

French companies attack Google ads rules

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"[Google](#) has crossed a line by taking the initiative this summer to launch a service that allows anyone to buy brand names as keywords to generate advertising links," four advertisers' associations said in a statement.

The associations include UDA, which represents major companies including Air France, BNP Paribas bank and Nestle, and UNIFAB, a manufacturers' grouping including brands such as [luxury goods](#) maker Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy (LVMH).

LVMH had already sued the California-based search engine, alleging it infringed its trademarks by allowing other firms to index LVMH brands as keywords.

Google responded to Monday's complaint by insisting its ad rules benefit [online shoppers](#) and retailers and respect a ruling by the European Court of Justice.

"This change brings our trademark policy in Europe into line with our policies across the rest of the world and enables users to access more relevant information," it said in a statement.

Google's lucrative Adwords service displays advertisements for relevant products alongside search results. Clients pay to have key search words linked to their products to ensure their ads will appear when certain words are used.

In September Google changed the terms of the service in Europe to allow companies to bid for keywords including [brand names](#) that they do not own. This prompted a complaint from the UDA, which has now got the three other associations on board.

"This change is a source of illegal situations -- acts of parasitism, unfair competition or forgery, a risk of confusion for the consumer," they said in the statement, citing a letter they sent to Google chief executive [Eric Schmidt](#).

Google responded: "We have a zero tolerance policy against online counterfeiting and have put in place a specific and efficient complaint process against ads promoting counterfeit products," in its statement.

"Consumers are also offered more choice as genuine resellers -- not just trademark owners' competitors -- can now advertise on branded products

available in their catalogues."

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