



Style &amp; Play Great Yard

# HANDS-ON APPROACH

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## NEW GENERATION STORES GET CUSTOMERS TO CUSTOMIZE THEIR OWN MERCHANDISE

'Personalization' has been a hot buzzword for the fashion business for a while, but until recently all customers did was pick an 'unfinished' item, choose – or create – a design they liked and hand it to the skilled artisan team in the store who would carry out the customization on their behalf. But what if the customers were able to actually work on their own pieces? Some Japanese stores are trying this out, and the results are very positive.

The multi-brand shop **Style & Play Great Yard**, which opened in Tokyo's Harajuku this spring, is creating a stir with its fresh selection that skillfully blends fashion and sports. The cool interior lines up items from the latest it-brands and has a gallery space. But there is more to it than just cool merchandise: shortly after the opening, customers began waiting in line every day to attend a workshop where they could handprint a selection of visuals (created by the artist Walnut) on the store's tote bags. According to a representative from Corporate Planning at **Himaya** Co., Ltd., the company that manages the shop: "Many customers attended this workshop and happily carried home the tote bags they printed themselves. The idea was to enable this sharing experience via self-printing." This store has other experiential hands-on events in the pipeline, including a workshop that uses **GoPro** cameras and interactive events hosted by **Hunter**.

The popular brand **Muveil** also incorporates collective handwork to strengthen and diversify its customer relationships. At **Gallery Muveil** in Tokyo, a variety of workshops, such as charm making and planting, are carried out. In addition, this year the store started a new handicraft service where a customization plan is developed with customers, enabling them to create one-of-a-kind flower embroidery cardigans.

Luxury stores are exploring the trend, too. The **Hermès** shop in the Gion area of Kyoto, for example, organizes 'Carré' scarf dyeing events that have proved immensely popular. One customer said, "I can now use the 'Carré' keepsake from my mother in my own way."

Such events give customers a new skill and a sense of achievement, while also creating a warm community feeling and ultimately strengthening consumers' bonds with the store. They highlight the joy of shopping in bricks-and-mortar stores and do not require huge investments from store owners: could this be something worth trying on your own shop floor?