The Research on the Brand Marketing Strategy of Yves Saint Laurent

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Abstract. Yves Saint Laurent was founded in 1961. The brand is owned by Kering as part of the Gucci Group. Yves Saint Laurent is a luxury brand specializing in both men's and women's ready-to-wear in addition to handbags, shoes, accessories, sunglasses, fragrances, and cosmetics. With the development of Internet information, under the background of the younger concept of consumer goods and the gradual maturity of social media, this paper takes the social marketing of the Saint Laurent brand as an example, takes the marketing strategy as the main line, and uses 4Ps marketing mix to analyze its internal problems, and through the analysis of competitors and comparative analysis of Saint Laurent's success and shortcomings, and finally, put forward the brand's marketing point of view and thinking. Through the research results, it was found that brands can use create pop-up stores and develop brand extension (fragrance and furniture products) as marketing strategies. YSL sells its products through directly operated stores all around the world as well as on an e-commerce site, moreover, YSL directly competes with LVMH’s French labels Louis Vuitton and Gucci in Kering, also in addition to a wide range of other luxury brands.

Keywords: Luxury fashion branding; Marketing strategies; Brand extension.

1. Introduction

Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) has both financial success and a good aesthetic originally created by its founder, Yves Saint Laurent. The Internet age's constant updating, iterative, and revolutionary technological advancements, along with the younger population's consumption patterns, the emergence of socialized self-media, and the incorporation of social platforms into everyday life, have led to it gradually becoming the primary platform for people to interact and make friends. The world's largest and busiest social media network is in China, which also happens to be the world's largest market for luxury goods. Social media users largely control the content, which is open, widely shared, and participatory. Users today are seeking to become information producers and distributors rather than being content with the one-way information-receiving paradigm of traditional marketing. This makes enterprises gradually socialize in brand marketing, eliminates traditional marketing strategies, and affects the development trend of most consumer goods industries. Whereas social media marketing refers to the use of social media by companies to create hot topics, picture content, short videos, etc. to plan marketing activities for brands. At the same time, social marketing attaches great importance to effective interaction and communication with users. Saint Laurent has been the second-tier brand of Kering Group in the past, with excellent sales. From the fourth quarter of 2021 to the first quarter of 2022, Saint Laurent has become the brand with the best revenue performance in the first quarter, with a 43% increase[1]. This makes people and various fashion luxury brands can't help but imagine what makes Saint Laurent today's performance. At the same time, from the perspective of the brand concept, the founder Yves Saint Laurent subverted this conservative clothing style, using a Le Smoking design, so that women can be liberated and free in dressing. In 1966, Yves Saint Laurent boldly pioneered an androgynous style, designing the first women's Le Smoking suit. Without Saint Laurent, as women, people might not even have the right to wear trench coats now. It is not just clothing, but the rise of female consciousness. This unisex outfit is not just a fashion trend, but the meaning behind it is also a symbol of women breaking free from shackles and having the same rights as men. If Coco Chanel liberated the corset that bound women, Yves Saint Laurent empowered women.
As Fig.1 shown, french fashion designer Yves Henri Donat Mathieu-Saint-Laurent, also known as Yves Saint-Laurent or YSL, established his own clothing line in 1962[2]. Saint Laurent possesses the romantic traits of a creative person. A staple of the YSL brand's image has long been its smoking-related clothing.

As Fig.2 shown, Hedi Slimane, a French photographer, and fashion designer. He was the creative director of Yves Saint Laurent from 2012 to 2016. He revived the brand, which had been in the doldrums for ten years. Hedi changed the name of the brand from Yves Saint Laurent to Saint Laurent Paris after his appointment. Hedi's design style also changed from YSL's focus on elegant and avant-garde design to one that incorporates rebellious elements such as rock and street to open up a market of young consumers and make SLP's sales rise rapidly not only in the logo and Hedi also redesigned the campaign and the brand's website in a consistent way and used his expertise in photography as part of the new brand image.

2. The Marketing Mix- Four Ps

2.1 Product

As Fig.3 shown, the product categories of Saint Laurent can be roughly divided into ready-to-wear, shoes, handbags, small leather goods (belts and belt bags), accessories, and jewelry. Saint Laurent's pricing strategy is to focus on its leather products, which account for more than 70% of the turnover of the brands[1]. Compared with competitors, the iconic smoking tuxedo that made Saint Laurent famous in 1966 is one of the most affordable iconic suits.
2.2 Price

Pricing range for ready-to-wear is $30-31240, and for handbags is $1760-7810\[10\]. Saint Laurent mainly attracts more young consumers through the handbag pricing strategy. From the official website, it can be seen that the cheapest bag is priced at about 1700 Singapore dollars, which is a relatively affordable entry price. The new ambassadors, such as Rosé from Blackpink with the huge fan base of the K-pop icon lead to the younger generation may find new attractions in the brand. Also, it is more affordable than competitors such as Dior, Chanel, or Louis Vuitton.

2.3 Place

Saint Laurent stands out from competing brands thanks to its projection in upscale boutiques and the most prestigious department shops. Similar to that, it has its own official electronic stores and a presence online via a recent development in mobile sales channels. As a result, YSL has already opened physical boutiques in more than 35 countries, including Japan[1].

2.4 Promotion

By letting the supermodels wear the brand's classic designs, Saint Laurent has made the brand image deeply rooted in consumers, such as Anja Rubik's clothes (Fig.4) on the red carpet and the smoking clothes interpreted by the brand Muse Loulou de la Falaise (Fig.5). In addition, Hailey Bieber is also an indispensable presence for brand explosion promotion(Fig.6), she wears the popular designs from shows and frequently appears on social media in the form of Street Photos, which extends the communication cycle of the latest show for the brand and deepens the public's awareness.

![Fig. 4 Anja Rubik](https://www.fashiongonerogue.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Saint-Laurent-Fall-2019-Campaign01.jpg)

![Fig. 5 Loulou de la Falaise](https://imgix.bustle.com/wmag/2016/12/15/58523426d3b7a5db18f35487_loulou-de-la-falaise-book-3.jpg?w=414&h=624&fit=crop&crop=faces&auto=format%2Ccompress)

![Fig. 6 Hailey Bieber](https://lofficielthailand.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HAILEY-BIEBER_25-02-2020-scaled.jpg)

In June 2020, the brand announced Rosé, a member of Blackpink as the global ambassador(Fig.7). Subsequently, the magazine, global coverage, bag advertising shooting, private server wearing... It reflects that the brand's purpose is to borrow from global pop idols, radiate the brand influence to a more extensive mass base, and achieve higher social media communication value. Moreover, In the brand marketing strategy of Saint Laurent, the strategy formulation of brand ambassadors mainly adopts cross-border linkage, such as the linkage between YSL and game brands, using celebrity spokespersons to create hot topics online, etc., and the form of social media to promote online sales.
3. SWOT Analysis of YSL

3.1 Strengths

Given its long history and distinctive ready-to-wear designs, Saint Laurent appeals to a certain clientele, the majority of whom are wealthy individuals with strong brand loyalty. They are reliant on the brand's aesthetic. Because they are durable as well as lasting a long time in terms of fashion, Saint Laurent's designs continue to be timeless, iconic, and timeless[3]. Additionally, the brand must be concentrated on staying on top of the most recent trends by coming up with something original and setting itself apart from competing luxury fashion firms. Saint Laurent also has success in the fashion and cosmetics industries. They have established a reputation as a business by selling stunning and high-end goods.

3.2 Weaknesses

Brand quality has received feedback from customers and needs to be improved and updated. Moreover, the brand has too wide channels in retail stores and buyer's stores, and the price is questioned by customers.

3.3 Opportunities

In the context of the epidemic, brands have made new expansions in online marketing. For instance, YSL's online anniversary celebration in 2021. In this event, YSL beauty(Fig.8) has created the exclusive website of YSL beauty records, which combines online shopping, games, gifts, and other activities to make customers' online experiences ample and interesting. Also, choosing popular idol Rosé as ambassador opened up the Asian market for Saint Laurent and created more market share. This is due to the high brand fit of the ambassador, and the fact that the fans of popular idols are mostly young, which also nurtures potential customers. Consumers who have the ability to spend, even though they are not fans of the Rosé, will frequently see a look with a high degree of compatibility and will be motivated to buy. Therefore, Rosé creates favorable conditions for Saint Laurent, as idols are more popular than supermodels, and to create a sense of closeness to consumers than superstars.
3.4 Threats

The other Karing brands are a fierce competitor to the brand. Compared to Saint Laurent, Gucci is a better recognizable brand[4]. To attract greater attention from consumers, the brand should endeavor to enhance its reputation and broaden brand recognition[5]. The epidemic has immediately impacted the entire fashion sector, which has an impact on Saint Laurent sales, as well as the overall world economy. Additionally, the design is frequently stolen and replicated, which lowers brand value.

4. Consumer Analysis and Branding Positioning

Saint Laurent is positioned in the high-end luxury market and serves fashion-conscious consumers. The main consumer group is the rich with high purchasing power over the age of 25. This group of consumers includes individuals with high net worth and people with a lot of luxury consumption expertise, they are also composed of loyal customers. In formulating the marketing plan, Saint Laurent gives priority to this consumer group to gain greater market share[6]. However, Saint Laurent has a wide audience of consumers and also attracts young consumers, such as the popular handbags and clothes endorsed by stars. The brand hopes to maintain a balance between street culture and popular culture while developing an eternal and unique image. Furthermore, Saint Laurent also attracts customers who are interested in music, especially rock music[7]. Hedi Slimane, the former Creative director of the brand, as a rock fan, derive musical inspiration from his design and showed his style of punk and country rock music at Saint Laurent's show and catwalk[8]. Under his guidance, Saint Laurent presents a new style making it leave a cool impression on the public(Fig.9). For branding positioning of Saint Laurent, there are some details shown in Fig.10.

![Fig. 9 Saint Laurent Spring/Summer 2015 Menswear](source: https://media.gettyimages.com/photos/models-walk-the-runway-during-the-saint-laurent-show-as-part-of-the-picture-id451472002?s=612x612)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age</th>
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<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Consumer Occupation</th>
<th>Hobby</th>
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<td>Male/ Female</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Designer, model, wealthy socialites or celebrities, business manager, lawyer</td>
<td>Fashion, design, art, music</td>
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![Fig. 10 Branding positioning of Saint Laurent]
5. Competition Brand Analysis

5.1 Gucci

Gucci and Saint Laurent belong to the Kering group. Gucci's products include fashion, leather goods, shoes, watches, ties, scarves, perfume, household goods, and pet goods[4].

5.1.1 Price comparison of Gucci and Saint Laurent

As the diagram above shows, the author chose China (Fig.12) and the US (Fig.11) as the representation as they were the primary largest market for luxury goods in recent years [9]. As per the information and data on the official website, The two diagrams show the price range of Gucci and Saint Laurent women's Jackets. Since there are all designs of Jacket of the two brands which is popular, the research on this product is significant. Compared with Gucci as a competitive brand, Saint Laurent's Jackets has a lower price range. The price of Gucci's jacket is generally higher, since Saint Laurent's designs are mostly basic and common fabrics, and Gucci will sell special fabrics to high-end people to meet their demand. For example, the faux fur coat. The design of Saint Laurent also takes into account both classic and fashion. The creative director Anthony Vaccarello’s design is well-tailored and uses the simplest lines to interpret the sexy, charming, and audacious female image[10]. Besides, For comparison, Gucci's current design mostly uses red and green colors, complex monograms, and ubiquitous animal elements. Although many designs are bold and recognizable, they are not suitable for daily wear, which tests the wearer's temperament and fashion expression, leading to Gucci's achievement decline. Armani's ready-to-wear clothing design emphasizes excellent production and fabric selection. The design is elegant and high-grade, suitable for business occasions. Compared with Saint Laurent, Saint Laurent's design attracts more people.
5.1.2 Products selection Gucci

![GUCCI DÉCOR](source: https://www.gucci.com/sg/en_gb/ca/decor-lifestyle/decor-c-decor)

Gucci not only covers cosmetics and jewelry in the selection of products and launched a home product line: GUCCI DÉCOR (Fig.13) in 2017, with a collection of furniture and decorative pieces [11]. It presents the romantic aesthetics of Gucci, extends the brand to the exclusive home space of consumers, and gradually approaches it like a high-end lifestyle brand.

5.2 Givenchy

Givenchy is a high luxury fashion brand in France, which belongs to the LVMH group in France. It mainly deals in high-end garment customization, ready-made garments, shoes, leather products, and accessories.

5.2.1 Marketing strategy analysis of Givenchy (younger)

In today's social context, young people are gradually becoming the main force of social production and consumption. Givenchy and Saint Laurent, as luxury brands with a strong historical and cultural heritage, both faced the problem of how rejuvenating their brands while ensuring that the brand value was not depleted. Faced with this situation, Givenchy first chose to replace its design director. For a better brand prospect, the designer's job is not only to design clothes but also more necessary to have the ability to help the brand attract the attention of the public, produce popular goods and achieve commercial realization, and create town talk.

![The Kardashian family](source: https://dazedimg-dazedgroup.netdna-ssl.com/640/azure/dazed-prod/1290/7/1297669.jpg)

![Travis Scott](https://www.shiftlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/121628466_285532935810461_3553851174891611702_n-822x1024.jpg)
In June 2020, Givenchy announced Matthew Williams as its creative director, who understands the street culture and contemporary youth aesthetics and is able to blend high fashion with street trends. He also makes good use of social media to keep up with young trends. He asked the celebrities and stars to post on their social media accounts wearing the latest Givenchy outfits, including the Kardashian family(Fig.14), which is the most topicality in US, street trend icon Travis Scott(Fig.15), and virtual idol Lil Miquela. This strategy is targeting younger audiences, and this marketing approach has allowed Givenchy's new designs to take advantage of the power of social media to seep across the globe, effectively raising public awareness. In the mass flow of information in the Internet age, where consumers browse a lot of information every day, the designs can be easy to get cover-up, therefore luxury brands need their products to have high popularity as well as public praise. In contrast to Givenchy, Saint Laurent also relies on a similar approach to gain renown on social networks, but with a less youthful representation than Givenchy.

Moreover, Givenchy has also chosen Chinese icons Fan Chengcheng and Nana Ou-Yang as their brand ambassadors in China (Fig.16), and transformed high fashion into more accessible ready-to-wear through this marketing approach, bringing it closer to consumers and changing the stereotype of the brand's design being too old-fashioned in young people's minds. Lastly, The two ambassadors have the ability to fashion perform and can enhance the brand's popularity among young people. Through them, Givenchy shows the futuristic aesthetics and modernity of Givenchy in addition to elegance and classics.

6. Future Recommendations

6.1 Create Pop-up Stores

In the context of great changes in the retail environment, luxury brands can not blindly expand the scale of retails but should start to think about other sales methods. The offline sales locations of Saint Laurent are retail stores in shopping malls or some Antique stores, which lack innovation and competitiveness with other brands. Therefore, building a Pop-up shop is undoubtedly an executable choice. In recent years, Saint Laurent's makeup series has held Pop-up shop activities, this form can also be extended to clothing or bags. A Pop-up shop is a store that does not stay in the same place for long, it is a temporary store set up in a commercially developed area for retailers to market their brands for a short period of time (several weeks) to capture some seasonal consumers(Fig.17)[12].
In order to thrill and differentiate itself for customers, Saint Laurent's Pop-up shop might develop time-limited events with the marketing of new items as the theme. Pop-up stores have emerged as a new trend and are starting to be used by large businesses as a tool to solve the retail conundrum. The needs of luxury brands to attract younger generation consumers are also reflected in the Pop-up shop in order to preserve freshness and offer new ideas for retail. Saint Laurent can take emerging culture as their publicity theme and display trendy items that are closer to the needs of young consumers, thus ensuring that brands can bring consumers the freshest shopping experience at any time and show a more tense brand culture. Creating scarcity is the only way for Pop-up shops to succeed. In addition to bringing freshness, scarcity is also a key to the success of flash stores. The main characteristics of flash stores are time-limited and strong flexibility, which is also one of the characteristics that distinguish them from fixed regional brand retail stores. The "uniqueness" of flash stores helps commercial brands show the scarcity and difference of their own goods or services.

6.2 Develop Brand Extension (Fragrance and Furniture Products)

In addition, adopting a brand extension strategy is an option to consider for Saint Laurent. Brand extensions can further promote Saint Laurent as a lifestyle brand of choice for its target consumers. Lifestyle branding refers to the use of lifestyle as a breakthrough point to establish closer emotional ties with consumers through the build-up of brand values and concepts, and to integrating into consumers' lifestyles through corresponding products and services to meet the emotional and personalized needs of the target customers, ultimately creating consumers' desire for the brand. Saint Laurent easily reminds consumers of elegance and a sense of high-fashion edge. These values have been successfully penetrated through brand extensions into products such as cosmetics and eyewear, which are far from the brand's original apparel business. Moreover, Saint Laurent also carries out brand extensions for fragrance products or home furnishings. These products tally with Saint Laurent's brand image and can be a positive auxiliary effect on brand marketing. As an example, Gucci's home products, which were discussed previously, have successfully penetrated the brand's influence into all aspects of consumers' lives. In addition, it is still recommended that the brand continue to develop its core businesses such as handbags and ready-to-wear. Such developable furniture products are not the core products of the brand's long-term strategy, but they support the values and emotional connection of the brand and can establish a more stable connection with consumers. However, there are potential risks associated with brand extensions as well, such as the potential to dilute brand equity, damage brand loyalty, and move away from core consumers. Avoiding these risks requires assessing the relevance of the extended product to the brand, which is achievable. Another point is brand credibility. Saint Laurent, as a representative luxury brand, has a good reputation in consumers' minds as well as trustworthy quality. Moreover, the innovative approach of brand extensions can give the brand the credibility needed to extend within reasonable limits and enhance the overall image of the brand.
7. Conclusion

After investigating Saint Laurent's 4Ps marketing strategy, conducting research on Saint Laurent's brand strategy and marketing strategy, the success of Internet marketing, but also facing the threat of a large number of competitors, although Saint Laurent has a long history and unique design and the style has attracted a large number of high-end people. However, because of its extensive sales channels, Saint Laurent has certain restrictions on the price control of product sales. Understanding of the development prospects of Saint Laurent's current Internet channel marketing and sales in the luxury consumer industry in the future, and analyzing its brand strategy and positioning as well as target groups through graphic analysis of market positioning data. By analyzing Gucci's product line design and pricing as well as Givenchy's youthful targeted marketing strategy, and finally synthesizing the defects of competitors and Saint Laurent's marketing strategies, and considering the brand's development prospects, the final brand is given. Regarding the marketing ideas of pop-up stores such as clothing, and based on the author’s analysis and understanding of the brand style and audience, as well as the analysis and understanding of the existing product structure of its competitor Gucci, the brand extension direction of Gucci furniture products can be a new reference direction for Saint Laurent business structure and product line extension to fragrance and furniture development suggestions are given.

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