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Tudor expands athleisure brand as lineup, Japanese society grow

Lululemon leader takes change and runs with it

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Stewart Tudor came on board with the athleisure brand lululemon in March 2020, just as COVID-19 hit. While the pandemic has undoubtedly brought many challenges, it has been also the catalyst for positive developments in Japanese society, and Tudor believes the company is well-placed to meet the latest needs. With roots in both Japan and the U.S., the bicultural executive met with The Japan Times to talk about the latest developments at lululemon and to share his thoughts on what lies ahead.



Stewart Tudor's motto is "be curious and not judgmental." HARUO MOTOHASHI

Tough times, positive changes

Tudor pointed out that the pandemic has had a major effect on fashion trends, with more people working at home and increasingly interested in wellness and working out. "In many ways, I think this makes lululemon being in Japan quite timely. I am honored to be able to contribute to that in some way," he said.

Tudor noted that tough times, serving as agents of social change, often bring out the best in people. "I was here for the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami disaster, and I noticed that tremendous growth occurred in digital communications around that time," he said. "In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, I think it is more about thinking in terms of well-being and investing in yourself."

He believes that Japan is moving in a positive direction in this respect. "We come from a culture of *gaman* (endurance) here, and that is commendable — there will always be an element of *gaman*. However, I think people have woken up and have started treating themselves a little bit better."

Customers as valued guests

The company places priority on helping everyone who comes to the store get the most out of the experience. Customers are referred to as "guests," while staff members are "educators." Tudor explained that educators take time to get to know their guests and their needs, often spending 30 to 45 minutes with each one for a curated shopping experience.

It was this aspect of the brand's business model that first attracted Tudor's

attention. "At one of my former companies I was in charge of how to create the theater and communication for our products. Everything about retail is storytelling, and you want tell that story in the right way. When I went to New York to do some research in 2016, I stumbled upon lululemon lab in Soho and I was blown away!" said Tudor, who was based in Portland, Oregon, at the time.

"They had everything; a connection between the guest and the company, and getting feedback from the guest in terms of design or intent, and what needed to be modified or adjusted. I had never seen a company that was so in touch with the guest, and it was done in such an intuitive way," he noted.

Two years later Tudor returned to Japan as vice president for WeWork, a provider of co-working spaces, before taking on his current position in 2020. "With lululemon expanding into Japan, being the steward of a major brand from abroad has been a dream for me."

Following the opening of the Aoyama store this month in Tokyo, Japan now has a total of eight lululemon locations in Tokyo, Osaka and Shizuoka. The product lineup of lululemon has seen major changes since the Roppongi flagship store opened in June 2020. It has expanded from being known primarily as a women's yoga brand to now include apparel for golf and hiking, jackets and even comfortable business wear. "In essence, we have gone 'beyond yoga.' Anyone can wear lululemon," Tudor said, adding that there are plans to expand global stores fourfold by 2026.



HARUO MOTOHASHI

Global studies, global experience

The son of a Japanese mother and an American father, Stewart Tudor was born and educated in Tokyo, before moving to the United States to attend high school. He graduated from Boston University with a BA in global studies in 2002, then worked for the real estate firm CBRE in both New York and Tokyo. He subsequently joined Nike in 2011, where his final position was as general manager of Nike Stores Asia-Pacific and Latin America in Portland, Oregon.

Tudor returned to Japan in 2018 as vice president and general manager for WeWork before taking the helm at lululemon Japan in 2020. The father of two young children, in his spare time he enjoys running and cooking with his family. Tudor is proud to call Japan home and aspires to give back to the country he loves by having a positive impact on Japanese society.

ing innovative solutions into its product lines. In 2021, for example, they developed a 100% recycled polyester fabric, which is now being used for the pockets in men's apparel.

When he isn't taking care of business, Tudor enjoys spending time with his family. A dedicated rower during his high school and college years in the USA, he later switched to running. These days he and his wife go for regular runs together as a way to connect and de-stress. He is also a proud father of a 12-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. Spending more time at home during the pandemic has allowed Tudor to connect with his children on a deeper level, as well as take a more active role in managing things at home after his wife returned to her teaching career.

"I love cooking for the kids. I didn't cook all that well before, but now my son and daughter often ask, 'Did Daddy make this?' I do a pretty mean roast chicken with rosemary potatoes!" he said with a smile.

Rising to the challenge

Tudor is excited to see what lies ahead and how lululemon rises to meet new challenges. "People want to know what brands are doing, and how they're impacting society; there's a reprioritization of values. There is an urgency in the world, and I feel it, too," he said. "It's great that we are getting called out and that companies all around the world are starting to speak up. I think the fuse has been ignited, and the question is how fast we can make these

changes."

Tudor points out that lululemon's products are designed to be worn and enjoyed for 10 or 15 years — or more. The company recently introduced lululemon Like New in the U.S., a trade-in and resale program that operates both in-store and online. Tudor is looking forward to implementing the program in the Japanese market in the future. Moreover, with a global target of using all sustainable materials by 2030, lululemon has been steadily incorporat-

Oji's Nepi Eco paper products advance goal to cut fossil fuels

ESG/SDGs

MAIKO MURAOKA
 CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The first item launched in the Nepi Eco series, a lineup of environmentally conscious products introduced by Oji Nepia Co. Ltd. in 2021, was toilet paper. Oji Nepia is a subsidiary of Oji Holdings, one of the world's major pulp and paper producers, headquartered in Tokyo's Chuo Ward. This year, kitchen paper towels, tissues and masks were added to the series. In a recent interview with The Japan Times, Tomoko Takase from the Product Planning Division of Oji Nepia talked about the new ideas and efforts that have been put into these products and underlie Oji's commitment toward a better global environment.

Oji owns and manages 580,000 hectares of forests globally, which is about 2.5 times as large as the prefecture of Tokyo. The company logs and plants trees, maintaining forests in a healthy state — proper management of forests keeps them healthy and maximizes their benefits. Young, growing trees absorb more carbon dioxide through photosynthesis than old, mature trees. In forests that are not properly managed, the lack of sunlight makes the forest darker, making it more difficult for young trees and underbrush to grow.

"Good soil in healthy forests can prevent disasters such as floods and landslides because of its water-retention capability. The groundwater that runs into rivers is clean and contains nutrients. Forests contribute not only to the preservation of biodiversity but also to the physical and mental



Oji owns and manages 580,000 hectares of forests globally. OJI HOLDINGS

health of people," Takase said, stressing the importance of helping to maintain such diverse functions of forests.

Trees that are cut down are never wasted. Oji turns them into products or fuel to support production. Saplings are planted and the cycle of growth goes on. Some of the paper products are collected for recycling after use. "While fossil resources such as oil are depletable, wood, which can repeat this positive cycle, is a sustainable resource," Takase said.

The Nepi Eco series is the fruit of Oji Nepia's pursuit for a higher level of sustainability in its products. The rolls of toilet paper are twice as long as the standard 25 meters, which is better in many respects. "Customers are happy because it saves them space and the trouble of having to change toilet paper rolls frequently. Stores welcome it too because it requires less space, less restocking work and lower shipping costs. It can achieve a reduction in delivery trucks' exhaust emissions at the same time," Takase said. The toilet paper, tissues and kitchen paper towels are made of paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Eighty percent of the materials used for Nepi Eco Biomass Masks are made from plants such as sugar cane and corn. "Conventional non-woven masks are made of petroleum-based materials," Takase explained.

The company's efforts extend to packaging. Toilet paper rolls and boxes of tissues are generally sold wrapped in petroleum-based films. Oji Nepia tried to challenge this convention by using packaging made of paper and biomass film. Among the many kinds of paper it makes, it selected a wrapping paper that is strong, holds up against water and can be run through a machine to package its toilet paper rolls and kitchen paper towels. The designs on the packages are printed in biomass ink. Boxes of tissues are wrapped in biomass film. Biomass materials are also used for the inner packaging for masks.

The strips of plastic film normally attached to the opening of boxes of tissues have been replaced by paper. "We have been aware of customers' feedback that it is trou-

The Nepi Eco tissues are made of paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. OJI HOLDINGS



blesome to tear the film off the empty boxes because they need to separate trash," Takase said. The box even has a guide, a grooved line, that allows a user to push and fold at ease, making it easier especially for the elderly with weaker grips to discard the box.

Since the masks are mostly sold online, they come in a thin paper box that fits through the slot of a normal mailbox, eliminating the need for extra packing just for shipping. The designs on the packages of kitchen paper towels, tissues and masks are meant to deliver the message that protecting forests leads to protecting our own future.

Takase said Oji aims to tell consumers about its initiatives on "forest recycling" — the sustainable and circular management of forests — and its contribution to issues related to climate change and preservation of biodiversity through the Nepi Eco products. "We have a major goal of achieving net-zero carbon in 2050," she said. She expressed Oji's determination to address climate change by cutting down on the use of fossil resources and curbing emissions. "We will continue to promote the use of environmentally friendly materials such as paper for our products and packaging," Takase said.

Oji Holdings is a member of the Sustainable Japan Network, a group of companies that cooperate with this newspaper in spreading information about sustainability in Japan. You can also be part of the network; scan the QR code for more details.



Suntory is committed to nurturing forests and water

Mission: Sustainability

OSAMU INOUE
 RENEWS

Suntory Group's efforts on sustainability have earned it high objective evaluations from external bodies. One of them is CDP, formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project, an international nonprofit that evaluates climate change measures taken by companies, which selected Suntory for its "A list" six years in a row in the water security section and three straight years in the climate change section.

In July 2019, Suntory established a wide-ranging "Sustainability Vision." It then revised its "Environmental Vision Toward 2050" in June 2020, introducing a target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across its entire value chain, including indirect Scope 3 emissions, by 2050.

Especially noteworthy are Suntory's commitments regarding water. Its 2050 vision features targets that include reducing water intensity at plants by 50%, replenishing more than 100% of the water used at all of its plants globally, and achieving sustainable water use for all key ingredients.

Cultivating groundwater

"It takes nearly two decades for rainwater to become groundwater to be finally pumped up. It stirs many emotions in me to think that we can finally pump up the rainwater that fell when we began the Natural Water Sanctuary project," said Yuko Koshiishi, senior general manager of Suntory's Corporate Sustainability Department.

Since 2003, Suntory has been working on the Natural Water Sanctuary initiatives to protect forests in the water source recharge areas of its factories. The Natural Water Sanctuary initiatives, which began in Aso, Kumamoto Prefecture, expanded to 21 locations across Japan covering a total area of about 12,000 hectares by 2019, when an agreement was signed with the Yamanashi prefectural government on water source recharge areas for the Suntory Minami Alps Hakushu Water Plant. These forest areas are enough to cultivate more than twice the total amount of groundwater used by its plants in Japan.

All 21 projects require a long-term commitment. They include the Natural Water Sanctuary Aso, for which the agreement will

be renewed for several decades, as well as the agreement for the Natural Water Sanctuary Akagi, which is planned to be renewed for 100 years.

Furthermore, the Natural Water Sanctuary initiatives nurture forests full of biodiversity. For example, in forests with dense, dark stands of planted trees, thinning to an appropriate density to let in sunlight promotes diverse undergrowth that nurtures many creatures and creates a rich ecosystem.

As an extension of these activities, Suntory is also carrying out an environmental education program for children called Mizuiku, a portmanteau word combining "water" and "education," since 2004. The company runs the Outdoor School of Forest and Water, a program in which parents and children experience the importance of nature in the field, at sanctuaries forests near Suntory plants, as well as the Teaching Program at Schools. So far, a total of 210,000 children and parents have participated in the program in Japan and it has now expanded globally.

Water the starting point

In 2018, Suntory's Okudaisen Bunanomori Water Plant received the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) certification for its efforts to meet international water stewardship standards, and two more Suntory water plants followed. Currently, Suntory is the only Japanese company to obtain AWS certifications.

Suntory was also selected by the Science Based Targets Network as one of the three pilot companies for its SBTN Freshwater Hub, along with General Mills and P&G. Suntory's efforts on water resource protection have thus been recognized internationally. Asked what drives the company to go as far as it does, Makiko Ono, Suntory's chief sustainability officer, said: "Nature is at the heart of our business. We pump up water to manufacture products. Water is indispensable for the growth of ingredients for beer and whisky. So when we think of these facts, we



Suntory's plant in the Yamanashi Prefecture city of Hokuto. SUNTORY

are led to realize that water is the starting point of all our sustainability efforts."

Recycling bottles and cans

Plastics are a significant issue for the Suntory Group, which shipped about 29,000 tons of PET bottles as part of its products in 2020, 88.5% of which were recycled. Plastics from recycled bottles are mostly used in trays used in food packaging and interior materials in automobiles and railway cars but beverage makers still continue to manufacture PET bottles using fossil fuel-derived materials.

Given these circumstances, Suntory announced that by 2030, it will switch all of the PET bottles used by the group globally to ones made of recycled or plant-based materials, achieving zero use of virgin petroleum-based materials. Moreover, it has launched in limited quantities The Premium Malt's CO2 Reduction Can, the world's first commercially available stay-on-tab can that uses only aluminum from recycled cans. The can reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 60% compared to conventional aluminum cans.

Suntory is diligently working toward its goals. "We will make sure we respond to trends without fail, by leading the industry not just on water but also plastics and not falling behind on reducing greenhouse gas emissions," Ono said.

Scan the QR code to read the full article about Suntory's commitments toward protecting water resources and forests.



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