

JAPAN'S ARTFUL APPROACH TO LIFESTYLE INNOVATION

THE HIDDEN GEMS OF JAPAN ARE REDEFINING MODERN LIFESTYLE WITH UNPARALLELED ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND ARTISTRY. *By Bernard Thompson, Daniel de Bomford and Megah Bintang*

Japanese companies are celebrated worldwide for seamlessly blending groundbreaking innovation with a deep-rooted dedication to societal well-being. Their unwavering commitment to sustainability, community engagement and masterful craftsmanship—driven by a discerning domestic demand for premium lifestyle—results in products which both captivate and inspire a vision of a more balanced and harmonious future.

Companies like Hobonichi, famed for its iconic planners, and master-piece (MSPC), celebrated for sleek, durable bags, are such paragons. President Shigesato Itoi of Hobonichi reflects on his company's approach, "Would someone from 500 years ago appreciate this?" Tokiko Inoue, the president of master-piece, answers on how MSPC meets these timeless human needs: "Japanese people typically look at ways to add functionalities and improve their usefulness." Both companies are united in one vision: to synthesize tradition and innovation throughout their products.



Global Style Suit

Cosmetics transform daily routines into self-expression, something Japanese companies excel at. Nisshin Chemical company president Hiroki Takada attests to this: "Japanese cosmetics are one of the most attractive products from a global perspective." His is one of many hidden gems redefining beauty, servicing a discriminating global village in need of their unique talents: crafting cosmetic solutions redefining refinement and functionality.

Apparel, a cornerstone of lifestyle goods, weaves cultural narratives and shapes individual identity. Beyond function, it harmonizes with fashion, enriching lives through comfort, style and self-expression. Global Style Co., crafting custom luxury suits; GRIP INTERNATIONAL, a trailblazer in golf apparel; and Mother's Industry, known for sustainable innovative fashion, exemplify this transformative ethos. Global Style Co. President and CEO Hiroshi Tashiro explains: "We aim to redefine made-to-order suits by breaking down barriers, making bespoke tailoring accessible to all." This



Master-piece bags

bold reimagining reflects the industry's shift toward inclusivity and innovation.

GRIP INTERNATIONAL echoes this pioneering spirit in golf fashion. President and Chairman Takaharu Kuwata states: "I wanted to be called a pioneer, blazing a trail as a trend-setter." Similarly, Mother's Industry President Nobuaki Sasano captures the emotional resonance of their work: "What we aim for is to trigger emotions in our customers." These companies are redefining fashion, transforming how it's made and experienced.

These hidden gems of Japanese lifestyle resonate internationally, showcasing a thoughtful blend of tradition, innovation and artistry. They redefine everyday essentials with unmatched quality and purpose, inspiring a deeper appreciation for purposeful design. This considered and artful approach by Japanese lifestyle brands positions them what they are: models of craftsmanship with eternal appeal.

HOBONICHI: *How to Grow a Community*

HOBONICHI CO., LTD. IS KNOWN FOR ITS VERSATILE AND HIGH-QUALITY PLANNERS, COMBINING CREATIVITY AND PRACTICALITY, INSPIRING PEOPLE TO DOCUMENT THEIR DAILY LIVES IN MEANINGFUL WAYS. *By Daniel de Bomford and Cian O'Neill*



"I always say that to be amusing is actually the driver of our business"

Shigesato Itoi
President, HOBONICHI

President of Hobonichi, Shigesato Itoi, says that the company operates under three guiding principles: to be kind, to be strong and to be amusing. "Being amusing means adding value to society, but people will not follow you if you're not kind and strongly driven." Itoi explains that while they

sell planner books, they are actually a content creation company. "We provide content in the form of a product, so content creation, gathering, and sales are the core business," he says.

With the business having grown organically through word of mouth, Hobonichi is looking to grow its network overseas. "We have realized through experience that our business model is applicable overseas and there is a demand for our products," Itoi says. Hobonichi is finding success in the West with this same approach, combined with tech-savvy initiatives like the AR Hobonichi Globe. However, Itoi emphasizes a mindful approach to technology: "Digital technology is beneficial for human beings, but we only consider that as one tool. Humanity's fundamental needs—two eyes, one nose, one mouth—haven't changed over history. When brainstorming, we ask: Would someone from 500 years ago appreciate this? We focus on satisfying basic needs while embracing innovation and maintaining timeless human values in our designs."

HOBONICHI

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BEYOND A GENTLEMAN'S GAME, *Bringing Luxury Fashion to Golf*

SINCE ITS INCEPTION 23 YEARS AGO, GRIP INTERNATIONAL HAS LED THE EXPANSION OF THE GOLF APPAREL MARKET AND BROKEN THROUGH THE BORDERS TO BRING IT TO THE WORLD. *By Daniel De Bomford, Bernard Thompson and Megah Bintang*

Golf is more than a sport in Japan—it's a statement, embraced by more than 8 million players to create the world's second-largest golf community. Here, the game transcends fairways, embodying ambition, precision and style. From advanced clubs to impeccably crafted apparel, golf in Japan is elevated to an art form where every swing reflects innovation and excellence.

Leading this cultural evolution is GRIP INTERNATIONAL, a revolutionary force in golf apparel. Two decades ago, the sportswear market was crowded, but President and Chairman Takaharu Kuwata saw an untapped opportunity. "We wanted to create a golf wear market that can accept those who like luxurious brands," he explains. "I wanted to be called a pioneer in a new market, blazing a trail as a trendsetter."

This vision redefined the game, making GRIP INTERNATIONAL a true industry leader whose example global giants now follow.

Kuwata believes this new market he helped create has sustained the number of golfers despite the declining population of Japan. Furthermore, in order to secure GRIP INTERNATIONAL's success, Kuwata began to approach the global market before the company had even launched. "Even 23 years ago, I recognized the looming threat, and I made a clear, unwavering decision to expand internationally," he says. Quickly, the company established strong relationships in Taiwan, South Korea and Thailand. He explains, "This was never just about building a business—it was about redefining the industry's boundaries on a worldwide scale."

From the flagship store Fine Second in Kobe's Sannomiya district, GRIP INTERNATIONAL has curated its diverse brands like the elegant Heal Creek that focuses on the perfect silhouette. The MUNITALP brand takes this to the next level, focusing on a fashionable black-and-white aesthetic. Kuwata says that it can be challenging to connect with European audiences who prefer function over fashion. But he points out, "this presents an exciting opportunity for us to introduce them to the unique blend of style and performance that our designs offer." Kuwata is also excited about the VIVA HEART brand that brings bold, vibrant colors to the field and is worn by world No. 9 golfer Ayaka Furue. "Designed to uplift players and inspire confidence, it turns every round of golf with friends into a dynamic, colorful experience," he says.

With the next generation coming through the ranks of GRIP INTERNATIONAL, Kuwata says the company is ready to continue growing. "I am now supported by my son and our many young staff, all very capable of handling both domestic and global business needs."



"Our brands are bursting with potential and limitless opportunities for growth, ready to reach new heights."

Takaharu Kuwata

Chairman and CEO,
Grip International Co., LTD.



www.grip-inter.com

Website

Online shop





“Our philosophy emphasizes our use of fashion to put smiles on peoples’ faces.”

Nobuaki Sasano
President, Mother's Industry Co., Ltd.

Mother's Industry co., ltd.
<https://mothers-ind.com>



TRADITIONAL JAPANESE STYLE, *by Everyone for Everyone*

MOTHER'S INDUSTRY IS PREPARING TO MAKE THE LEAP TO THE WORLD STAGE WITH ITS TRADITION-INSPIRED, EXPERTLY CRAFTED FASHION.
By Daniel De Bomford, Bernard Thompson and Megah Bintang

The clothes we wear serve as a powerful expression of our identity, forming part of a complex social language that communicates who we are to the world. Fashion shapes how we perceive one another and can elicit emotional connections, making it essential to choose attire that authentically reflects our individuality. Few brands embody this idea more than Japan's Mother's Industry Co., Ltd. President Nobuaki Sasano describes their philosophy as putting smiles on people's faces and their vision is to be known as a brand for everyone, by everyone. The minimalist and understated style exemplifies the principles of classic Japanese design – clean lines, simplicity and functionality. “Our concept targets people who want to express themselves in a simple manner,” Sasano says.

Mother's Industry's focus on quality and using Japanese fabrics gives its clothes a level of luxury in the fashion industry yet remains an attainable price. To keep quality high and costs down, Sasano says they are very particular about keeping all production on shore, in Japan, to ensure access to high-quality Japanese fabrics and the highly developed manufacturing industry. Sasano explains, “Our target is to become a new luxury, and while many will associate luxury with high-class, what we aim for is, beyond that, to trigger emotions in our customers.” That care and quality is reflected in its consumption rate of 99.6 percent, Mother's Industry has never had to discard excess stock. “This is a reflection of the Japanese mottainai; a centuries-old philosophy that expresses a sense of regret over waste,” he says.

Despite the fact it manufactures entirely on shore, it is looking to bring Japanese fashion to the world. Its “Five-Hour Distance” social media strategy targets neighboring customers within five hours of Japan, such as Korea and China. “We want to actively use social media and influencers in each region so that we can reach out to people in the area,” Sasano says. By gaining a foothold nearby, Sasano explains they aim to trigger a butterfly effect that will carry the brand all the way to fashion centers in the West, such as Paris and New York.

Currently, Mother's Industry is looking for partners who share its values and passions. “At this present time, we are looking for both sales channels and partners to help us with boutique stores as well as partners to help with production,” Sasano explains. With a new flagship store in Aoyama and a retail store in Taiwan soon to open and discussions in Korea and Mainland China, Mother's Industry is already well on its way to global recognition. Sasano says, “The goal here is to be recognized worldwide as a unique Japanese brand.”



Global Style Co: Making Sophistication Global and Accessible



"I want to see our suits worn in New York and Chicago, on the East Coast, in London and Paris - I want to see our suits all over the world."

Hiroshi Tashiro, President, Global Style Co., Ltd.

Purchasing a suit is a defining moment, symbolizing the transition into adulthood and the embrace of new responsibilities. More than mere attire, a suit serves as a powerful statement of confidence, style and purpose. In Japan, this sentiment runs deep. For many, investing in a high-quality

Global Style Co are tailoring custom-made suits to bring Japanese craftsmanship and style to the global market. *By Daniel De Bomford, Bernard Thompson and Megah Bintang*



A stylist measuring a customer suit ensures you're prepared for Japan's many formal occasions—whether commanding attention in the boardroom or celebrating life's milestones—where impeccable presentation and lasting first impressions are paramount. This is where Global Style, a company specializing in custom suits, shirts and shoes sales management, has built incredible success on a simple, yet powerful idea: to make tailor-made suits accessible to everyone.

At Global Style, timeless elegance and Japanese craftsmanship meets global fashion trends and inclusivity, delivering suits as unique and individual as the people who wear them. Company President and CEO Hiroshi

Tashiro speaks to this transformative truth: "We aim to redefine made-to-order suits by breaking down barriers of exclusivity and cost, making bespoke tailoring accessible to all." This bold vision empowers everyone to experience the confidence and sophistication of a tailor-made suit.



Various suits in a wide variety of fabrics

In a market base traditionally middle-aged and male, it is this vision which has allowed Global Style as a market newcomer to touch upon a new younger demographic. Tashiro says that over 50 percent of their clientele, with the opening of their GINZA Global Style, are in their 20s and 30s. "To cater to this younger customer, we've positioned stylists, rather than tailors, to provide a fresh and relevant experience," he says.

Tashiro explains that Global Style provides a personal touch with its in-store stylists who go beyond simply measuring. "Silhouette and comfort remain essential elements of fashion, yet our customers often seek guidance on coordinating shirts and ties with their suits," he says. This guidance differentiates its tailors from stylists who need to be able to provide holistic, personalized style advice. "In essence, our stylists are dedicated to delivering comprehensive style coordination, embodying the role of a true stylist," he says.

Global Style isn't just catering to men; an increasing number of women are purchasing suits as demographics shift, particularly in the business world. "To cater to our female customers, our team re-

quires female stylists for fittings," Tashiro explains. He believes this trend will present substantial future opportunities.

Seizing these opportunities is becoming paramount with the shrinking domestic market and aging workforce. Setting their sights abroad, Tashiro wants to see Global Style suits in high-demand areas, particularly financial hubs like London and New York. The key to their strategy is to apply the lessons they've learned from their domestic success: collaboration. "Moving forward, we aim to establish more partnerships in markets targeted for our expansion," he explains. Global Style is actively seeking new partners to break into global markets. "To expand effectively in these areas, securing reliable distribution partners is key," Tashiro says.



Kaiser Premium

With designs for the international market, a Japanese eye for quality, impeccable style and a personal touch, it won't be long before Global Style suits are seen in cities worldwide. As Tashiro says, "Our mission is to redefine the image of made-to-order suits, removing outdated perceptions of exclusivity or high cost and making stylish suits accessible to everyone."

**GINZA
Global Style**

www.global-style.jp



GINZA Global Style PREMIUM flagship store



GINZA Global Style store interior

The Bold International Future of Nisshin Chemical

Making strides in manufacturing and tactical international investment, Nisshin Chemical stands poised to help their clients break into the global market. *By Daniel De Bomford*



"Japanese cosmetics are one of the most attractive products from a global perspective."

Hiroshi Takada, President, Nisshin Chemical Co., Ltd.

From the nourishing caress of a hair cream to the invigorating allure of a fragrance, the products we rely on daily define our comfort and confidence. These unseen essentials transform routines into rituals, blending elegance with purpose. At the core of this innovation stands Nisshin Chemical, a high-performance developer and manufacturer, a driving force behind the creation of solutions elevating everyday life. With every product, it redefines the art of refinement and functionality.

Nisshin Chemical Co., Ltd., established in 1970, has emerged as a market leader in contract manufacturing. Initially focused on producing aerosols for industrial, automotive and deodorant applications, the company's journey into cosmetics began with haircare products. "We began receiving orders such as hair sprays and styling forms from a global brand company," recalls President Hiroshi Takada. Around

the same time, demand for bathroom fragrances surged. "The toilet sanitary environment was not so good, so aerosol products that had an immediate effect on the odor were very popular," Takada says. From that point, Nisshin Chemical's trend-savvy approach attracted clients seeking products beyond aerosols, such as styling gels. As fashion trends evolved, the company responded by developing hair creams, mists and waxes. This progression naturally enhanced its expertise in personal beauty and care, expanding its product range to include gels, foams, creams and oils.

A major turning point came in 2005 with the revision of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Law, which allowed companies to outsource product manufacturing.



Mother factory in Wakayama prefecture

"Until then, brand companies could not outsource the entire manufacturing process and had to carry out the part of manufacturing process in-house," Takada explains. The law opened the market to fabless companies—start-ups focused on planning, design and marketing—enabling them to outsource manufacturing entirely to OEMs like Nisshin. "These companies are typically founded by young people who have planning, designing or marketing



R&D Lab in the headquarters

capabilities, and they can outsource the whole manufacturing process to an OEM company like us," says Takada. This shift not only broadened Nisshin's domestic client base but also positioned the company to collaborate with international brands, leveraging its manufacturing expertise to meet global market demands.

Nisshin Chemical continued its global expansion this year with the acquisition of Malaysian OEM and ODM company Bodibasix Manufacturing (BSX). "I think the potential in BSX is quite significant. Malaysia doesn't have a large population, but ASEAN has 680 million people," Takada says. With many of its clients looking abroad for new markets as the domestic market shrinks, Nisshin Chemical has gained an enviable position. BSX's capacity to produce halal products means it can serve Muslims across Asia and look to continue expansion into India and the Middle East. "I believe that considering the price, local production for local consumption becomes a key factor. To achieve that, significant investments are required in infrastructure development for factories and production processes. BSX can play a pivotal role in this effort," Takada says.

Another major advantage offered by Nisshin Chemical is flexibility and advanced manufacturing expertise. As Takada explains, "High-mix-low-volume is our biggest strength because we initially specialized in aerosols, and there were a lot of small lots for that product." Takada says that they are constantly looking for ways to improve efficiency and reduce waste through technology. "There

are many companies in Japan that make machines to automate the process, and we are using their machines to reduce the labor needed on the production line. We are also incorporating digital tools into making smart factories."



Key blending equipment

With its forward-thinking approach to production and expansion, Nisshin Chemical prepared for future challenges. Its willingness to embrace new technology and bold steps into the international market give it the edge in a competitive market. With the confidence gained from experience, they are the trusted choice for manufacturing.



Board members of headquarters and Bodibasix



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