

Are you making the best business decisions for your marketing?

Yesterday, a friend and I met to have lunch at a new pupusa place in Bethesda that we'd read about. (In case you don't know, pupusas are an absolutely delicious Salvadoran specialty of stuffed thick corn tortillas that are griddled.)

When the pupusa place first opened, it was covered in Bethesda Magazine online (I don't know if it was in the print version). The article stated that the pupusa place was sharing the kitchen with a Japanese restaurant. I assumed it was next door to the Japanese restaurant, but it turns out that it is not separate at all.

I looked up the address online, and set out. Once I got to the block the restaurant was supposed to be on, I walked up and down the street not seeing sign for it anywhere. I noticed a Japanese place, but there was no indication that they served pupusas there. I called the number listed on the pupusa place's Facebook page. I said I was on their street but couldn't find them. The guy who answered told me he was INSIDE the Japanese restaurant, and that they normally only do take out, but that we could sit inside the restaurant.

My friend and I went in, and told the hostess that we wanted to eat pupusas. She told us that it was take out only, but when I told her I had spoken to the pupusa guy and he'd told me we could sit inside, she let us sit in the bar area, and even took our order.

When the pupusas came out, the waitress realized we needed forks and knives since it's kind of hard to eat stuffed tortillas with chopsticks. It took her another few minutes to reappear with forks for us.

Even with all the hoops to jump through, these pupusas were absolutely delicious, and we both really enjoyed our lunch. We decided that the next time we'd call it in as a takeout order, that is, if this place manages to stay in business.

This pupusa place faces many marketing challenges that are related to its business decision to be inside of a Japanese restaurant. Here are the top issues:

- No signage whatsoever
- No clarity on its Facebook page indicating their physical location inside the Japanese restaurant
- Not a natural fit in cuisines
- No menu or any printed materials
- No clarity on being a takeout business

I am not sure how this place can surmount these difficulties. An article in Bethesda Magazine, and one Yelp review are not sufficient publicity. This place has to rely on word of mouth and even more, on people specifically searching for pupusas in Bethesda.

I'd recommend that the "restaurant" seek out it's own space, even if only a food truck. Failing that, I would recommend it figure out a way of having a sign and a menu available within the Japanese restaurant. And definitely make it perfectly clear on its Facebook page that it's take out only.