

Research Article

The role of Narratology in Japanese Sake Marketing

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ABSTRACT

We have been studying an expression of the taste of Japanese sake. Actually, the descriptions of the taste can be regarded as stories. Accordingly, we conducted a special experiment, where we asked participants to draw descriptions of the taste of the Japanese sakes, create catch copies, and to design labels of them for the younger generation. From the results of the experiment, we will analyse the relationship between taste and narratology and the role of narratology in Japanese sake marketing.

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1. Introduction

We have been studying an expression of the taste of Japanese sake (alcoholic drink) [1], [2], [3], [4]. The reason is that since we do not have a dictionary of the taste of Japanese sake, we tried to create words or phrases to express or describe the taste of Japanese sake. In general, we do not describe the taste of sake as a still situation, instead as a changing situation. When describing the taste, we will deal with a time flow. We will describe a gradual change of the taste. Accordingly the descriptions of the taste can be regarded as stories. The descriptions are also interesting as a set of corpus. However more interesting matter is that we are able to use the descriptions for the marketing. Since the descriptions are created during the tasting of sake, a part of it should contain the taste. And if labels are designed based on the description, it should contain the information or expression of the taste.

Usually labels of the Japanese sake are not attractive. At least, what labels should inform us is name of the sake. In addition, the font is not rather normal. No attractive factor except the taste is necessary for selling the sake, they may think. However, according to the Jensen's

theory [5], it is important to prepare a story for selling products. Accordingly we think it will be better to include a story in the labels of sakes. At least labels of sakes should be attractive for a certain generation.

Therefore, we conducted an experiment, in which we asked participants to draw descriptions of the taste of the Japanese sakes and to design labels of them. Then the design should include the taste information of the sake.

We could collect several results. From the results of the experiment, we will analyse the relationship between taste and narratology and the role of the narratology in marketing of Japanese sake.

2. Narratology

Like structuralism and semiotics, from which it derived, narratology is based on the idea of a common literary language, or a universal pattern of codes that operates within the text of a work. Its theoretical starting point is the fact that narratives are found and communicated through a wide variety of media—such as oral and written language, gestures, and music—and that the

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“same” narrative can be seen in many different forms*. For the multi-media field, Ryan and Thon replaced “narrative” with “storyworld” and pointed out that “Nowadays, we have not only multimodal representations of storyworlds that combine various types of signs, and virtual online worlds that wait to be filled with stories by their player citizens, but also serial storyworlds that span multiple installments, and transmedial storyworlds that are deployed simultaneously across multiple media platforms, resulting in a media landscape in which creators and fans alike constantly expand, revise, and even parody them [6].”

In the future, such media-conscious narratologies can be considered to create better literary works. Since “storyworld” is an extension of “narrative.” Anyway, narratology plays a significant role in literary works generation. In addition, we think it can be applied to the other creative field such as marketing.

3. Story telling (narratology) in marketing

Rolf Jensen showed the importance of story in selling products⁵. For instance, an article in (<http://cifs.dk/publications/books/rolf-jensen-the-dream-society/the-dream-society/>) shows that “[t]he huge increase in material wealth owes much to science and technology, but, in the future, attention will turn away from science toward nonmaterialistic and nonscientific values. The highest-paid person in the first half of the next century [(21st)] will be the “storyteller.” The value of products will depend on the story they tell. Nike and many other global companies are already mainly storytellers. That is where the money is --- even today. The corporate strategy sessions are increasingly about storytelling --- not manufacturing. Our heroes at the Olympic Games in Atlanta will be those telling magnificent stories - and they'll be getting well paid later.” That is, the highest-paid person in the first half of the next century will be the “storyteller.” In fact as we can see the situation in CM in Japan (Sapporo? beer), they try to show the background story of the birth of the product. In addition, Sapporo beer's CM film in 2007 entitled “We must produce necessary products (ないものは創るしかない).”[†] is very famous. It is a musical type advertisement where the story of the beer product procedure is played. Thus products should have a story inside. Thus products should have a story inside.

Accordingly narratology plays a very important role in several situations.

4. Description of Sake as a Story

4.1. Descriptions of the taste of sake

The descriptions of taste of sake can be found in several books. For instance, for the taste of Japanese sake, in a magazine “LOVE ♡ Japanese sake!, 2014, 2 Gakken,” the following descriptions are included:

- Kamoshi-bito Kuheiji (醸し人九平次) Eau Du Desir 2012

At the first moment in the mouth, strong fruit flavour can be felt. After a proper maturing time, the mouth is fragrant with the smell of honey and vanilla. A good flavour is spread and in the center of it splendid sour can be found... (口にした瞬間は果実のフレーバーが強く感じるものの、適度な熟成を経ると蜂蜜やバニラの香を覚えます。旨味は華やかな酸を軸に広がりますが....)

- Isojiman Junmai ginjou (磯自慢純米吟醸)
Refreshing scent such as the scent of muskmelon and pear is elegant... (マスクメロンや洋ナシを思わせる爽快とした香りは気品すら感じさせるもの....)

No stories are included in the above descriptions. Perhaps, for the evaluation, subjective descriptions will not be preferable. On the other hand, descriptions in several book contain the stories of production such as “Mr. Fernandez who was 79 years old had spent all his life for the wine production (El Vinclo 2010 by *Real Wine Guide Vol. 52 (2016, Winter)*)” and “This taste was born by the malted rice which the president Kimizuka in the winter puts his heart and soul into producing and the fermentation technique that pulls out the potential taste of Fusakogane (an eating rice only in Chiba prefecture) at the best (Naruka special junmai direct packing raw [white] (鳴海特別純米直詰め生【白】) the homepage of Nishiura liquors shop (酒舗にしうら)).”

Previously, we described the taste of Japanese sake¹. I will show one of the descriptions; The followings are records of two person's expressions for the taste of Japanese sake. We tasted the same sake (Shizengou seven (自然郷 セブン)) at the same time in the same room. We used different cup but the environmental condition will be almost the same.

- A: The first impression in my mouth was oh good taste. However, after that the taste disappeared as if water escaped from the side of the tongue. The first taste of sake did not spread and taste like water went through tongue then escape from my mouth between teeth. Very “interesting” taste.

* <https://www.britannica.com/art/narratology>

† <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x32ov53>

- F: The first half of tongue can feel good taste. I felt oh good taste. However gradually the taste disappeared as if the taste was veiled in mist. At the last, I had an aftertaste such that sugar is diluted in water. I felt quite a few satisfactions. If I dare to describe the last half taste as a refreshing taste, it can be described that the taste is tightened.

In fact, we used the phrases for the flow of time. Though they do not contain the story of the producer nor process of production, the flow of time during the tasting can be regarded as a story.

4.2. A label of sake

Certain labels of Japanese sake contains certain illustrations. “The Japanese sake stories (日本酒ものがたり)” (<http://sakemono.com/>) by the Japanese sake ×produce production project (日本酒×作家創作プロジェクト) is conducted as an intention to draw a story in the Japanese sake by artists. For instance, the illustration on the label of Hanahimesakura Shizuku-hime non-filtered junmai ginjou no-water-added sake (華姫桜しずく媛 無濾過純米吟醸原酒) is shown in Figure 1. This is an anime-like illustration.

Though this sake is a non-filtered junmai ginjou no-water-added sake, its taste was fully matured opposite to our expectation. According to the home page, her name is Sakurashizuku (桜雫) and she is 138 years old.



Fig. 1. A label of Japanese sake (華姫桜しずく媛 無濾過純米吟醸原酒)

Accordingly the sake might be matured sake. However, I do not think actual taste of the sake is coincide with the lady in the illustration. At least, the taste is not the similar to what I expected when I saw the label. This illustration might represent the image of the sake as the sake brewery imaged, but does not represent the exact taste of the sake.

If they want to sell this sake to those love idols, it might be successful. Because the illustration contains the story which will be liked by idol lovers. This label includes a story with this lady who is cute. We would like to buy the sake regarding the story read in this label. Thus a story in the product will play an important role in marketing.

5. Experiment

We conducted an experiment as follows;

5.1. Objectives

We reviewed the role of narratology in the previous section. We concluded in the previous section that a story in the product will play an important role in marketing. Accordingly, we would like to see how can we generate stories from the product and how can we express the stories for the marketing.

5.2. Participants

Seven persons from 21 to 29 years old participated in the experiments shown in Figure 2. Some of them frequently drink Japanese sakes and describe the taste of them. Only one person was female.

5.3 Method

We used the following six kinds of sakes: Ichijima



Fig. 2. Japanese sakes used in this experiment

junmai ginjou raw no-water-added sake (市島 純米吟醸 生原酒), Azumaichi junmai daiginjou (東一 純米大吟醸), Azumaichi Yamadanishiki junmai-shu 64% polishing (東一 山田錦純米酒 64%磨き), Azumaichi Nero, Azumaichi junmai daiginjou drip squeezing (東一 純米大吟醸 雫搾り), Inabazuru junmai ginjou gouriki freshly squeezed non-filtered raw no-water-added sake (いなば鶴 純米吟醸 強力しぼりたて 無濾過生原酒). We also prepared some foods such as cheeses and chocoates to check a marriage (matching) with sakes.

We asked the participants to taste Japanese sake to describe the taste shown in Figure 3. The description could include texts and figures. Then we asked them to create catch copies for the sake. In addition, we asked

them to design the label of the sake. The target person was young person in 20's. Those descriptions and drawings were drawn on the papers in A3 size. They used several pens such as colored pens and pencils.

5.4. Results

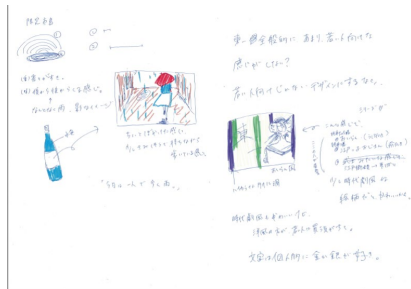


Fig. 3. One of results in this experiment

We collected such design results as shown in Figure 3.

First, we show some descriptions of the taste of sake. All descriptions were written in Japanese. We translated them in English.

- Ichijima junmai ginjou raw no-water-added sake
 - 1) Delicious. I like this because I can smell and taste rice. Since it contains spicy taste, the taste comes gradually. At first, I feel gentle taste, but in the latter half I feel spicy taste.
 - 2) Jyowa jyowa--- The fragrance disappears suddenly and clearly. A refreshing fragrance which is going out from nose. For the summer season? I can not say it is a refreshing type. With snack it is not good. With a Camembert cheese, the taste becomes soft. For a party? It is difficult to drink without any foods.
 - 3) (fragrance) I like the fragrance.
(taste) The taste comes again and again. I feel somewhat an image of rain and shadow.



- 4) (fragrance) I feel a straight alcoholic fragrance.
(taste) Strong sour and slightly sweet. After taste includes spicy. Bitter taste is weak.
- 5) Spicy banana
(taste) I feel a smell of cloth. First sweet taste such as pears comes to mouth and spread slightly. Unfavorable taste flows out of mouth but it is not hate

taste. With a duck, I can taste without conflicts. Smoked taste becomes weak.

- Azumaichi junmai daiginjou
 - 1) I feel sweet and floral feeling. When I open the sake, I feel a fragrance from the 20cm distance, the taste is soft and I feel umami of rice. The more I drink, the more I become aware of biting taste. If I drink a lot, spreads of the sake will change? It is easy to drink, so I can drink more and more. I think I can get drunk comfortably. It will be good for drinking when tired? But it is not good to drink before holiday. I might not be aware of having a hangover.
 - 2) Refreshing fragrance. The first attack is smoothly sweet. It is rather bitter. The balance of the taste is good. After a while, I feel a bitter taste more. The target generation of the sake will be elder persons. Younger generation will not like this. The taste is bitter, but after taste does not remain long. So it will be good for with a meal. After a long time, the taste changes flat and I do not feel a bitter taste.
 - 3) (fragrance) Fresh and young type. (taste) strong sour. At (1), a prickly taste comes and at (2) also a prickly taste comes. Then the taste spread to (3) rapidly. The taste remains more at (1) and (2) than at (3). It has a peculiar taste but is easy to drink. It is a feminine type sake.



- 4) (fragrance) Sweet fragrance of rice which comes my nose straightly and a straight alcoholic fragrance.
(taste) First, I feel a sweetness of rice. The taste becomes bitter as the sake enters the back of tongue. At the throat I feel a biting taste. It is easy to drink (because a bitter taste dose not come suddenly). After taste is a sweetness of a rice and I feel a biting taste in the throat. At the back of throat, I feel a little bitter taste.
- (taste) mine) Fragrance like a dust. A taste like a fruit (apple) comes in the shape of round and thickly. The taste does not spread and comes heavily. However, at the top of the tongue, I feel spicy taste. In the mouth, a remaining taste is faintly sweet and clear. If it does not have spicy taste, it is clear taste.

- Azumaichi Yamadanishiki junmai-shu 64% polishing

1) A sharp feeling. Cool. Good for summer. Cool feeling → I cannot feel the fragrance. The taste is sour? like a caramel. I feel bitterness rather than sweetness. But sweet. It's difficult to express the taste. The taste spreads a little. The taste stops at the place where I feel like to go more. It the type of sake that tantalizes after appealing to me. It is like a quiet and cool pretty girl such as Rei Ayamaru (綾○レイ).

2) It is a normally delicious sake. It is neither good nor bad. It is better than Ichjima and Azumaichi Junmai daiginjou. If I do not have any sake, I will drink this. I can drink this with every foods.

3) (fragrance) astringent. (taste) A prickly taste comes and spreads with numbing. After drinking the sake, at (2) and (4) the taste remains. In addition, at (5), the taste remains. The taste is like a little bitter chocolate and remains in the mouth (A cacao degree is high.). The taste in (3) moves back and forth according to the way of putting it in my mouth. The taste in (3) spreads overall the mouth slowly. The after taste is like a chocolate.



4) (fragrance) Rather strong fragrance.

(taste) Just after putting the sake in my tongue, I feel a spicy taste. I feel sweetness little and the after taste has a bitterness. But the taste is more refreshing than that of Azumaichi junmai ginjou. I feel a spicy taste at the top of my tongue.

5) Middle: clear, a clear stream, acid, forest, summer, late summer, September, sun light through the trees Later: Autumn rice field with a swaying ear of rice, refreshed taste. A sunny autumn day. A rim of the taste is clear.

(mine) A little fragrance of an alcohol exists in the bottom of the sake. The taste is matured and at the bottom of the sake, an alcoholic taste sinks. At the upper side of the sake thin sweetness exists. I feel a spicy taste at the top of my tongue. I feel an astringency spreading around my cheek.

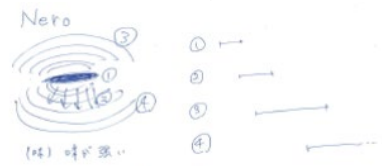
● Azumaichi Nero

1) Its taste is similar to that of Azumaichi junmai daiginjou? If it is said as sweets, it will belong to the sweets. The taste is rather sweet and it comes gradually. The taste is not spreading wider than

that of Azumaichi junmai daiginjou. I feel like a drinking sake more than Azumaichi junmai daiginjou drip squeezing.

2) I can smell nothing. Its taste is calm and gentle. I feel carbonic acid. I think it is better to drink with yakitori. Perhaps with sashimi. After a little while, it becomes melting. And more time after, it becomes sticky.

3) (taste) Its taste is strong. (4) remains ..., but is rather smooth. At the last, the taste becomes clean.



4) (fragrance) I feel a straight fragrance. No sweet fragrance I feel.

(taste) The taste of sweetness of a rice and sour strongly comes. The after taste is slightly (gentle) spicy and bitter.

(mine) I feel a closed fragrance. A fruit type of taste comes smoothly. It spreads very little and on my tongue sweetness remains. I feel little unfavourable taste. If I inflate the sake in my mouth, a little sour comes and the taste of the sake becomes very well balanced. At the last, I feel a spicy taste on my tongue, but I mind a little.

● Azumaichi junmai daiginjou drip squeezing

1) The spreading of the taste is a little. I have a unremarkable impression. Spicy? I feel a prickly taste. I think I can recommend to everybody?

2) I feel a rich fragrance. This is a hoping sake. The taste is not bad. I will drink this later. A cheap taste. I can dare to drink it in a train alone. For a party. After several minutes, a bitter taste comes a little.

3) (fragrance) I smell a little. pretty.

(taste) like a melon. pretty. At (3) the taste comes with a heavy impact. "It is not just a pretty face." I feel it is like a pearl.



4) (fragrance) Fragrance of sweetness of rice and alcohol.

(taste) I feel a taste of strong flavour of a rice. In addition, I feel sweetness and slightly acidity. On the throat, I feel relatively strong spicy taste. Even if I drink it with air, a spicy taste comes.

5) Mowa--n, unformel, it has an outline.

(mine) I feel a smell of cloth a little. On the periphery, clear sweetness exists. The taste enters in mouth cleanly. I feel a spicy taste over the sweetness. Its clear sweetness is like a delicious water and beautiful. However, I want a more spreading taste. Without the last spicy taste, it will become a non-stimulative sake? If it had umami or rich flavour, it will be the best.

- Inabazuru junmai ginjou gouriki freshly squeezed non-filtered raw no-water-added sake
 - 2) I drink it with sweets. The taste is not bad. (It might because I drink it with sweets.) It smells like fruits (green apple).

(mine) At first, the taste is closed. A sour taste stands out, but is not strong. It is easy to drink, but does not have a special feature.

Next, we show some catch copies for sakes.

- Ichijima junmai ginjou raw no-water-added sake
 - 2) Best for the summer party... with cheese and ham.
 - 3) It's raining... today I walk alone.
 - 4) Spreading taste.
 - 5) If we get drunk, everything is tasteful.
- Azumaichi junmai daiginjou
 - 2) For the sake lovers!! The best in Azumaichi.
 - 3) Scared lady (gentle lady)
 - 4) Seven changes
 - 5) Flower blooms four times.
- Azumaichi Yamadanishiki junmai-shu 64% polishing
 - 1) A friend with an evening drink.
 - 2) The entry item of Azumaichi!!
 - 3) The first step to adult.
- Azumaichi Nero
 - 2) It's very clear taste. So you can taste it with both meats and fishes.
 - 5) 25 years old, week end, girls party.
- Azumaichi junmai daiginjou drip squeezing
 - 2) Please taste slowly.
 - 4) Happiness of a drop.
 - 5) Metamon transforms Japanese sake. Drinking rice ball sake.

In addition, several catch copies were collected. These copies are for younger generation. One of interesting

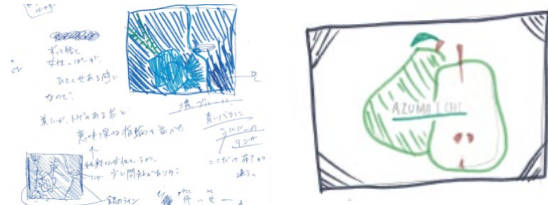
copies is that for Azumaichi junmai daiginjou (above). It might have changing taste, accordingly they generate phrases with words meaning change.

Then according to the created catch copies, participants created labels for the sakes as shown below:

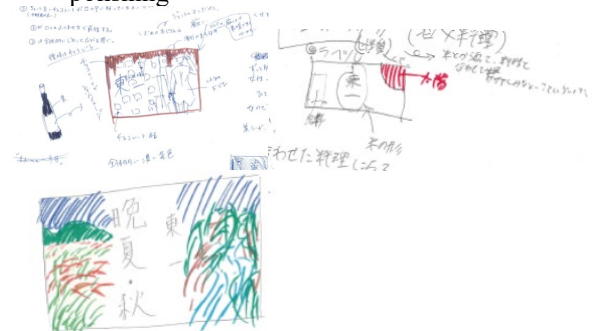
- Ichijima junmai ginjou raw no-water-added sake



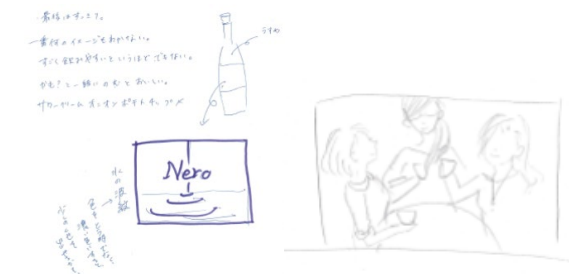
- Azumaichi junmai daiginjou



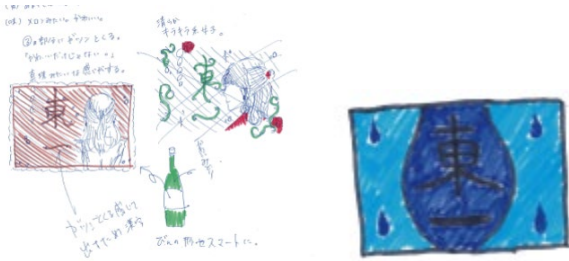
- Azumaichi Yamadanishiki junmai-shu 64% polishing



- Azumaichi Nero



- Azumaichi junmai daiginjou drip squeezing



Some labels have stories. For instance, a drawing in the label of Ichijima junmai ginjou raw no-water-added sake has a story that “she looks slightly sad and is strolling with waiting somebody.” The drawing also has a title “Today she strolls alone in the rain (今日は一人で歩く雨).” In addition a label for Azumaichi Nero has a story which tells a happy drinking.

6. Discussions

In the experiment, we have collected several drawings and descriptions. They are descriptions of the taste of the sake, catch copies for the selling the sakes. In addition, they are drawings of shape and movement of the taste. Finally they designed labels of sakes according to their descriptions and drawings. We could expect stories in the descriptions and drawings of the taste. Some participants described changing tastes. We think these are regarded as stories of the sakes.

A sommeliere sometimes describes a taste of a wine with a scene such as “walking in a forest with stepping firmly dead leaves.” This expression comes from the changing taste. We think for the description of the taste of Japanese sake, the similar type of expression can be made. Actually, a participant described such phrase as “I feel a rich scent. This is a hoping sake. The taste is not bad. I will drink later. A cheap taste. I can dare to drink it in a train alone. For a party. After several minutes, a bitter taste comes a little.” This phrase contains time expression, but does not contain any explicit story. In fact, the changing of the taste can be considered a story. From the expression “middle: clear, a clear stream, acid, forest, summer, late summer, September, sun light through the trees. Later: Autumn rice field with swaying inaho, refreshed taste. A fine autumn day. A rim of the taste is clear,” we will be able to create a story, though they are only a juxtaposition of words.

Reviewing the labels, we think a story of the taste is described in certain labels. And the story (narratology) functions well in the labels. We think an illustration in the label expresses the story of the taste of the Japanese sake. For instance, the label entitled “Today she strolls alone in the rain (今日は一人で歩く雨)” has a story as the taste and very impressive. We think it will be better

to express the story of the taste of the sake. Because it has a lot of information to select the product. For instance, the label of Gassan Innovation (red) Syunnyou (月山イノベーション(赤) 春陽) is at a first glance, attractive, but if we look at it carefully we can find a map where the sake was produced. I think this type of label design will be very effective. This label may contain environment and story of the production.

We did not conduct an experiment to evaluate the design of labels from the viewpoint of marketing.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, we conducted series of experiments. First, we asked the participants to taste Japanese sake to describe the taste. The description could include texts and figures. Then we asked them to create catch copies of the sake. In addition, we asked them to design the label of the sake for the persons in twenties.

Several expressions could be collected in this experiment. The expressions are very interesting. The more interesting results are labels designed by the participants. We think some labels can be used for the actual selling.

We have not evaluate the designs. In the future, it is necessary to evaluate them by the outsiders as a marketing.

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Authors Introduction

Dr. Akinori Abe



He received an M.E. and Doctor of Engineering (PhD) from the University of Tokyo in 1988 and 1991 respectively. His main research interests are abduction, analogical reasoning, data mining, Chance Discovery, curation and language sense processing (rather emotional aspects of language processing). He worked in NTT Communication Science Laboratories from 1991 to 2000, NTT MSC (Malaysia) from 2000 to 2002, and ATR From 2002 to 2009. He also worked as an associate professor of IREIIMS, Tokyo Women's Medical Univ. and a visiting associate professor of Kobe Univ. Graduate School (Cooperation Course). In 2009 he returned to NTT Communication Science Laboratories. Then he moved to Faculty of Letters, Chiba University in April 2012. Since then he is a full professor of Chiba University.
