ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION
Valentino S.p.A. v. ai zhang
Case No. D2026-2475

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Valentino S.p.A., Italy, represented by Studio Barbero S.p.A., Italy.

The Respondent is ai zhang, China.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <valentinogaravanireplica.com> (the "Disputed Domain Name") is registered with Name.com, Inc. (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on June 8, 2026. On June 9, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the Disputed Domain Name. On June 10, 2026, 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 (Redacted for Privacy, Domain Protection Services, Inc.) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on June 13, 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 amendment to the Complaint on June 15, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amendment to 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 the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on June 17, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was July 7, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent's default on July 10, 2026.

The Center appointed Lynda M. Braun as the sole panelist in this matter on July 14, 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 was founded in 1960 by the legendary fashion designer Valentino Garavani and his business partner, Giancarlo Giammetti. The Complainant is a well-known company with its products available in over 90 countries, in 160 directly-operated retail stores, as well as online.

The Complainant is the owner of a broad array of trademark registrations worldwide for VALENTINO. The trademark has been regularly used by the Complainant for more than 60 years in connection with products in the high-fashion and leather industry, including ready-to-wear clothes, handbags, small leather goods, luggage, shoes, jewelry, eyewear and fragrances. For example, the Complainant owns the following registered trademarks in the United States of America ("United States") through the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("USPTO"): VALENTINO, United States Registration No. 910,955, registered on April 6, 1971, with a first use anywhere and a first use in commerce of April 1960, in International Class 25; and VALENTINO, United States Registration No. 1,153,226, registered on May 5, 1981, with a first use anywhere and a first use in commerce of 1968, in International Class 25. The Complainant also owns international trademarks in many jurisdictions worldwide, including in China, where the Respondent purportedly resides. The international registered trademarks include VALENTINO and VALENTINO GARAVANI.

The foregoing trademarks will hereinafter collectively be referred to as the "VALENTINO Mark".
The Complainant is the owner of over 1000 domain names identical to or comprising the VALENTINO Mark, including <valentino.com>, which resolves to the Complainant's official website at "www.valentino.com", registered on July 21, 1998, and which promotes and offers for sale the Complainant's goods.

The Disputed Domain Name was registered on June 9, 2025, and initially redirected to a website at "www.valinspired.com" that promoted and offered for sale discounted products bearing the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark that were purportedly counterfeit until June 4, 2026, when the site was deactivated.

On May 15, 2026, the Complainant's representative sent a cease-and-desist letter to the Respondent through the Registrar's online form, demanding that the Respondent cease use of the Disputed Domain Name and transfer it to the Complainant. The Respondent, however, did not reply to the letter.

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 Name. Notably, the Complainant contends that:

- the Disputed Domain Name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark because the Disputed Domain Name contains the VALENTINO Mark in its entirety, followed by the term "garavani", followed by the term "replica", and then followed by the generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD") ".com", which does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity; and

- the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Disputed Domain Name because, among other things, the Complainant has not authorized the Respondent to register a domain name containing the VALENTINO Mark, and the Respondent has never been commonly known by the Disputed Domain Name; and

- the Disputed Domain Name was registered and is used in bad faith because, among other things, the Respondent used the Disputed Domain Name to redirect users to the commercial website, displaying the Complainant's trademarks and offering for sale counterfeit VALENTINO branded products, which clearly indicates that the Respondent's purpose in registering the Disputed Domain Name was to capitalize on the reputation of the VALENTINO Mark.

The Complainant seeks the transfer of the Disputed Domain Name in accordance with paragraph 4(i) of the Policy.

B. Respondent

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

6. Discussion and Findings

In order for the Complainant to prevail and have the Disputed Domain Name transferred to the Complainant, the Complainant must prove the following (Policy, paragraph 4(a)):

(i) the Disputed Domain Name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights;

(ii) the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the Disputed Domain Name; and

(iii) the Disputed Domain Name was registered and is being used in bad faith.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

Paragraph 4(a)(i) of the Policy requires a two-fold inquiry: a threshold investigation into whether a complainant has rights in a trademark, followed by an assessment of whether the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to that trademark. The Panel concludes that in the present case, the Disputed Domain Name is confusingly similar to the VALENTINO Mark as explained below.

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. See WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("WIPO Overview 3.1"), section 1.7.

It is uncontroverted that the Complainant has established rights in the VALENTINO Mark based on its years of use as well as its registered trademarks for the VALENTINO Mark through the USPTO and jurisdictions worldwide. The consensus view of panels is that "[w]here the complainant holds a nationally or regionally registered trademark or service mark, this prima facie satisfies the threshold requirement of having trademark rights for purposes of standing to file a UDRP case". See WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.2.1. Therefore, the Panel finds that the Complainant has rights in the VALENTINO Mark.

The Disputed Domain Name consists of the VALENTINO Mark in its entirety, followed by the term "garavani", followed by the term "replica", and then followed by the gTLD ".com". The test for confusing similarity involves a side-by-side comparison of the domain name and the textual components of the relevant trademark to assess whether the mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Here, the VALENTINO Mark is recognizable within the Disputed Domain Name. As stated in section 1.8 of WIPO Overview 3.1, "where the relevant trademark is recognizable within the disputed domain name, the addition of other terms (whether descriptive . . . or otherwise) would not prevent a finding of confusing similarity under the first element". Thus, the addition of the terms "garavani" and "replica" to the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark in the Disputed Domain Name does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity. *See e.g.*, *Allianz Global Investors of America, L.P. and Pacific Investment Management Company (PIMCO) v. Bingo-Bongo*, WIPO Case No. D2011-0795; and *Hoffmann-La Roche Inc. v. Wei-Chun Hsia*, WIPO Case No. D2008-0923.

Finally, the addition of a gTLD such as ".com" in a domain name is a technical requirement. As such, it is well established that a gTLD may typically be disregarded when assessing whether a disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark. *See Proactiva Medio Ambiente, S.A. v. Proactiva*, WIPO Case No. D2012-0182 and WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.11.1. Thus, the Panel finds that the Disputed Domain Name is confusingly similar to the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds that 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 that 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 3.1, section 2.1.

In this case, given the facts as set out above, the Panel finds that the Complainant has made out a prima facie case. The Respondent has not submitted any arguments or evidence to rebut the Complainant's prima facie case. Furthermore, the Complainant has not authorized, licensed, or otherwise permitted the Respondent to use its VALENTINO Mark. Nor does the Complainant have any type of business relationship with the Respondent. There is also no evidence that the Respondent is commonly known by the Disputed Domain Name or by any similar name, nor any evidence that the Respondent was using or making demonstrable preparations to use the Disputed Domain Name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services. See Policy, paragraph 4(c).

The Disputed Domain Name redirected to a website displaying the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark and purportedly selling unauthorized discounted products bearing the VALENTINO Mark, and thus, the Respondent does not have rights or legitimate interests in the Disputed Domain Name. The Panel thus determines that the Respondent is not making a bona fide offering of goods nor a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the Disputed Domain Name but rather is using the Disputed Domain Name for commercial gain. A respondent's use of a complainant's mark to redirect users (e.g., to a competing site) would not support a claim to rights or legitimate interests. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.5.3.

In sum, the Panel concludes that the Complainant has established an unrebutted prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the Disputed Domain Name. Such use of the Disputed Domain Name cannot conceivably constitute a bona fide offering of a product or service within the meaning of paragraph 4(c)(i) of the Policy.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds that 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.

The Panel finds that based on the record, the Complainant has demonstrated the existence of the Respondent's bad faith registration and use of the Disputed Domain Name pursuant to paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy. 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 3.1, section 3.2.1.

Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent's registration and use of the Disputed Domain Name constitutes bad faith under the Policy due to the Respondent's redirecting the Disputed Domain Name to a website purportedly offering competing or counterfeit goods to unwitting customers.

The Respondent redirected the Disputed Domain Name to a website purportedly offering VALENTINO-branded products at a discount. Therefore, it strains credulity to believe that the Respondent had not known of the Complainant or its VALENTINO Mark when registering the Disputed Domain Name. See *Myer Stores Limited v. Mr. David John Singh*, WIPO Case No. D2001-0763 ("a finding of bad faith may be made where the respondent 'knew or should have known' of the registration and/or use of the trademark prior to registering the domain name"). In this regard, the fact that the redirected to website featured goods bearing the VALENTINO Mark also indicates that the Respondent was aware of the Complainant and its branded goods. The Panel also notes that the composition of the Disputed Domain Name, together with its prior use, affirms the Respondent's intention to take unfair advantage of the likelihood of confusion between the Disputed Domain Name and the Complainant as to the origin or affiliation of the website at the Disputed Domain Name. In sum, the Panel finds that the Respondent had the Complainant's VALENTINO Mark in mind when registering the Disputed Domain Name.

The use of a domain name to intentionally attempt to attract Internet users to a respondent's website or online location by creating a likelihood of confusion with a complainant's mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation or endorsement of the registrant's website or online location for commercial gain demonstrates registration and use in bad faith. Here, the Respondent's registration and prior use of the Disputed Domain Name indicates that such registration and use had been done for the specific purpose of trading upon and targeting the reputation, name, mark, and goodwill of the Complainant. See *Madonna Ciccone, p/k/a Madonna v. Dan Parisi and "Madonna.com"*, WIPO Case No. D2000-0847 ("[t]he only plausible explanation for Respondent's actions appears to be an intentional effort to trade upon the fame of Complainant's name and mark for commercial gain.").

Moreover, the Panel concludes that the Respondent's registration of the Disputed Domain Name was an attempt to disrupt the Complainant's business. The Respondent's use of the Disputed Domain Name was also likely to confuse Internet users into incorrectly believing that the Respondent was authorized or sponsored by or affiliated with the Complainant. The current passive holding of the Disputed Domain Name does not prevent a finding of bad faith in the circumstances of this case.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds that the third element of the Policy has been established

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 <valentinogaravanireplica.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Lynda M. Braun/
Lynda M. Braun
Sole Panelist
Date: July 22, 2026