

## **‘Languaging’ as Marketing and Promotion Strategies: What Triggers Emotional Engagement of Potential Customer**

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### **Abstract**

Under the circumstances of COVID-19 devastating restaurant management, there are increasing demands of promotion for culinary business all over the world. This study investigates the way to market and promote culinary business by developing digital promotion products. In order to promote culinary business, a marketing and promotion project took place in the university as the joint project. The project teams were formed to promote Georgia beverage together. Intercultural project involves a synergistic work between a group of students from Georgia and Japan. This study employs mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 1998; Scollon & Scollon, 2004) to see the spoken and unspoken language as actions. Mediated discourse analysis expands understanding language in action in daily lives. Mediated discourse analysis comes from an adaptation of sociocultural theory. The focus of mediated discourse analysis is not only discourse but the whole vision of social practices. Wertsch (1998) claims that all actions are mediated through ‘cultural tools’: objects, technologies, practices, identities, social institutions, and also language and other semiotic systems. In order to bring back lively business there must be fundamental factors that stimulate potential customers. The project is to raise awareness conversion of two socio-cultural contexts apparently distant, through beverage marketing and the restaurant promotion. The integration of ideas creates marketing and promotion tools to trigger emotional engagement of potential customers. This project also brought a unique opportunity for interaction between two cultures that may seem distant, but that are similar for what concerns communication and international business relations.

**Keywords:** Languaging, Beverage Marketing and Promotion, Culinary Business, Design Thinking, Mediated Discourse Analysis

### **1. Introduction**

This study aims at investigating how multiple groups of the project participants find the way to market and promote culinary business by developing digital promotion products. In order to develop the marketing and promoting digital products, the project members needed to propose prototypes for the client. The marketing strategy and digital products development followed the design thinking process. Design thinking is an interactive process in which all participants seek to understand the potential customers approaching from multi dimensions (Dam & Siang, 2021).

The past studies about destination marketing suggest that conveying the expectations of memorable experience associated with the destination is important (Blain, Levy & Ritchie, 2005). Nichita and Tanaka (2017) conducted research on destination marketing for a Romanian small village. Photographs were employed as the visual anthropology of a small village to create promotional video. Beautiful sceneries are crucial elements constituting images for promotion. Furthermore, local people’s engagement is more important to stimulate the tourists’ expectation. This research echoes their argument to use available resources not only cultural heritage also involvement of people. In order to explore marketing and promotion in digital environment, this study set research question as follows:

1. What elements can be promotion and marketing strategies in digital environment?
2. How do the project members create effective posts on Instagram to reach the potential customers?

From ecological perspective, this project naturally involved different group of stakeholders. Design thinking process produced rich interactions of brainstorm to develop concrete prototypes for the products. The participants from different disciplines, interactions might contain meaning negotiations during discussions in each stage of development process. This study shed the light on interactions and creations on the website which illustrate the effective marketing and promotion in culinary business. In order to investigate marketing and promotion strategies, section 2 provides the literature review and key concepts in relation to empathy. Data analysis will be developed with empirical sources in section 3. Section 4 is devoted to discuss important element of emotional engagement. This study will conclude with consideration to achieve successful outcome in marketing and promotion.

### **1-1. Background**

Culinary business became important industry for Japanese economy. According to the report of Japan Foodservice Association, culinary business industry produces large employment 5,000,000 past years in Japan, size of market in 2019 was \$251,816,000,000. However, COVID-19 pandemic situation has a significant impact on employees and business owners. Comparison to 2019, March 2021, revenue of restaurants was 32.1 %, only 8.1% for bars due to restriction of serving alcohol and shortened hours. The Japanese government kept addressing to refrain from any nonessential and non-urgent outings. There is apparently the atmosphere not to go gatherings in crowded places, wearing masks outside anytime. Culinary business lost enormous numbers of customers to come dining. Customers also arguably have the great disruption from changes being forced to shelter at home. Customers found themselves having to prepare most or all their meals at home. The items on larger amount of sale were canned soup which were up 200% than precious year, and frozen food sales were up 40% (Demetrakakes, 2020). As restaurants have been struggling through the coronavirus pandemic, customers also needed to give up going out and traveling. The crisis has reversed some trends. There is increasing demand of virtual traveling experience among customers. On the website, virtual experiences are offered for consumers to access different world which illustrates people are craving travelling and different experience.

### **1-2. The project outline**

The project was launched as one of the experiential learning course in the university. This project was constituted by multiple groups of people; participants from different disciplines were International Studies and Informatics of Meisei University, Georgian University, the restaurant owner, chefs and staff. International Studies students took initiative in idea creation and crossing disciplinary coordination during data collection. Informatics students developed the digital products by writing the source code for programming the digital products. The restaurant owner provided time and space for the project, that enabled university students experience to conduct the project in an entrepreneurial manner.

The objectives are two folds. The pedagogical objective is to work with people from different disciplinary, such as different major and different country. The collaborative work beyond the expertise and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) with the international partner university enable to create the experiential learning. The social objective is to revitalize a restaurant in west part of rural Tokyo by promoting and marketing Georgia beverage applied digital products development. The private restaurant located in west part of Tokyo, named TOUMAI, provides time and space for the project to suggest the proposal of marketing and promotion.

In order to motivate people to go out, the project proposes digital products to experience culinary tourism electrically. What can be done to trigger emotional engagement of potential customers? This study explores the development process to investigate the

efficient marketing and promotion strategy in languaging and discourse among participants with ecological perspective.

## **2. Methodology**

This section explains a qualitative ethnography approach which aims at producing contextual real-world knowledge about the behaviors, and shared beliefs of a specific group of people. By doing so, how social interactions develop and make meaning in the society.

### **2-1. Languaging**

The term ‘Languaging’ is one of pedagogical concepts coined by Swain relating to the participants’ cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful, comprehensible output (1985). The participants from different disciplines brought each discourse and context which influenced the ways of thinking, talking and attitudes (Gee, 1996, 1999, 2001; Flowerdrew, 2014; Handford, 2020). In the collaborative activities, a view of language is not separable from actions and reactions in response each other. Conception of language can be seen not only as a noun, but also as a verb. Gross & Crawford (2022) suggest that collaborative dialogic activities make meaning and build knowledge through language to solve complex problems. Hence, in the project there were multiple opportunities for discussions among participants to create ideas and develop the product.

This study views language not only as a text also as an action which emerge in the interaction and context. Furthermore, language with actions are associated with context which reflect social environment and discourse (Scollon & Saint-Georges, 2011). In order to capture social phenomena relevant to language and action with wider perspective, I employ Mediated discourse analysis as an approach to see languaging and actions.

### **2-2. Mediated discourse analysis**

Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA) is an approach to focus on linkages between discourse and action which can illuminate how these work in complex social situations ( Scollon, 2001). MDA was developed to theorize to answer following questions. Paying attention on the text as well as the action itself and relevance, what is going on here and why someone is doing so. Addition to that, what is the role of discourse in this action and by whom it is produces, why it is used (Scollon & de Saint-Georges, 2011).

Mediated discourse analysis expands understanding language in action in daily lives. Mediated discourse analysis comes from an adaptation of sociocultural theory. The focus of mediated discourse analysis is not only discourse but the whole vision of social practices. Wertsch(1998) claims that all actions are mediated through ‘cultural tools’: objects, technologies, practices, identities, social institutions, and also language and other semiotic systems. In order to bring back lively business there must be fundamental factors that stimulate potential customers.

### **2-3. Design thinking**

In the discussion of idea creation and product developments, participants are supposed to follow the design thinking process to achieve the successful goal. Design thinking process was lectured and introduced to the participants. Thinking process focus on the five-phase model suggested by Hasso-Plattner Institute of design at Stanford is as follows.

- Empathize – with users
- Define – users’ needs, their problem, and your insights
- Ideate – by challenging assumptions, discussing ideas for solutions
- Prototype – to start creating solutions
- Test – solutions (Balcaitis, 2018)

Design thinking is essentially human-centered, user-centered, and problem-solving approach for design. Five stages are interactive and non-linear process. By following the process, participants can assess a problem and identify the more ambiguous factors which might contribute to the conditions of a problem (Dickson Franklin & Tyler, 2018).

The fundamental process is 'empathize', empathy plays important role in the human-centered behavior. There is increasing academic awareness of empathy which might have serious impact on society and human development (Davis, 1994). Following section discuss the empathy which the most important concept in this study.

#### **2-4. Empathy**

Empathy is the key to solve problem. This section discuss how empathy works in psychological state during the members' product development process. Mead's definition (1968) of Empathy is the capacity to take the role of the other and to adopt alternative perspective oneself. Iacoboni (2005) argues that imitating and understanding of others are important along with Theory of Mind. Imaging others intentionally develop social cognition. Empathy has important function of reasoning and prediction followed by own intentions on emotional level (Iacoboni, 2005). As other definition, Davis (1994) points out that cognitive empathy can be seen as attitude and emotional empathy as emotional response to the emotions of the other. In order to empathize to others for develop the product, there are two approaches, cognitive and emotional engagement. This study applied the concept of empathy as a frame to see languaging in the project.

#### **3. Data analysis**

The project aimed at promoting and marketing Georgian beverage. The project members formed smaller teams by purposes. There were main activities, such as social media promotion which employed Instagram posting and developing information technology products. Data were collected in multimodal ways, observation, video, or audio recording of discussion in person and online, fieldnote, and observing posts on social media.

##### **3-1. Posted contents on Instagram for promotion**

This study focuses on the promoting activities on Instagram postings from June to August 2021. International studies students took initiatives on idea creation and data collection of product development. As one of the efficient ways, Instagram posting was chosen. The reason they concluded using Instagram was that there were positive and optimistic comments which might help making nicer image building. Moreover, Instagram users share images and videos mainly on this platform, that is effective as visual presentations. The characteristic attracts many companies use the platform as commercial tools (Zarella, 2014).

Each post had purpose and meaning and reflected the project members' behaviors and thoughts. When the members thought about promoting the Georgian beverage, the photo materials of Georgian scenery and varieties of beverage firstly gathered. Promoting foreign country drew the participants' attention to tourism and food. Culinary tourism has been accepted as a popular concept in Japan recent years (Yasuda, 2012). Target customers for the project member were craving travels, so that the materials mostly beautiful sentries. One more objective was promoting beverage. The information was gathered to satisfy beverage connoisseurs; indigenous species of Georgian grapes were also introduced.

Posted contents are briefly categorised into three phases. First, I described earlier, the beautiful but general information that everybody can access on the website. This suggests that the first phase of empathy was cognitive and general. The team members empathized potential customers who liked travel and beverage. The cognition of the others' situation brought the contents ideas. In this general empathy phase, although mediational means were customer oriented, mediated action was limited within common. The underlined parts of (n),

(p) showed simple mediational means of Georgian foods, (d), (g), (i), (k), (m) illustrated beverage characteristics.

Second, mediated action of the project members was complex. The second phase is mediated empathy. The part underlined (b) was the contents included Georgian colleagues for the member. In this case, the beautiful sceneries were mediational means which supposed to attract potential customers. Through the actions of two parties, Georgia and Japan, ‘our colleagues and us’, the beauty of the city and objects handed to customers. The project members empathized cognitive state of mind and expanded sense of role as a host. This action can be interpreted that expanding solidarity of host slightly addressed emotional state at the same time.

Final phase is the emotional and personal empathy. There were the posts which had different tone from other post. The member who wrote post on Friday, the underline parts of (j), (o) can tell difference.

The post drew the little story of the project member who engaged beverage marketing. It was not sure that the beverage connoisseurs would be happy, the member who bought the bottle of beverage for the first time in her life. She usually did not drink any alcohol. She had no idea about how to open the cork. Consequently, she kept waiting to open the bottle a while until she knew how to open it. By the time she tasted good condition of beverage for her, it took one week. She commented that five days old, opened beverage was nice for her. This little narrative cannot be indulgent experience. However, personal portrait appeared, and chronological encounter of beverage was unique feature of promoting as mediated action. Excitement and surprise led the empathy emotional and personal phase. The narrative is one of the mediational means. In the underline part of (c) also indicated building relation among international project member, bonding each other seemed fundamental state of joy which might stimulate emotional connection. Following section discuss about how can the project members effectively market and promote Georgian beverage.

[Figure 1] Posted contents on Instagram from June 2021 to August 2021

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2021/6/28 5 slide introducing team members in Japan and Georgia	2021/6/28 5 slide introducing team members in Japan and Georgia	2021/6/30 Introducing the team’s name and its meaning	7/1 Introducing the project and promotion activity	7/2 Team introduction and explanation about the university course
7/5 <u>Introducing Georgia’s scenery.</u> (a) downtown, bridge, church	7/6 <u>Describing the city of Tbilisi.</u> (b) Georgian member told about current feature of Georgia, Beautiful city that Marco Poro praised long time ago	7/7 Team member talked <u>in the movie, introducing name and what they thought about the project(C)</u>	7/8 <u>Traditional way of beverage making</u> (d)uses the clay bottle called Qveveri.	7/10 <u>Introducing the restaurant</u> (e) that this project also promoting, Restaurant Toumai.
7/12 Georgian One of <u>the faculty members in Georgia gave the movie</u> (f) of Tbilisi	7/13 Series <u>recommendations of different beverage.</u> (g) made out of white grapes and black grapes	7/14 <u>White beverage</u> , (h) ‘mutsbane’ good for olive taste pasta	7/15 <u>Pirosmani</u> , tear drop of Lreopatra, <u>made out of Georgia species grapes</u> (i)	7/17 <u>One of team members bought a bottle of Georgia beverage</u> (j) she wanted to report the taste, but she did not know how to open the cork. She would like to

				comment next time.
7/19 <u>Kisi-Mtsuvane, dry white beverage (k)</u>	7/20 <u>The short movie of the restaurant, Toumai.(l)</u> Entering the restaurant and looking around the dining room and the garden.	7/21 Orange beverage has amber color. It has been made for <u>the 8000 years history of beverage making in Georgia.(m)</u>	7/22 <u>Introducing Georgian food. (n)</u> The chicken dish called Shkmeruli has familiar taste for Japanese people. Dumpling called Xinkali, also looked good	7/23 Team member could open cork and tasted. <u>Her first attempt tasting beverage, (o)</u> right after she opened the bottle, the taste was too strong for her. After one week it became mild. She was not sure the comment sounded good for beverage lover.
7/26 <u>Pictures of Georgian church. (p)</u> Vake Sameba Church in Tbilisi. Inside the church has pictures on walls.	7/27 <u>Khachapuri, Georgian cheese bread.</u> This team's name took from the bread.	7/28 <u>Introducing Georgian dumpling, Xinkali.</u> How it looks like and taste.	7/29 <u>Introducing one of the orchard in Georgia.</u> Chelti orchard started beverage making for home at the begging. They expanded beverage business later and established the beverage brand in Georgia.	7/30 Collaged pictures showing their work in the first semester. <u>Students presented their work as the interim report for the restaurant owner.</u>
2021/8/3 The first semester ended, students presented three different digital products which promote Georgia and Georgian beverage. Hoping these technological products also promoting the restaurant.		8/4 Students finished the first semester, and they look forward to the second semester to work on promotion and development of digital products.	8/5 This team is in charge of Instagram posting. Schedule was shared, Georgian and Japanese students work together at the beginning of September. The intensive work will generate	

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

Instagram posting shared numbers of pictures and messages. For the space constrain, this paper does not load pictures. The focus of analysis was on the written text and contents. Even though only text can show action and attitude which was languaging among members. The actions and attitude were influenced the members' empathy toward potential customers. Imaginary action of customers was created through mediated action.

As findings, there were three different phase of empathy which were grounded in this study. To answer the research question, this study examined the data carefully. Cultivating emotional connection needs emotional empathy. The general information was able to receive from the internet. The first phase of general empathy gets along with customers' needs.

However, it might be hard to compete with other sophisticated and creative posts. The second phase of empathy is expanded empathy. The mediated action which provide the mediational means, such as valued object. When the project member stated the movie that our Georgian colleague produced, the movie itself was handed to potential customers by mediated action of both Georgian and Japanese members. By collaborating, the viewpoint of empathy was expanded. Cognitive and emotional parts existed in this empathy.

The final phase of empathy is affecting emotion by sharing personal emotion and experience. Not only have the objects also the stories worked effectively. The importance of narrative was argued in the destination marketing research in the past. To promoting the destination Nichita and Tanaka (2016) demonstrate the tourism industries can apply storytelling to emotional involvement of tourists. Apparently promoting products needs emotional connection to trigger the potential customers. During idea creation, small, ordinary, and tiny topics are often taken for granted. Other indulgent and luxury appeals intervened the sensibility. However, knowing small things work as mediated action and can be mediational means, the empathic idea creation take place in the development process.

### 5. Final considerations

Through the discussion how the project members achieve the emotional connection with the potential customers, there is fundamental element of personal presence. When the contents include what viewer can see the people's face and action, the emotional connection emerges.

This project is undergoing in 2021. The contents of Instagram would further develop in the second semester. I continue to engage this research project in the latter half. Here is the restaurant owner's comment.

I imagine, it would be nice that I can see Georgian man in augmented reality through my smartphone. Georgian man talks in his Japanese, little broken style... "Thank you for ordering my beverage...For Meisei and Georgia's collaboration we worked hard in Georgian side. I am Gigi. And we think our beverage is the best beverage in the world! Why so different from other French, Italian beverage..." I would rather listen to the story!  
(The restaurant owner interview, July 30, 2021)

Cultivating future relationship with potential customer is important and can be done on the digital platform. While people are coping the pandemic era, I hope this study would be able to contribute scaffolding the future path.

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