

UX in Japan

Best practices &
UX trends





Why is localization important in UX Design?

Localization: adapting the interfaces to the language and culture of a country

A site or application must meet the country codes in order to best correspond to the expectations of its users.

UX design considers localization in order to provide businesses with suitable products and services.

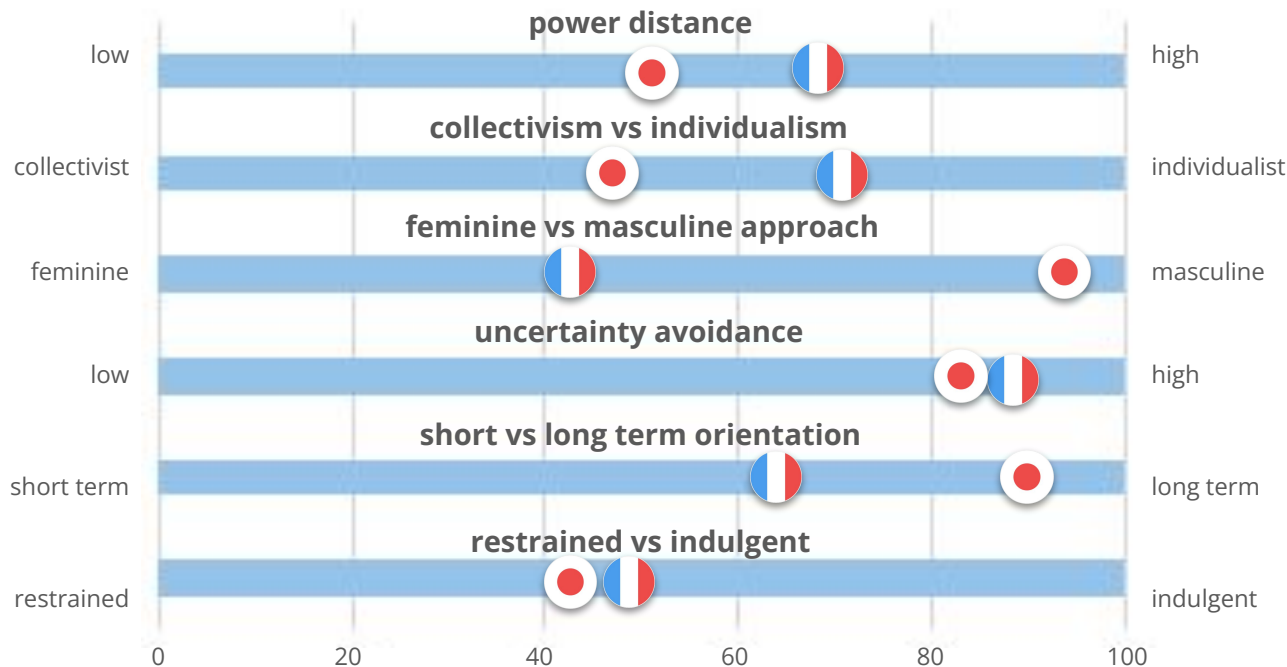
Here are the specifics of UX Design in Japan.





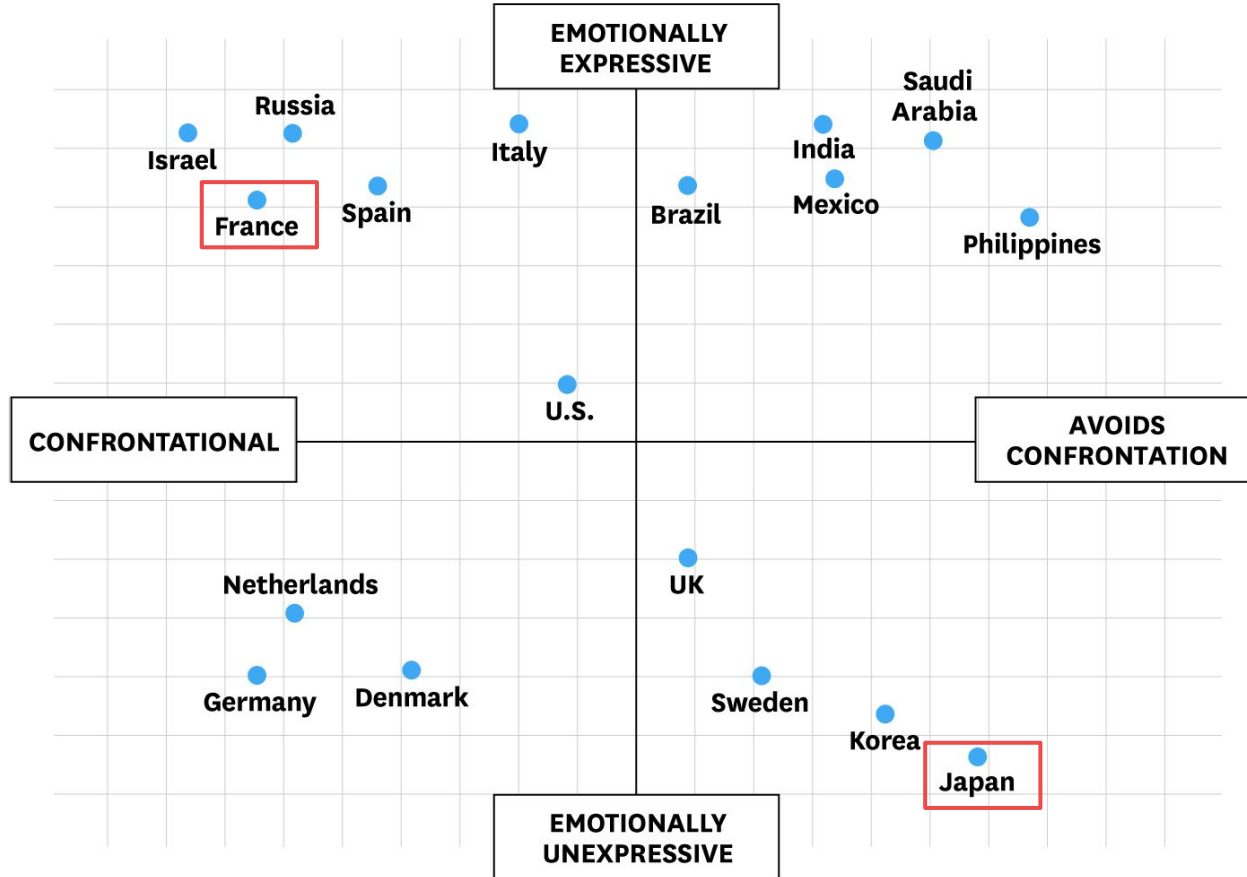
Analyze the culture

Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede set up a 6-category measurement system to analyze the different cultures of countries.





A different way of communicating depending on the country



Source : Erin Meyer "Getting to si, ja, oui, hai and da", 2015



1

Complexity of the Design Culture

- Culture
- Lots of information
- Structure
- Navigation

2

Emotional engagement

- Colors
- Brands communication



Part 1

Complexity of the Design Culture





Section 1

Culture



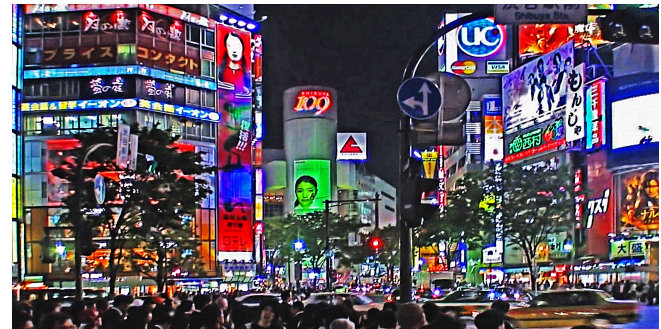
A complex Japanese Design Culture

There is a gap between the design of digital products and non-digital products in Japan:

- **Japanese non-digital design:** simple, sophisticated, and minimalist style
- **Japanese digital design:** overwhelmed by the complexity and volume of information display

The Japanese are accustomed to living in a very cumbersome and chaotic environment of information.

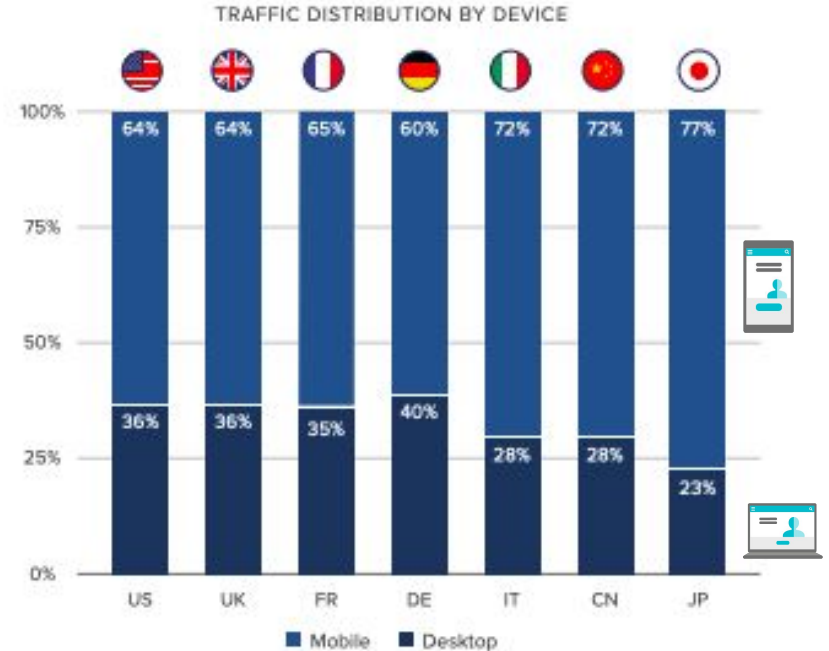
In Japan, contrasts coexist: the new and the old, the innovative and the traditional, the unique and the conservative.





Digital history

Most Japanese used flip phones until 2014 before adopting smartphones. They used to have their own version of the mobile websites to fit these screens: the design was small and squeezed. **Japanese are accustomed to navigating on dense websites.** They are also more mobile users than desktop, thus very mobile first.



Source: ContentSquare

★ Japanese behaviors

Avoid taking risks

Japanese and especially businessmen, don't like to be different from others. They want to behave like the rest of the group to avoid differentiation, they avoid taking risks.

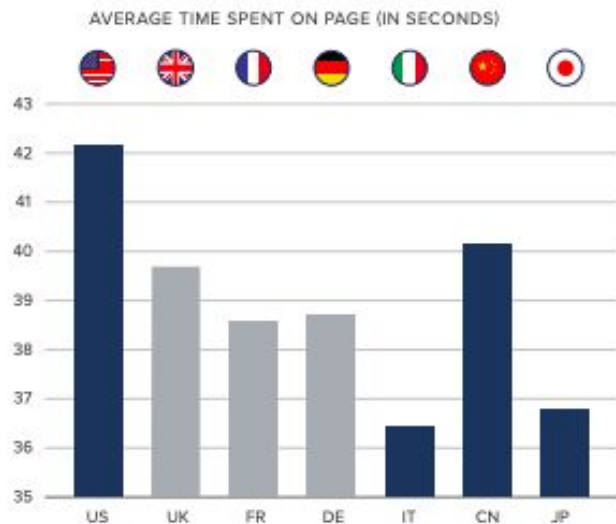


This can be noticed in UX Design:

Japanese prefer to be assured rather than challenged. Consequently, **they are looking for a lot of information when they shop online.** They read the description, and they are looking for detailed information.



Japanese expectations



Japanese users are known as “zappers” when they navigate: **they spend between about 36 seconds per page on average** (whereas Americans are “engaged” because their users spend more than 40 sec). The amount of information per page can distract the user, so it is better to **make the information instantly visible**.

They also visit a high number of pages and scroll a lot (+20%).
In Japan it is good to have content on several pages as Japanese navigate deeper.



Section 2

Lots of information



Simplicity is seen as unreliable

Even if we feel that there is too much information, that is normal for Japanese users. **All users are targeted by one interface, and there is no differentiation based on user needs.**

Simplicity = unreliable

In western countries, the amount of information is minimal and brands are represented through visuals, colors, atmosphere. **This simple and minimalist western UI are perceived as unreliable.** Lots of white space connotes a lack of important information.



Kakaku (ecommerce website)



Simplicity is seen as unreliable

In Japan

Focus on information, text

Starbucks Japan website layout showing a focus on text and information. The page includes a large hero image, a sidebar with navigation links, and multiple text-heavy sections for news, promotions, and product information.

Starbucks JP

Western

Focus on atmosphere, visuals

Starbucks US website layout showing a focus on atmosphere and visuals. The page features large, high-quality images of Starbucks drinks and products, with text used to describe the products and promotions.

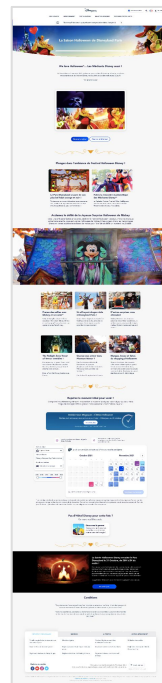
Starbucks US



Long pages

The length of the page is completely different in Japan vs in Western countries. **It is more than twice as long.**

Western websites focus more about the main points of the service. However, Japanese websites have much more information: menus, campaigns, and quality control information, etc.



Disneyland FR



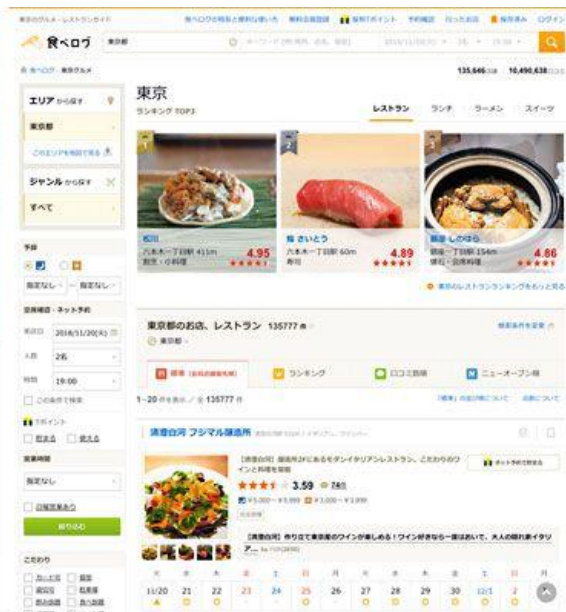
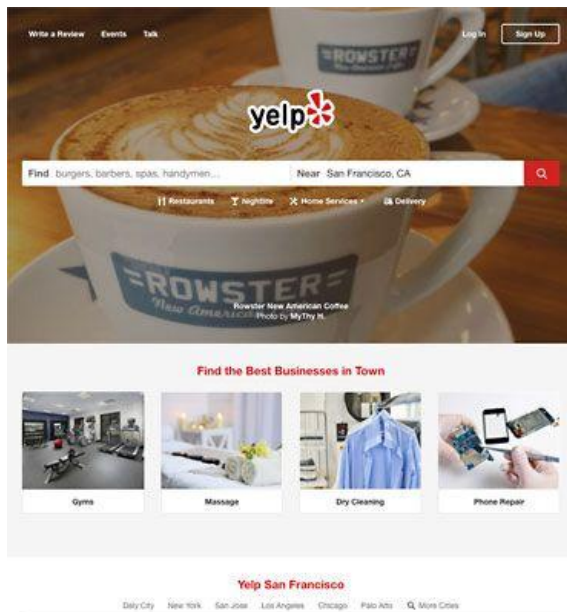
Disneyland JP



Different highlighted services

Food-search services in Japan and the US reflect their culture.

- Yelp, in the US, prioritizes search effectiveness for individual preferences or wants.
- Tabelog (食べログ), the most popular food-search app in Japan, displays the function of recommendations on top of the page.





Section 3

Structure




3 alphabets

The quick brown fox


速い褐色の狐

私の好きな国はドイツです。

寿司が好きです。



デザイナー
マットタレビ



Matt Talebi
Designer

I like sushi.
My favorite country to visit is Germany.
I live in California.

Text should be large enough to be readable

Logographic alphabet = visual references grouped into a single character

- no capital letter
- no spaces
- no italics
- few typographies

These characters allow Japanese to become comfortable processing a lot of information **in a short period of time**

Vertical reading is reorganized the interface structure (vs horizontal in Western countries).

Vertical reading, vertical architecture information

Vertical reading has influenced interface design.

The structure is based on vertical columns, whereas in Western countries it follows a horizontal structure. The information architecture is different and adapted to how they read.

The image displays a comparison of web interface architectures. On the left, three Japanese websites are shown, characterized by vertical reading and vertical information architecture. The first site (Jalan.net) features a vertical navigation bar on the left with a map of Japan, and a main content area with vertical text columns. The second site (JAL) has a vertical navigation bar on the left and a main content area with vertical text columns. The third site (ANA) has a vertical navigation bar on the left and a main content area with vertical text columns. On the right, a Spanish website (Aviator) is shown, featuring a horizontal layout with a large header image and a search form. The search form has a horizontal structure with fields for Origin, Destination, Date of departure, Date of return, and Number of passengers. The bottom of the Spanish site shows a horizontal navigation bar with logos for various payment methods and a large promotional banner for 'EUROPA'.



Vertical reading, vertical architecture information

The screenshot shows the Yahoo US homepage with a vertical layout. At the top is the Yahoo! logo and a search bar. Below the logo are navigation links for Mail, News, Finance, Sports, Politics, Entertainment, Lifestyle, and More. The main content area features a large article titled "'Perhaps they got lost': Russia stops U.S. diplomats" with a photo of Vladimir Putin. To the right of this article is a "Trending Now" list with 10 items. Below the main article are several smaller news snippets, including "Seth Rogen Has Perfect Response After 20-Year-Old Arrested With McLovin Fake ID" and "California Man Makes \$2.8M Trading From Home". At the bottom, there is a weather forecast for San Francisco, CA, and a section for "Impeachment Inquiry".

Yahoo US

The screenshot shows the Yahoo JP homepage with a vertical layout. At the top is the Yahoo! JAPAN logo and a search bar. Below the logo are navigation links for Travel, Shopping, and Premium. The main content area features a large article titled "「誰かのためにあなたができること」" (Something you can do for someone) with a photo of a person. To the right of this article is a "Trending Now" list with 10 items. Below the main article are several smaller news snippets, including "Seth Rogen Has Perfect Response After 20-Year-Old Arrested With McLovin Fake ID" and "California Man Makes \$2.8M Trading From Home". At the bottom, there is a weather forecast for San Francisco, CA, and a section for "Impeachment Inquiry".

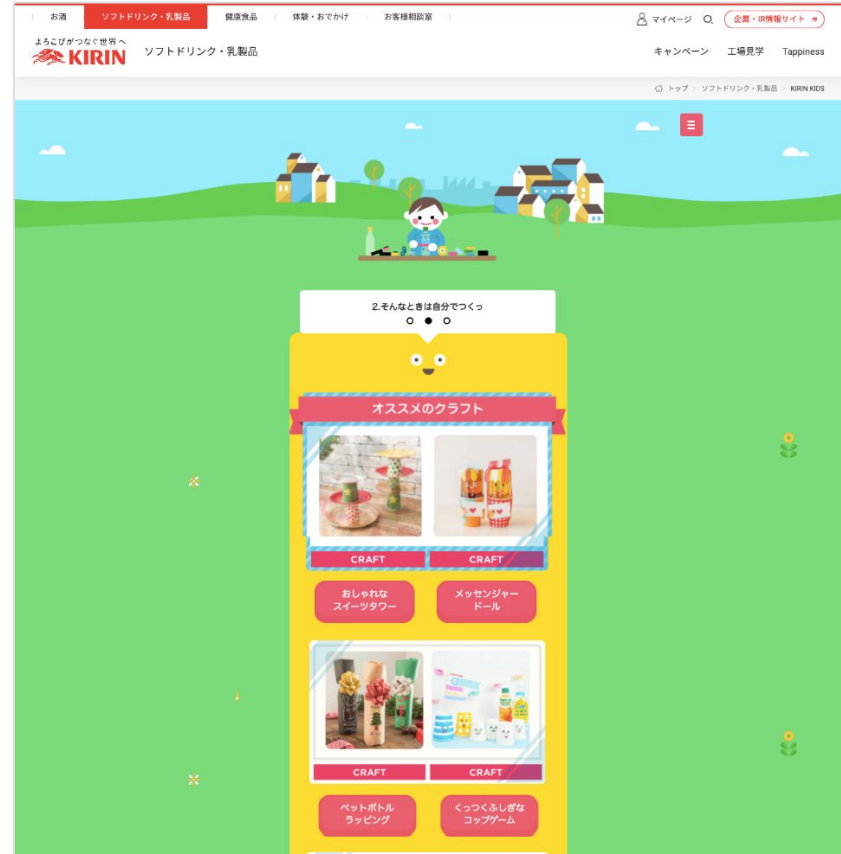
Yahoo JP



Adults vs Children alphabet on interfaces



Kirin Adult



Kirin Kids



Adults vs Children alphabet on packaging



Packaging for children



Packaging for adults



Section 4

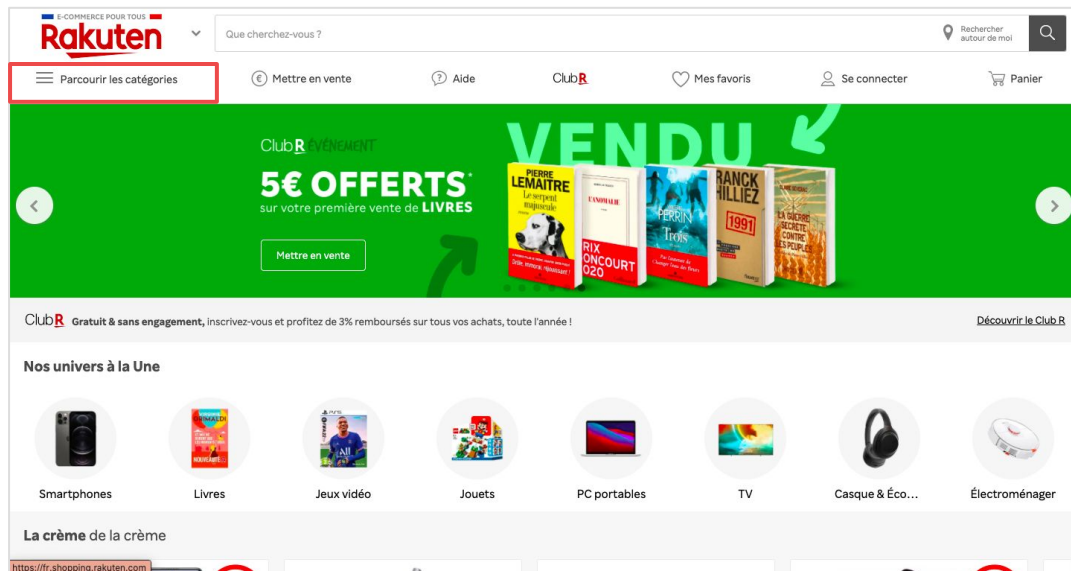
Navigation



More menus

The menu is displayed very differently:

- **Japan:** there are 2 ways to access the categories menu as they prefer to be “guided” when they browse
- **France:** there is only 1 burger menu to access it, they prefer to “search” by themselves when they browse



Rakuten FR



Rakuten JP

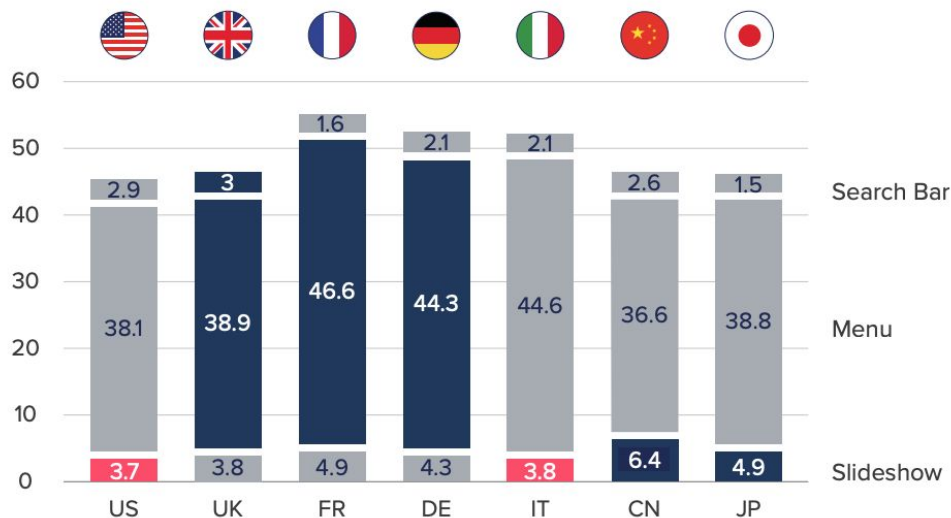


Use of slideshows

Japanese use more slideshows on mobile compare to the rest of the world (+87%). As they are looking for information when they browse, they are more likely to click on visuals.

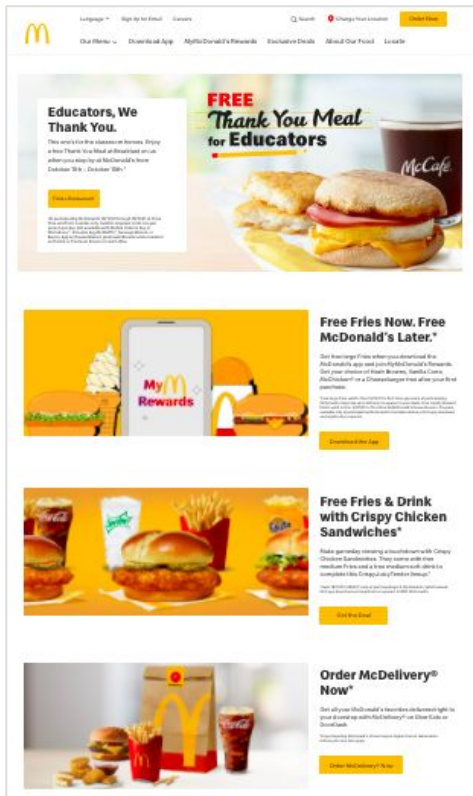
China and Japan who more often use this display prefer slideshow display because it is not easy to type with their characters. The search bar is not frequently used.

DESKTOP CLICK RATE ON SEARCH BAR, SLIDESHOW, AND MENU

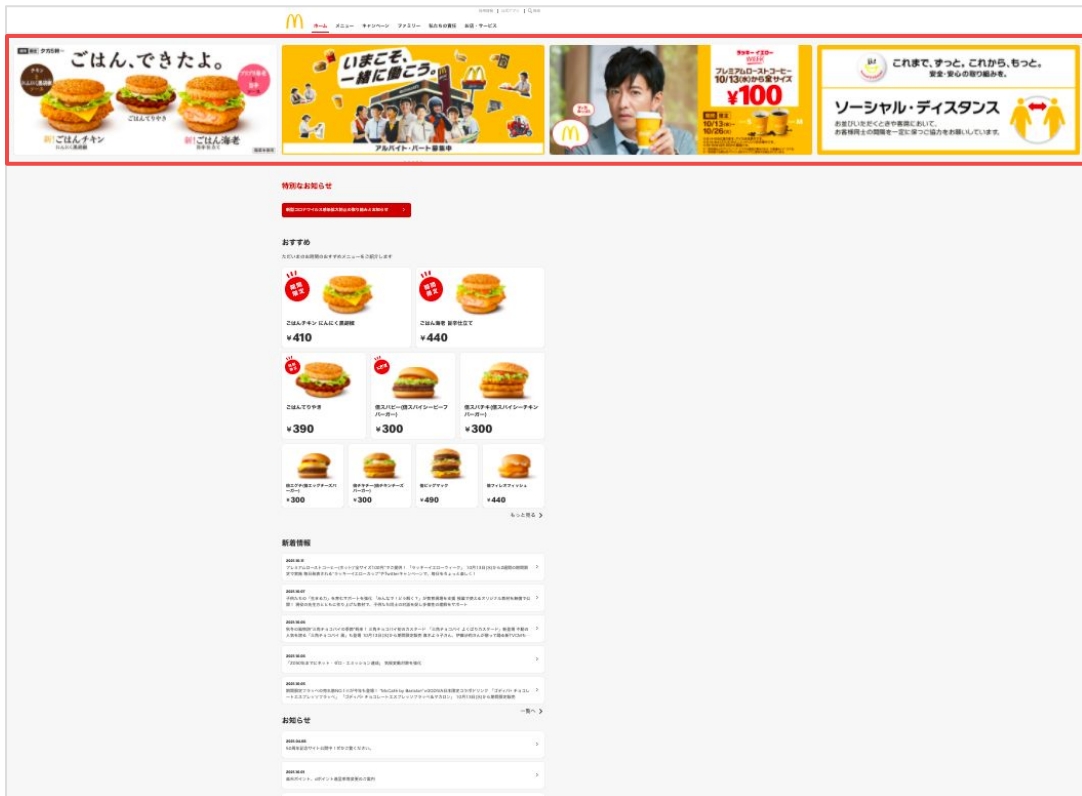




Navigation through slideshows



McDonald's US



McDonald's JP



Part 2

Emotional engagement



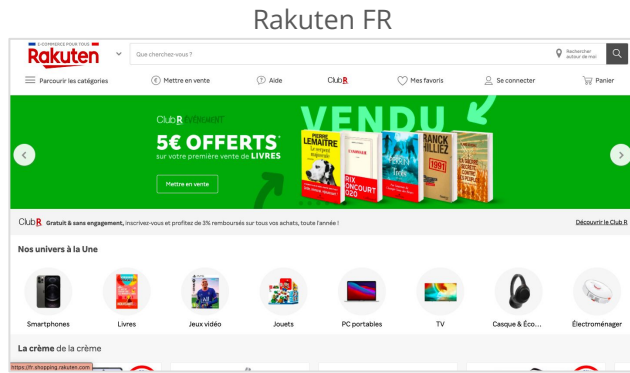
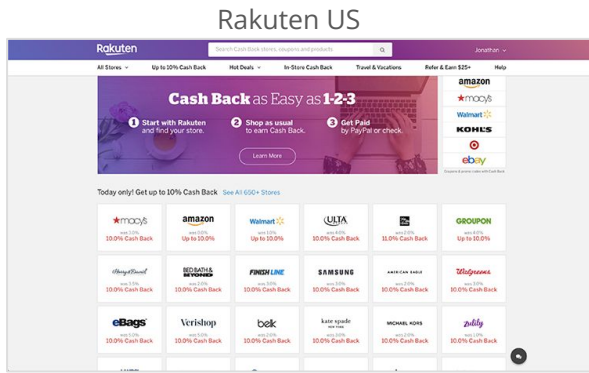


Section 1

Colors



Different use of colors



Red is a very strong color that represents error in Western countries. However, in Japan, red is a positive color used to catch the eye. It is important to choose the CTA color wisely to impact conversion rates. As you can see in the images above, Rakuten's Japanese website uses red to attract users to its advertisements, while its American website emphasizes shopping deals with red. Japanese UI can have more brightly clashing colors.



Different use of colors

The screenshot shows the KFC France website with a red header. The main banner features a large image of a baby wearing sunglasses, with text for 'BABY BOSS 2' and '6 PUZZLES À COLLECTIONNER'. Below the banner are three red buttons: 'COMMANDEZ', 'EN SAVOIR PLUS', and 'COMMANDEZ'. The bottom section has three red panels with white text: 'NOS RESTAURANTS PARTOUT EN FRANCE', 'DÉCOUVREZ LE NUTRI-SCORE DE TOUS NOS PRODUITS', and 'CLICK & BUCKET'.

KFC FR

The screenshot shows the KFC Japan website with a red header. The main banner features a large image of a meal with text for '選んで! 2種類!!' and '¥1500'. Below the banner are four red panels with white text: 'No.2 クリスピー 6', 'No.3 骨なしケンタッキー 4', 'No.1 オリジナルチキン 4', and 'No.4 ナゲット 15'. The bottom section has a red panel with white text: '毎月28日は「とりの日」パック!'. There are also red buttons for 'メニュー', 'クーポン', 'キャンペーン', 'サービス', and 'About KFC'.

KFC JP



Section 2

Brand communication



Characters & mascots

Emotion prevails over anything else. **Brands use manga characters or mascots to connect with their users.** In Japan, the concept of "kawaii" influences mood and establishes a unique relationship with the product.

It represents cuteness, innocence and friendliness which match with Japanese mentalities and culture.

Example: the Softbank mascot is a white shiba





From online to offline

Emotional engagement doesn't stop to the digital world.

Japanese often use “characters stickers” when they write message. These characters have their own stories and shops. Many users buy physical products after using these kinds of stickers.

Japanese users like when a (luxury) brand website offer stickers. It made them even more loyal.





Fun fact

Japanese express feelings with eyes, Americans use their mouth.

As the Japanese saying goes, "The eyes say more than the mouth." This might be the reason that Japanese anime characters have bigger eyes and American cartoon characters have bigger mouths.

Japan

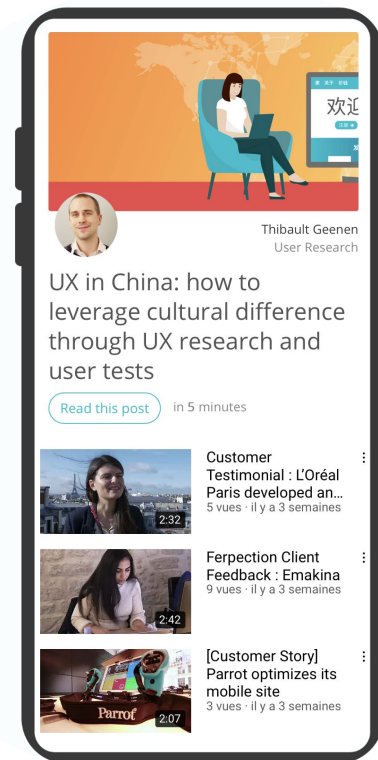
(>_<) (^_^) (*_*) (;_;) (@_@)

Western



Thank you!

10 Rue du Faubourg Poissonnière
75010 Paris
+33 1 76 42 00 45
hello@ferpection.com



See our expert content on our [blog](#) and our [YouTube](#) channel