French label Bensimon revamps ready-to-wear collection, opens Tokyo concept store

By Anaïs Lerévérend - April 12, 2018

French label Bensimon is once again putting womenswear at the heart of its expansion and communication strategy, introducing a new approach and fresh blood into the creative team. A new designer, Géraldine Dufour, joined Bensimon a few months ago to take care of the Autumn/Winter 2018 collection. “I’ve worked with the same designer for fifteen years. We didn't want a comprehensive overhaul, but we needed a fresh take on our ready-to-wear and accessories collections, to try and appeal to a younger clientèle,” said Serge Bensimon, the label's co-founder and creative director.

The result? A Bensimon collection for the next Autumn/Winter season which is as down-to-earth as ever, with a nod to workwear and the customary penchant for bright colours - black is forbidden, and a titillating palette exuding French joie de vivre is in - but featuring a more urban, more contemporary feel. The season's advertising campaign will of course reflect this new mood.

“Currently, our customers are mature, modern women,” said Géraldine Dufour. “We want to broaden our target market, first with women in their early forties, then with the next generations. We want to be able to appeal to mothers and their daughters. The latter may first appreciate [Bensimon] for our sneakers, but we then intend to turn them into loyal customers,” added Dufour, formerly a consultant for other brands, La Redoute among them, whose collaborations brought her in contact with Bensimon.

“We want our fashion to somehow converge with our homeware range. With the latter, I believe we’ve hit a very contemporary note, fostering a wide, highly distinctive product selection,” said Serge Bensimon.
By recalibrating the womenswear range, Bensimon is seeking to bolster its expansion, notably driven by Rudy Achache, the first general manager appointed by the two founder brothers Yves and Serge Bensimon just under two years ago. Bensimon currently operates about fifty stores, the majority of them located in France. Last year was marked by a spate of French openings, some of them franchises, and four of them concept stores, showcasing the label's lifestyle approach, in Dijon, Angers and in two Parisian shopping malls, Beaugrenelle and Parly 2.

“The new generation of shopping malls doesn’t have the reputation of its older counterpart. [New malls] are able to bring a host of directional labels under the same roof, and they advertise very vigorously. Through them, we attract a more selective clientèle,” said Yves Bensimon.

But the French label is also busy making inroads outside its domestic market, bolstering its wholesale presence by signing up new distributors. Besides, after Berlin, Brussels and Antwerp, Bensimon recently opened its fourth international store in Tokyo.
With its two local partners, Itochu and Look, Bensimon recently inaugurated an unconventional store in the Daikanyama district, extending over about one hundred square metres on several floors and conceived as a little house dedicated to the French art of living and to the label’s love of colour. The same concept may well be replicated in other prime Japanese shopping locations, and a second opening is in fact already on the cards.

Bensimon is also keen to expand in the UK, and it is looking for premises that would boost its visibility. In the longer term, it is also thinking about China, the ultimate consumer market. Above all though, Bensimon wants to freshen up its fashion image and positioning. “We would like to make our history better known, to reach a broader audience with our narrative. Our next mission, as it were, is to proselytize!” said Géraldine Dufour.

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