

In the UK the Ikigai narrative is timeless, and the affect orientation is active and positive. In contrast in Japan, it is transient, where the literal daily purpose of life takes backstage with the adjustments to the pandemic. That said the affect orientation is still positive and active. The negativity of frustration

driving annoyance and anger is balanced in the emotional response, in Japan, by a sense of expectation and surprise. The emotional response in the UK around the narrative is much more positive (Figure 1).

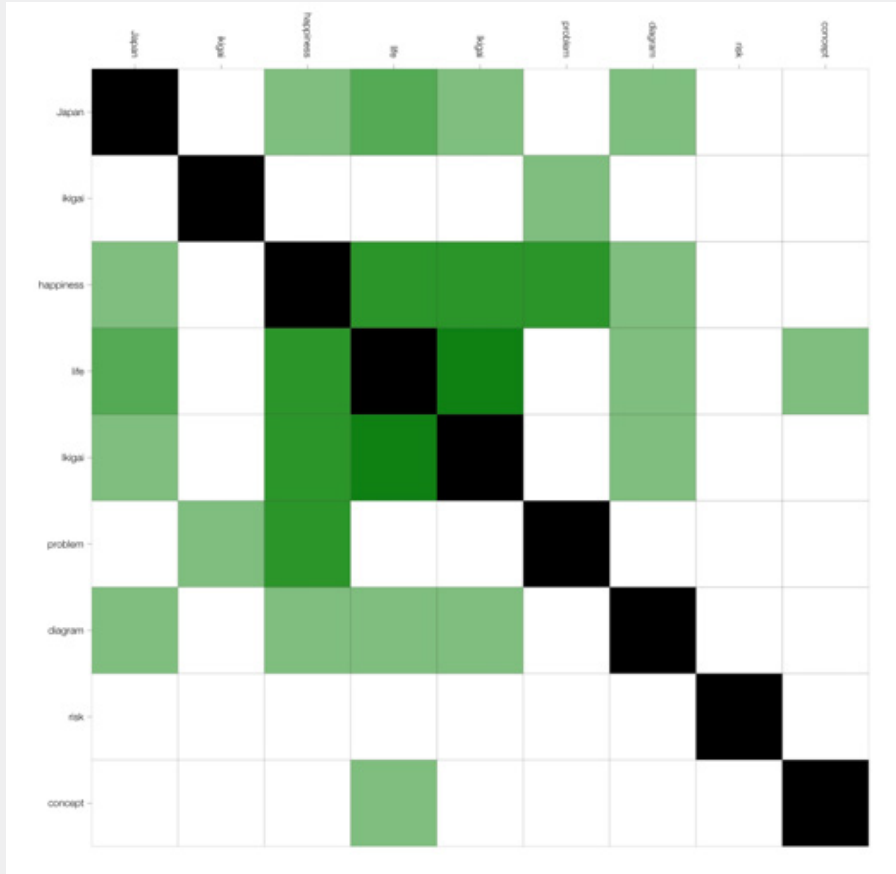


Figure 2: Key topics driving Ikigai in UK.

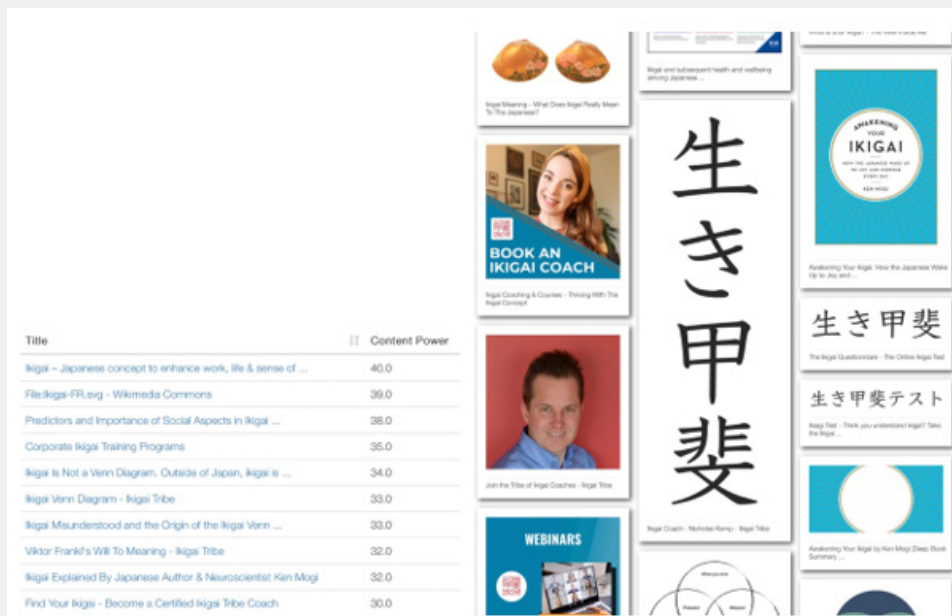


Figure 3: Powerful pieces of content driving Ikigai (UK).

The key topics driving engagement with Ikigai in the UK are broad (Figure 2), demonstrating the rise in interest in this Japanese concept. Life purpose has naturally been questioned more during COVID-19, when greater pressure on work-life aspirations have brought it home to individuals that economic growth or wealth does not mean happiness or improved life satisfaction. In Japan the key topics driving engagement take the definition of ikigai somewhat literally where it simply boils down to life and purpose, and currently peoples own lives are considered within the context of ikigai and found wanting (Figure 3).

Implications

Ikigai can be viewed as a cultural vessel that could support the regeneration of peoples and societies post COVID-19. It offers a dynamic framework for an individual to seek purpose in life while at the same time finding an improved balance between life's competing tasks. It may during the ongoing transformation in many people's daily lives offer a useful framework to embrace and assess changes. Our analysis shows perhaps the sharpest dichotomy, driven by culture, in comparing the UK and Japan. In

the UK the notion of ikigai is new, increasingly relevant and gaining some traction albeit at an embryonic stage. In Japan, it is implicitly understood and the current volatile and uncertain circumstance lead to a general rational response that ikigai is not currently present and there's a gap between actuality and aspiration.

References

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