

POLA: Innovating Aging Skin Care with Japanese Culture and Technology

Japanese cosmetics company POLA, renowned for its aging skin care products, is leveraging innovative technology and cultural values to redefine beauty. By Sasha Lauture and Cian O Neill

Established 95 years ago, Japanese cosmetics company POLA primarily focuses on aging skin care products. Its flagship brand, B.A, launched 39 years ago and is currently in its sixth generation. The brand aims to challenge and shift the traditional perspective that aging is associated with loss of beauty.



POLA technical development center

Representative Director and President Miki Oikawa explains: "We actively promote a positive mindset through our products and sales strategies, aiming to eliminate the negative image of aging and to convey our brand message along with the concept of expanding the possibilities of life through one's age and accumulated experiences."

POLA's latest offering, POLA B.A Grandluxe O, encompasses the company's extensive knowledge and technological advancements in aging care. The

cream—which also functions as a mask—is "a testament to our dedicated research and development efforts," Oikawa declares. What's more, POLA B.A Grandluxe O epitomizes the care and attention that goes into product packaging at the firm. "The packaging has been specially conceptualized with respect for the Japanese culture of wrapping gifts to express gratitude," she notes. "With its minimal design aimed at reducing packaging waste as far as possible, it can be folded up compactly after it has been opened."

Meanwhile, POLA's most pioneering product, the Wrinkle Shot, is a medicated wrinkleimproving cosmetic. Oikawa

POLA counter



product became the industry's first medicated wrinkle improvement application in 2017. The Wrinkle Shot uses the active ingredient NEI-L1, which functions by halting enzymes that target and disassemble skin collagen, leading to the formation of wrinkles.

As it continues to blaze a trail with its world-class R&D capabilities, POLA is keeping its international focus on Asia. "In the past 30 years, we have gathered a vast database of over 20.7 million Japanese skin type records, crucial for our research and development in catering to diverse skin types," Oikawa says. "Our global strategy focuses on Asian regions where skin types align closely

with Japanese skin, ensuring the relevance of our products. Japan's geographical diversi-



"Our company strives to improve and enhance users' quality of life by tackling skin concerns with effective cosmetics."

Miki Oikawa. President, POLA Inc.

www.pola.co.ip

ty—from the chilly climate in Hokkaido to the tropical heat in Okinawa—plays a pivotal role. Skin types observed in Hokkaido correlate with those of Chinese residing in colder regions, while Okinawa's skin type closely resembles that of Southeast Asians.



POLA B.A

"Thanks to recent artificial intelligence advancements, we have significantly enhanced our ability to conduct detailed data analysis. Our standout advantage lies in our extensive database, enabling comprehensive analysis between various skin types. Through this database analysis, we can pinpoint similarities and differences, providing us with a unique edge in understanding and addressing diverse skin care needs."

B'S INTERNATIONAL

Fusing Fashion and Culture

B's Int'l.
http://bs-intl.jp

B's International blends street culture with sports, art and lifestyle through bold collaborations, unique designs and a commitment to global streetwear innovation. By Sasha Lauture and Sean McBride

online store

's International isn't just about clothes; it's a cultural movement, bringing together fashion, art and lifestyle in ways that surprise and delight. At the helm of this dynamic company is Yusaku

Nishikata, a man driven by passion for the cultures that shape Japanese streetwear and an ever-evolving vision for the brands he oversees.

One of B's International's boldest moves yet? Partnering with Japan's WE League, a professional women's soccer league. "This initiative is a challenge for us, so it is an important theme," Nishikata says, reflecting on the company's ambition to go beyond just sportswear. "We sympathize with the WE League's concept of promoting a society in which women are active. When supplying uniforms, we added our X-girl brand's unique fashion sense to the functionality necessary for sportswear."

It's not just about making female athletes look good, though—it's about making sure they feel good, too. B's International created a whole new pattern specifically designed for the female form, breaking away from the conventional practice of simply adapting men's designs.

As a leader in streetwear, B's International is always innovating. XLARGE, the company's flagship brand, is at the forefront

of global street culture. But one thing Nishikata is particularly focused on is promoting Floyd, a lifestyle brand that turns street culture into playful, everyday items. "We want to make your days more exciting by incorporating the playfulness of the street into your lifestyle, not just clothes," says Nishikata. Floyd's customizable, skateboard-inspired suitcases are a key example of this philosophy in action.

With a strong presence in Japan, the United States and China, and plans to break into the European market, B's International is truly a global player. Nishikata sees endless possibilities ahead: "Our XLARGE brand was born in the U.S. but has been raised in Japan, so in a sense, it's like a bilingual global brand that has a unique background." The company's goal is clear—to push boundaries and redefine street culture on a global scale. "We want to create excitement and a craze around the world," Nishikata states, and with the company's track record, it's hard to imagine anything less.

B's International isn't just leading the pack in streetwear; it's reshaping what it means to live a life inspired by the street. For Nishikata, the challenge is not simply to keep up with trends but to set them, making waves that ripple across fashion, sports and beyond.



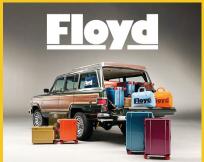
"We want to create excitement and a craze around the world."

Yusaku Nishikata

President, B's International







B-THREE: WHERE STYLE

B-THREE-OWNED BY THE APPAREL GROUP VALUE PLANNING-MAKES HIGH-QUALITY, STRETCHABLE CLOTHING THAT EMPHASIZES COMFORT, FIT AND STYLE, HELPING REVOLU-TIONIZE MODERN JAPANESE FASHION. By Sasha Lauture and Bernard Thompson

n the world of fashion, where comfort often clashes with style, B-Three is rewriting the rules. With a legacy rooted in Japan's rich textile traditions and a commitment to cutting-edge innovation, the clothing brand is transforming everyday wear into an experience of unmatched luxury and practicality. With over 30 years of experience, the company stands at the forefront of Japan's stretchable fabric market.

"Japan has always valued the feel of the material against the skin," explains Norio Imoto, president of Value Planning, the parent company that owns the well-known B-Three brand. "Our product concept—'look better, fit better, feel better'—captures this essence by focus- LOOK BETTER, FIT BETTER, FEEL BETTER ing on the tactile experience, a cornerstone of Japanese fashion."

This attention to detail is embodied in Value Planning's flagship brand, which specializes in expertly crafted stretch pants. B-Three's pants are not just comfortable but engineered for durability, providing a flattering silhouette. "Stretchability is key," says Imoto. "We use stretch yarn to ensure our products stretch in every direction, making them a superior choice for both work and casual wear."

In addition to B-Three, Value Planning has expanded into complementary products with brands like B-Three Plus, which offers tops, and Sheafeel, which features fabrics enriched with shea butter for extra skin comfort. "The focus is always on how our clothes feel and fit," Imoto emphasizes. This thoughtful approach has earned the company a loyal following: over the course of three decades, 2.1 million total customers have enjoyed Value Planning brand products, 500,000 in the last three years alone.

As Japan's population ages, Value Planning sees this situation as a unique opportunity. "The need for functional pants styles will not decrease significantly in the future. When people get older, they tend to wear pants more often," notes Imoto.

"Our stretch pants are also particularly popular among working women," says the president, who is proud that Value Planning's pants have become an item that encourages Japanese women to be active in society. "We have received the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Award as a company that promotes women's empowerment."

> The pandemic posed challenges, but it also shifted the company's focus toward online expansion. While physical stores remain crucial for first-time buyers, Imoto sees e-commerce

as the future, though sizing remains a challenge. "We're waiting for technology that allows customers to measure themselves online easily," he says.

With plans to expand across Asia and a commitment to both product innovation and customer satisfaction, Value Planning is poised for continued growth. As Imoto puts it: "When people try our pants, they understand the quality—our

goal is to make this experience available globally."

"Our product concept-'look better, fit better, feel better'-focuses on the tactile experience."

Norio Imoto

President, Value Planning Co., Ltd.



B-THREE







Japan only Website online shop





www.valueplanning.co.jp

Tsukaki Group Expands Globally

With origins dating back to 1867, the Tsukaki Group has expanded from the traditional industries of dyeing and weaving, and continues to grow through Hawaii weddings and New York real estate. By Paul Mannion and Sean McBride





Landscape with the sun and moon (*Nishijin-ori* folding screen) *Nishijin-ori* pure gold thread tapestry (museum entrance)

The Tsukaki Group was initially established as a kimono whole-saler in Kyoto in 1867, by the current president's great-grandfather and namesake Kizaemon Tsukamoto, who hailed from Gokasho Kondo Town, a preserved townscape in the birthplace of the Omi merchants.

Taking the Omi merchant philosophy *sampo-yoshi*, or "threeway satisfaction," as its inspiration, the company has grown steadily and is still thriving today, having successfully negotiated a series of crises (the Meiji Restoration, the Great Kanto Earthquake, the Great Depression, WWII) throughout its 150-year history.

Of the group's seven business divisions, which encompass the traditional industries of dyeing and weaving as well as the fields of pearls, jewelry and shapewear for women, perhaps the most famous is its original company, Tsukaki Shoji Co., Ltd.



Nishijin-ori Great Wave (Hokusai)

Today it is responsible for the Nishijin-ori Asagi Art Museum, which was established in 2019, and showcases the highest artistry of *Nishijin-ori*, a traditional weaving technique which has been a hallmark of Japanese culture and art from the Heian to the Edo period. The museum offers an immersive experience, allowing visitors to learn about

and experience intricate techniques like silk, pure gold thread, foil and Jacquard loom weaving. It is also home to a remarkable Nishijin-ori collection of *Ukiyo-e* art, which depicts Kabuki actors, Mount Fuji and daily life in the Edo period (1603-1868). Ukiyo-e art had a profound influence on a number of European impressionists, including Vincent Van Gogh.



1800-needle Jacquard machine

In July 2024, Tsukaki Shoji opened its pioneering Tango Creative Center in Tango, Japan's largest silk weaving region, with a view to training young artisans in the craft of traditional Nishijin-ori. The center, a response to Japan's welldocumented demographic shift, which could see established traditions being lost as the older generation dies out, also serves as an open factory where visitors can observe the Nishijinori weaving process, while its second floor houses a museum dedicated to the practice



Suminagashi dyeing (marbling print)



Akova pearl

Also operating along more traditional lines is Kyoto-based kimono manufacturer Kyoho, which has a dyeing workshop in Narutaki. The firm uses the suminagashi dyeing process, a technique that originated in the ninth century when Heian-era aristocrats floated ink on water and transferred the patterns to Japanese paper. Having revived the practice, Kyoho has successfully incorporated it into Kyoto-style yuzen kimono designs, drawing attention from around the world.

Established half a century ago within the group, Tsukaki Co., Ltd. operates as a jewelry specialist, dealing in pearls and rare colored diamonds and earning widespread recognition from global gemstone buyers. The firm, which this year celebrated its 50th anniversary, is notable for sourcing new gemstones from mines in Madagascar, specializing in demantoid garnet, grandidierite and Bekily garnet.

Tamura Čo., Ltd., meanwhile, focusing on feminine beauty, holds multiple patents for women's underwear and has recently developed a new bra technology that stretches and contracts freely based on changes in body shape. This groundbreaking product, which accommodates changes owing to breastfeeding



"Following the sampoyoshi philosophy enables us to be good for buyers, sellers and society as a whole."

Kizaemon Tsukamoto, President, Tsukaki Group

or fluctuations in weight, allows women to feel comfortable in their own skin at all times.

Looking to the future, the Tsukaki Group continues to grow and expand. The recent acquisition of a building in New York signals a new venture in the field of asset management, while the group also has plans to enter the Hawaiian wedding market in 2025.



Founder's house (Gokasho, Shiga Prefecture)

With its high-quality furs and jewelry from Italy and France, its pearl and gemstone exports, its cutting-edge women's underwear and its continued promotion of the Nishijin-ori technique to a fascinated public in the U.S. and Europe, the Tsukaki Group, which started as a small firm, continues to grow into a special company worldwide in the 21st century.



Crafting Wool's Future in Global Markets

With nearly a century of expertise, Nishikawa Keori is redefining wool's role in the global textile industry, blending tradition with innovation to meet rising global demand. By Antoine Azoulay and Sean McBride



"No matter the location, we aim to ensure the same high quality."

Ryuzo Nishikawa, President, Nishikawa Keori Co., Ltd.

As the world evolves, the wool industry finds itself adapting to new possibilities and challenges, with Nishikawa Keori at its forefront. Founded in 1929, the company remains deeply committed to innovation, developing over 100 new materials each season, with fresh combinations leading to significant growth potential.

"Japan's fashion industry has gone through several paradigm shifts, from adopting American styles to European influences, and today, we are witnessing growing global interest in Japanese textiles," says company President Ryuzo Nishikawa.

However, the shift is more than just aesthetic; it's grounded in Japan's commitment to quality as well as a change in demographics.

"In recent years, the reputation of Japanese textiles has expanded beyond Europe and the U.S. to the Middle East, where exports are booming," Nishikawa explains. "But we have used many suppliers whose facilities and equipment are getting old; hence we introduced new pieces of machinery to help the transition."

These additions are seen as crucial to Nishikawa Keori's operations, aiming to secure the future of wool production in Japan's Bishu area amidst the challenges. An extension to the company's Inazawa factory, the new equipment comprises six state-of-the-art rapier



Weaving machine



looms, which include automated yarn attachment. What's more, the installation of full air conditioning has enhanced worker comfort.

While preserving the region's textile heritage and encouraging collaboration, the president hopes the factory upgrade will serve as a model for sustainable growth, attracting younger workers and reinvigorating Bishu as a global leader in wool production.

"As equality and freedom spread, population growth in China, India and the Middle East will increase demand," predicts Nishikawa. "We believe in promoting wool's many benefits, and collaboration with other global companies is crucial."



西川毛織株式会社

www.nishikawa-keori.co.jp

BARCOS: FUSING Fashion & Technology

Japanese handbag and wallet manufacturer Barcos is set to revolutionize fashion with affordable, tech-enabled products that can be tracked when lost. By Sean McBride

BARCOS



follow us: follow us: follow us:

ashion designers have always had to strike a perfect balance between form and function, and at no time is this truer than in today's age of technology. From sneakers that record your running style to smart watches, clothing is becoming ever more tech-enabled, and one of the companies pushing this forward is Japanese handbag and wallet manufacturer Barcos.

Founded in 1991, Barcos specializes in producing mass-market items that stand out for their quality and reasonable pricing, in a similar vein to Japanese manufacturers Uniqlo and Muji, which are successful in the apparel industry. As company President Takashi

Yamamoto explains, Barcos' know-how and networks have enabled it to grow into a leading original equipment manufacturer (OEM). He adds: "We can't be competitive in the world unless good products are provided at a low price."

"We are one of the top-class leather-goods manufacturers in Japan."

Takashi Yamamoto President, Barcos Co., Ltd.

Barcos is now poised to incorporate tracking technology similar to an AirTag in its products, allowing customers to find lost purses, wallets and handbags. "We want to leverage this new product to start the next stage of our business," Yamamoto says, noting that he expects it to be a top seller: "This technology will show people the exact location of their items on their smartphones."

The company plans to launch this new range of tech-enabled products domestically in fall 2024, before expanding its availability across overseas markets.

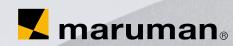
And having previously partnered with TJ Maxx as an OEM, jointly developed products with firms like Isetan Mitsukoshi, and worked with designers such as Ryuji Otani and Picard, Yamamoto is always open to collaborating with like-minded international designers and material makers. "We do not have any definite criteria," he says. "Rather, it is more about the chemistry and the bond we could have with a potential partner."







ARUMAN SETS FOCUS



www.e-maruman.co.jp







aruman, Japan's leading manufacturer of high-quality stationery, is adapting to a shrinking domestic market by concentrating on international business expansion.

Under President Yasuhiro Iguchi, Maruman has set the ambitious objective of surpassing domestic sales by 2030. Having already established operations in China and the U.S., the company plans further expan-

sion. "We are focusing on Southeast Asia and India as well," Iguchi says. "We believe that 'Made in Japan' products have marketability in these countries in terms of value and trust."

A DOMESTIC INDUSTRY LEADER THAT HAS BEEN CRAFTING PREMIUM-QUALITY STATIONERY

PRODUCTS FOR OVER A CENTURY, MARUMAN IS RESPONDING TO JAPAN'S AGING POPULATION BY

A firm whose stated mission is to be a "creative support company," Maruman has accumulated over a century of expertise in the stationery business, establishing itself as a go-to specialist in premium paper. The manufacturer offers customers no fewer than 13 different types of original paper, for both writing and art.

Key to maintaining Maruman's renowned paper quality are the company's "paper meisters"industry experts who meticulously evaluate the writing experience, focusing on aspects such as smoothness, resistance to bleeding and durability.

And among the products that epitomize Maruman's exquisite paper manufacturing are its Mnemosyne notebooks. Named after the ancient Greek goddess of memory, these notebooks are crafted with paper that's perfect for fountain pens—and are adored by professionals for the luxurious experience they enjoy as they work.



Pioneering Global Biotech Research

Transforming the biotech industry, Cosmo Bio is leveraging partnerships, an extensive product database and cold storage solutions to expand globally. Its vision emphasizes both innovation and market expansion. By Paul Mannion and Cian O Neill



"New technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics are drastically changing the research environment."

Norihiko Shibayama, President, Cosmo Bio Co., Ltd.

Cosmo Bio plays a crucial role in the global biotechnology field. The company provides over 12 million products from 500 suppliers worldwide, which are used by researchers to advance scientific discovery. Cosmo Bio's proprietary database enables researchers to access products more efficiently, suggesting optimal tools and



materials for their experiments based on shared information. This system greatly enhances research processes, equipping scientists with the resources they need for cutting-edge work.

While trading remains a cornerstone of its operations, Cosmo Bio has expanded into manufacturing, particularly through its Sapporobased facility. By producing its own reagents, the company reduces dependence on imports and avoids exposure to currency fluctuations. "By having manufacturing capabilities, we're less vulnerable to the risks associated with currency exchange," says President Norihiko Shibayama. This dual focus on trading and manufacturing allows Cosmo Bio to stay competitive both domestically and internationally.

The company has also developed advanced logistics systems to ensure the safe transportation of temperature-sensitive reagents. Using air freight and a sophisticated customs clearance process, Cosmo Bio ensures products reach their destinations promptly and in the right conditions. This logistical expertise is a key asset as the company continues to grow its global reach.

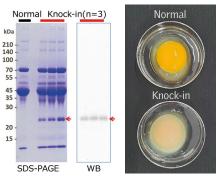
Looking ahead, Cosmo Bio plans further expansion into overseas markets, particularly high-tech research hubs in the U.S. and Europe. The company is also rolling out its cutting-edge

new Chicken Egg Bioreactor-unique, costreducing technology that's capable of stably producing large quantities of useful recombinant proteins. "We want to expand our network and commercialize this product," Shibayama says.





Cosmo Bio's original products



Targeted protein production by the Chicken Egg Bioreactor technology









OGOS TO FOCUS ON

The future is bright for the renowned outdoor goods brand as it aims to MARK ITS APPROACHING CENTENARY BY EXPANDING ITS INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND SHOWCASING JAPANESE HOSPITALITY TO POTENTIAL DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS. By Antoine Azoulay and Bernard Thompson



irst established in 1928, Logos Corporation is an outdoor brand that caters to three main areas of the outdoor goods industry, providing camping gear, clothing and backpacks to eco-conscious, familyoriented consumers.

With the outdoor goods industry forecast to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 7 percent from 2024 to 2032, it's clear that business is as good as it's ever been.

Company President Shigeki Shibata confirms that the outlook is optimistic: "There is an increasing tendency among our customers to combine products that were conventionally used for a single purpose. People are getting more sophisticated and fusing activities together, meaning we are seeing a growing interest in our products across different categories."

Equally important for Logos, of course, is its brand. Shibata again: "Brand positioning is vital because outdoor and camping brands occupy different niches in each region."

For Logos Corporation, the target demographic is families with children in elementary or middle school. "We make consumables such as fuel, and generalist products, which are easy to assemble, use and disassemble," Shibata says.

Accessibility, however, is not about catering to novices. "There's a reason we value accessibility so highly," Shibata continues. "Manufacturing accessible products helps to increase connections and engagement and gives families the chance to have a memorable experience."

Meanwhile, the corporation's evolution from outdoor lifestyle brand to community builder can be seen most clearly in its decision to open two new theme parks, LOGOS LAND in Kyoto in 2018, and LOGOS PARK in Kochi in 2022. Increasing community engagement is one of the pillars of the corporation's sustainability strategy, as well as a way to showcase its products to a growing domestic audience.

"The theme parks are free," Shibata confirms. "People go there, enjoy time with friends and family, maybe have a meal, and go back home. As a company, we have to benefit from these interactions, which is why we are building accommodation, cafes and barbecues on site."

Looking to the future, and with an existing market presence in China and South Korea, Shibata is open to the prospect of international expansion. "Our strategy towards overseas expansion is to use local distributors," he says. "We don't open up our own operations in foreign countries. Thus, we are always seeking new distribution channels."

Logos is looking for like-minded, innovation-driven partners, something which Shibata is passionate about: "What I'm really interested in is foreign companies that might want to develop the Logos brand in their country. Then I long to develop with them the Japanese sense of hospitality around the world."





"Brand recognition is what generates trust and loyalty among customers."

Shigeki Shibata

President, Logos Corporation







ELEVATE YOUR ROUTINE WITH Inpanese Genuty by Mt

A COMPANY OUT TO EXPAND GLOBALLY, NBS LEADS THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY WITH CUTTING-EDGE DEVICES LIKE THE METALT AND HY PEEL INTO, OFFERING ADVANCED TREATMENTS THAT ENHANCE SKIN HEALTH AND OVERALL WELL-BEING. By Sasha Lauture and Sean McBride



"At NBS, we help our customers to become the best version of themselves they can be."

> **Ayami Sato** President, NBS Co., Ltd.



www.nbs-nbs.com/lang-en/company











aking a holistic approach to beauty with a focus on well-being inside and out, NBS is a leading developer of equipment for

salon and home use, mainly specializing in devices for hair removal, slimming and skin care. As it looks to expand its global presence, the Japanese company showcases two of its flagship products, the MetaLT and the soon-to-be-released Hy Peel into.

The MetaLT is a revolutionary device designed to deliver professional salon-quality treatments right at home. The world's first home-use device to incorporate a thermal fractional mode, the MetaLT can be applied over makeup and immediately tightens pores and lifts the skin. Equipped with a 24-karat-gold head to protect your skin, the MetaLT penetrates beyond surface layers, counteracting wrinkles and improving elasticity. "A similar treatment is performed at clinics and is called Thermage," says President Ayami Sato. "Each session costs around 80,000 yen, and it also requires downtime, meaning you have to wait for a significant period before the next treatment. But with the MetaLT, there is no such downtime."

The MetaLT has five functions to meet various needs, but the user does not have to make any difficult choices. The device is designed to automatically switch between functions for the best treatment; simply press the 'auto' button.

Sato emphasizes that NBS gathered extensive feedback from salons while developing the MetaLT: "We wanted a deep understanding of what customers really wanted and what they felt was most beneficial. What we did was bring the professional experience to everyday consumers in a product they can use without any specialized knowledge."

Meanwhile, the Hy Peel into allows you to treat both the inside and outside of your body with one device, leading to fundamental improvements to your well-being. The device not only enables you to perform cutting-edge skin care treatments, but also has a tube through which you can breathe in highly concentrated hydrogen gas to detoxify bad active oxygen in your body.

"No matter how sensitive your skin may be, this device has something for you," states Sato, who stresses the Hy Peel into's benefits for all-round health. "We have science-backed evidence based on urine and blood tests, where using the device improved biomarkers. It had a direct effect not only on the surface of the skin, but also on the well-being of the body itself. With continued use, you'll see improvements in sleep quality and hormonal balance."

The MetaLT and Hy Peel into showcase NBS's potential to become a globally renowned beauty brand, offering unique products to address the diverse needs of customers worldwide. In line with its international ambitions, the company is seeking distributors and partners who can help promote its products in new markets.

"With our devices, we want to give people the courage to love themselves more and be kind to others," Sato concludes. "At NBS, we will continue to pursue products and services that help our customers to become the best version of themselves they can be."



