

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

The Wine Advocate, Inc. v. linken matrin
Case No. D2026-0044

1. The Parties

The Complainant is The Wine Advocate, Inc., United States of America ("United States"), represented by Tmark Conseils, France.

The Respondent is linken matrin, Hong Kong, China.

2. The Domain Names and Registrar

The disputed domain names <www-robertparker.com> and <www-robertparkers.com> are registered with Gname.com Pte. Ltd. (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on January 7, 2026. On January 8, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain names. On January 9, 2026, 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. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on January 9, 2026, 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 January 9, 2026.

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 January 13, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 2, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on February 4, 2026.

The Center appointed Fabrizio Bedarida as the sole panelist in this matter on February 6, 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

The Complainant in this administrative proceeding is The Wine Advocate, Inc., a United States limited company founded in 1978 by Robert M. Parker Jr. According to the Complainant's submissions, through its flagship publication, ROBERT PARKER, and the online platform "www.robertparker.com", the Complainant became one of the world's most influential sources of wine ratings and criticism. The Complainant's introduction of the "Parker Points" system (a 100-point rating scale) transformed the global wine market by providing an accessible, standardized measure of wine quality. Since November 2019, The Wine Advocate Pte Ltd has been a wholly owned subsidiary of Compagnie Générale des Établissements Michelin, following Michelin's acquisition in full of the business.

The Complainant is, inter alia, the owner of the following:

International Trademark Registration ROBERT PARKER'S WINE ADVOCATES (word) No. 999871, registered on April 16, 2009;

United States Trademark ROBERT PARKER registration No. 3901219 (word), registered on January 4, 2011;

United States Trademark ROBERT PARKER'S WINE ADVOCATE (device) registration No. 3709056, registered on November 10, 2009.

The Complainant operates its online presence through a series of domain names that reproduce or incorporate its registered trademark, notably the domain name <robertparker.com>, registered on June 6, 1997.

The Complainant also maintains social media accounts under the name "Robert Parker Wine Advocate" across major platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

The Respondent is an individual based in Hong Kong, China. According to information provided by the Complainant, the Respondent has been found by prior UDRP panels to have registered and used in bad faith five domain names that wholly incorporated trademarks owned by the Complainant and/or its parent company.

The disputed domain names were registered on November 2, 2025. Currently, the disputed domain names appear to be inactive, resolving to inaccessible pages. However, based on the Complainant's submissions, it appears that the disputed domain names previously resolved to an identical webpage prominently displaying the text "THE WINE ADVOCATE", similar to Complainant's trademark and inviting Internet users to log in using their account numbers and passwords. The evidence on the record does not include the content of those websites.

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 additions in the disputed domain names, namely the addition of the leading “www-” (three w's and a hyphen) and the trailing “s”, do not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain names and the Complainant's trademark; that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain names; that the Respondent's use of the Complainant's trademark clearly shows that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant's business, trade name, and trademarks; and that the Respondent registered the disputed domain names in order to mislead Internet users for commercial gain by creating a false impression of association with, authorization with, or endorsement by the Complainant.

B. Respondent

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

6. Discussion and Findings

In order for the Complainant to obtain a transfer of the disputed domain names, paragraph 4(a) of the Policy requires that the Complainant must demonstrate to the Panel that:

- (i) the disputed domain names are 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 names; and
- (iii) the disputed domain names have been registered and are being used in bad faith.

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.

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 mark is incorporated entirely and 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.

Although the addition of other terms here, namely the addition of the leading “www-” (three w's and a hyphen) and the trailing “s” (for one disputed domain name), may bear on the assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds that the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain names and the trademark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

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.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, here impersonation/passing off and phishing, can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.13.1.

In addition, the Panel notes that the composition of the disputed domain names, together with the manner in which the corresponding websites purported to be websites affiliated with and/or operated by the Complainant, carried a risk of implied affiliation with the Complainant and its website. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.5.1.

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.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s trademark.

Paragraph 4(b) of the Policy sets out a list of non-exhaustive circumstances that may indicate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith, but other circumstances may be relevant in assessing whether a respondent’s registration and use of a domain name is in bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.2.1.

The disputed domain names were registered many years after the Complainant registered its ROBERT PARKER trademark. The reproduction of the Complainant’s trademark in the disputed domain names, together with its impersonating use, indicates that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant’s trademark and activities at the time of registration.

Further evidence of the Respondent’s awareness of the Complainant’s trademark and activities at the time of registration is the fact that the disputed domain names were registered on November 2, 2025, just days after the Respondent received, on October 27, 2025, an email from the Center concerning a prior UDRP complaint filed by the present Complainant regarding the domain name <thewineadvocate.top>.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity as in the case, here allegedly for impersonation/passing off and phishing, constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.4.

Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent’s registration and use of the disputed domain names constitute bad faith under the Policy.

This same Respondent has already been the subject of multiple adverse UDRP decisions, including, in particular, two previous UDRP cases involving the Complainant, namely: *Compagnie Générale des Établissements Michelin v. linken matrin*, WIPO Case No. [D2025-0676](#); and *The Wine Advocate, Inc. v. linken matrin*, WIPO Case No. [D2025-4329](#).

Previous panels have consistently held that the registration of domain names targeting well-known trademarks constitutes strong evidence of bad faith registration and use under paragraph 4(b)(ii) of 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 <www-robertparker.com> and <www-robertparkers.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Fabrizio Bedarida/

Fabrizio Bedarida

Sole Panelist

Date: February 16, 2026