

ADVERTISING

Yves Saint Laurent name change: Messing around with 45-year history?

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By RACHEL LAMB

As part of a brand makeover under designer Hedi Slimane, storied haute couture brand Yves Saint Laurent will be changing its name to Saint Laurent Paris. Experts are divided as to whether or not the French house should be messing with more than four decades of history and goodwill associated with the name.

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While a name reboot could help the Yves Saint Laurent name transfer into different languages and increase resonance with consumers, it could confuse the way that shoppers look at the brand and dilute its status. However, as long as Yves Saint Laurent does not sway too far from the image that consumers know and love, there may not be many long-term damages. Not all are convinced, though.

“It is a bad idea to change a successful brand name like Yves Saint Laurent,” said Al Ries, chairman of [Ries & Ries](#), Atlanta, GA. “Furthermore, the new name Saint Laurent Paris does not add anything significant to the original name.

“Long term, it will not be a problem because consumers will learn to recognize the new name as a replacement for the Yves Saint Laurent name, a process that will take years,” he said. “However, changing a brand name is a lot of work and it involves a considerable amount of money.

“It risks offending consumers who are used to the Yves Saint Laurent name.”

Neither **Yves Saint Laurent** nor parent company **PPR** was able to comment before press deadline.

What’s in a name?

The new Saint Laurent Paris name is expected to be introduced in the coming months in an attempt to restore the label back to its original branding and restoring the house to its trust, purity and essence, according to Yves Saint Laurent.

Behind the name change is the brand-new Yves Saint Laurent creative director Mr. Slimane, who hopes that the new name will stick by the time his first designs for Saint Laurent hit the sales floor for the spring 2013 season, according to a report from **Women’s Wear Daily**.

“I think that the reason behind this is that it will be easier for consumers to remember,” said Milton Pedraza, CEO of the **Luxury Institute**, New York. “The brand is so well-known that I do not think that it will drastically change the brand, except for the better.”

The main reason behind this is because the new name will still be keeping the well-known last name Saint Laurent, according to Mr. Pedraza.

Indeed, for every Balenciaga, Cartier, Hermes or Prada, there is a Giorgio Armani or Salvatore Ferragamo – and both of these Italian brands have not suffered for included a first name and last name in their brand.



Pumps by Yves Saint Laurent

Yves Saint Laurent’s Mr. Slimane is remaking the brand as a whole, recalling Yves Saint Laurent’s 1966 beginnings as inspiration. The brand will use the same fonts and similar

nomenclature from that era, WWD reported.

Although there are reports of a “complete makeover,” there are no other reported changes to the Yves Saint Laurent label at this time.

However, because of this complete makeover, it makes sense that the name is being fine-tuned, Mr. Pedraza said.

“I do not think that this change is inconsistent because the most well-known part of the name is Saint Laurent, which is not being removed,” Mr. Pedraza said. “In my opinion, this may make it easier for consumers to remember and pronounce.

“This is not a high-risk marketing move, and I think that it will all turn out just fine,” he said.



Yves Saint Laurent "Le Smoking" jacket

Risky business

However, the new branding may not be all consistent.

What will not change is the “YSL” logo, which could be inconsistent with the new moniker.

Yves Saint Laurent says that it wishes to keep the logo for “institutional” purposes.



YSL logo

“The logo, coupled with the new name will likely create brand and market confusion, something every brand desires to avoid,” said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami. “At the same time, perhaps the name change is proof that the brand does not or cannot reflect on its long-term vision.”

In addition, another problem will be brand confusion.

“The problem is the short term,” Mr. Ries said. “Some consumers are going to think that Saint Laurent Paris is a knockoff of the Yves Saint Laurent name, and that is a big negative.”

Indeed, consumers not in-the-know could also think that it is simply a line extension of the

Yves Saint Laurent brand.

Nonetheless, Yves Saint Laurent must be cautious of how it plans to go about this new change. Changing a brand name is a lot of work and can involve a considerable amount of money spent on print, online, outdoor, in-store, mail and mobile properties, not to mention the considerable advertising required to imprint this name change into target consumer memory.

“Rebranding, regardless of who you are, is always a risk,” Affluent Insight’s Mr. Ramey said. “The brand sees a problem that we do not see.

“Trust, purity and essence are fine, but not at the risk of losing 45 years of brand equity, unless, it perceives or its research tells that the current brand is inconsistent with trust, purity and essence.” he said.

Final Take

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