

CRAFT AND CULTURE SHAPE JAPAN'S LIFESTYLE

JAPANESE BRANDS FRAME LIFESTYLE AS A DAILY PRACTICE, SHAPED BY CONTINUITY AND LIVED EXPERIENCE.

By Daniel de Bomford and Bernard Thompson



Shabondama Soap product



EBM's holistic skincare lineup



Yuzawayama Shoji buttons



C vita series by MOMOTANI JUNTENKAN



Kao Cosmetic Products



Maruzen Junkudo Bookstore



Yuskin Series

Lifestyle, at its most enduring, is shaped less by trends than by the everyday choices people make; how they care for their bodies, engage their minds and find meaning in routine acts. In Japan, a new generation of established brands is reaffirming that idea. Guided by centuries of craftsmanship and culture, these companies frame lifestyle as a lived experience built through trust and continuity.

A Culture of Craftsmanship at the Core

For Yuzawayama Shoji, lifestyle begins with the act of making. President Nobumoto Hatanaka emphasized the emotional value of craft in an era of convenience. "The emotional experience of creating something with your own hands was completely different, and it could not be replaced," he said, describing handcrafting as both a personal practice and a cultural constant.

Japan is renowned for its culture of artisan craftsmanship, and ITO-YA, one of the country's oldest stationery manufacturers, carries that culture forward. President Akira Ito said that consumers are increasingly seeking out high-quality goods and experiences, despite modern digital conveniences. "This shift allows us to create higher-end products with greater value," he said.

At Shabondama Soap, daily hygiene is treated as a form of wellness. President Hayato Morita said Japanese bathing culture had long shaped consumer expectations around purity and care. "Japanese companies responded with refined craftsmanship, careful selection of ingredients, and meticulous product development," he said, positioning soap as a product of responsibility rather than marketing. ▶

▶ EBM approaches beauty as a balance of skin, mind and environment, guided by long-term relationships with customers. President Eiko Matsushima described the company's purpose simply: "EBM is a company that creates beauty in order to bring happiness and vitality to people and to the Earth."

Beauty Designed for Life

This sentiment is echoed by Kao Corporation, whose focus on skincare rituals is supported by decades of rigorous research and testing. "We continually refine our technology to ensure these ingredients are delivered effectively to

the skin and remain stable within formulations," Executive Officer Tomoko Uchiyama said. The company's careful approach is nurturing the skin to bring out its natural radiance, without unnecessarily burdening it.

At Yuskin, skincare is rooted in everyday habit and medical-grade trust. President Takeyuki Nowatari said hand care in Japan is shaped by climate and culture, adding that "hand care is integrated into everyday life." The company's quasi-drug formulations emphasize effectiveness over cosmetic appeal.

Momotani Juntendo approaches beauty as part of life design. Seiichiro

Momotani, representative director and president, said aesthetic care offered more than surface-level change. "This was not merely beauty; it was a reconstruction of one's way of life," he said, describing how confidence and health often evolve together.

For Maruzen Junkudo Bookstores, lifestyle is intellectual and communal. President Jin Nishikawa underscored the role of bookstores as cultural anchors in a digital age. "The greatest risk lay in failing to adapt," he said, arguing that spaces for discovery and thought remain essential to daily life.



EBM EXPANDS JAPANESE SKINCARE THROUGH HOLISTIC BEAUTY

AT EBM, BEAUTY BEGINS WITH LISTENING AND TRANSLATES INTO PERSONALIZED WELLNESS CARE. By Daniel de Bomford



EBM Co., Ltd. continues to strengthen its position as a distinctive force in Japan's cosmetics and skincare sector, combining long-standing craftsmanship with a human approach to beauty. Founded on the concept of Energy, Beauty and Mind, the company operates nearly 40 salons in Japan and overseas and has developed more than 200 products shaped by customer voices and deep counseling.

Coenal, EBM's voice-analysis system that translates the

Japanese idea of staying close to people into technology, supports more personalized beauty and health care. As President Eiko Matsushima said, "EBM is a company that creates beauty to support the happiness and vitality of people and the Earth." Through Jap-

anese-quality cosmetics, Bali-inspired studios with Japanese spirit, Planetary Energy Beauty Mist with innovative wellness and beauty technology and Planetary Health promotion, EBM continues to evolve its holistic vision of beauty.

"Our core philosophy is to stay close to our customers."

Eiko Matsushima
President, EBM Co., Ltd.



"Yuskin has a tradition of formulating for real, tangible results."

Takeyuki Nowatari
President,
Yuskin Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd.



YUSKIN HAND CREAM MARKS 70 YEARS

DISCOVER YUSKIN'S ICONIC JAPANESE HAND CREAM, REIMAGINED TODAY. By Cian O'Neill

In 1957, prompted by the voice of a single woman suffering from severe hand irritation, Yuskin launched its signature yellow cream, "Yuskin," developed to treat chapped skin, cracks and chilblains. Since then, under the guiding principle "For the sake of your skin," the company has been headquartered in Kawasaki City and has manufactured and sold pharmaceuticals, quasi-drugs and cosmetics.

As customers shared their experiences of improved hand conditions, the product spread nationwide through word of mouth. Annual shipments now reach approximately five million units, reflecting the trust and continued support of a broad customer base.

In 2016, Yuskin fully relocated its production facilities to Toyama. In 2020, the company redesigned and updated the "Yuskin" container to enhance everyday usability while addressing environmental considerations. This redesign was recognized with a Good Design Award.



A CENTURY OF SKIN WISDOM

FROM A SINGLE BOTTLE OF LOTION CREATED AS A GIFT FOR HIS WIFE STRUGGLING WITH ACNE TO GLOBAL SKINCARE INNOVATION, MOMOTANI JUNTENKAN SHAPES MODERN BEAUTY WORLDWIDE. *By Daniel de Bomford and Kyann Edouard and Bernard Thompson*



“Our mission is to harmonize nature and science to support people’s beauty, health, and happiness.”

Seichiro Momotani

President,
Momotani Juntanken Co., Ltd.

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Founded in 1885, Momotani Juntanken is one of Japan’s longest-operating cosmetics manufacturers. “Our founder believed that business should exist to solve people’s concerns and to improve their daily lives, not merely to generate profit,” President Seichiro Momotani said. “That belief has been guiding us for over 140 years.” That conviction became the company’s guiding principle: “Following Nature’s Will, Serving People.”

The company’s origins are rooted in care, rather than commerce. Its first product, *Bigansui* Acne Lotion, was created when the founder sought to heal his wife’s acne. More than a century later, the product remains a bestseller, a rare constant in an industry driven by short cycles and fast trends.

Momotani Juntanken’s strength lies in skincare, shaped by Japan’s climate and culture. “Japan is a country surrounded by seawater, with a naturally humid climate, and our products have evolved to care for skin under those conditions,” Momotani said. Coupled with a long-term approach that prioritizes trust and continuity over novelty, the company has been a mainstay in the skincare market for over a century.

Today, its philosophy extends beyond topical skincare. The company positions itself as a total beauty and wellness group, spanning supplements, medical support and research into “beauty from within.” As Momotani said, “We’re exploring the relationship between skin health and gut health, understanding how intestinal bacteria affect skin appearance.”

Sun protection is another priority, with strong overseas demand for Cvita, reflecting a field he called “essential worldwide.” Internationally, Momotani Juntanken exports to around 30 countries. One representative example is the White Moisture Series, formulated with extracts originally cultivated from Japanese rice. Gentle enough for children and adults alike, it passed children’s safety testing in 2024 and now accounts for roughly 10 percent of international sales, steadily evolving into a long-selling line. The Placenta White Medicated Whitening Eye Cream has also been very well received both in Japan and overseas.

In 2025, the company opened a new chapter with CHEF de BEAUTÉ, developed in collaboration with research findings from Yokohama National University that showed that choosing products based on comfort and sensory satisfaction, rather than ingredients alone, can contribute to a more youthful skin appearance. The brand centers on what Momotani calls “personal resonance,” where users can choose products based on the comfort created by texture and fragrance.

“Our next chapter is about reimagining the essence of cosmetics,” Momotani said. The company is moving away from mass production, toward mindful, sensory, and sustainable beauty.



White Moisture



SHABONDAMA SOAP: JAPAN'S ADDITIVE-FREE APPROACH TO EVERYDAY WELLNESS

ROOTED IN JAPANESE CRAFTSMANSHIP, SHABONDAMA SOAP ADVANCES ADDITIVE-FREE CARE THAT PROTECTS SKIN, WATERWAYS AND COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE. *By Daniel de Bomford and Anudari Erdenebulgan*



Morning light glints off an enormous kettle. Steam rises slowly, carrying the faint, clean scent of natural oils. Inside, soap is formed, tested and judged by human hands. This deliberate scene has played out for more than half a century at Shabondama Soap, a company that has built its name on a radical idea: less can be better.

Founded in Kitakyushu, Japan, Shabondama Soap began as a general-goods merchant before entering soap manufacturing. Its turning point came in the 1960s, when the founder developed eczema while handling synthetic detergents, a hard-earned lesson that reshaped the company's purpose. That realization, followed by 17 years of losses, ultimately reshaped its purpose and led to a singular commitment to additive-free soapmaking. As President Hayato Morita said, "Our corporate philosophy is promoting wellness and clean water," a principle that still guides every decision today.

At the heart of Shabondama's manufacturing is the traditional kettle (batch) saponification process, also known as *kamadaki seiho*. Natural oils and lye are slowly saponified in open kettles over nearly a week to ensure that natural glycerin is preserved within the soap for a smooth, supple feel after washing. "The final evaluation is always human," Morita said, noting that soap artisans even taste the soap "with the tip of their tongues to ensure the soap has reached its peak quality and perfect balance." The result is soap with a simple formula, free from fragrances, colorants and preservatives.

This craftsmanship is the foundation of the company's long-running effort to educate consumers about the difference between real soap and synthetic detergents. "For over 50 years of producing additive-free soap, we still find many consumers remain uncertain about the difference," Morita said. Switching to additive-free soap is gentle on sensitive skin and on clean water by eliminating unnecessary chemicals, delivering gentle cleansing that readily biodegrades and supports long-term personal and environmental wellness. Factory tours, seminars and digital outreach are designed to close that gap and empower informed choice.

Shabondama's social commitment extends beyond the bathroom. Through initiatives such as the Jinoshima project, in which an entire island community switched to additive-free soap, the company addresses water pollution while speaking out against scent pollution that affects both people and ecosystems. Its product lineup reflects the same values: Head to Toe Cleansing Soap, Our SHABON Foaming Pure Facial Soap, SNOWL: Natural Laundry Soap, Natural Care Toothpaste and its signature SHABONDAMA Bath Soap.

With overseas expansion underway with the message "Wellness with Less," Shabondama Soap is bringing its philosophy to new markets without changing its core formulation. "Natural soap is gentle yet effective and environmentally friendly," Morita said. Looking ahead, the company remains focused on a simple promise: promote wellness and clean water, one honest bar of soap at a time.



"Across cultures, cleanliness has long been regarded as essential to personal wellness. At Shabondama Soap, we strive to support that wellbeing with additive-free soap."

Hayato Morita
President, Shabondama Soap



Shabondama Soap
Promoting Wellness and Clean Water

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HOW YUZAWAYA BRINGS CRAFT GLOBAL

FROM TOKYO FLAGSHIP TO GLOBAL SHOPPERS, YUZAWAYA SHOJI CONNECTS MAKERS WORLDWIDE.

By Daniel de Bomford, Cian O'Neill and Paul Mannion

The first impression is sound before sight. Bolts of fabric slide against wooden shelves. Scissors click somewhere in the distance. Yarn, stacked by color rather than brand, rises in mesmerizing columns. Inside a Yuzawaya store, movement is unhurried but constant, as customers trace patterns with their fingers, weighing texture and weight as carefully as price.

For decades, Yuzawaya Shoji has been a familiar presence in Japan's creative life. Today, the company operates 74 stores nationwide, supplying fabrics, yarns and handicraft materials to everyone from first-time hobbyists to seasoned professionals. Its flagship store in Tokyo, sprawling across roughly 3,300 square meters, carries close to 100,000 items. It's a working archive of materials.

That depth reflects a philosophy rooted in Japanese craftsmanship. "When we talk about Japan's strengths," President and Representative Director Nobumoto Hatanaka said, "I believe they rest on four foundations: the use of high-quality materials, an uncompromising attention to detail, a long-standing culture of handcrafting, and very active communication among creators." These are the qualities that have earned trust beyond Japan's borders.

Visitors from overseas now move easily through Yuzawaya Shoji's aisles, often arriving with lists or simply out of curiosity. Japanese materials such as specialty cords, decorative fabrics and traditional craft supplies have found a global audience. "These are not mass-market items," Hatanaka said. "But they resonate strongly with overseas customers who appreciate traditional Japanese decorative arts."



"We want to become a pioneer that brings Japanese handicraft culture to the world."

Nobumoto Hatanaka

President and Representative Director,
Yuzawaya Shoji Co., Ltd.



Yuzawaya

The company's international reach is no longer limited to tourism. Yuzawaya Shoji is placing strong emphasis on international e-commerce, extending access to customers who may never set foot in Japan. Online platforms allow the company to introduce Japanese materials directly to creators in the United States, Europe and across Asia, responding to a renewed global interest in making things by hand.

That interest spans generations. "The emotional experience of creating something with your own hands is completely different, and it cannot be replaced," Hatanaka said. In



that way, Yuzawaya Shoji promotes handicraft as something that endures thread by thread, across borders.



BEYOND RETAIL: BOOKSTORES AS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

REIMAGINING BOOKSTORES AS HUBS FOR CULTURE, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING. *By Daniel de Bomford*

The smell of new paper, the sounds of rustling pages, the quiet, contemplative atmosphere: few places leave a more profound impression than a bookstore. Within its walls, entire universes wait to be discovered, while the full spectrum of human emotions, from joy to grief to curiosity, is eager to be shared. A single excursion to a bookstore can be a life-changing experience.

Around the world, physical bookstores are feeling the squeeze of digital media, changing habits and economic conditions. However, Japan's reading culture endures even as the market contracts. Within this landscape, MaruzenJunkudo Bookstores stands as a long-established institution with over 150 years of history, adapting deliberately while preserving the cultural role bookstores continue to play.

Japan's bookselling industry is confronting hard realities: store numbers have fallen sharply, overall sales have declined, and consumers are devoting less time and discretionary spending to books. For leadership at MaruzenJunkudo Bookstores, denial is not an option. As President Hitoshi Nishikawa has said, "the greatest risk lies in failing to adapt." Internal research points to a resilient core of hybrid readers who move easily between print and digital formats, and between online and physical stores, offering a clear path forward even in a contracting market.

For MaruzenJunkudo, bookstores are a part of the cultural infrastructure and are rooted in the communities that they serve. Physical spaces are designed for comfort and time spent browsing. Author events and exhibitions provide engagement beyond transactions and are supported by booksellers who can guide readers across



"A bookstore should serve its community the way a library or a school does – as essential public infrastructure."

Hitoshi Nishikawa

President,
MaruzenJunkudo Bookstores Co.,Ltd.

disciplines. Nishikawa said the goal is to move "from a place that simply sells books into a place that provides diverse intellectual experiences." It's something that bookstores can provide that digital stores cannot.

The company views digital tools as complementary to physical books, rather than in opposition. "For us, this means developing online services that enhance the in-store experience rather than replace it," Nishikawa said. At the same time, inbound interest has highlighted global demand for Japanese books and merchandise based on intellectual property, traditional craftsmanship and fine stationery. By linking physical stores with digital access and cultural credibility, MaruzenJunkudo Bookstores is aiming to be a bridge connecting Japanese content with people around the world.



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As information becomes ever more abundant, places that offer context and human judgment grow more valuable. By remaining culturally relevant, adaptable and trusted, MaruzenJunkudo demonstrates how a bookstore can continue to matter in a global information economy.

Learn more in President Nishikawa's interview with the WorldFolio.

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