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# Pernod Ricard Scraps PSG Sponsorship

## Marseille Fans Force Pernod Ricard U-Turn

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Earlier this week, we reported here at Vinetur about the sponsorship agreement between the alcoholic beverages group Pernod Ricard and the Parisian football club PSG. However, in a surprising turn of events, this deal has now been scrapped.

Pernod Ricard, a leading global producer of spirits and wines, decided to end its sponsorship agreement with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) following backlash from the fans of Olympique de Marseille (OM). The controversy erupted shortly after the four-year contract was announced on Monday, which would have made Pernod Ricard the official sponsor of the Parisian club and the exclusive supplier of champagne and liquors. However, the company's deep historical ties to Marseille, France's second-largest city and the birthplace of Pernod Ricard more than 90 years ago, became a source of friction with the fans of OM, who felt that sponsoring PSG was a betrayal of the brand's values. The resentment led to calls for a boycott of Pernod Ricard's products by OM supporters, who used social media to voice their dissatisfaction.

The Mayor of Marseille, Benoît Payan, also expressed his discontent in an interview with BFM Marseille Provence. He conveyed his surprise at the agreement and stated his intention to seek clarification from Pernod Ricard's CEO, Alexandre Ricard. Payan emphasized the long-standing connection between the brand and the city, highlighting the potential negative impact of the decision on the people of Marseille. His comments added to the mounting pressure on Pernod Ricard to reconsider its position.

On Thursday, CEO Alexandre Ricard issued a public statement announcing the cancellation of the sponsorship deal. In his statement, Ricard explained that the decision had been made after carefully considering the concerns expressed by employees, customers, and shareholders of the company. He underscored the historical bond between Ricard and Marseille, reaffirming that the company remains deeply committed to the city and its communities. While acknowledging that the PSG sponsorship had international significance, Ricard emphasized that the local outcry had led the company to prioritize its roots in Marseille over its association with the Parisian football club.

This development highlights the intensity of the rivalry between PSG and OM, a competition that extends beyond the football pitch and into business decisions when a brand holds strong regional ties. The uproar underscores how deeply rooted loyalties can shape public perception and, in this case, influence the corporate strategies of global companies like Pernod Ricard.

The rivalry between PSG and OM, often considered one of the fiercest in French football, plays a significant role in the cultural identity of both cities. PSG, based in the capital, represents the glamour and wealth of Paris, while OM symbolizes the gritty, working-class spirit of Marseille. The tension between the two teams and their respective fanbases frequently spills over into non-sporting realms, and the Pernod Ricard sponsorship deal is a vivid example of how these dynamics can affect even large corporations. For OM fans, seeing a company that has long been associated with their city partner with their archrival felt like a personal affront, leading to the intense backlash that forced Pernod Ricard to reconsider its decision.

In its public response, Pernod Ricard took care to note that while the PSG deal was intended to expand the brand's international visibility, the historical and emotional ties to Marseille were ultimately more important. The episode serves as a reminder that even for multinational corporations, maintaining strong local relationships can sometimes outweigh the benefits of high-profile global partnerships.

This situation is likely to become a case study in corporate loyalty, regional identity, and the balancing act between expanding brand presence and respecting local roots. It also serves as a reminder of the powerful role that consumers and local communities can play in holding companies accountable for their choices, especially when those choices touch on deeply held cultural rivalries. Pernod Ricard's swift response to the backlash demonstrates that in today's interconnected world, corporate decisions are scrutinized more closely than ever, and companies must be prepared to address the concerns of their most passionate stakeholders.