

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

HOLT PARIS WELCOME SERVICE v. Ralph HOLT, VIP Riviera Service
Case No. D2026-2613

1. The Parties

The Complainant is HOLT PARIS WELCOME SERVICE, France, represented by LAIDEBEUR & PARTNERS, Luxembourg.

The Respondent is Ralph HOLT, VIP Riviera Service, France, represented by Cabinet Delobel, France.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <holtfrance.com> is registered with NameCheap, Inc. (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on June 16, 2026. On June 16, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On June 16, 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 (Withheld for Privacy ehf) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on June 18, 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 June 22, 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 June 25, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was July 15, 2026. The Response was filed in French with the Center on July 10, 2026.

The Center appointed Vincent Denoyelle as the sole panelist in this matter on August 3, 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 is a company operating in the travel industry.

The Complainant owns the following trade mark:

- French trade mark HOLT DMC FRANCE applied for on March 12, 2025 and registered on June 27, 2025 under number 5128856.

The Complainant is the registrant of the domain name <holtfrance.fr> which was registered by the previous owner of the Complainant's business in 2007. The website of the Complainant at "www.holtfrance.fr" contains a chronology of the Complainant's business (and thus of the Respondent's business prior to 2017) including "1979 Creation of VIP Riviera Service, Holt office on the French Riviera".

The Respondent is an individual bearing the last name "Holt" as well as the company VIP Riviera Service operating in the same sector as the Complainant.

All shares in the Complainant's business registered under the name Holt Paris Welcome Service were purchased by the Complainant from the Respondent and other related parties via a share purchase agreement (the "Share Purchase Agreement") signed on October 24, 2017 and publicly recorded on November 23, 2017.

The use of the term "Holt" whether as a surname or as part of a company name has been and still is closely linked to the activities of both the Complainant and the Respondent with, judging from the Complainant's website, different targets in terms of regional areas.

The disputed domain name was registered on August 29, 2023 by the Respondent and it had been registered and used previously in relation to the Respondent's business prior to the Share Purchase Agreement including to create email addresses used by relatives of the Respondent (or at least natural persons whose name also consisted of "Holt") in relation to the "Holt" business activities.

The disputed domain name does not currently resolve to any website but it used to redirect to the Respondent's website at "www.viprivieraservice.com" containing the following disclaimer:

"Holt Paris Welcome Service (also trading as Holt DMC France) is no longer an approved partner.

Thank you for your attention.

Ralph HOLT, Owner and Managing Director, VIP RIVIERA SERVICE DMC (est. 1979)".

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 it has unregistered trade mark rights in the term HOLT including as it is the name under which the Complainant claims to be known by its partners, clients and the international

professional public (with reference to four letters sent to members of the Holt family between 1993 and 1999). The Complainant also refers to its trade mark registered on June 27, 2025 and its domain name <holtfrance.fr>. The Complainant considers that the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to its unregistered and registered rights in the terms HOLT, HOLT PARIS WELCOME SERVICE, and HOLT DMC FRANCE.

The Complainant asserts that the disputed domain name is registered solely in the name of VIP Riviera Service and that it would thus preclude any claim of legitimate personal interest based on an individual's family name or personal rights. The Complainant also considers that there cannot be any bona fide use of the disputed domain name or legitimate non-commercial or fair use as the Complainant claims that the disputed domain name is used to mislead Internet users and divert them to the Respondent's website. The Complainant also asserts that the Respondent concealed its identity by using an anonymization service to conclude that this is further evidence of the Respondent's lack of legitimate interest.

Turning to bad faith, the Complainant argues that the Respondent did clearly know of the Complainant when it registered the disputed domain name and that the Respondent uses the disputed domain name to disrupt the Complainant's business, intentionally attempt to attract Internet users for commercial gain by creating confusion and to disparage the Complainant and its business.

B. Respondent

The Respondent contends that the Complainant has not satisfied the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

The Respondent contends that there cannot be any confusing similarity with a valid prior trade mark given that the Complainant's registered trade mark HOLT DMC FRANCE was filed on March 12, 2025 and registered on June 27, 2025, nearly two years after the Respondent registered the disputed domain name.

The Respondent argues that as for the Complainant's alleged unregistered trade mark rights in HOLT, the Complainant has failed to substantiate the existence of such rights as it mainly referred to documents from 1993 to 1999, a Wayback Machine screen capture from 2019 and undated commercial prospectus.

The Respondent highlights that its family name "Holt" is intrinsically linked to its business (and vice and versa) and that the Respondent is commonly known by a name corresponding to the disputed domain name and that this constitutes a legitimate interest in the disputed domain name.

The Respondent also explains that it registered the disputed domain name to protect the Respondent's legitimate commercial presence and digital identity, following the alleged deliberate failure by the Complainant to renew the disputed domain name which had expired for several years.

The Respondent expressly requests that a finding of Reverse Domain Name Hijacking be found, as the Respondent argues that the Complaint has been brought in bad faith, with full knowledge of the Respondent's prior and legitimate interest in the Holt name, in an attempt to misappropriate a domain name rightfully and lawfully held by the Respondent.

6. Discussion and Findings

Pursuant to paragraph 11 of the UDRP Rules, unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the default language of the proceeding is the language of the registration agreement, subject to the authority of the panel to determine otherwise. Here, the language of the Registration Agreement is English and the Complaint was submitted in English. However, the Response was submitted in French. The Response did not make a specific language request, but noting the Panel is familiar with both English and French, the Respondent clearly understood and responded to the Complaint filed in English, and Complainant is not expected to reply to the Response, in the interest of fairness and to avoid unnecessary delay the Panel has accepted all

submissions in the language provided, but will proceed to render a decision in English as the language of the proceeding.

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 trade mark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)"), section 1.7.

Although the UDRP makes no specific reference to the date on which the holder of the trade mark or service mark acquired its rights, such rights must be in existence at the time the complaint is filed. The fact that a domain name may have been registered before a complainant has acquired trade mark rights does not by itself preclude a complainant's standing to file a UDRP case, nor a panel's finding of identity or confusing similarity under the first element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.1.3.

In light of this and without needing to address the Complainant's unregistered rights claims, the Panel finds that the Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trade mark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds that the HOLT DMC FRANCE trade mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name as both the first term and the last term of the trade mark are reproduced in the disputed domain name.

Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

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 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.

Pursuant to paragraph 4(c) of the Policy, the Respondent may establish rights to or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name by demonstrating any of the following:

- (i) before any notice to it of the dispute, the respondent's 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) the respondent has been commonly known by the domain name, even if it has acquired no trade mark or service mark rights; or
- (iii) the respondent is making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the domain name, without intent for commercial gain, to misleadingly divert consumers or to tarnish the trade mark or service mark at issue.

After careful consideration of the record, the Panel is unable to conclude that the Complainant has met its burden under paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy.

According to [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.3: “Insofar as a respondent’s being commonly known by a domain name might give rise to a legitimate interest under the Policy, panels will carefully consider whether a respondent’s claim to be commonly known by the domain name – independent of the domain name – is legitimate. Mere assertions that a respondent is commonly known by the domain name will not suffice; respondents are expected to produce specific credible evidence.”

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent details as disclosed by the Registrar clearly include the details of the natural person Ralph Holt as well as his company VIP Riviera Service. The fact that Holt is the surname of the Respondent (or at least part of it) is not disputed and is nevertheless supported by the VIP Riviera Service’s certificate of incorporation where the name “Holt” is listed as a manager. It is reasonable for someone to register a domain name that corresponds to their own given name, as is the case here. Even if the Panel were to accept that the Complainant could successfully claim to have unregistered trade mark rights in HOLT, for the purpose of the Policy the Respondent has been genuinely and legitimately known by the name “Holt” for years, apart from the disputed domain name, which prima facie supports a finding of rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Panel also notes a general lack of indicia of cybersquatting and that the Complainant has failed to overcome the Respondent’s showing of rights or legitimate interests, e.g. by showing that the registration and use of the disputed domain name was primarily to take advantage of the Complainant’s trade mark rights rather than for the inherent connection to the Respondent’s family name and activities in France for many years. Deciding otherwise would render paragraph 4(a)(ii) of the Policy superfluous and would contradict the plain meaning of paragraph 4(c)(ii) of the Policy (see e.g., *Ken’s Foods Inc. v. kens.com*, WIPO Case No. [D2005-0721](#) and *Gail Guarulhos Indústria e Comércio Ltda. V. Kevin Watson*, WIPO Case No. [D2006-0655](#)).

The Panel notes that a lot of confusion arises from the claims made by both Parties which sometimes contain contradictions or are not supported by the referenced evidence. While the present matter and the truthfulness of the respective claims are not without doubt, on balance and on the basis of the respectively submitted evidence, the Panel is of the view that the Respondent has rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name for the purpose of the Policy.

In addition, it is not for the Panel to decide on whether the use of the Respondent’s own family name could in any way infringe any intellectual property rights of the Complainant or be in breach of the Share Purchase Agreement or any applicable laws applicable as between the parties and this must be left to other fora.

Based on the available record, the Panel finds the second element of the Policy has not been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

Given that the Panel has decided that the Respondent has a legitimate interest in the disputed domain name and as the three prongs of the UDRP are cumulative, the Panel concludes that the Complaint must be denied and it is not necessary to proceed to consider whether the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

D. No Reverse Domain Name Hijacking

Paragraph 15(e) of the Rules provides that, if after considering the submissions, the Panel finds that the Complaint was brought in bad faith, for example in an attempt at Reverse Domain Name Hijacking or to harass the domain-name holder, the Panel shall declare in its decision that the Complaint was brought in bad faith and constitutes an abuse of the administrative proceeding. The mere lack of success of the complaint is not, on its own, sufficient to constitute reverse domain name hijacking. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 4.16.

Whilst the Panel agrees that it could have occurred to the Complainant that the UDRP was not the appropriate forum to resolve the dispute at hand, the Panel does not consider that there is enough evidence to conclude that the Complainant deliberately tried to misuse the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, the Complaint is denied.

/Vincent Denoyelle/

Vincent Denoyelle

Sole Panelist

Date: August 17, 2026