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Lacoste accused of 'moral washing' over Russia



PARIS – Fashion brand Lacoste has been accused by the Moral Rating Agency (MRA) corporate watchdog of playing down its business interests in Russia following the military invasion of Ukraine.

In a statement to France’s L’Express given in early June 2023, the fashion brand claimed that it had suspended shipments to Russia and didn’t have any employees there.

The company said in the statement that it had ‘disassociated itself’ from Lacoste-branded products made in Russia, claiming they were handled under licence by independent partner Devanlay.

The implication of the statement, according to the MRA, was that Lacoste could not control Devanlay and should not be judged for its products being available in the country.

MRA is accusing the brand of ‘double-talk’ - claiming that Lacoste and Devanlay are both owned by the same operating group, MF Brands Group of Switzerland.

That meant that Lacoste’s suggestion that the entity operating in Russia is independent is “far from an accurate and full disclosure of the facts”, it claims.

MRA founder Mark Dixon said: “It is blatant moral-washing to suggest that Lacoste is not to blame for the Lacoste brand being available in Russia. The companies are part of the same group.

“Lacoste’s parent company and its sister company Devanlay are financial beneficiaries of any licensing payments that flow back from Russia. Plus, Lacoste is promoting the Lacoste stores in Russia directly on its global site.

“Lacoste’s attempt to distance itself from Russian contagion adds cowardice and spin to the immorality of its inherent relationship with Russia. It is just an attempt to escape embarrassment from contagion while the broader group can benefit from the association.”

Ecotextile News has approached Lacoste for comment.