



TOKYO

HEARTBEATS TREND REPORT

VERENA DAUERER, who is a member of the Heartbeats Movement, divides her time between Tokyo and Berlin. She works as an editor at the intersection of technology with design/art/fashion/film and is also freelancing for The Japan Times and BBC Radio. Below she shares her thoughts on the latest marketing trends, the Japanese 'keitai', innovative and memorable campaigns from 2010, and much more.



Verena, what major trends have you spotted in Tokyo, within the field of marketing?

It's actually hard to spot trends in Tokyo. If I have to say something it would be that a lot of campaigns are focusing on eco, such as eco products or products with environmental friendly features. This is something that has been big for the last couple of years now. Most likely, all things eco are here to stay, obviously. With the recession continuing, cycling around with a chic bike is the thing that will stay for sure.



Do you recall any specific marketing campaigns from 2010?

I really liked several Twitter campaigns in Japan. While Twitter itself has been struggling to find a profitable business plan, Japanese ad agencies quickly embraced the micro-blogging service to create innovative campaigns. No western agency has been able to pick that up so neatly. Japanese clothing chain Uniqlo, for example, has been at the forefront of creating Twitter-based microsites for which they received international media attention. You can read my article about Twitter campaigns in the Japan Times [here](#).

What about fashion trends? What brands do people just have to own?

There are too many layers and scenes in Japan, especially in Tokyo. This makes it difficult to talk about any general fashion trends. But randomly picked, I'd say that Ambush is quite in vogue, at least in the (foreign) party and fashion community (www.ambushdesign.com). However, the time when people are into big trends that come and go like waves is over. The most obvious thing is that Louis Vuitton bags used to be a must for every girl. Now, that's so over and all people want to have is gadgets. Kids in Tokyo used to be all about fashion, but all they want now is the latest gadgets, such as the iPhone.

You just mentioned the iPhone, leading us into media. What do you think is the media of the future in Tokyo?

The media of the future is mobile. In Tokyo it has always been about the 'keitai', the mobile phone (Wikipedia: In Japan, mobile phones have become ubiquitous. In Japanese, mobile phones are called keitai denwa, literally "portable telephones", that are often known simply as keitai). However, many people might own an iPhone, but at the same time they continue to use their Japanese phone, since it can do more for them.



What about the iPad, is there a market for such tablets in Japan?

I'm seeing more and more people with the iPad on the trains lately, but it's still a very small percentage of the design and developer community that use the tablet. It is catching up though, but yet the sales don't seem to be that high.

If you have a Japanese 'keitai', and an iPhone to play with, what do you actually want with a tablet that is quite expensive? In Japan it's considered as an expensive toy for designers and programmers.

What about music, how do people in Tokyo consume that media?

Tokyo has a big local live scene, so people go out a lot, but clubs have been declining due to recession. In general it's a lot about Ustream. iTunes isn't that popular since people still like something tangible such as a CD or a record. Of course, the record industry isn't doing great either, but the Japanese aren't really into downloading tracks from the web. Illegal file sharing sites aren't that popular, really. Also, the Japanese music industry are fierce when it comes to copyright protection.



For example, to get fan stuff and merchandise of certain bands, you have to go to one specific store in Harajuku, and there is always a long queue (Wikipedia: Harajuku is the common name for the area around Harajuku Station on the Yamanote Line in the Shibuya ward of Tokyo).

What about brands and music, what is the general attitude towards brands sponsoring bands and artists?

It is very common to see boy and girl bands appearing in ads and TV spots for brands (such as SMAP for Pocari Sweat, or Namie Amuro for Coca Cola). People in Japan are used to that kind of marketing. Red Bull's music initiative, the Red Bull Music Academy, has really made a name for itself here.

Finally, what is the best place to hang out in Tokyo?

After the underground club Mixcrooffice, artist Naohiro Ukawa came up with something new that totally embodies the Zeitgeist, Dommune, which is a virtual club. It's a tiny venue in a Shibuya basement, open every day with a talk show from 7 till 9, and a DJ set afterwards until midnight. The club is on Ustream and Twitter, so you can stay at home and watch the stream which has over 40,000 followers (www.dommune.com).

For more insight into the fields of music branding and communication strategies, visit www.soundlikebranding.com and www.heartbeatsinternational.com