

# Developing Brands for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with Haiku in English

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This paper studies the product and place branding strategies of an international tea company and a city in Japan which associate themselves with haiku in English. Surveys and free word association tests were used to reveal the thoughts of participants concerning three stimulus words—haiku, tea, and *washoku*. These stimulus words retrieved a cluster of associations that were analyzed and triangulated so that they could be classified according to predetermined criteria. The cue word haiku was quantitatively assessed to make inferences about branding strategies such as the “*Oi Ocha* New Haiku Contest” carried out by Itoen Co. Ltd. for its internationally marketed products. As well, inferences are made about Matsuyama City’s strategy to attract more tourists from overseas by positioning itself as the “World Capital of Haiku Culture” and by promoting photo-haiku as a new movement.

## Introduction

Associations are central to the way humans think. Meara (2009) describes the psycholinguist term association as meaning the connection or relation between ideas, concepts, or words which exist in the human mind. An appearance of one entity entails the appearance of another. The human conceptual system is characterized by category and schema. Psycholinguists map the connections between words, which is the methodology applied to study the effectiveness of brand strategy in this research.

Associative thinking is integral to the process of writing and reading poetry. Associations are essential for haikuists to construct haiku poetry. Haiku, by its very nature, relies on lexical associations because it is so short. The haiku poetic genre is characterized by heavy reliance on lexical associations. For example, Japanese spring is almost exclusively associated with one season word *sakura*. Meaning cherry blossoms, the word instantly connotes images of trees covered in pale pink or a breeze filling the air with fluttering cherry blossom petals that in turn creates the illusion of a spring snowfall, spring love and a long list of other associations (Higginson & Kondo, 2005).

Product brand strategy is a long term plan for the development of a successful brand to achieve specific goals (Carly, 2015). The Itoen Company Limited set out to develop a product brand that was associated with the words: *natural, healthy, safe, well-designed, and delicious*. The company launched its *Oi Ocha* brand in 1989, timed to coincide with the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Matsuo Basho’s travel journal “Narrow Road to Deep North” and the release of poet Machi Tawara’s hit anthology “Salad Anniversary.” Itoen succeeded in convincing Japanese consumers to drink this brand and it has been the industry leader for 27 years. One reason why Itoen has been able to distinguish itself from other tea brands is that its vision isn’t just to sell tea, but rather it’s to add elegance and health to people’s daily lives (Itoen, 2016). Their brand is

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more than the product, logo, website, or name. It's also what feels intangible through association.

Place branding, which includes place marketing and place promotion is a new umbrella term encompassing nation branding, region branding and city branding. Place branding is the process of communicating an image to a target demographic market such as tourists, young people, families, or retirees. Governments aiming to revitalize their area of responsibility use place branding strategies. Matsuyama city promotes its goals by creating and associating with major haiku events. In 2017 it hosted events commemorating the anniversaries of famous haikuists such as Matsuoka Shiki and Natsume Soseki. The city mayor nurtured new connections with famous international haikuists such as the former EU president Hermann Van Rompuy.

## **Methodology**

To study why brands associated to haiku seemed to be working well in strategies to market tea, food and tourism destination, a methodology was devised to test whether the image of haiku was compatible or at least comparable with the images consumers had of these products and places. A principled method for collecting, scoring, and analyzing word association responses was designed to address the issue of differing ages, cultures and foreign language ability. Within a particular social group the same words can evoke almost the same set of word associations.

## **Participants**

A study was conducted at the International University of Kagoshima, a private university situated in Kagoshima, Japan. A total of 73 undergraduate male and female students aged from 18 to 22 who majored in intercultural studies completed questionnaires and took word association tests. To avoid systematic differences in the word association behavior of different age and different language abilities of cohorts, this study focused on one age group and used retesting techniques in English and Japanese.

## **Research Instruments**

Respondents were given questionnaires and word association tests. Word Association Norms are tests designed with a collection of cue words and a set of free associations. A large Word Association Norm data base for English is maintained at the University of Florida (Nelson et al., 1998).

The research instruments were applied in four steps.

Step 1. Each participant was asked to respond with the first word that came into mind when they were given a prompt, known as a seed word or cue: haiku, green tea, washoku. Test administrators collected the immediate responses of the first word that came to mind during a class held in December 2016.

Step 2. In a follow-up retest, each participant was given a response paper with 30 suggested English words. This word association task was presented in written rather than spoken mode for three reasons. First, it was not feasible to collect both written and spoken responses from the same informants. The written

mode was preferable because student assistants and teaching assistants were involved in data collection, and it would not be possible to guarantee consistency of delivery of spoken cues. The majority of word association studies in applied linguistics use written data, therefore using that same elicitation method maximized the relevance of our study to others.

Students circled as many words as they wished for each prompt. The 30 English words were: healthy, seasonable, artificial, masculine, expensive, young, traditional, poor, safe, domestic, well-designed, bored, unique, natural, unfit, feminine, dangerous, awful, specialized, cheap, old, exotic, New Year, amusing, global, uncomfortable, distinctive, delicious, popular, and dizzy. To check the validity of the tests and to show whether participants were able to understand the English words, the participants were also given the same test in Japanese. For these students of English as a foreign language much effort is needed to memorize words. Translation methodology requires that a particular word in their native Japanese language be matched to the corresponding word in a foreign language such as English, and vice versa. This process of learning, naming the words in a pair one after another is based on the mechanism that human memory is based on associations.

Step 3. An additional word association test measured whether these students in Japan associated the word haiku with words that students in other countries came up with. Digregario (2017) received fifty-four responses from writing students on her blog to an inquiry about the first word that comes to mind in thinking about haiku. The words generated during the international study, that was conducted in January similarly to this current study, included: evocative, mutable, essence, evolutionary, focus, introspective, insight, imagination, home, succinct, condensed, contemplative, intimate, natural, moment, imagistic, awareness, flow, freshness, epiphany, light, sharing, everyday. One participant coined the word *perspection* that is likely intended to be similar in meaning to the word perspective.

Step 4. Participants were given an open-ended questionnaire in paper format in January, 2017. Each participant was asked to write their personal opinion on what image they had of haiku, green tea, and *washoku*.

## Findings

When using a computerized thesaurus we found that it will link the noun haiku to words with similar meanings such as: poetry, prose, poem, verse, and literature. Computerized searches were used to hunt for adjectives and collocations related to haiku such as: traditional, aesthetic, buddhist, contemporary, modern, famous, essential, short, poetic, Japanese, topical, and seasonal. But this study focused on what a consumer, in particular a Japanese university student might think of haiku when they are thirsty for a drink, hungry to eat, or planning a trip.

In response to the prompt haiku, students (N= 21) self-generated these words: international, culture, difficult, fantastic, traditional, simple, words, Kyoto.

In response to the prompt green tea, students (N=21) self-generated these words: warm, relax, green,

every day, important drink, tastefully, calm, life relief, like, bitter drink, drink, tasty, health, hot.

In response to the prompt *washoku* students (N=21) self-generated these words: traditional, beautiful, culture, kind, oden, happy, art, quality, delicious, rice, good, healthy, tasty, life.

A triangulation map (figure 1) of the responses was constructed to assist in the matching analysis of the associations between cue words. The word that the students' chose were arranged as a triangulation diagram that places related words close together; words with a weaker association are mapped further apart. These word associations can help us to understand ways consumers draw relationships between tea, haiku, and washoku.

The following words were associated to each of three cues: seasonable, healthy, traditional, well-designed, unique, New Year, global, popular, old, domestic, popular, delicious, natural, amusing.

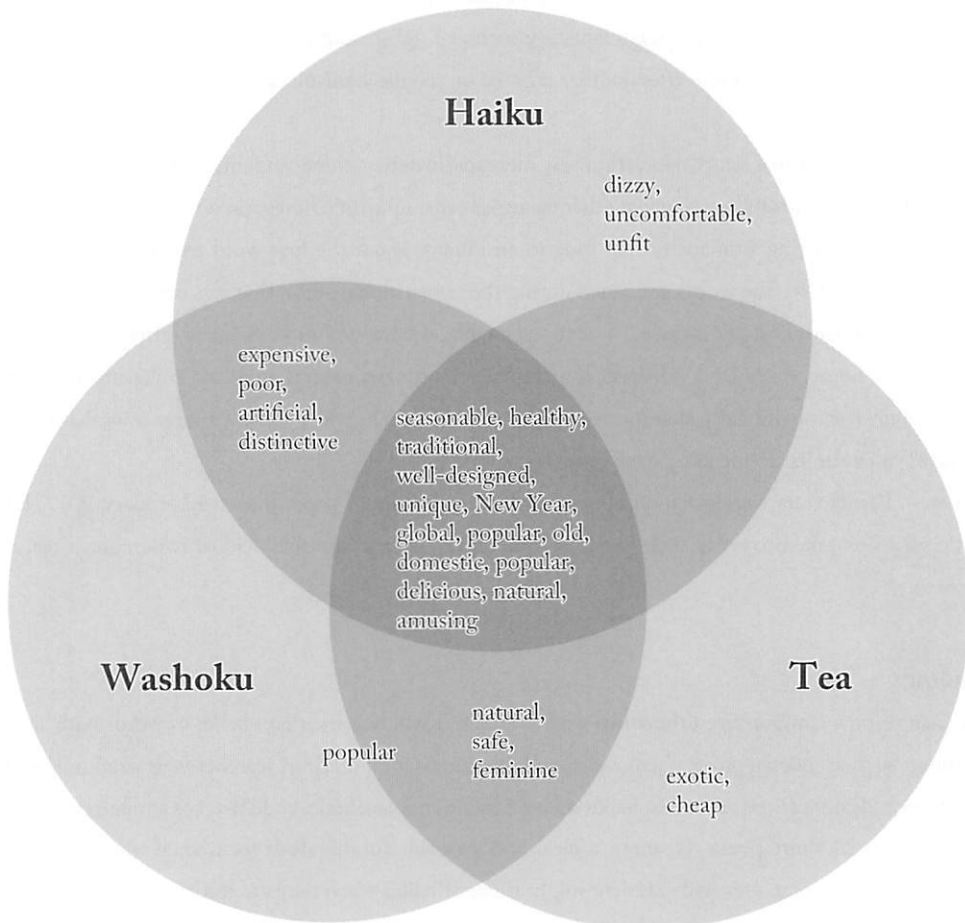


Figure 1. A Triangulation Map of Word Associations for Haiku, Washoku, Tea

## Discussion

Fitzpatrick (2007: p. 327) found that “not only do [native speakers] vary in the actual words they produce, they also seem to vary in the types of association they make. On the other hand, consistency was found in the word association behavior of individuals, both diachronically in the L1 and also synchronically across two languages (Fitzpatrick, 2013). Similarly, a validity check of the tests used in the current study showed that participants were able to understand the English words because they gave the same test results in the Japanese language.

Digregario (2017) was surprised that among her participants, no one associated haiku with words like: wisdom, heartfelt or thoughtful.

Within a particular social group the same words can evoke almost the same set of word associations as we suggested happened in Steps 1 and 2 of the methodology. Surprisingly, in Step 3 of this study the Japanese students and non-Japanese writers of haiku in English mutually shared the association that haiku are evocative, an epiphany, Japanese, poem, evolutionary, imagination, imagistic, imagery, everyday, home, essential, short, succinct, moment, snapshot, pithy, natural, elegant, breathing, natural, flow, light, illumination, reflection, window, awareness, truth, share, sharing, universal.

## Itoen's *Oi Ocha* and Haiku

Starting in 1990, Itoen distributed its green tea product in plastic bottles for sale to the Japanese market. At that time, Coca Cola and other companies were selling sweet drinks but no other company was selling bottled tea. Itoen set out to develop a product brand that was associated with the words: *natural, healthy, safe, well-designed, and delicious*. Itoen succeeded in convincing Japanese consumers to drink this brand and it has been the industry leader for 27 years. The *Oi Ocha* beverage is the most familiar tea brand in Japan, accounting for a 40% share based on annual sales volume (Kajihara, 2012). Once *Oi Ocha* hit the market place, Itoen maintained its position as the obvious choice in consumer mindset by developing effective brand strategies. To keep strengthening *Oi Ocha* brands, for instance, they introduced a sense of Japan's unique seasons and freshness by printing cherry blossoms on the bottles in the spring and maple leaves in the autumn. These innovations garnered the Good Design Long Life Award from the Japan Institute of Design Promotion in 2011.

When the *Oi Ocha* product was launched in 1989, Itoen concomitantly began the *Oi Ocha* New Haiku Contest. Marketers dreamed up the idea of using *Oi Ocha* product packaging as a medium for publishing haiku. Auspiciously, the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matsuo Basho's Okuno Hosomichi (“Narrow Road to Deep North”) travel journal was to be celebrated. Surprisingly, when Machi Tawara an unknown high school teacher released an endearing collection of tanka poems “Salad Anniversary,” her anthology quickly sold 2.6 million copies. These events created great interest in short forms of Japanese poetry. People were even becoming excited about writing their own poems. However, most people were novices. Before the Internet there were few opportunities to publish and would-be poets needed a venue. Itoen jumped through this

window of opportunity and provided their customers with an opportunity to feel like they're part of a community where they could read their own literary works.

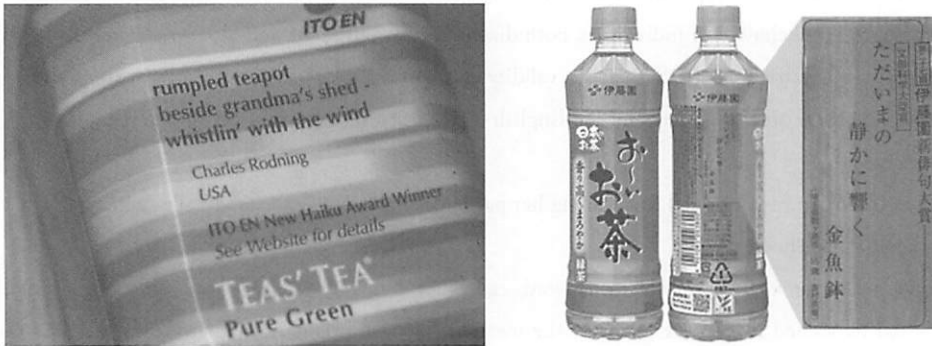


Figure 2. The consumer's haiku are printed on product packaging in English and Japanese

When the company introduced the Oi Ocha New Haiku contest it announced it would give prizes to the winners. There were 41,373 applicants. But its most attractive feature turned out to be that the winning entries would also be printed on the packaging of *Oi Ocha* products. Junior and senior high school students and younger, university students, and adults sent in Japanese haiku.

Starting from the second contest, Itoen launched an English-language section. The organizers of the Oi Ocha New Haiku in English Contest decided to allow consumers to express their feelings in haiku form, without needing to conform to conventional seasonal themes or the 5-7-5 syllable format. This enabled entrants from around the world to compose and submit their poems. Unexpectedly, junior and senior high school students in Japan also took up the challenge to write haiku in English. Itoen therefore began cooperating with the ministry of education from the fifth contest. The Oi Ocha New Haiku contest English category (Figure 3.) has now become a regular part of education in school and shown to develop the powers of expression of students.

Winning haiku with the haikuists' names are printed in Japanese or English on the bottled tea products. Over 2,000 haiku in Japanese and English are printed on bottles of tea and hundreds of prizes are awarded each year. In 2016, 1,862,954 entries in Japanese and 17,825 haiku in English were received (Itoen, 2017).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology awards one winner from the Japanese division 500,000 yen in prize money, a framed copy of the winning haiku, a set of *Oi Ocha* products with the winning poem on the package, inclusion in an anthology of the winning poems, and an award certificate. Nine winners from the English division receive awards from Itoen of ¥50,000 in prize money, a set of *Oi Ocha* products with the winning poem on the package, inclusion in an anthology of the winning poems, award certificate, and 2 winners from the English division receive 30,000 in prize money from the judges, a set of *Oi Ocha* products with the winning poem on the package, inclusion in an anthology of the winning poems, award certificate

One winner from the English division receives 20,000 yen in prize money from a sponsor, a set of Oi Ocha products with the winning poem on the package, inclusion in an anthology of the winning poems, award certificate. Five winners from overseas each receive 5,000 yen in prize money, a set of Oi Ocha products with the winning poem on the package, inclusion in an anthology of the winning poems, award certificate, and 5,000 other haikuists receive merit awards. An Excellent School Award is given to a school from which 5 or more students win a prize and group awards are given to haiku groups achieving excellent results.

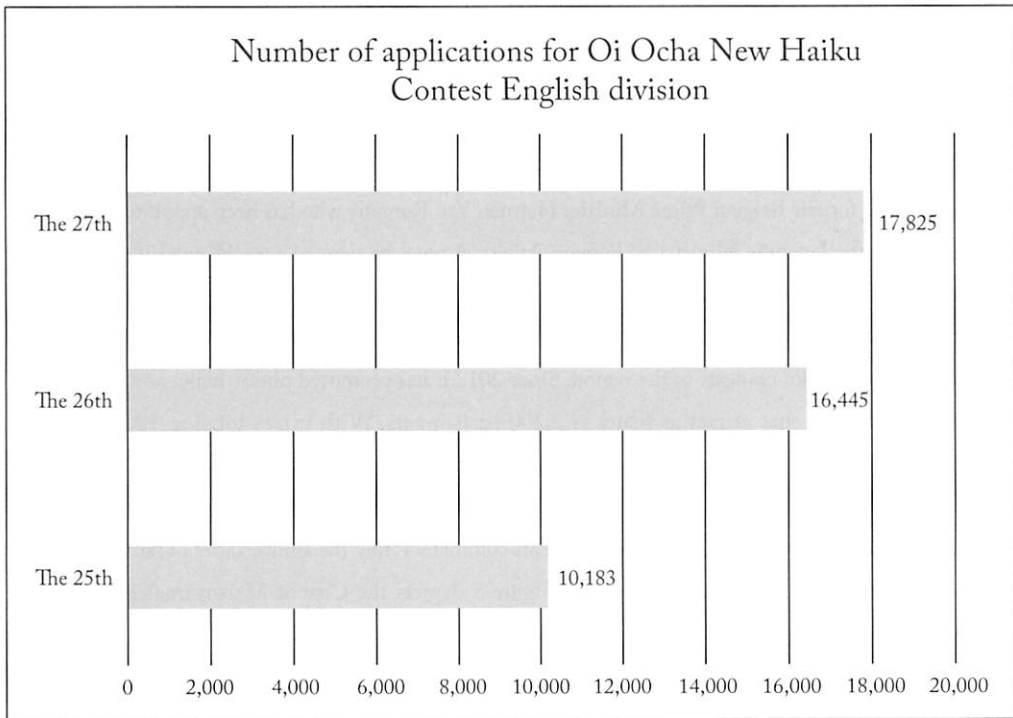


Figure 3: Increasing numbers of English haiku entered in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 *Oi Ocha* New Haiku Contests

Haiku in English has become a value-added feature for Oi Ocha products and attracted loyal fans inside and outside of Japan. Consumers around the world are provided with an opportunity to become familiar with haiku culture and possibly publish their own work. These Oi Ocha New Haiku in English Contests are helping to spread the traditional cultures of Japan to world markets. The contest has seen its popularity spread overseas as people from many countries develop an interest in Japanese literary culture and Japanese food culture.

By running contests for haiku in English and printing the winner's English haiku on their products, Itoen has successfully expanded international demand for their product to the point where the editors of Fortune Magazine (2016), claim the Itoen group is today one of 50 companies changing the world. *Always putting the customer first* is the group's management motto and its long-term vision is to become a global

tea company.

### **Matsuyama City's Gambit to Become the World Capital of Haiku Culture**

Place branding is a new umbrella term encompassing nation branding, region branding and city branding. Place branding is the process of communicating an image to a target market. Places compete with other places for people, resources, and business; the global competition of cities is estimated to host 2.7 million small cities and towns, 3,000 large cities, and 455 metropolises including Tokyo and Osaka. Place branding is defined by Zenker & Braun (2010) as the process employed by public administrations to create place brands, networks of associations in the target groups' minds "based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design".

The mayor of the city of Matsuyama has enlisted the support of perhaps the most famous non-Japanese haiku writer, the former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy who has been appointed as a Haiku Ambassador by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A piece he penned goes: Wandering clouds/ Full moon and black heaven/ Chiaroscuro.

Matsuyama city promotes its goals by creating and associating with major haiku events. For the past 20 years it has hosted haiku contests in the region. Since 2012 it has promoted photo-haiku as a new form of art and runs contests that attract as many as 2,200 participants. With prizes totaling 50,000 yen and opportunities for publication, the Matsuyama Photo Haiku in English contests attract over 1,000 entries from up to 35 countries. Annual conventions held at the Shiki Memorial Museum can attract 500 tourists with an avid interest in haiku. In 2017 it hosted events commemorating the anniversaries of famous haikuists such as Matsuoka Shiki and Natsume Soseki. Figure 5 depicts the City of Matsuyama's gambit to be associated pre-eminently with haiku as the World Capital of Haiku Culture.



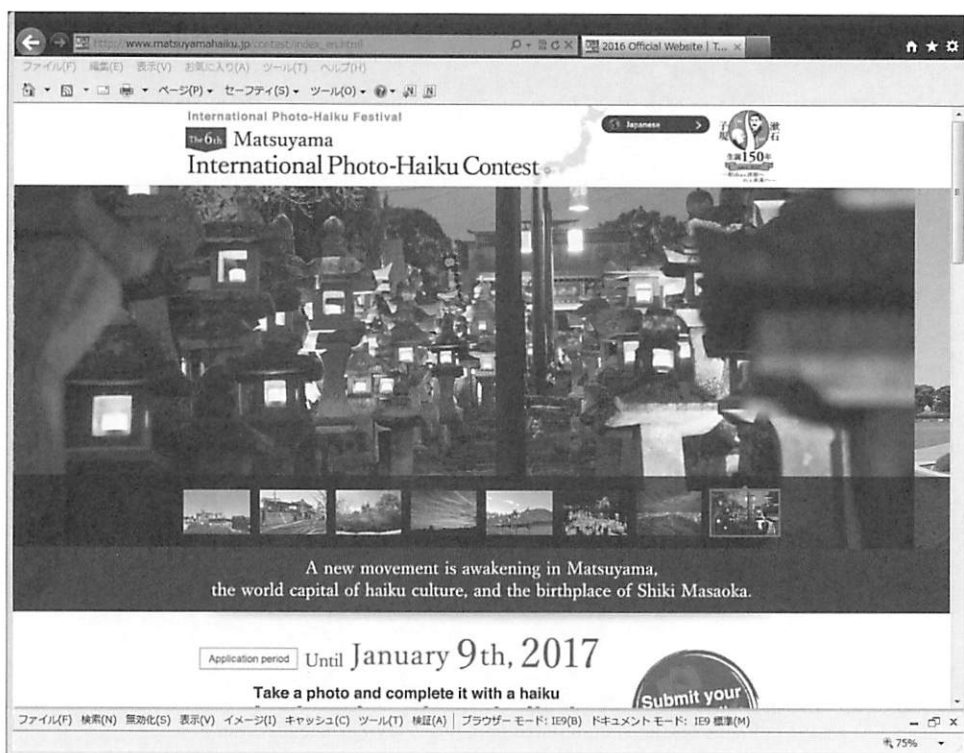


Figure 5: Clip-shot retrieved from: <http://www.matsuyama-haiku.jp/contest/>

## Haiku and Japanese-Style Dining Restaurants

The global Japanese food boom started in the U.S. and Canada during the 1970s and subsequently spread to Europe and the rest of the world. The appeal of Japanese food culture is that it is considered to be balanced and healthy (Stapleton, 2016). In response to hoteliers, the Japanese government re-focused its strategy to promote the Japanese food culture defined as *washoku* (Japan Education Center for the Hotel Industry, 2015). This traditional Japanese cuisine was added to the UNESCO Heritage list of intangible culture in 2013. However, there is still a gap between how *washoku* actually is defined and what the Japanese and the world understand it to be. Itoen participates in the Washoku Association of Japan that is resolved to enhance cooperation between ordinary people, manufacturers, distributors, restaurant operators, researchers and organizations. The association members propose and promote drinking and eating habits that match the season and new ways of enjoying green tea and also emphasize the good match between *Oi Ocha* and *washoku*.

To create and expand opportunities for people around the world to become familiar with *washoku* culture, several Japanese style dining restaurants have associated themselves with haiku in both name and with the poetry. For example, the Haiku—Sushi & Seafood Buffet in the United States published these haiku on its seasonal menus to deliciously describe the ingredients served in its main dishes.

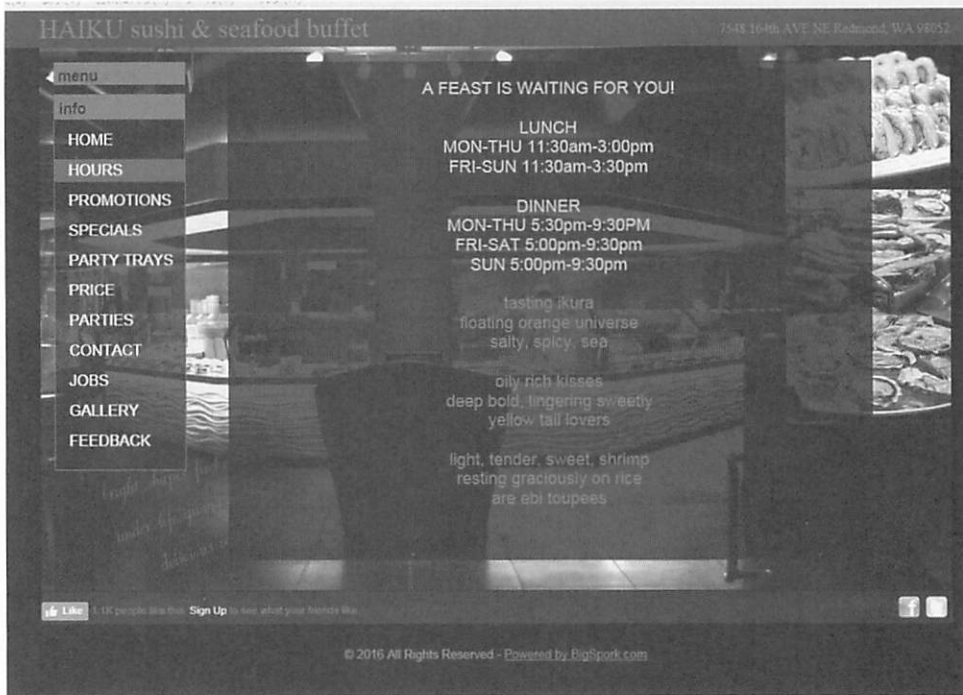


Figure 6: Clip-shot retrieved from <http://www.haikubuffet.com>

*Tasting ikura*

*floating orange universe*

*salty, spicy, sea*

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*Oily rich kisses*

*deep bold, lingering sweetly*

*yellow tail lovers*

\*\*\*

*Light tender, sweet shrimp*

*resting graciously on rice*

*are ebi toupees*

\*\*\*

*Unfolding package*

*salty nori sweet rice pearls*

*pure firm fish surprise*

\*\*\*

*Blue cold sea swimmer*

*wasabi warms ruby flesh*

*maguro madness*

\*\*\*

*Bright crisp cucumber*

*salt, dancing sweetly smoky*

*mellow unagi*

\*\*\*

*Nest of dense green life*

*natural health from the sea*

*anticipation*

\*\*\*



Figure 7. Haiku and Food Word Associations (Mukasa, 2013).

## Conclusion

Diction is primarily the poet's choice of words. Since poetry and in particular haiku, of all literary forms, uses the least number of words to accomplish its task, each word is important and must be chosen as the exact word. The fundamental difference between the use of metaphor in haiku and that in other poetry is that in haiku it tends to be extremely subtle and indirect, to the point of not being readily apparent. The metaphor in good haiku is often buried deep within the poem.

Must a haikuist choose exacting words? The answer lies perhaps in the use of *kigo*, meaning a season-word, which is a word in the haiku that anchors it in a particular season of the year. *Kigo* are triggers that set off a seasonal association in the mind of the reader, sometimes with complex cultural and historical overtones that are absent when transplanted into another language or culture. Season words are metonymic or associative in all cultures—we each have our memories about the seasons and the activities performed within them. Inclusion of a *kigo* is important to haiku not just for subtlety but for its richness of associations (Shirane, 2000).

Word associations are an important element of linguistic creativity. Word association links words whose underlying concepts are related. The words leaf and tree, for example, are strongly related but do not have

similar meaning. Being able to come up with related words, or by using the results of word association tests can help students in writing an essay and finding inspiration for a brainstorm of ideas about what to write about. Systematic relations among words include synonymy, polysemy and hyponymy. These types of lexical associations are common in poetic text. A thesaurus links words with similar meanings. Synonymy is the language phenomenon that words that sound different have the same or identical meaning as another word or phrase. A polysemous word has two or more meanings. Hyponymy is a relation between two words in which the meaning of one of the words includes the meaning of the other word. For example, hyponyms for the verb cook include: roast, boil, fry, grill, bake.

In summary, this study of word associations for haiku, tea, and *washoku* revealed that university-aged participants from Japan thought there were similar connections between haiku, tea and *washoku* including that they are: seasonable, healthy, traditional, well-designed, unique, global, popular, old, domestic, delicious, natural, amusing, and represent the New Year.

The Japanese students and non-Japanese writers of haiku in English shared the association that haiku are: evocative, an epiphany, Japanese, poem, evolutionary, imagination, imagistic, imagery, everyday, home, essential, short, succinct, moment, snapshot, pithy, natural, elegant, breathing, refreshing, natural, flow, light, illumination, reflection, window, awareness, truth, share, sharing, and universal.

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Appendix 1. Word Association Test Data

Step 1	the image of haiku that pops in mind			
Respondent Number = 21	International			
	Culture	N=10		
	Difficult	N=3		
	Fantastic			
	Traditional	N=3		
	Simple			
	Words			
	Kyoto			
	the image of tea that pops in mind			
	Warm		Relief	
	Relax	N=3	Like	
	Green	N=3	Bitter	
	Everyday		Drink	
	Important		Tasty	
	tastefully		Health	
	Calm		Hot	
	Life	N=2	Coffee	
	the image of washoku that pops in mind			
	Traditional	N=4	Good	
	Beautiful	N=3	Healthy	
	Culture		Tasty	
	Kind		Life	
	Oden		Fish	
	Happy			
	Art			
	Quality			
	Delicious	N=2		
	Rice			
Step 2	Haiku Associations (circle as many as necessary)			
Respondent Number =24	Seasonable	N=21	Poor	
	Unique	N=14	Amusing	N=5
	Traditional	N=19	Specialized	N=8
	Well-designed	N=6	Old	N=11
	Artificial	N=4	Expensive	
	Natural	N=11	Distinctive	
	Popular	N=7	Unfit	
	Global	N=10	Healthy	
	New Year	N=3	Dizzy	
	Domestic	N=2	Distinctive	N=2
	Uncomfortable		Delicious	

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Tea Associations (circle as much as necessary)

Respondent Number =21	Seasonable	N=10	Healthy	N=21
	Unique	N=2	Delicious	N=13
	Traditional	N=16	Specialized	N=5
	Well-designed	N=3	Safe	N=7
	Natural	N=15	old	N=7
	Popular	N=14	Cheap	N=3
	Global	N=6	Amusing	
	New Year		Feminine	N=3
	Domestic	N=10	exotic	

Washoku words (circle as much as necessary)

Respondent Number =21	Healthy	N=21	Seasonable	N=12
	Unique	N=11	Delicious	N=19
	Traditional	N=14	Specialized	N=4
	Well-desinged	N=12	Safe	N=10
	Natural	N=9	Old	N=6
	Popular	N=4	Amusing	N=4
	Global	N=11	Expensive	N=4
	New Year	N=9	Artificial	N=2
	Domestic	N=9	Feminine	N=2
	Distinctive		Poor	

Washoku words in J. (circle as many as necessary)

Respondent Number =21	Healthy	N=21	Seasonable	N=19
	Unique	N=4	delicious	N=17
	Traditional	N=19	Safe	N=10
	Well-designed	N=4	Old	N=3
	Popular	N=7	Amusing	N=2
	Global	N=4	Expensive	N=3
	New Year	N=3	Natural	N=8
	Specialized		Feminine	N=2