

## Inside this issue

“Japanese pop culture in Switzerland has matured & diversified” 1 + 2

An Investment Vision for Japanese Health Care Start-Ups 3

SECO's 2022 FTA Monitor Has Been Published 3

Partnership between IBM and Japan's AIST Aims to Develop a 10,000-Qubit Quantum Computer 4

会見

INTERVIEW

## “Japanese pop culture in Switzerland has matured & diversified”

Interview with Pierre-André Grasselet, Marketing Manager at Genki Corp.

[Genki Corp. SA](#), based in Aclens, is a company specializing in the distribution of high-quality collectible statues and figures, catering to fans of well-known franchises such as “Zelda”, “Saint Seiya”, “One Piece” or “Demon Slayer”. For this edition of our newsletter, we interviewed Mr. Pierre-André Grasselet, Marketing Manager at Genki Corp. SA.

*Mr. Grasselet, can you tell us more about the origins of Genki Corp.?*

I joined Genki Corp. 3 years ago and am the company's Marketing Manager. Genki Corp. was founded 17 years ago by our current director, Franck Boisseau. Franck's background was in the DVD industry, specializing in anime, which led him to start importing licensed products. The business started in a garage at the end of 2007. Franck, being a fan of the “Saint Seiya” franchise, started the company out of his passion for Japanese culture. We've come a long way since then. Today, we're a team of 11 staff members, operating out of a 1'000 square meter warehouse in Aclens, near Lausanne. Our growth has been significant, and we've had to relocate five times to accommodate our expanding inventory. We've established strong partnerships with major companies like Bandai and Hasbro, allowing us to offer a wide range of licensed products. Currently, our warehouse houses an impressive 27'000 products,



The Gashapon store at Manor Geneva © Genki Corp.

with 50-60% of these being Japanese -related items.

*Please elaborate on Genki Corp.'s business model and its advantages.*

Our business model is designed to cater to a niche market through both wholesale and online retail channels. Our approach is particularly tailored to the Swiss market, which is relatively small with only 3 to 5 distributors, of which only 3 are in Switzerland. One of the key advantages is the maintenance of local stock, which enables us to fulfill orders for small quantities efficiently. By having stock readily available, we can quickly adapt to market demands and ensure timely delivery, which is crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction. Our success is also driven by our deep understanding of market trends. We make it a priority to anticipate what will be popular in the coming months, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve and offer products that meet emerging consumer preferences. This foresight is supported by our professional skills and genuine passion for the licenses and

products we offer. While not the cheapest, we offer superior quality to compensate.

*Who are your main customers?*

Our customer base has evolved significantly over the years, but our focus has always been on providing tailored services to our diverse customer base. Initially, we collaborated extensively with specialized shops like Jeeg in Zurich and Tanigami in Geneva. However, we've seen a gradual shift towards wholesale and supermarkets. One of our notable successes was with Melectronics in Crissier, where our section was the only profitable area. Manor has become a major customer, expanding from 3 to 27 locations. We typically start with pop-ups, which in 90% of cases become permanent fixtures. Recently, we've made inroads with larger chains.

(continue on page 2)

## “Japanese pop culture in Switzerland has matured & diversified”

Interview with Pierre-André Grasseler, Marketing Manager at *Genki Corp.*

会見

INTERVIEW

We've just signed an agreement with *Coop*, and we're also able to sell through *Migros'* online platform, *Galaxus*.

### *What are the product categories that you specialize in?*

We specialize in a wide range of licensed goods, covering various price points. You'll find everything from key chains to collectible figurines, books, socks, and more. We are always keeping an eye on emerging trends and popular franchises, especially in Japan. When we spot something gaining traction, we work quickly to bring those products to our shelves. I used to work for a magazine specialized on Japanese pop culture and I did a lot of research anticipating what might become the next big thing. Our product lineup is constantly evolving and the popularity of different franchises ebbs and flows, so our inventory is always changing to reflect what's currently hot in the anime and Japanese pop culture scene.

### *Could you talk about the trends of Japanese pop culture in Switzerland?*

Japanese pop culture has had a significant impact in neighboring countries like Italy and France. It's a trend we've been closely following and adapting to over the years. When I first arrived in Switzerland, I noticed that *Naruto* was at the peak of its popularity here, while it was already on the decline in France. This highlighted a slight delay in trends between the markets at that time. However, the Swiss market has since caught up, and we now see trends aligning more closely with other European countries. Currently, *One*

*Piece* stands out as an incredibly popular franchise among Swiss fans. It's fascinating to see how it has maintained its appeal across different age groups and demographics. Overall, I'd say that Japanese pop culture in Switzerland has matured and diversified, appealing to a wide range of people from young adults to families. We're no longer lagging behind in trends, which is exciting for both fans and businesses in this sector.

### *You are currently displaying “Gashapon”(toy-vending machines popular in Japan) in the Manor store in Geneva. How did this partnership come about?*

The project is a collaboration between *Genki Corp.* and *Bandai* to test the concept of a *Gashapon* Store in continental Europe. The idea was to set up an ephemeral *Gashapon* concept store based on the Japanese model in one or more European cities. This is the first establishment in continental Europe as there is also an establishment in London. Switzerland was chosen for this test because of its cultural diversity. The country is influenced by countries such as France, Germany, and Italy, but also has strong immigrant communities. As all these countries are potential markets for *Bandai*, and so it was ideal to select Switzerland as our “laboratory”. We studied several potential locations before choosing *Manor Genève* as our first site. Geneva's status as a multicultural metropolis reinforced our initial choice. In addition, the purchasing power and potential sales were sufficient to limit the risks of such a location. *Manor* is a long-standing customer of *Genki Corp.* They offered an ideal location within their department store, plus a strong sales and decorating team. The zone was set up on

Wednesday, 22 May 2024, and inaugurated on Saturday, 25 May 2024.

### *How is the project going overall so far?*

The project is going surprisingly well, far beyond our expectations. According to *Bandai*, we are the most profitable location so far. By calculating the weighted average of the price of *Gashapon* we arrive at an estimate of 2045 *Gashapon* sold in the first week and an average of 1136 *Gashapon* per week over the entire period. Initially, I didn't expect much because the project is quite pricey, and not everything was working perfectly at the start. However, we see people returning every week and quickly catching on to how *Gashapon* works. Our original plan was to test one location and then try three additional locations: Geneva, Le Bouveret, and Zurich. With the success of the first location, it will now turn into a permanent location, while testing the pop-up concept in Lugano and Basel, similar to Geneva.

### *What are your future plans for Genki Corp.?*

Our 11-person team is ready to grow, balancing opportunities with cash flow. We've managed to stay debt-free and are focusing on optimizing distribution. We've signed with *Coop* and are in talks with *Migros* to enter their supermarket toy section. We're committed to official markets and licensed sellers to curb the grey market while acknowledging that it can't be eliminated entirely. We're not overly worried about competition but aim for fair conditions. Ultimately, our decision comes down to whether we go all-in on expansion or maintain our current size.

*Thank you for the interview!*

## An Investment Vision for Japanese Health Care Start-Ups

On 27 June 2024, a health ministry panel in Japan unveiled its vision to boost the competitiveness of Japanese health care start-ups in the global market through strategic investments. The panel's initiative aims to address the challenges faced by these start-ups in commercializing their innovations and developing sustainable business models.

The panel, led by management consultant **Shuji Honjo**, emphasized that Japan has the potential to be a leader in health care innovation. However, it faces challenges in commercializing these innovations and developing them into sustainable businesses. Health care, considered a crucial part of Japan's social infrastructure, must be driven by startups to foster innovation and contribute both domestically and internationally, according to Honjo. The panel's vision focuses on strategic investments to propel Japanese health care start-ups onto the global stage. By implementing this approach, the panel aims to create an environment that fosters growth, innovation, and international competitiveness in the health care start-up ecosystem. This initiative reflects Japan's commitment to leveraging its strengths in health care and technology to position itself as a major player in the global



Shuji Honjo presents the vision proposal to Health Minister Keizo Takemi in Tokyo © NIKKEI

health innovation landscape. As the country faces demographic challenges and increasing health care demands, supporting start-ups in this sector could lead to innovative solutions and economic growth opportunities.

Sources: [The Japan Times](#); [Nikkei](#)

動向

SITUATION

## SECO's 2022 FTA Monitor Has Been Published

On 18 June 2024, the Swiss Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs (SECO) released the latest edition of its FTA Monitor on the use of free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by Switzerland with other countries and their effects in the year 2022.

In 2022, approximately CHF 2.39 billion of tariffs on imports to Switzerland were reduced and exempted using existing FTAs between Switzerland and other countries. Switzerland's overall preferential tariff utilization rate for imports under all FTAs was 64%. In trade with its largest partner, the EU, the rates were even higher: 73.2% for Swiss imports from the EU, and 89.5% for Swiss exports to the EU. Regarding trade with Japan, the Japan-Switzerland Economic Partnership

Agreement (EPA), which has been in effect since September 2009, has led to significant tariff reductions.

According to the 2022 FTA Monitor, the agreement led to reduced tariffs of CHF 5'562'700 (48.4% reduction rate) for imports to Switzerland and CHF 34'691'800 (74.3% reduction rate) for exports to Japan. The preferential tariff utilization rate was 35.2% for imports to Switzerland and 64.5% for exports to Japan. An additional CHF 5'922'200 could have been reduced or exempted from tariffs if the EPA had been used more extensively for imports into Switzerland. The preferential tariff utilization rate was 35.2% for imports to

Switzerland and 64.5% for exports to Japan. Notably, the amount of tariff reductions and exemptions, exemption rates, and preferential tariff utilization rates for exports to Japan all increased compared to 2021, suggesting potential progress in the use of the Japan-Switzerland EPA for exports to Japan. In 2021, automobiles and auto parts such as brakes accounted for seven of the top 10 tariff imports from Japan to Switzerland that could have been reduced or exempted if the Japan-Switzerland EPA had been fully utilized.

Source: [SECO](#)

分析

ANALYSIS

## 革新

INNOVATION

## Partnership between IBM and Japan's AIST Aims to Develop a 10,000-Qubit Quantum Computer

*IBM and Japan's National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) are reportedly joining forces to develop a 10,000-qubit quantum computer. The partnership, set to begin this year, aims to create a quantum computer that surpasses the power of already existing systems.*

This project is part of a broader initiative by the Japanese government to advance quantum technology and maintain a competitive edge in the global tech landscape. IBM's most advanced quantum processor named Condor operates at 1,121 qubits. The leap to 10,000 qubits represents, therefore, a monumental increase in computational power and complexity. Quantum computers with such a high qubit count could potentially solve complex problems that are currently intractable for classical computers. This includes applications in fields such as drug discovery and development, financial

modeling and risk assessment, or optimization of supply chains and logistics.

Some of the technical challenges that the development of a 10,000-qubit quantum computer faces include minimizing error rates in quantum operations, developing more sophisticated quantum error connection techniques or designing software and algorithms that can harness the full potential of the hardware. The joint effort of IBM and AIST could lead to the creation of new quantum computing technologies and methodologies to overcome these hurdles.

Countries and tech giants worldwide are investing heavily in quantum computing research and development. This project could potentially position Japan at the forefront of quantum

technology, with far-reaching implications for various industries and scientific fields. While the exact timeline for developing the 10,000-qubit quantum computer remains unclear, the project's commencement in 2024 signals a long-term commitment to pushing the boundaries of quantum computing. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that several years of research and development will be needed to achieve this goal.

Sources: [The Quantum Insider](#); [Nikkei](#)

## Agenda

## 日程

AGENDA

✓ Stay tuned!

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>



Japan External Trade Organization

JETRO Geneva  
80, Rue de Lausanne  
1202 Geneva  
Phone: 022 732 13 04  
E-mail: SWG@jetro.go.jp



©Expo 2025