IrepInc.

# Demystifying Japanese Design and Copywriting

## JAPAN MARKET ENTRY PLAYBOOK



# Table of Contents

## The Distinctive Characteristics of Japanese Design and Copy Localization


Introduction ..... 3

1. Features of Japanese Design ..... 4
   - a. Colorful Creative ..... 5
   - b. Detail-oriented Copy ..... 6
   - c. Typography ..... 7
   - d. Kawaii" Brand Mascots ..... 8
   - e. Celebrity Endorsements ..... 9

2. Features of Japanese Copy ..... 10
   - a. Indirect Language ..... 11
   - b. Audience-specific Language ..... 12
   - c. Wordplay, Rhymes, and Mnemonics ..... 14

Conclusion ..... 15


IrepInc.

# Introduction

From advertisements to websites, the distinct world of Japanese design intertwines contemporary aesthetics with a rich tapestry of history and cultural values. Copywriting also reflects unique traits shaped by distinct cultural norms and the Japanese language. Hence, straightforward translation is insufficient for effectively communicating your message to a Japanese audience. This whitepaper delves into the prominent features of the creative aspects of marketing in Japan, offering invaluable insights that empower your business to craft authentic, resonating content for a Japanese audience.



# Features of Japanese Design



# Colorful Creative

## Overview

The abundant use of vibrant hues and color combinations is a distinctive feature of Japanese design. Instead of a unified key color, the aesthetic embraces a colorful palette that grabs the eye with visual interest. The renowned Harajuku style, celebrated for its eccentric color schemes, is a prime example.

## Origins

The natural beauty of Japan's ever-changing seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—has nurtured the culture's unique sense of color appreciation. This sensitivity toward color has its roots in the Edo period (17th through the 19th century), a creative era when many innovative shades emerged, greatly influenced by the widespread popularity of Ukiyo-e art or colorful woodblock prints.

Source:
https://www.canva.com/learn/japanese-design/ https://hataraku.vivivit.com/design-knowledge/color_popculture/
https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/641802










https://pin.it/2E8d0jm
https://rojitohito.exblog.jp/19129046/
https://mirai-works.co.jp/uragawa/d2cdot/21020/

# Detail-oriented Copy

## Overview

The Japanese audience deeply appreciates communication methods that intricately convey details through text, in a remarkable departure from the Western preference for short, concise copy. This contrast manifests vividly in the design of Japanese advertisements and websites.

## Origins

Japan's preference for information-dense communications is rooted in the risk-averse national character, creating a demand for details upfront. As exemplified by kanji, logographic characters can encapsulate a wealth of meaning with just a few symbols. While these seemingly crowded designs may initially appear overwhelming to those unfamiliar with the language, native speakers can effortlessly unravel the layers of information concealed within.

Source:
https://www.canva.com/learn/japanese-design/ https://hataraku.vivivit.com/design-knowledge/color_popculture/
https://gigazine.net/news/20221129-peculiar-case-of-japanese-web-design/

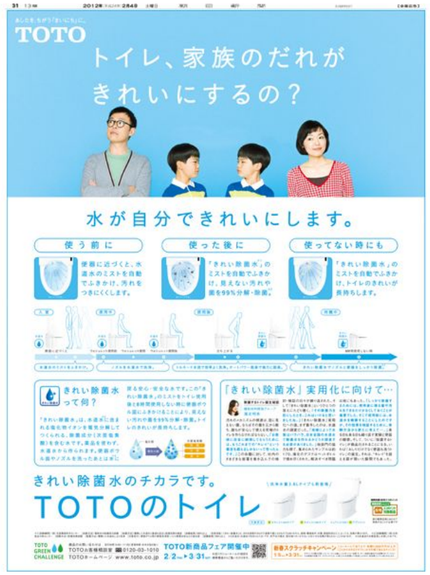
Rakuten Website







https://pin.it/vDCdNgR




https://pin.it/3iiCwSm

# Typography

## Overview

Typography is pivotal in Japanese design, which employs diverse writing systems, including kanji, hiragana, katakana, and English. This unique blend of characters results in designs harmoniously incorporating multiple fonts to maintain visual balance and ensure easy comprehension. To achieve seamless integration, designers often craft custom fonts meticulously tailored to align with their specific designs.

## Origins

Traditional calligraphy has a profound influence on contemporary Japanese typography. Much more than a means of writing, calligraphy is a revered art form that has helped shape the Japanese perspective on text aesthetics and presentation.

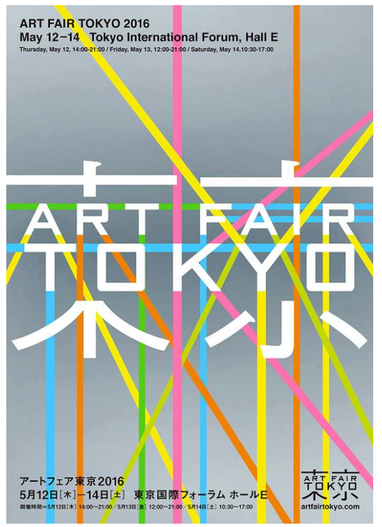






https://pin.it/f2pb1xO
https://pin.it/4obRPMf




https://pin.it/6WFArCi
https://pin.it/2LkQxAs

Source:
https://www.canva.com/learn/japanese-design/
https://drm.ricoh.jp/lab/theory/th00006.html
https://www.vectornator.io/blog/japanese-graphic-design/
https://www.grad.osaka-geidai.ac.jp/app/graduation-work/doctoral-dissertation/production-no46-thesis.pdf

# “Kawaii” Brand Mascots

## Overview

A prevalent trend among Japanese corporations, government entities, and organizations is the strategic utilization of cute or "kawaii" cartoon characters in promotional materials for advertising and events. This includes incorporating existing popular anime, manga, or video game characters and developing new original characters. Beyond their entertainment value, characters play a pivotal role in corporate branding strategies, showcasing their ability to captivate and resonate with diverse demographics. Sometimes, characters are even integrated into logos, further enhancing brand identity.

## Origins

Anime, manga, and character merchandise enjoy widespread popularity among the Japanese public. Underscoring the significance of this thriving industry, the character business market (comprising commercialization rights and copyrights) reached a remarkable 2 trillion 586.3 billion yen in 2021. Companies often harness the enduring allure of characters to create meaningful connections with their target audience, tapping into the power of familiarity and likability to drive purchasing decisions.

Source:
https://www.genius-web.co.jp/blog/design-tips/the-importance-of-concepts-to-learn-from-non-verbal-communication.html
https://goldcast.jp/magazine/contac/









https://www.jr-hellokittyshinkansen.jp/en/
https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000006.000003373.html
https://game.watch.impress.co.jp/docs/news/1417134.html

# Celebrity Endorsements

## Overview

Japanese companies and government agencies frequently enlist the aid of famous figures– including actors, singers, and athletes–to establish brand credibility and enhance the visibility and recognition of their products or services. In the digital age, celebrity-driven initiatives also have the potential to garner significant traction on social media platforms, amplifying their message and expanding their influence to broader audiences. By leveraging existing fan loyalty through new and traditional marketing channels, advertisers can tap into a vast network of devoted followers, extending their reach and impact.

## Origins

In a society where authority is highly respected, Japanese consumers are inclined to accept recommendations from influential figures with little skepticism. This cultural trait is further reinforced by a strong sense of conformity within the national character, leading individuals to adopt trends that enjoy widespread popularity. By associating with trusted and admired personalities, companies can tap into a deep-rooted sense of credibility and instill confidence in their offerings.

Source:
https://youmaycasting.com/blog/14119/
https://youmaycasting.com/blog/13823/










https://www.jr-hellokittyshinkansen.jp/en/
https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000006.000003373.html
https://game.watch.impress.co.jp/docs/news/1417134.html

# Features of Japanese Copy




Irep Inc.

# Indirect Language

## Overview

Instead of using straightforward language, individuals often convey ideas indirectly through metaphors, poetry, fables, and allusions. Ambiguous and suggestive copy allows for various interpretations, facilitating the creation of a lasting impression and appealing to a broader audience.

## Origins

Japan's high-context culture is characterized by the need to comprehend and interpret words' underlying meaning and context. A preference exists for “reading between the lines" or anticipating what others might be thinking, highlighting the significance of implicit messages communicated between the lines.







https://worry-hacker.com/tensai-catchcopy-list/

Source:
https://dentsu-ho.com/articles/7753
https://blog.btrax.com/jp/us-copywriting/
https://www.humantrust.co.jp/bizskills/employee88/

# Audience-specific Language

## Overview

Tailoring your copy to align with Japanese audience's unique expectations and comprehension is crucial to forge a genuine connection. The Japanese language embraces a diverse medley of writing systems, including kanji, hiragana, and katakana, accompanied by distinctive punctuation marks. When writing Japanese copy, harmoniously merging these elements becomes paramount.

Honorifics also hold great significance, encompassing respectful, humble, and polite language. Their appropriate use (or exclusion, e.g., when marketing to children in certain instances) is critical for fostering effective connections. Integration of regional dialects is another helpful strategy for infusing communications with an authentic and compelling touch. The vibrant nuances and distinct linguistic flavors associated with specific areas have the power to resonate profoundly with individuals from those locales.

Source:
hhttps://mtame.jp/advertisement/catch_copy/#a02
https://www.siteengine.co.jp/blog/copywriting/




https://twitter.com/yukio/status/912868265952559104

# Audience-specific Language

## Origins

The culture of respecting hierarchical relationships profoundly influences spoken Japanese. The language undergoes notable transformations depending on a person's age or position, as exemplified by honorifics. Furthermore, coined words known as "Wakamono Kotoba" (literally "words of young people") aptly capture and reflect prevailing trends and social dynamics. The term itself illustrates how language varies among different generations of Japanese speakers. Predominantly embraced by the younger generation, this linguistic phenomenon adds a contemporary and vibrant dimension to the Japanese language, showcasing its ever-evolving nature.

Source:
https://hrd.php.co.jp/mid-level/articles/post-1237.php
https://we-xpats.com/ja/guide/as/jp/detail/10625/







http://kacce.co.jp/blog/musashi-university-nyushi
https://pin.it/6u0zGkN

# Wordplay, Rhymes, and Mnemonics

## Overview

The Japanese language possesses a remarkable sensitivity to the nuances of sound and wordplay. Successful advertising copy skillfully harnesses this inherent characteristic, employing clever puns and wordplay to captivate audiences. Strategic use of rhythm and rhyme makes the content more memorable while distinguishing and accentuating products and services.

## Origins

A deep appreciation for wordplay has long flourished in traditional Japanese culture, giving rise to poetic forms like Senryu and Tanka. During the Tenmei Era (1781-1789), an intriguing form of linguistic play known as "goroawase" emerged in the city of Edo. This linguistic phenomenon involves crafting humorous phrases with multiple meanings, cleverly mimicking the tones and sounds of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. Goroawase represents a captivating blend of creativity, humor, and linguistic dexterity, showcasing the Japanese penchant for linguistic playfulness and ingenuity.




https://worry-hacker.com/tensai-catchcopy-list/

Source:
https://www.xn--ad-og4apd7e.com/inavi_dentsu/inavi_dentsu_copy/inavi_dentsu_copy_tech/
https://www.weblio.jp/content/%E8%AA%9E%E5%91%82%E5%90%88%E3%82%8F%E3%81%9B

# Conclusion

Success in the Japanese market hinges on authentic localization, tailoring advertisements, and websites to align with the unique visual and verbal characteristics valued by the Japanese audience.

For over two decades, IREP has led the digital advertising industry. We have successfully guided creative production and localization for overseas companies seeking to establish a presence in Japan. Our deep comprehension and harnessing of Japanese audience insights and data ensures our strategies resonate effectively. As a proud member of the Hakuhodo DY Group, IREP offers a comprehensive suite of services. From formulating robust marketing strategies to planning media tactics and executing full-funnel approaches that seamlessly integrate online and offline channels, we possess the expertise and capabilities to drive your success in the Japanese market.









# Digital crossroads to global success

Irep Inc. is an award-winning global digital marketing agency based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our headquarters are in Tokyo, and our network spans more than 20 countries.

In Japan, we are ranked No. 1 for performance-based marketing. We also offer highly specialized market entry, as well as integrated marketing and localization services.

Since 1997, our data-driven solutions have effectively led our diverse international clientele to continuous success in Japan, Asia, and beyond.

**We offer data-driven solutions:**

- **Marketing & Creative**
- **Strategy & Analytics**
- **Product & Service Localization**

Irep Inc.



# Thank you.

Need a hand with a project?
Please email us a little about your business and
the outcomes you hope to achieve.

**https://irep.inc**

**info@irep.inc**

IrepInc.