

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Compagnie Générale des Etablissements Michelin v. Name Redacted Case No. D2025-3998

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Compagnie Générale des Etablissements Michelin, France, represented by Tmark Conseils, France.

The Respondent is Name Redacted¹, France.

2. The Domain Names and Registrar

The disputed domain names

<michelinguidefoodapp.com>

<michelinguidefoodcenter.com>

<michelintabletalk.com>

<michelintastingtour.com>

<starredbymichelin.com> are registered with Gname.com Pte. Ltd. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint, which originally included ten disputed domain names, was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on September 30, 2025. On October 1, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain names. On October 2, 2025, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain names which differed from the named Respondent (UNKNOWN) and contact information in the Complaint.

¹ The Respondent appears to have used the name of a former Chairman of the Board of the Complainant when registering the disputed domain name. In light of the potential identity theft, the Panel has redacted Respondent’s name from this decision. However, the Panel has attached Annex 1 to this decision with an instruction to the Registrar regarding the transfer of the disputed domain name, which includes the name of Respondent. The Panel has authorized the Center to transmit Annex 1 to the Registrar as part of the order in this proceeding, and has indicated Annex 1 to this decision shall not be published due to the exceptional circumstances of this case. See *Banco Bradesco S.A. v. FAST-12785241 Attn. Bradescourgente.net / Name Redacted*, WIPO Case No. [D2009-1788](#).

The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on October 3, 2025 with the registrant and contact information of nominally two underlying registrants revealed by the Registrar, requesting the Complainant to either file separate complaint for the disputed domain names associated with different underlying registrants or alternatively, demonstrate that the underlying registrants are in fact the same entity and/or that all domain names are under common control. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on October 13, 2025 for the <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com> and <michelintastingtour.com> domain names which were initially included in the Complaint, and adding the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> domain names.

On October 13, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the added disputed domain names. On October 13, 2025, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response confirming the information regarding the registrant and its contact information for the added disputed domain names.

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 October 14, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was November 3, 2025. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on November 4, 2025.

The Center appointed Fabrice Bircker as the sole panelist in this matter on November 11, 2025. 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

The Complainant is a French globally leading company that created its business in 1889 in the field of tire manufacturing for cars, trucks, motorcycles and planes.

According to undisputed elements in the case file, the Complainant is present on the 5 continents and employs more than 127,000 people.

Beyond tire manufacturing, in 1900, the Complainant started publishing the travel/gastronomy MICHELIN guide to encourage drivers to take road trips to local attractions. Since 1926, this guide ranks and grade fine dining establishments according to their quality by awarding "stars".

The MICHELIN guide has now rated over 30,000 establishments in over 30 territories, and more than 30 million MICHELIN guides have been sold worldwide.

The Complainant's activities are protected by the following trademark registration:

- MICHELIN, European Union trademark No. 013558366 filed on December 12, 2014, registered on April 17, 2015, renewed since then, and designating products and services of classes 9, 35, 38, 39, 41 and 42,
- MICHELIN, International Trademark Registration No. 1254506, registered on December 10, 2014, renewed since then, designating Japan, Norway, Switzerland and Türkiye, and protecting products and services of classes 9, 35, 38, 39, 41 and 42.

As far as the <michelinguidefoodapp.com>, <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com>, <michelintastingtour.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names are concerned, they all were registered on August 8, 2025.

At the time of drafting the decision, none of them resolve to an active website.

However, it results from undisputed elements of the case file that, until the Registrar deactivated them further to a takedown notice sent by the Complainant, the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names initially directed to a page:

- reproducing the MICHELIN trademark and the Complainant's mascot, the Michelin Bibendum,
- displaying a picture representing plated dishes,
- inviting Internet users to log in to the related website by using their username and password.

Very little is known about the Respondent, except that he is apparently located in France, at the Complainant's headquarters, based on the information disclosed by the Registrar.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain names.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain names are confusingly similar to its well-known MICHELIN prior trademark, because they reproduce the latter, and the added elements do not prevent it from being recognizable.

Besides, the Complainant argues that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect with the disputed domain names, in substance because:

- the Complainant is the sole legitimate owner of distinctive signs consisting in the "Michelin" denomination,
- the Complainant has never authorized the Respondent to register and/or use any domain name incorporating its trademarks,
- as "Michelin" is not a generic term, but a registered and famous trademark owned by the Complainant, there is no legitimate reason for the Respondent to incorporate it in the disputed domain names,
- as the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names directed to a page reproducing the MICHELIN trademark and the Complainant's mascot, the Respondent is misleading Internet users into believing that the Complainant has sponsored, is affiliated with or has endorsed the corresponding website.

Then, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain names have been registered and are being used in bad faith, notably because:

- the Complainant's MICHELIN trademark is well-known, and a mere Google search would have revealed it,
- the website that was under the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names reproduced the Complainant's MICHELIN trademark and its famous mascot,

- consequently, the Respondent used these disputed domain names in connection with a website which misleadingly impersonated it to conduct the Internet users to erroneously believe that the Complainant was at the source of said website or that the latter was sponsored, affiliated or endorsed by the Complainant,
- such use of these disputed domain names disrupted the Complainants' business, notably by taking unfair advantage of its reputation and goodwill to divert traffic with the purpose of making profit,
- as far as the <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com> and <michelintastingtour.com> disputed domain names are concerned, bad faith use can be established under the passive holding doctrine, notably because the Complainant's trademark is very well-known, the Respondent's concealed its identity when registering them and any good faith use seems implausible.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition ("[WIPO Overview 3.0](#)"), section 1.7.

As evidenced by annex 3.2 of the Complaint, the Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds the MICHELIN mark is recognizable within the disputed domain names. Accordingly, the disputed domain names are confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

Indeed, the entirety of the mark is reproduced within the disputed domain names.

Although the addition of other terms (here, "guide", "food", "app", "center", "table", "talk", "tasting", "tour", "starred" and "by") may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

Regarding the generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD") ".com" in the disputed domain names, it is well established that gTLDs do not generally affect the assessment of domain names for the purpose of determining identity or confusingly similarity. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain names. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant’s prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain names such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

Indeed, the Complainant contends that it has not given its consent to the Respondent to use its MICHELIN trademark in domain names registrations or in any other manner.

Besides, there is nothing in the record of the case likely to indicate that the Respondent may be commonly known by the disputed domain names.

Furthermore, three of the five disputed domain names, namely <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com> and <michelintastingtour.com> are not used (they resolve to an inactive website) and nothing in the case file suggests that the Respondent has made preparations to use them for legitimate purposes.

As far as the remaining disputed domain names, namely <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com>, are concerned, until their deactivation further to a takedown notice sent by the Complainant to the Registrar; they resolved to a website:

- if not impersonating the Complainant, causing confusion with it (its MICHELIN trademark was reproduced along with its famous mascot, Bibendum, and with a picture showing plated dishes therefore directly referring to the Complaint’s activity of rating fine restaurants),
- collecting personal data of Internet users by inviting them to log in to the related website.

Such use of the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names cannot confer a legitimate interest as it was made with intent for commercial gain (because personal data have a financial value) and by misleadingly diverting consumers.

Further, Panels have held that the use of domain names for illegitimate activity (here, unauthorized account access/hacking, impersonation/passing off, or other types of fraud) can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.13.1.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

Registration in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that:

- all the disputed domain names reproduce the Complainant's MICHELIN trademark,
- the use of this trademark predates the registration of the disputed domain names by more than 135 years,
- the MICHELIN trademark is globally well-known (this not only results from the documentation supporting the Complaint, but many other UDRP panels have also already steadily decided this for years, see for instance *Compagnie Generale Des Etablissements Michelin v. Vaclav Novotny*, WIPO Case No. [D2009-1022](#), *Compagnie Générale des Etablissements Michelin v. Jon Cropper, Jonathan Media*, WIPO Case No. [D2020-1439](#) or *Compagnie Générale des Etablissements Michelin v. Kiều Công Anh*, WIPO Case No. [D2024-4906](#)),
- according to the information provided by the Registrar, the Respondent registered the disputed domain names by communicating the address of the Complainant's headquarters, and the identity of a Complainant's former Chairman of the Board,
- all the disputed domain names associate the MICHELIN trademark with elements directly referring to the Complainant's activity of editing guides awarding restaurants by granting them stars (namely, "guide", "food", "app", "center", "table", "talk", "tasting", "tour", "starred" and "by"),
- the disputed domain names that were active directed to a website reproducing the MICHELIN trademark and its famous mascot,
- the Respondent has not put forward any argument intended to establish his good faith.

In view of these elements, the Panel finds that the Respondent registered the disputed domain names with the Complainant's trademark in mind, that is to say in bad faith.

Use in Bad Faith

Before being deactivated further to a takedown notice sent by the Complainant to the Registrar, the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names directed to a website illegitimately collecting personal data of Internet users by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of said website.

Indeed, this website reproduced the MICHELIN trademark along with its famous mascot, Bibendum, and with a picture referring to the Complaint's activity.

It results from the above-mentioned conditions of use of the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names that the Respondent used them to intentionally attempt to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to its website, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the Respondent's website.

Indeed, the personal data illegitimately collected through the website under the disputed domain names have a financial value and can be used to misuse the identity of any individual having communicated them.

In this respect, panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegitimate activity, such as phishing, impersonation/passing off, or any other types of fraud, constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.4.

Consequently, as far as this case concerns the <michelinguidefoodapp.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> disputed domain names, it clearly falls within the scope of paragraph 4(b)(iv) of the Policy.

Turning to the three other disputed domain names, namely <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com> and <michelintastingtour.com>, they seem to have never been used.

However, panels have found that the non-use of a domain name (including a blank or “coming soon” page) would not prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel notes:

- the distinctiveness and the global reputation of the Complainant’s trademark,
- the composition of the disputed domain names in as far as they all associate the Complainant’s trademark with terms referring to its activity of editing a guide ranking restaurant by granting them stars,
- the clear absence of rights of the Respondent,
- the fact that the Respondent has not only concealed his identity through a privacy service, but also communicated to the Registrar inaccurate identity and contact details,
- that two of the five disputed domain names previously directed to a website used for illegitimately collecting personal data of Internet users by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of said website,
- the silence kept by the Respondent while invited to participate in the proceedings.

In such a context, any good faith use of the disputed domain names by the Respondent seems implausible (see [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.3).

Therefore, the Panel finds that in the circumstances of this case the passive holding of the disputed domain names does not prevent a finding of bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

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 names <michelinguidefoodapp.com>, <michelinguidefoodcenter.com>, <michelintabletalk.com>, <michelintastingtour.com> and <starredbymichelin.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Fabrice Bircker/

Fabrice Bircker

Sole Panelist

Date: November 21, 2025