

ADVERTISING

Saint Laurent Paris rebranding effort to settle over time

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By ERIN SHEA

The rebranding of Yves Saint Laurent to Saint Laurent Paris will likely affect in the short term the brand's relationship with its customers as they adapt to the new name for the French designer.



The Web site and ready-to-wear line of Saint Laurent Paris have been updated to reflect the name and logo change, but not all areas of the brand are being renamed, including the beauty line which remains under the Yves Saint Laurent name. Experts agree that the execution of the French label's name transition could have been stronger.

"The brand could have done a much better job communicating that it was reinvigorating its ready-to-wear collection," said Milton Pedraza, CEO of the [Luxury Institute](#), New York. "It was not communicated well, so there was a negative reaction."

Mr. Pedraza is not affiliated with Saint Laurent Paris, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Saint Laurent Paris](#) did not respond before press deadline. The label is part of a PPR portfolio that comprises Gucci, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga, Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen.

Another bump in the road

It has been a tumultuous year for the Saint Laurent Paris brand. Earlier this year, it was in a legal battle with footwear label Christian Louboutin over the trademark of its red-soled heels.



Yves Saint Laurent all-red shoe

A decision was made on the case in September, which awarded each fashion house a small victory. However, experts wondered if this was something that should have been started in the first place since Louboutin risked losing its trademark all together.

The appeals court ruled that Saint Laurent Paris could continue to manufacture its monochrome red shoe, while Louboutin still owned the red-sole trademark, so long as the product has a contrasting upper-half color ([see story](#)).

Also in March, Hedi Slimane replaced Stefano Pilati as the brand's creative director.

This summer, the brand attempted to reinvigorate its ready-to-wear line with a name and logo change.

Why fix what is not broken?

A few changes at the brand could have spurred the name and logo change.

The death of Yves Saint Laurent in 2008 and, more recently, the appointing of Hedi Slimane as the new creative director could have had something to do with the decision.

"It is going to take a while before consumers accept the new Saint Laurent Paris name," said Al Ries, chairman of marketing consultancy [Ries & Ries](#), Roswell, GA.

"We don't think this is a positive move for the company," Mr. Ries said. "Changing a well-

established brand like Yves Saint Laurent is a mistake.

"It is usually because new management takes over and wants to make its mark on the organization."



Saint Laurent Paris' Web site reflects the change

However, the beauty line remains under the Yves Saint Laurent name.

"Multiple brands are generally a good idea – Toyota and Lexus, for example – but not when the brand names are similar," Mr. Ries said. "Using both Yves Saint Laurent and Saint Laurent Paris is a confusing strategy for most consumers."

Mr. Ries predicts that the beauty line will eventually be renamed Saint Laurent Paris.

Experts agree that this change probably will not affect the brand in the long-term. But, it could affect consumers right now.

"In the short-term, it's going to confuse consumers and force the company to spend marketing dollars educating consumers about the new name - money that could be spent promoting the brand itself instead of the name change," Mr. Ries said.

After a while, Saint Laurent Paris will likely pass the test of rebranding if the product delivers.

"Keeping 'Saint Laurent' was not a risky move because when you say, 'Saint Laurent' people know what you are talking about," Luxury Institute's Mr. Pedraza said. "The intentions were good since the brand was trying to reinvigorate its ready-to-wear line and the proof will be in the product."

"You can't kill a brand like this - it is too iconic and too powerful," he said. "In the long-term, Yves Saint Laurent will come back to its prominence.

"But when you make a change to an iconic brand, you better make communications crystal-clear."

Final Take

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