

What does Ralph Lauren hope to get out of its Olympics partnership?

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Ralph Lauren's Olympics uniforms

Lifestyle label Ralph Lauren created the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Closing Ceremony parade uniforms and village wear for this summer's games in a move likely to maintain brand affinity and position itself as a thought leader during one of the most-watched events every four years.

Since Ralph Lauren is already a monster-sized brand, this placement likely does not have to do with building awareness for products, but for the label's name. Indeed, creating goodwill and a good name for itself could give Ralph Lauren a leg-up over competitors and show the brand as a socially-responsible company.

"Ralph Lauren is trying to get publicity for the brand, but even more important, credit for being a good citizen of the world," said Al Ries, chairman of marketing consultancy [Ries & Ries](#) ^[2], Roswell, GA. "As people like Ralph Lauren get older, they tend to be more concerned about their legacies than their bank accounts.

"Ralph Lauren is already a world-class brand, so it is difficult to see how much additional value the Olympic connection is going to bring," he said. "However, and this is an important point, the choice of Ralph Lauren by Olympic officials keeps other designers from getting the assignment.

"When your brand is at the top of the food chain, you shouldn't pass up an opportunity to maintain your leadership."

Mr. Ries is not affiliated with Ralph Lauren, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Ralph Lauren](#) ^[3] could not comment before press deadline.

Big pony show

The United States Olympic Committee debuted Ralph Lauren's designs earlier this week on NBC's Today Show.

A brand that is known for its preppy, athletic-inspired collections, Ralph Lauren's designs featured all-white uniforms with touches of red and navy for its U.S. uniforms.



Ralph Lauren's Facebook page

The women's uniform for the Closing Ceremonies parade consisted of a white blouse with the official U.S. Olympic team logo and Big Pony logo at the chest with a knee-length white skirt. It also includes a red silk belt in red, white and navy that matched a scarf at the neck.

The men's uniform was a white cotton sport shirt with the U.S. Olympic team logo and navy Big Pony logo. Men will also be wearing white trousers with a pleated front and cuff and a red, white and navy silk belt.



Closing Ceremony parade uniforms and village wear collection

The village wear uniforms included a mesh polo, a Create Your Own USA polo, an Olympic tank and a tunic.

"This is not the first time that Ralph Lauren has created product for the U.S.," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#) ^[6], Miami. "It is an honor for any brand to participate in the Olympics.

"It is only fitting that the U.S.'s No. 1 luxury apparel brand be designing product for our Olympians," he said. "It is more about prestige than whether it is reaching high-end or aspirational customers.

“Consider it akin to organizations that sponsor events.”

Olympic-sized commitment

Ralph Lauren’s choice to debut the outfits on television was a good move, but that is only the first step to acknowledgment.

“Getting the assignment is only half the battle,” Mr. Ries said. “The other half is trying to get the media to cover the story. In an over-saturated media environment, this can sometimes be very difficult.”

Luckily, the Ralph Lauren Big Pony logo is a well-known marque that is symbolic of the brand.



Ralph Lauren's Olympics collection

However, Ralph Lauren upped its commitment to the games by introducing an entire Olympics-inspired wardrobe for men, women, children and babies.

Available on the [Ralph Lauren Web site](#) [8] and stores in addition to Team USA shop's [ecommerce site](#) [9], consumers can buy Olympic-inspired apparel, accessories, pins and create-your-own products from the Blue Label and Polo Ralph Lauren collections. The price range runs from \$10 pins to \$198 dresses.

Ralph Lauren's Web site, social media pages and stores all flaunt the connection to the Olympics.

Even though Ralph Lauren's Olympic partnership will not draw exclusively high-end consumers, the international awareness will be undeniably beneficial for the brand as it positions itself as a leader and socially-responsible company.



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Ralph Lauren's Facebook page

"This activity will reinforce the Ralph Lauren brand as being a style leader and being socially-responsible, and it will give them a resource for creating various publicity and promotional programs," said Ron Kurtz, president of [American Affluence Research Center](#)^[11], Atlanta.

"I believe the primary goal of Ralph Lauren is to generate good exposure and goodwill on an international basis," he said. "Ralph Lauren will probably be identified and acknowledged to millions of TV viewers around the world as the source of the uniforms."