ascertain, the Domain Name long resolved to a parked page). That date postdates the filing date (and first use date) of Complainant's USPTO trademark application, and Complainant's use of its domain name. Further, the Panel has verified that the same content as currently displayed on Respondent's website was available in 2024 at the domain name <saltxpine.com> (which Complainant claimed Respondent was using). Taking into account the combination of the above factors, the Panel finds it likely that the Respondent acquired the Domain Name at some point in 2025 with knowledge of Complainant's use of SALT + PINE for its home décor services. Essentially, the Domain Name is nearly identical to Complainant's mark, and the Panel is unaware of any indication that the combination "salt and pine" has any descriptive association with interior design, being even an unusual combination of its own. Under these circumstances, some explanation of this implausible coincidence is required. Respondent chose, repeatedly, not to supply any innocent explanation why her Domain Name would essentially match the registered – and to some degree renowned – trademark of a competitor in her field of commerce, a field in which she has encountered "the best of the best". That void plays against the Respondent and affirms the Panel's decision here.

Complainant has established Policy paragraph 4(a)(iii).

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 Domain Name <saltandpine.com> be transferred to Complainant.

/Robert A. Badgley/

Robert A. Badgley

Sole Panelist

Date: February 3, 2026

² <https://web.archive.org/web/20250416140811/https://saltandpine.com/>