

JAPAN'S LIFESTYLE LEADERS TURN UTILITY INTO GLOBAL APPEAL

By Bernard Thompson and Daniel de Bomford



ORiental TRaffic



Goldwin Performance Collection SS26



ZOZOFIT



Edwin EDS Hinomaru

Across Japan, function and form go hand in hand. Whether it be outdoor wear suitable for day-to-day use, sleek umbrellas that match outfits rather than clash or comfortable staples like footwear and denim, Japan shapes everyday life through the objects people reach for instinctively. The country's craftsmanship bridges the gap between comfort, utility and style.

Goldwin is carrying Japanese technical apparel into the global market with a vision shaped by precision and material innovation. From its research and development base in Toyama, the company combines advanced fabric engineering with a refined aesthetic that moves easily from the outdoors to everyday life. As President and CEO Takao Watanabe put it, "We aim for simplicity, but a simplicity that is universal and deeply considered, products that do not depend on a particular country, region, or moment in time. In other words, design that transcends place and time."

WA Inc. is shaping Japanese lifestyle footwear around the idea that style should feel effortless and inviting. Through brands such as ORiental TRaffic and HIMIKO, the company brings together fashion sensitivity, comfort and accessibility in ways that reflect modern daily life. President Junwei Xiao said, "Maintaining the right balance between design, comfort and price accessibility is critical to building consumer loyalty." That balance, paired with a Japanese sense of charm and approachability, is winning hearts and soles at home and increasingly abroad.

Moonbat is reimaging the umbrella as a refined expression of Japanese lifestyle, where craftsmanship, design and protection come together in a single everyday object. Drawing on growing demand for climate-conscious accessories, the company is pairing elegance with practical innovation, from lightweight construction to full UV protection. As President and CEO Hisashi Kamada said, "Our goal is to help

people enjoy their daily lives even when the weather is not ideal."

EDWIN is carrying Japanese denim into the future by pairing heritage craftsmanship with a contemporary global outlook. Long respected for fabric character, fit and finish, the company continues to translate Japanese monozukuri into jeans that feel authentic. President Shuichi Tawara said denim is valued for "a beautiful and satisfying kind of change," capturing how EDWIN treats wear as character. "People who love denim are not looking for a fabric that stays identical," he said. "They are looking for a fabric that develops character, and that character becomes a form of personal expression."

ZOZO, Inc. is extending Japan's fashion influence through data, AI and platforms built to make style feel more personal and precise. From ZOZOTOWN to ZOZOFIT and the addition of Lyst, the company is turning fashion discovery into a smarter, more global experience shaped by behavioral insight. Representative Director, President and CEO Kotaro Sawada said ZOZO is building "a fashion AI agent," one that can recommend what truly suits each user with greater conviction. "To make truly meaningful recommendations, you need to incorporate that emotional and contextual information and then perform extremely complex customization," he said.

These companies show how Japanese fashion creates value through daily use. Whether through fit, fabric, protection or digital precision, each brings craft and purpose to ordinary life. Japan remains a source of style, and a maker of thoughtful, lasting fashion and accessories.



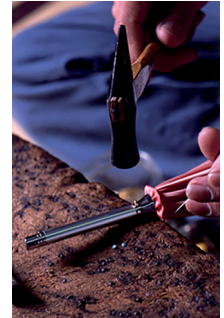
Magical Tech Umbrella



MOONBAT DESIGNS ACCESSORIES FOR THE CLIMATE

AS CLIMATE CHANGE INTENSIFIES, MOONBAT IS CREATING ACCESSORIES THAT RESIST EXTREME WEATHER TO PROTECT LIFESTYLES AND PEOPLE FROM THE ELEMENTS. *By Daniel de Bomford, Quentin Lange and Kyann Eduoard*

Picture walking down the trendy back streets of Hara-juku, Tokyo's fashion capital. What looked to be a clear day quickly turns as storm clouds roll in and the sky unleashes a torrent. Far from ruining your day or your outfit, you came prepared with a Moonbat Co., Ltd. umbrella. Stylish, handcrafted and perhaps most importantly, light, compact and able to be carried anywhere. As the effects of climate change intensify, extreme weather events, such as storms and heat waves, will become more frequent. Hisashi Kamada, president and CEO, wants Moonbat's handcrafted umbrellas to be a defense against the weather while complementing the wearer's style. "Rainy days often make people feel discouraged," he said. "However, a stylish umbrella can transform that experience." Drawing on Kyoto's rich history of craftsmanship and the company's 140 years of experience, Moonbat offers colors and designs that lift spirits. Japan is famous for its four distinct seasons, which include frightfully hot summers and a long wet season, and those conditions have given rise to a unique culture of practical fashion. In Kansai, where the company draws on its craftsman traditions, parasols and umbrellas have been a staple fashion accessory year-round. Moonbat's experience creating accessories for Japan's varied weather has given it the tools to combat extreme weather events as they become more



pronounced, particularly in Asia. As heat increases, so too does demand for heat shielding and thermal insulation, and Moonbat has developed parasols using materials like Fuwacool to reduce heat. Protection from the sun isn't just for comfort, either; it's a vital component of skincare. Thirty years ago, it developed UV-processing technology for its parasols and now can block 100 percent of the sun's rays. Conversely, as freak rainstorms wreak havoc on fashionable excursions, the need for an umbrella on hand has never been greater. But Moon-

bat is already decades ahead, pioneering the development of umbrellas weighing less than 100 grams and continuing to push the boundaries of lightness. At the same time, it achieves high water repellency through Teflon processing of its jointly developed fabric. Moonbat is determined not to let a rainy day dampen anyone's spirits. The company is making everyday objects into fashion items, and we can help bring a small sense of happiness even on a rainy day," Kamada said. "That is something I believe deeply in."

"Our goal is to help people enjoy their daily lives even when the weather is not ideal."

Hisashi Kamada

President and CEO, Moonbat Co., Ltd.



www.moonbat.co.jp





GOLDWIN BUILDS ITSELF INTO A GLOBAL BRAND

GOLDWIN IS TURNING JAPANESE CRAFTSMANSHIP INTO A GLOBAL LANGUAGE FOR PERFORMANCE WEAR. FROM ITS ROOTS IN TOYAMA TO FLAGSHIP STORES IN LONDON, SEOUL AND NEW YORK, THE COMPANY BLENDS TECHNICAL APPAREL, MINIMALIST DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY. *By Daniel de Bomford, Cian O'Neill and Arthur Menkes*

On a snow-covered slope, in a quiet city street or inside a flagship store built to feel like an extension of nature, Goldwin's products are designed to move between performance and everyday life with ease. Founded in Toyama more than 75 years ago, the company has grown from a high-quality knitwear manufacturer into a lifestyle creative company built around sports and outdoor apparel. Its business spans its own Goldwin brand as well as partnerships with global names including THE NORTH FACE and HELLY HANSEN, combining material research, technical development, retail experiences and environmental initiatives into a broader vision of how people live, move and connect with nature.

A Unique Approach to Apparel
Goldwin's identity rests on a distinctly Japanese design and manufacturing mindset. Takao Watanabe, president and CEO, said the company's philosophy is rooted in a deep awareness of beauty, a mindset of consideration and the instinct

to think beyond oneself. "For many Japanese people, working with that awareness is simply normal," he said.

One of its strongest advantages is its research and development base in Toyama. "We are closely connected to upstream industries at the earliest stages, from spinning and yarn production, to dyeing, and to what we call functional finishing and processing, including techniques such as lamination and other advanced treatments," Watanabe said.

This local manufacturing ecosystem makes communication easy and hands-on, allowing the company to develop materials with specificity and intention. "We can, in many cases, create the exact materials we envision, rather than simply choosing from what already exists," Watanabe said, going on to call this ability the "defining feature of Goldwin."

A Culture of Dedication to the Unseen Details
Goldwin's mindset has resulted in a dedication to detail that extends to material origins, comfort and long-term use, set-

ting it apart from the fast-fashion hype cycle popular in the fashion industry. The company strives to create harmony with nature, as evidenced by its dedication to circularity and sustainability. Its design approach of its own "Goldwin" brand can be compared to the Higashiyama culture, where wabi-sabi thrives. Refinement happens through the rejection of excess, quality without maximalism and the prioritization of simplicity, functionality and harmony with nature. By tying technical apparel to Japanese aesthetics, it ties function and beauty together, rather than sacrificing one for the other.

From Ski Heritage to Everyday Life
"Ski," Goldwin's origin, was created in conjunction with professional athletes. The Ski category reflects Goldwin's overall philosophy: integration of innovative materials and technologies for functional garments. Its second pillar is "Performance," which suits the year-round outdoor activities, like trekking and trail running. C3fit adds body-performance to the Goldwin brand, built around com-



Goldwin Kyoto



Goldwin Seoul



Goldwin 0 Collection SS26

pression, conditioning and comfort. Its products are designed to support movement, recovery and everyday physical condition, extending Goldwin's technical expertise from outerwear into the layers closest to the body.

The third pillar, "Lifestyle," which connects nature to the city. "Goldwin0" is the final pillar, an experimental platform that pursues supreme quality and timeless beauty rooted in nature, science and technology. Watanabe described outdoor apparel as versatile, bridging functions and demographics to appeal to a wide range of people. "Our products can of course be worn in sports and outdoor settings, but they can also be worn in business situations, while traveling, during leisure activities, and in a wide range of everyday contexts," he said.

In Japan, Goldwin Kyoto and Goldwin Marunouchi serve as domestic flagships, grounding the brand's global ambitions in spaces that express its Japanese sense of functional beauty. Goldwin is expanding its global business by gaining diverse experience through the rollout of its experimental platform, Goldwin0, and the opening of flagship stores around the world. "We want to offer products that are extremely functional, but also aesthetically refined, subtle, and carefully made," he said. "We aim for simplicity, but a simplicity that is universal and deeply considered, products that do not depend on a particular country, region, or moment in time. In other words, design that transcends place and time."

Global Growth: London, New York and Seoul

Goldwin's recent openings in London, Seoul and New York show that its global expansion is being built through flagship spaces designed to embody the brand's philosophy in physical form. Watanabe

considers Bushwick Street, home to the London flagship store, one of the best streets in Soho. "We see this store as a branding hub, and we want to develop a thoughtful communication strategy from London, working closely with the creative community there," he said.

While China is expected to account for a large share of sales in Goldwin brand's global strategy, South Korea also plays an important role in strengthening the brand's presence across Asia. Despite having half of Japan's population, outdoor wear is more deeply embedded in daily life in Korea, and the market is comparable in size. The company operates THE NORTH FACE brand in Korea and is leveraging that experience to position the Goldwin brand as a premium sports brand.

Like London, New York is being positioned as another global flagship. More



Goldwin Lifestyle Collection SS26

than just communicating its commitment to functional product creation, Watanabe said that Goldwin's flagship stores, including the New York location, will communicate its commitment to circularity and environmental responsibility. "We want to engage customers who live with strong standards, who care about the choices they make, and who want to purchase products that align with a sense of responsibility," he said.

Sustainability and the Future: Repair, Circularity and Material Innovation

For Goldwin, sustainability is not a side message or a matter of compliance. It is central to how the company defines value, product life and future growth. That philosophy is reflected in practical initiatives designed to keep products in use for longer.

From the beginning of the process, Goldwin carefully considers materials

and design as a way to reduce waste and ensure circularity. "We evaluate whether those materials are recycled, whether



Goldwin Performance Collection SS26

they can be recycled, and whether they can realistically be part of a circular system," Watanabe said. "It includes secondary components as well, such as zippers and other trims." Over 70 percent of its production has shifted to these low-impact materials, and it aims to achieve 90 percent utilization by 2030.

The Goldwin brand offers a free repair service for damaged products. Watanabe said the company is also directly confronting the industry's waste problem. "Our aim is ultimately to bring disposal to zero," he said. Through repair, circular design and next-generation materials, Goldwin reinforces its premium positioning by linking durability with responsibility.

Goldwin's global expansion reflects a broader ambition: to define performance through precision, restraint and responsibility. By linking Japanese craftsmanship with technical innovation and a clear commitment to nature, the company is building a premium sports brand for consumers who expect products to last, perform and reflect the values behind their choices.



WA INC. STEPS UP JAPANESE LIFESTYLE FOOTWEAR

WA INC. BLENDS JAPANESE COMFORT, CHARM AND PRACTICALITY INTO LIFESTYLE FOOTWEAR DESIGNED FOR MODERN CONSUMERS. *By Daniel de Bomford, Bernard Thompson and Kyann Eduoard*

Win a day out in Tokyo, a good pair of shoes is essential. The city is famously walkable with thousands of attractions, just a stone's throw away from hundreds of railway stations. A stroll in Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, a coffee break in trendy Shimokitazawa and shopping in Ginza, all easily accessible on foot. But comfort and durability aren't enough; shoes are a fashion statement and an expression of self. For WA Inc., that everyday journey is where Japanese lifestyle design begins.

Led by President Junwei Xiao, the company behind brands including ORiental TRaffic and HIMIKO has built its identity around a simple principle: products should be beautiful, practical and accessible. "In Japan, there is a strong sense of pride associated with design, particularly in achieving a refined balance between functionality and accessibility," he said. In footwear and lifestyle products, that balance is felt in the shoe's fit and the confidence it gives the wearer.

WA's approach reflects its key strength, the ability to make thoughtful designs feel natural. Xiao said that the company seeks to harmonize "design, comfort and affordability," creating products that earn consumer trust over time. This is especially important in footwear, where a purchase must satisfy both fashion and function. "As a footwear company, functionality is

our top priority," he said. "Ensuring a comfortable fit—especially one suited to Japanese foot shapes—is essential."

Utility is only one part of the equation. The company also brings a uniquely Japanese sensibility to its collections, particularly through ideas like kawaii, charm and softness. "We prioritize approachability and character, which we believe better reflects our brand identity and resonates more deeply with our audience," Xiao said. This gives the brand a warmer identity that resonates with younger customers and a wider audience alike.

Capturing that wider audience is becoming increasingly important. As Japan's population ages and younger demographics contract, WA is expanding beyond its original base. ORiental TRaffic serves as an accessible entry point for fashion-forward customers, while its sneakers, such as its ORTR line, appeal across generations, genders and lifestyles.

The company's growth is also being shaped by digital retail. Footwear was once considered difficult to sell online due to sizing issues, but consumer habits have changed. WA Inc. now connects stores and e-commerce in a way that lets customers discover products online, try them in person and buy through either channel. "Currently, over 30 percent of our footwear sales come from online channels," Xiao said, adding that this may grow to about 50 percent over time.

As WA looks overseas, sneakers and Japanese aesthetics may become key advantages. Xiao sees "strong universal appeal" in sneakers, while the company's sense of kawaii offers a point of difference in markets seeking something fresh, functional and unmistakably Japanese.

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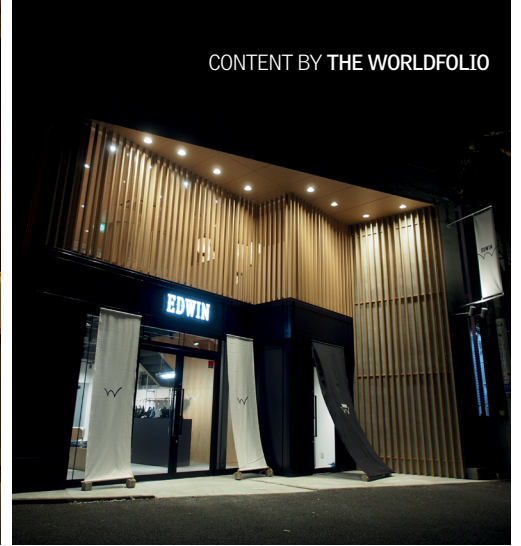
Junwei Xiao

President, WA Inc.



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EDWIN: JAPANESE DENIM REDEFINING STYLE

EDWIN BLENDS JAPANESE CRAFTSMANSHIP WITH MODERN STYLE, REDEFINING DENIM THROUGH INNOVATION, HERITAGE AND GLOBAL APPEAL. *By Daniel de Bomford*

Denim is iconic. A staple of streetwear and workwear for decades, it exudes style. Everyone from skaters to celebrities is caught wearing a pair of jeans. Versatile and functional, denim is the ultimate material. Denim was a late arrival in Japan, but when it finally arrived, EDWIN shook the scene, elevating denim to new levels. Beginning as a humble importer of denim from the United States, President Shuichi Tawara said that jeans quickly spread culturally throughout Japan. The company saw an opportunity and quickly shifted from purely importing to manufacturing jeans tailored to Japanese bodies and lifestyles.

“Our original starting point was not a prestige positioning,” Tawara said. “It was about making good jeans that many people could wear and building a business model that could produce reliably and distribute effectively.”

That philosophy remains central to EDWIN today, even as Japanese denim has gained global recognition for its craftsmanship and character. Unlike most fabrics, which are designed to resist change, denim is prized for how it evolves. Fading, creasing and subtle tonal shifts transform each pair into a unique reflection of the wearer. As Tawara explains, this “beautiful change” is not a flaw but the very essence



of denim. Japan’s rise as a leader in denim lies in its distinctive approach to manufacturing. While other markets prioritized speed and scale, Japanese producers focused on nuances like temperature control, dye depth and how fabric behaves over time. Traditional shuttle looms, though less efficient, create a textured, slightly uneven fabric that enthusiasts describe as having “life” and depth. EDWIN has built on this heritage while maintaining accessibility. Positioned as an “affordable premium” brand, it delivers Japanese quality without the exclusivity of top-tier luxury denim. Innovations such as stone washing and vintage finishing techniques have further cemented its place in denim history.

Today, the company is expanding its global footprint, particularly in Europe and the United States, where appreciation for Japanese craftsmanship continues to grow. At the same time, alongside a diverse retail network of accessible, everyday locations, EDWIN is embracing modern retail through concept stores that showcase not just products but the stories behind them. For Tawara, the future lies in balancing craft with innovation. By combining decades of expertise with contemporary design, EDWIN aims to ensure that denim remains as relevant tomorrow as it has been for generations.



“Our aim is to deliver uncompromising Japanese craftsmanship in a way that enriches everyday life.”

Shuichi Tawara

President, EDWIN Co., Ltd.

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