

**Globalization Theoretical Perspectives**  
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**Lecture No. 10**

**McDonaldization thesis by George Ritzer**

Welcome back to the class, and in today's session, we will examine one of the critical and influential essays titled McDonaldization Thesis, written by George Ritzer. George Ritzer is a very well known sociologist, and I hope you remember that one of your textbooks is edited by Ritzer. Ritzer is a highly well-known sociologist from the US.

So, he had contributed this particular term, McDonaldization, during the late nineties. It became a convenient term, and sociologists and social theorists across the globe began to use it. They found this term or rather this particular concept as really appealing because it kind of captures the process of globalization. So, this is the last lecture of the second week where we discuss cultural globalization.

So, I hope that you would have understood the various dimensions of cultural globalization. We discussed Samuel Huntington's thesis. We discussed Thomas Friedman's understanding of the artistic depiction of neoliberal globalization. We also discussed in the previous sessions the concept of culture and some of the essential arguments about globalization and culture.

So, I want to conclude this session on globalization and culture with this particular week with the thesis of McDonaldization. Then we will move to the next week, where we will examine theorists like Arjun Appadurai and Ulrich Beck, critical and influential theorists. So, I decided not to use the PPT, but instead, we will follow his original essay and this essay he has written in several places. He has a whole book with the same title, but this essay appeared earlier. So, this is taken from his introduction to this book McDonaldization of the World by George Ritzer. So, let us go to the essay.

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# 1

## An Introduction to McDonaldization

George Ritzer



McDonald's is the basis of one of the most influential developments in contemporary society. Its reverberations extend far beyond its point of origin in the United States and in the fast-food business. It has influenced a wide range of undertakings, indeed the way of life, of a significant portion of the world. And that impact is likely to expand at an accelerating rate.



An Introduction to McDonaldization. George Ritzer. Now this very title must remind you that Ritzer will tell you something about food, about this very famous global chain McDonald. I hope that all of you are familiar with that. Now McDonald stores are present in almost every major city or town in India. Many of you must have had the opportunity to go and have food there because it is always seen as a symbol of American fast-food culture. In India, we are familiar with the two major brands.

One is this Kentucky Fried Chicken KFC, and the second is this McDonald. So Ritzer made a theory out of it, or Ritzer used this particular restaurant chain as an example or as a compelling illustration to capture the essential processes unfolding as a part of globalization. So, he is not talking about food as such, he is not talking about even McDonald as a brand, but he is using this example to highlight a host of other processes around the world.

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of origin in the United States and in the fast-food business. It has influenced a wide range of undertakings, indeed the way of life, of a significant portion of the world. And that impact is likely to expand at an accelerating rate.


However, this is not . . . about McDonald's, or even about the fast-food business. . . . Rather, McDonald's serves here as the major example, the paradigm, of a wide-ranging process I call *McDonaldization*—that is,

*the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world.*

As you will see, McDonaldization affects not only the restaurant business but also . . . virtually every other aspect of society. McDonaldization has shown every sign of being an inexorable process, sweeping through seemingly impervious institutions and regions of the world.

Editor's Note: Excerpts from "An Introduction to McDonaldization," pp. 1-19 in *The McDonaldization of Society*, 3rd ed., by George Ritzer. Copyright © 2000, Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, CA. Used with permission.

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So he says. However, it is not about McDonald's or the fast-food business. So, this is not a theorisation about the fast-food industry, and you will see that he expands this particular argument to a host of other spheres of globalization. So, it is not a theorisation about what is happening in the globalization of food or restaurants. It is not about that. It is about much more than that. Instead, McDonald's serves here as a prominent example, the paradigm of a wide-ranging process called McDonaldization that is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society and the rest of the world.


So, he is talking about the principles of fast-food restaurants, which is something quite interesting. So, he is trying to look at what are they, why McDonald became such a famous brand, why they were able to spread across the globe, why people go to this particular restaurant again, and again, how do they work, what are the kinds of fundamental principles, what are the kind of organisational principles, how do they present food, what kind of food, how is it organised, how are the customers dealt with, what are the kind of instructions that are given to the workers, what kind of food is available.

So, he argues that this restaurant contains many essential procedures and processes that are now taking a global form. So, he wants to highlight that the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society and the rest of the world. So, he

makes a very close connection between American culture and the rest of the world; we have discussed several times that there was a powerful argument that American imperialism will take over the whole world.

The global culture is going to be entirely dominated by America. There is an Americanization of culture that will take place in American media, American films, American culture, American food, American music, American fashion, etc. So later, people realised that it is not against a one-sided flow of culture. Instead, things are much more complicated. So, we will discuss that when we discuss Arjuna Appadurai later. So, let us see.

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8 Basics, Studies, Applications, and Extensions

The success of McDonald's itself is apparent. . . "There are McDonald's everywhere. There's one near you, and there's one being built right now even nearer to you. Soon, if McDonald's goes to expanding at its present rate, there might even be one in your house. You could find Ronald McDonald's boots under your bed. And maybe his red wig, too."

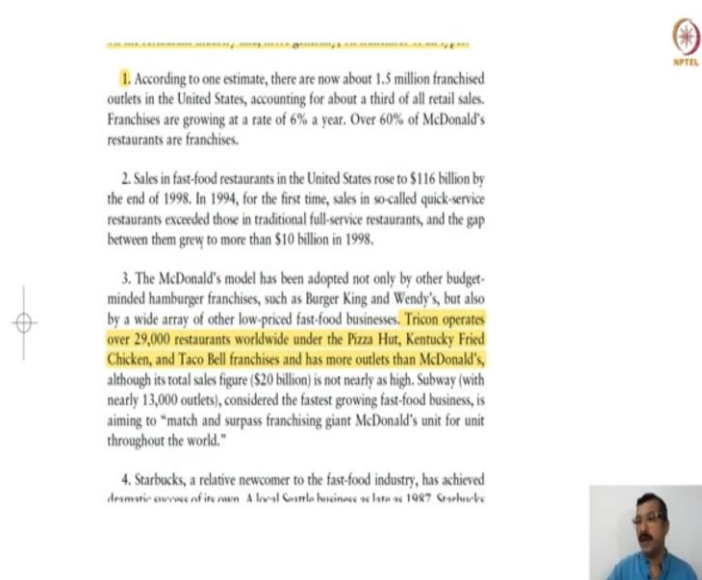
McDonald's and McDonaldization have had their most obvious influence on the restaurant industry and, more generally, on franchises of all types:

1. According to one estimate, there are now about 1.5 million franchised outlets in the United States, accounting for about a third of all retail sales. Franchises are growing at a rate of 6% a year. Over 60% of McDonald's restaurants are franchises.
2. Sales in fast-food restaurants in the United States rose to \$116 billion by the end of 1998. In 1994, for the first time, sales in so-called quick-service restaurants exceeded those in traditional full-service restaurants, and the gap



So, the success of McDonald itself is apparent. There are McDonald's everywhere. There is one near you, anywhere; McDonald and McDonaldization have had their most obvious influence on the restaurant industry and, more generally, on all types' franchises.

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2. Sales in fast-food restaurants in the United States rose to \$116 billion by the end of 1998. In 1994, for the first time, sales in so-called quick-service restaurants exceeded those in traditional full-service restaurants, and the gap between them grew to more than \$10 billion in 1998.

3. The McDonald's model has been adopted not only by other budget-minded hamburger franchises, such as Burger King and Wendy's, but also by a wide array of other low-priced fast-food businesses. Tricon operates over 29,000 restaurants worldwide under the Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Taco Bell franchises and has more outlets than McDonald's, although its total sales figure (\$20 billion) is not nearly as high. Subway (with nearly 13,000 outlets), considered the fastest growing fast-food business, is aiming to "match and surpass franchising giant McDonald's unit for unit throughout the world."

4. Starbucks, a relative newcomer to the fast-food industry, has achieved dramatic success of its own. A local Seattle business as late as 1987, Starbucks

For example, he is talking about the kind of business model that these people are developed or become known for, and we know that these people do not own all the restaurants. They work with the base of this franchise. So, this franchise business where you sell your brand, sell your product and sell your process to people from across the globe, still, with the condition that they are supposed to follow precisely the kind of processes, products and procedures that are initially agreed upon.

So, this whole franchisee model is critical, which McDonald's has become very known for. According to one estimate, there are now around 1.5 million franchise outlets in the United States, accounting for about one-third of all retail sales. Franchises are growing at a rate of 6 per cent a year. Over 60 per cent of McDonald's restaurants are franchises. Then it is all about the statistics about the number of McDonald's stores available, and I do not think we need to go into that because the statistics would have changed. Our interests are also known to understand this particular restaurant per se and the processes that Ritzer is talking about.

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4. Starbucks, a relative newcomer to the fast-food industry, has achieved dramatic success of its own. A local Seattle business as late as 1987, Starbucks had over 1,668 company-owned shops (there are no franchises) by 1998, more than triple the number of shops in 1994. Starbucks planned on having 200 shops in Asia by the year 2000 and 500 shops in Europe by 2003.

5. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the McDonald's model has been extended to "casual dining"—that is, more "upscale," higher-priced restaurants with fuller menus (for example, Outback Steakhouse, Fuddrucker's, Chili's, The Olive Garden, and Red Lobster). Morton's is an even more upscale, high-priced chain of steakhouses that has overtly modeled itself after McDonald's: "Despite the fawning service and the huge wine list, a meal at Morton's conforms to the same dictates of uniformity, cost control and portion regulation that have enabled American fast-food chains to rule the






So, it is not only the kind of fast-food restaurants that have adopted this franchise model but a host of others, including Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken and Taco Bell franchise and everything. So, another point that he says is it is not only in the fast-food area or fast food field. This particular model or franchise has been expanded into another kind of sitting restaurant, more upscale kinds of restaurants. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the McDonald model has been extended to casual dining with more upscale, higher-priced restaurants with fuller menus. So, there are examples of Steakhouse. It is all American restaurant chains that we may not be familiar with and spread into toys.

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IN EVERY BUSINESS'S BUSINESS DISPLAYS THE PRESENTATION FOR EACH UNIT.

6. Other types of business are increasingly adapting the principles of the fast-food industry to their needs. Said the vice chairman of Toys R Us, "We want to be thought of as a sort of McDonald's of toys." The founder of Kidsports Fun and Fitness Club echoed this desire: "I want to be the McDonald's of the kids' fun and fitness business." Other chains with similar ambitions include Jiffy Lube, AAMCO Transmissions, Midas Muffler & Brake Shops, Hair Plus, H&R Block, Pearl Vision Centers, Kampgrounds of America (KOA), KinderCare (dubbed "Kentucky Fried Children"), Jenny Craig, Home Depot, Barnes & Noble, Petstuff, and Wal-Mart.

7. McDonald's has been a resounding success in the international arena. Just about half of McDonald's restaurants are outside the United States (in the mid-1980s, only 25% of McDonald's restaurants were outside the United States). The vast majority of the 1,750 new restaurants opened in 1998 were overseas (in the United States, restaurants grew by less than 100). Well over half of McDonald's profits come from its overseas operations. McDonald's restaurants are now found in 115 nations around the world. The leader, by far, is Japan with almost 2,852 restaurants, followed by Canada with 1,085 and Germany with 931. As of 1998, there were 45 McDonald's restaurants in Russia, and the company plans to open many more restaurants in the former Soviet Union and in the vast new territory in






He is talking about that. Then McDonald has been a resounding success in the international arena. About half of McDonald's restaurants are outside the United States in the mid-80s. Now, it must have expanded in India, Japan, China, everywhere.

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well over half of McDonald's profits come from its overseas operations. McDonald's restaurants are now found in 115 nations around the world. The leader, by far, is Japan with almost 2,852 restaurants, followed by Canada with 1,085 and Germany with 931. As of 1998, there were 45 McDonald's restaurants in Russia, and the company plans to open many more restaurants in the former Soviet Union and in the vast new territory in Eastern Europe that has now been laid bare to the invasion of fast-food restaurants. Great Britain has become the "fast-food capital of Europe," and Israel has been described as "McDonaldized," with its shopping malls populated by "Ace Hardware, Toys R Us, Office Depot, and TCBY."

8. Many highly McDonaldized firms outside the fast-food industry have also had success globally. In addition to its thousands of stores in the United States, Blockbuster now has just over 2,000 sites in 26 other countries. Although Wal-Mart opened its first international store (in Mexico) only in 1991, it now operates about 600 stores overseas (compared with just over 2,800 in the United States, including supercenters and Sam's Club).

9. Other nations have developed their own variants of this American institution. Canada has a chain of coffee shops, Tim Hortons (recently merged




This is also, for example, other stores like Wal-Mart. We know the story of Wal-Mart in India.

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with Wendy's, that planned on having 2,000 outlets by the year 2000. Paris, a city whose love for fine cuisine might lead you to think it would prove immune to fast food, has a large number of fast-food croissanteries; the revered French bread has also been McDonaldized. India has a chain of fast-food restaurants, Nirula's, that sells mutton burgers (about 80% of Indians are Hindus, who eat no beef) as well as local Indian cuisine. Mos Burger is a Japanese chain with over 1,500 restaurants that in addition to the usual fare sells teriyaki chicken burgers, rice burgers, and "Oshiruko with brown rice cake." Russkoye Bistro, a Russian chain, sells traditional Russian fare such as pirogi (meat and vegetable pies), blini (thin pancakes), Cossack apricot curd tarts, and, of course, vodka. Perhaps the most unlikely spot for an indigenous fast-food restaurant, war-ravaged Beirut of 1984, witnessed the opening of Juicy Burger, with a rainbow instead of golden arches and J. B. the Clown standing in for Ronald McDonald. Its owners hoped that it would become the "McDonald's of the Arab world."

10. And now McDonaldization is coming full circle. Other countries with their own McDonaldized institutions have begun to export them to the United States. The Body Shop, an ecologically sensitive British cosmetics chain, had over 1,500 shops in 47 nations in 1998, of which 300 were in the United States. Furthermore, American firms are now opening copies of this British chain such as Bath and Body Works



So, he is talking about how this particular are kind of business model is becoming a kind of a global phenomenon. This kind of franchise business model needs to be studied very closely because it conceives or has many essential features of globalization.






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**McDonald's as a Global Icon**

McDonald's has come to occupy a central place in American popular culture, not just the business world. A new McDonald's opening in a small town can be an important social event. Said one Maryland high school student at such an opening, "Nothing this exciting ever happens in Dale City." Even big-city newspapers avidly cover developments in the fast-food business.

Fast-food restaurants also play symbolic roles on television programs and in the movies. A skit on the television show *Saturday Night Live* satirized specialty chains by detailing the hardships of a franchise that sells nothing but Scotch tape. . . . In *Falling Down*, Michael Douglas vents his rage against the modern world in a fast-food restaurant dominated by mindless rules designed to frustrate customers. . . . In *Sleeper*, Woody Allen awakens in the future only to encounter a McDonald's.

Further proof that McDonald's has become a symbol of American culture is to be found in what happened when plans were made to raze Ray



He says now McDonaldization is coming full circle. Other countries with their McDonaldized institutions have begun to export them to the United States. The Body Shop, an ecologically sensitive British cosmetic chain, had over 1500 shops in 47 nations in 1998, of which 300 were in the United States. So, he is talking about how even different companies are coming to



America. So, it is not a one-sided story. You can look into the cases where Indian restaurant chains have opened up across the globe, across Europe and the US.

Now, McDonald is a global icon, and this is also talking about how these global icons are formed. What is the mechanism through which global icons are generated global icons are developed?. You know that these are the icons recognised across the globe. Now people do not usually assign it or recognise it as a company from the US or a restaurant from the US.

So, you understand that it is a global company. Of course, it is from the US, but it is available in your neighbourhood. It is available in the city in which you live. You have gone to several times, and quite a lot of people have gone there are several times. So, going to McDonald has become a part of that, and we know that while eating there, we are a part of a global kind of food culture; we are actively taking part in that. So, McDonald has become a central place in American popular culture, not just the business world.

So, he talks about how there are TV shows in which McDonald is quite often referred to; there is a cartoon, there are films, there are popular writings about McDonald, how this term has become a significant term in American popular culture or all these things which I do not think we need to detail into.

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Kroc's first McDonald's restaurant. Hundreds of letters poured into McDonald's headquarters, including the following:

Please don't tear it down! . . . Your company's name is a household word, not only in the United States of America, but all over the world. To destroy this major artifact of contemporary culture would, indeed, destroy part of the faith the people of the world have in your company.

In the end, the restaurant was not only saved but turned into a museum. A McDonald's executive explained the move: "McDonald's . . . is really a part of Americana."

Americans aren't the only ones who feel this way. At the opening of the McDonald's in Moscow, one journalist described the franchise as the "ultimate icon of Americana." . . . Reflecting on the growth of fast-food restaurants in Brazil, an executive associated with Pizza Hut of Brazil said that his nation "is experiencing a passion for things American."

One could go further and argue that in at least some ways McDonald's has become *more important* than the United States itself. Take the following story about a former U.S. ambassador to Israel who was officiating at the opening of the first McDonald's, in Jerusalem wearing a baseball hat with the McDonald's golden arches logo:



So, he talks about an instance where the first restaurant they were planning to demolish the first restaurant McDonald opened; there was a massive outcry against that. Finally, they decided to




turn it into a museum to explain how this particular brand is valued in the US. All these are illustrations about the popularity of McDonald which I am not going into that.

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fun-filled. People are even led to believe that they contribute through their purchases, at least indirectly, to charities such as the Ronald McDonald Houses for sick children.

**The Long Arm of McDonaldization**

McDonald's strives to continually extend its reach within American society and beyond. As the company's chairman said, "Our goal: to totally dominate."





Then this section talks about the long arm of McDonaldization. The long arm in the sense McDonaldization is no longer confined to the field of restaurants; it is expanded to a host of other areas.

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BE MORE THAN A LEADER. I WANT MCDONALD'S TO DOMINATE.

McDonald's began as a phenomenon of suburbs and medium-sized towns, but in recent years, it has moved into smaller towns that supposedly could not support such a restaurant and into many big cities that are supposedly too sophisticated. You can now find fast-food outlets in New York's Times Square as well as on the Champs Elysées in Paris. Soon after it opened in 1992, the McDonald's in Moscow sold almost 30,000 hamburgers a day and employed a staff of 1,200 young people working 2 to a cash register. In early 1992, Beijing witnessed the opening of the world's largest McDonald's restaurant with 700 seats, 29 cash registers, and nearly 1,000 employees. On its first day of business, it set a new one-day record for McDonald's by serving about 40,000 customers.

Small satellite, express, or remote outlets, opened in areas that cannot support full-scale fast-food restaurants, are also expanding rapidly. They have begun to appear in small store fronts in large cities and in nontraditional settings such as department stores, service stations, and even schools. These satellites typically offer only limited menus and may rely on larger outlets for food storage and preparation. McDonald's is considering opening express outlets in museums, office buildings, and corporate cafeterias.



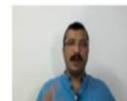
So, he says small satellite express or remote outlets opened in areas that cannot support full-scale fast-food restaurants are also expanding rapidly. They have begun to appear in small storefronts in large cities and non-traditional settings such as department stores, service stations and even schools. No longer content to dominate the strips that surround many college campuses, fast food restaurants have moved into many of those campuses.

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have begun to appear in small store fronts in large cities and in nontraditional settings such as department stores, service stations, and even schools. These satellites typically offer only limited menus and may rely on larger outlets for food storage and preparation. McDonald's is considering opening express outlets in museums, office buildings, and corporate cafeterias. A flap occurred recently over the placement of a McDonald's in the new federal courthouse in Boston.

No longer content to dominate the strips that surround many college campuses, fast-food restaurants have moved onto many of those campuses. The first campus fast-food restaurant opened at the University of Cincinnati in 1973. Today, college cafeterias often look like shopping-mall food courts. In conjunction with a variety of "branded partners" (for example, Pizza Hut and Subway), Marriott now supplies food to many colleges and universities. The apparent approval of college administrations puts fast-food restaurants in a position to further influence the younger generation.

More recently, another expansion has occurred: People no longer need to leave the highway to obtain fast food quickly and easily. Fast food is now available at convenient rest stops along the highway. After "refuel-



So, he is talking about how this particular business model is expanding into very unusual kinds of places. Maybe into a bus stand, into an airport, into a railway station, in front of the museum, into the campuses, into the college and school campuses. So, these are places where you should think that no restaurants can be seen inside the college campus, kind of a proper restaurant. So, he is talking about how they have their expanding places of the sort into completely unexplored areas.

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More recently, another expansion has occurred: People no longer need to leave the highway to obtain fast food quickly and easily. Fast food is now available at convenient rest stops along the highway. After "refueling," we can proceed with our trip, which is likely to end in another community that has about the same density and mix of fast-food restaurants as the locale we left behind.

Fast food is also increasingly available in hotels, railway stations, airports, and even on the trays for in-flight meals. The following advertisement appeared in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* a few years ago: "Where else at 35,000 feet can you get a McDonald's meal like this for your kids? Only on United's Orlando flights." Now, McDonald's so-called



Fast food is also increasingly available in railway stations, airports, and even trays for in-flight meals. So, talking about how it is kind of getting expanded. I am not reading out or going into the details because they are all illustrations, not very useful to us and mainly related to the American scenario. What is more important is that, so he talks about, for example, the sex trade.

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could enter a machine called an "orgasmatron" to experience an orgasm without going through the muss and fuss of sexual intercourse.

Similarly, real-life "dial-a-porn" allows people to have intimate, sexually explicit, even obscene conversations with people they have never met and probably never will meet. There is great specialization here: Dialing numbers such as 555-FOXX will lead to a very different phone message than dialing 555-SEXY. Those who answer the phones mindlessly and repetitively follow "scripts" that have them say such things as "Sorry, tiger, but your Dream Girl has to go. . . . Call right back and ask for me." Less scripted are phone sex systems that permit erotic conversations between total strangers. As Woody Allen anticipated with his "orgasmatron," participants can experience an orgasm without ever meeting or touching one another. "In a world where convenience is king, disembodied sex has its allure. You don't have to stir from your comfortable home. You pick up the phone or log onto the computer and, if you're plugged in, a world of unheard of sexual splendor rolls out before your eyes." In New York City, an official called a three-story pornographic center "the McDonald's of sex" because of its "cookie-cutter cleanliness and compliance with the



Similarly, the real-life dial-a-porn allows people to have intimate, sexually explicit, even obscene conversations with people they have never met and probably will never meet. So, talking about how this particular kind of ready-made service is available at concise notice is that worth at

many conveniences is being expanded to a host of another similar type of field, not something confined only to fast food.

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### The Dimensions of McDonaldization

Why has the McDonald's model proven so irresistible? Eating fast food at McDonald's has certainly become a "sign" that, among other things, one is in tune with the contemporary lifestyle. There is also a kind of magic or enchantment associated with such food and their settings. However, what will be focused on here are the four alluring dimensions that lie at the heart of the success of this model and, more generally, of McDonaldization. In short, McDonald's has succeeded because it offers consumers, workers, and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.

#### Efficiency

One important element of McDonald's success is *efficiency*, or the optimum method for getting from one point to another. For consumers, McDonald's offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being




Now, this is the remaining part that is something significant for us as students of Sociology. So, far he has established the arguments that McDonald is become a kind of a global icon in terms of its number of outlets, in terms of its reach, in terms of its novelty, in terms of its innovation. It becomes a kind of a global brand, and we also know that this is not a phenomenon confined to this particular brand; this is just an example, just a metaphor. There is a similar kind of process happening in a host of other fields, not only in food or fast food.

Now, what are the dimensions? So, here comes the actual interesting point or interesting arguments of Ritzer. So, Ritzer says that what will be focused on here are the four alluring dimensions that lie at the heart of the success of this model and, more generally, McDonaldization. In short, McDonald has succeeded because it offers consumers, workers and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. This is a very, very important argument.

So, he says that this McDonald as a restaurant offers, this whole process of McDonaldization process, offers it has succeeded because it offers consumers, workers and managers. So not only to the consumers but also to workers, managers and consumers efficiency, calculability,

predictability and control. He says these four mechanisms: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, are shaped in a particular manner so that this model becomes highly successful.

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**Efficiency**

One important element of McDonald's success is *efficiency*, or the optimum method for getting from one point to another. For consumers, McDonald's offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being full. In a society where both parents are likely to work or where a single parent is struggling to keep up, efficiently satisfying hunger is very attractive. In a society where people rush from one spot to another, usually by car, the efficiency of a fast-food meal, perhaps even a drive-through meal, often proves impossible to resist.

The fast-food model offers, or at least appears to offer, an efficient method for satisfying many other needs as well. Woody Allen's *orgasmatron* offered an efficient method for getting people from quiescence to sexual gratification. Other institutions fashioned on the McDonald's model offer similar efficiency in losing weight, lubricating cars, getting new glasses or contacts, or completing income tax forms.

Like their customers, workers in McDonaldized systems function effi-



Let us see how does he elaborate that. Efficiency. A critical element of McDonald's success is efficiency or the optimum method for getting from one point to another. For consumers, McDonald offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being complete. So, the very purpose of going to a hotel maybe could be for different reasons. Sometimes you want to spend time with your friends, you go to a restaurant, you want to celebrate somebody's birthday or a wedding anniversary or something you go there, or if you're going to catch up with your friends and spend a lot of time, you go to some of the restaurants.

But in most cases, in the large majority of the issues, we are hungry, and we need to have food; in today's world, we are all very, very, very fast, we all are swamped, so we need to fill our stomachs at the most straightforward way within the shortest period. So, he says that this is where places like McDonald's or another such kind of fast food comes where you can go, you can grab a meal, finish it fast and then get back to your work or get back to your job.

So, this is very different from other places where you will have to spend considerable time sitting and then the waiter will come and then take the order that will take another 20 to 30 minutes to get it prepared and then it will be served hot. If you want something else, you will have to tell



them again and quickly you can spend at least 1 to 2 hours in a good restaurant, but everything will be finished within minutes.

Your order will be taken in no time; charges will be displayed, only limited menus; you cannot ask them to have more options or combinations. They will not make anything extra for you; everything is set menu and visible, and you go and tell them. They enter it in the system, the payment is made, and immediately a ticket is electronically going to the kitchen, and the food is prepared in a matter of minutes it comes back, either you can sit in there, or you can take it. So, it is swift, and this particular system's efficiency is a fundamental cornerstone.

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Like their customers, workers in McDonaldized systems function efficiently following the steps in a predesigned process. They are trained to work this way by managers, who watch over them closely to make sure that they do. Organizational rules and regulations also help ensure highly efficient work.

Calculability




So, like their customers, workers in McDonaldized systems function efficiently following the steps of a predesigned process. They are trained to work this way by the managers who watch over them closely to make sure that they do. Organisation rules and regulations also help ensure high efficient work. The workers achieve this idea of efficiency by repeatedly training in a particular manner. So, for example, the workers imagine the case of a chef. You simply do not have the idea of it, chef, in a restaurant of McDonald.

A chef has no role in a place like McDonald's because chef we understand that chef is a very creative person. A chef will be able to dish out very different kinds of dishes. In good restaurants, you can have a word with the chef. The chef will prepare food according to your preference, whether you want to be hot or more salt or less salt, a host of other things, but there

are absolutely no such possibilities. Every employee has very well-defined jobs and well-defined roles to perform, and they do it very efficiently and has all been monitored.



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Calculability

*Calculability* is an emphasis on the quantitative aspects of products sold (portion size, cost) and services offered (the time it takes to get the product). In McDonaldized systems, quantity has become equivalent to quality; a lot of something, or the quick delivery of it, means it must be good. . . . "As a culture, we tend to believe deeply that in general 'bigger is better.'" Thus,

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The second one is calculability. This again is a very, very interesting point. Calculability emphasises the quantitative aspects of products sold: portion size, the cost and service offered, and the time it takes to get the product. In McDonaldized systems, quantity has become equivalent to quality; a lot of something or the quick delivery means it must be good. As a culture, we sincerely believe that general bigger is better.



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people order the Quarter Pounder, the Big Mac, the large fries. More recent lures are the "double this" (for instance, Burger King's "Double Whopper with Cheese") and the "triple that." People can quantify these things and feel that they are getting a lot of food for what appears to be a nominal sum of money. This calculation does not take into account an important point, however: The high profits of fast-food chains indicate that the owners, not the consumers, get the best deal.

People also tend to calculate how much time it will take to drive to McDonald's, be served the food, eat it, and return home; then, they compare that interval to the time required to prepare food at home. They often conclude, rightly or wrongly, that a trip to the fast-food restaurant will take less time than eating at home. This sort of calculation particularly supports home delivery franchises such as Domino's, as well as other chains that emphasise time saving. A notable example of time saving is another sort of



Thus, people order Quarter Pounder, the Big Mac, the large fries. More recent lures are double this. For example, Burger King's Double Whopper with Cheese and then triple that. People can quantify these things and feel that they are getting a lot of food for what appears to be a nominal sum of money. This calculation does not take into account a vital point, however. The high profits of fast food chains indicate that the owners, not the consumers get the best deal.

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Some McDonaldized institutions combine the emphases on time and money. Domino's promises pizza delivery in half an hour, or the pizza is free. Pizza Hut will serve a personal pan pizza in five minutes, or it, too, will be free.

Workers in McDonaldized systems also tend to emphasize the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of their work. Since the quality of the work is allowed to vary little, workers focus on things such as how quickly tasks can be accomplished. In a situation analogous to that of the customer, workers are expected to do a lot of work, very quickly, for low pay.



You know that, for example, Domino's Pizza delivery will promise to deliver the pizza in 30 minutes, and if they are late, you can have it free. So, at least in their advertisement, they say that. So, this whole idea of predictability. When you walk into a store of McDonald, you know what the things available are. You are sure about its taste, its size, its quantity. When you order a particular item, how much would be its quantity, what would be its price? So, this nothing is left for surprise. There is no surprise; there is no space for any surprises. There is no space for any unforeseen things. Everything is pre-decided and preset, and Ritzer argues that this whole idea of calculability has many vital roles in contemporary times.



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**Predictability**

McDonald's also offers *predictability*, the assurance that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales. The Egg McMuffin in New York will be, for all intents and purposes, identical to those in Chicago and Los Angeles. Also, those eaten next week or next year will be identical to those eaten today. Customers take great comfort in knowing that McDonald's offers no surprises. People know that the next Egg McMuffin they eat will not be awful, although it will not be exceptionally delicious, either. The success of the McDonald's model suggests that many people have come to prefer a world in which there are few surprises. "This is strange," notes a British observer, "considering [McDonald's is] the product of a culture which honours individualism above all."

The workers in McDonaldized systems also behave in predictable ways. They follow corporate rules as well as the dictates of their managers. In







And the second one is predictability, which is a continuation of the point. McDonald also offers predictability. The assurance that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales. So, you walk into a McDonald's store in the U.S., in Europe or the US or Brazil or India, more or less the items will be identical, more or less the kind of ambience will be similar, more or less you can predict what would be the kind of food that is available. It could be burgers or fries and a host of other things, and of course, this does not mean that they are not culturally sensitive.

You know that beef burgers are not served in India and other countries. They may not have this many varieties for this vegetarian stuff because, in India, the number of vegetarian people is much higher than in other countries. Still, as I mentioned earlier, you can predict the quantity with no more surprises. There is no more anything unforeseen. Everything is predicted.

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new York will be, for all intents and purposes, identical to those in Chicago and Los Angeles. Also, those eaten next week or next year will be identical to those eaten today. Customers take great comfort in knowing that McDonald's offers no surprises. People know that the next Egg McMuffin they eat will not be awful, although it will not be exceptionally delicious, either. The success of the McDonald's model suggests that many people have come to prefer a world in which there are few surprises. "This is strange," notes a British observer, "considering [McDonald's is] the product of a culture which honours individualism above all."

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The workers in the McDonaldized system also behave in predictable ways. You know that. You must have seen that when you walk into the counter, how they wish, it is not that they have decided. They have been trained and asked repeatedly to expect people with that gesture. So, you know how they are supposed to wish you and follow corporate rules and dictates of their managers.




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many cases, what they do, and even what they say, is highly predictable. McDonaldized organizations often have scripts that employees are supposed to memorize and follow whenever the occasion arises. This scripted behavior helps create highly predictable interactions between workers and customers. While customers do not follow scripts, they tend to develop simple recipes for dealing with the employees of McDonaldized systems. . . .

McDonald's pioneered the routinization of interactive service work and remains an exemplar of extreme standardization. Innovation is not discouraged . . . at least among managers and franchisees. Ironically, though, "the object is to look for new, innovative ways to create an experience that is exactly the same no matter what McDonald's you walk into, no matter where



What they do and even what they say is highly predictable in many cases. If a particular item is on there, they will first apologise and even explain that. So, in other words, everything that they

do there in terms of customer relations, in terms of conversation, everything is kind of pre-designed. It is almost like the air hostess in the flight demonstrates the safety mechanisms. They must have by hearted it by repeating it 100 times. So, just like a machine, they do that. This is precisely a similar process. McDonaldized organisations often have scripts that employees should memorise and follow whenever the occasion arises.

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#### Control Through Nonhuman Technology

The fourth element in McDonald's success, *control*, is exerted over the people who enter the world of McDonald's. Lines, limited menus, few options, and uncomfortable seats all lead diners to do what management wishes them to do—eat quickly and leave. Furthermore, the drive-through (in some cases, walk-through) window leads diners to leave before they eat. In the Domino's model, customers never enter in the first place.

The people who work in McDonaldized organizations are also controlled to a high degree, usually more blatantly and directly than customers. They are trained to do a limited number of things in precisely the way they are told to do them. The technologies used and the way the organization is set up reinforce this control. Managers and inspectors make sure that workers toe the line.

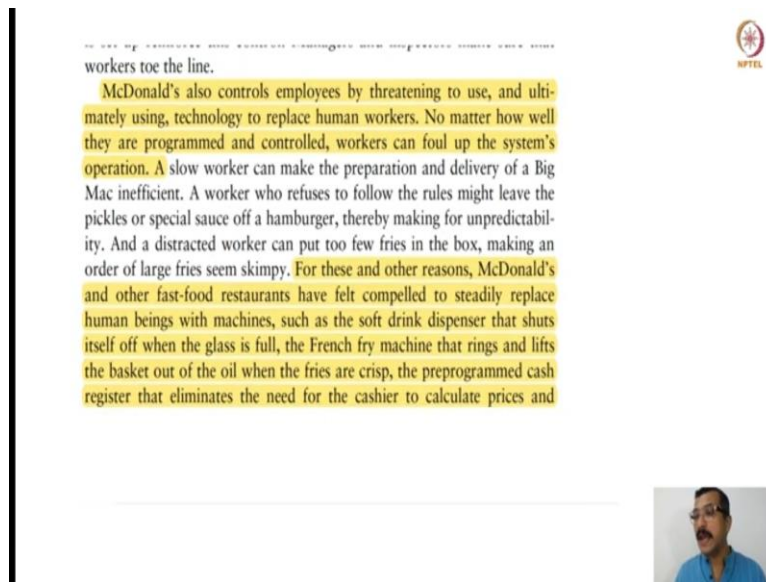
McDonald's also controls employees by threatening to use, and ultimately using, technology to replace human workers. No matter how well they are programmed and controlled, workers can foul up the system's operation. A slow worker can make the preparation and delivery of a Big



Another critical point is the control through nonhuman technology. So, increasingly nonhuman technology is becoming an essential part of the workers' control because they are closely monitored, and their performance is very closely assessed. There are closed-circuit cameras installed everywhere, including the kitchen and the serving area. So, these people's actions are monitored, and the managers watch them.

The fourth element in McDonald's success control is exerted over the people who enter the world of McDonald. Lines, limited menus through options, and uncomfortable seats lead diners to do what management wishes them to do. Eat quickly and leave. Furthermore, in some cases, the drive-through walks through windows and shows restaurants to go to before eating. In the Dominos model, customers never enter the first place at all.

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workers toe the line.

McDonald's also controls employees by threatening to use, and ultimately using, technology to replace human workers. No matter how well they are programmed and controlled, workers can foul up the system's operation. A slow worker can make the preparation and delivery of a Big Mac inefficient. A worker who refuses to follow the rules might leave the pickles or special sauce off a hamburger, thereby making for unpredictability. And a distracted worker can put too few fries in the box, making an order of large fries seem skimpy. For these and other reasons, McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants have felt compelled to steadily replace human beings with machines, such as the soft drink dispenser that shuts itself off when the glass is full, the French fry machine that rings and lifts the basket out of the oil when the fries are crisp, the preprogrammed cash register that eliminates the need for the cashier to calculate prices and

McDonald's also control employees by threatening to use technology to replace human workers. No matter how well programmed and controlled, workers can foul up the system's operation because we know a worker is quite unpredictable in many senses. So, if he fries a particular French fry for more, it might get spoiled, it might become rubbery, it might be burned, so they will not be able to sell it to the customer. So, everything is being increasingly being mechanised.

So, for these other reasons, McDonald's and other fast-food restaurants are compelled to steadily replace human beings with machines such as the soft drink dispenser that shuts itself off when the glass is full. There is no possibility of its overflowing and then wasting the beverage. The French fry machine rings and lifts the basket out of the oil, but the fries are crisp. The pre-programmed cash register eliminates the need for the cashier to calculate prices and amounts and, perhaps at some future time, the robot capable of making hamburgers.

So, these are all important, so these four key things Ritzer argues are some of the critical processes of the whole idea of McDonaldization supposes. So, he gives a list of the advantages of McDonaldization.

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undoubtedly because it has led to positive changes. Here are a few specific examples:



- A wider range of goods and services is available to a much larger portion of the population than ever before.
- Availability of goods and services depends far less than before on time or geographic location; people can do things, such as obtain money at the grocery store or a bank balance in the middle of the night, that were impossible before.
- People are able to get what they want or need almost instantaneously and get it far more conveniently.
- Goods and services are of a far more uniform quality; at least some people get better goods and services than before McDonaldization.
- Far more economical alternatives to high-priced, customized goods and services are widely available; therefore, people can afford things they could not previously afford.
- Fast, efficient goods and services are available to a population that is working longer hours and has fewer hours to spare.
- In a rapidly changing, unfamiliar, and seemingly hostile world, the comparatively stable, familiar, and safe environment of a McDonaldized system offers comfort.
- Because of quantification, consumers can more easily compare competing products.
- Certain products (for example, diet programs) are safer in a carefully regulated and



Let us have a quick look at all of them—a few specific examples. A wide range of goods and services is available at a much more significant portion of the population than ever before because they aim at the mass market to serve many people. Availability of goods and services depends far less than before on time or geographic location. People can do things such as obtain money at the grocery store or a bank balance in the middle of the night that was impossible before. The reach of technology makes it all possible. People can instantly get what they want or need and get it far more conveniently.

You think of the world of Amazon's or Flipkart's, so you can just order it from the comfort of your house. You can choose from a wide variety of options, and they get delivered to your home. Then goods and services are not far more uniform quality. At least some people get better goods and services than before McDonaldization. Far more economical alternatives to high priced customised goods and services are widely available. Therefore, people can afford things that they could not previously afford. The kind of class divide that was very sharp in the previous, while the class divide still exists, far more consumer opportunities are available.

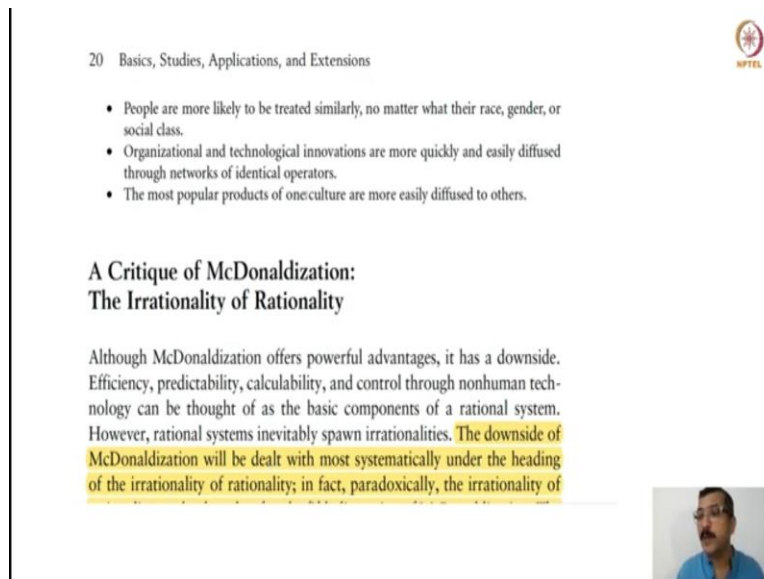
Fast, efficient goods and services are available to the population working longer hours and having fewer hours to spare in a rapidly changing, unfamiliar and seemingly hostile world; the comparatively stable, familiar and safe environment of a McDonaldized system offers comfort. This is significant because globalisation throws a lot of surprises on one side. You are forced to



believe in many methods that you do not face. When there is no money left in your purse, you transact by using a credit card if you go to an ATM hoping that the ATM will have sufficient money.

We know that some mechanisms take care of this whole intricacies, of the entire technological stuff behind that and that becomes very important, part in the modern world because of quantification consumer can more easily compare competing products and specific products for example, that programs are safer and carefully regulated and controlled system. So, a host of positive things that he is talking about.

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- People are more likely to be treated similarly, no matter what their race, gender, or social class.
- Organizational and technological innovations are more quickly and easily diffused through networks of identical operators.
- The most popular products of one culture are more easily diffused to others.

**A Critique of McDonalidization:  
The Irrationality of Rationality**

Although McDonalidization offers powerful advantages, it has a downside. Efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control through nonhuman technology can be thought of as the basic components of a rational system. However, rational systems inevitably spawn irrationalities. The downside of McDonalidization will be dealt with most systematically under the heading of the irrationality of rationality; in fact, paradoxically, the irrationality of

Then people are more likely to be treated similarly no matter their race, gender or social class because they are entirely transparent places. There is no preference for anybody. It is a wholly democratised space. Organisation and technological innovations are more quickly and easily diffused through networks of identical operations. The most popular products of one culture are more easily diffused to others.



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### A Critique of McDonaldization: The Irrationality of Rationality



Although McDonaldization offers powerful advantages, it has a downside. Efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control through nonhuman technology can be thought of as the basic components of a rational system. However, rational systems inevitably spawn irrationalities. The downside of McDonaldization will be dealt with most systematically under the heading of the irrationality of rationality; in fact, paradoxically, the irrationality of rationality can be thought of as the fifth dimension of McDonaldization. The basic idea here is that rational systems inevitably spawn irrational consequences. Another way of saying this is that rational systems serve to deny human reason; rational systems are often unreasonable.

For example, McDonaldization has produced a wide array of adverse effects on the environment. One is a side effect of the need to grow uniform potatoes from which to create predictable French fries. The huge farms of the Pacific Northwest that now produce such potatoes rely on the extensive use of chemicals. In addition, the need to produce a perfect fry means that



These are some of the very important to positive aspects of McDonaldization. Again, repeat that we are not talking about McDonald as a restaurant chain; it is only a metaphor. It is only an example. We are talking about the kind of processes around us or what happened during the 90s and 2000s, which contained the inherent functions of this particular restaurant. He also spent some time criticising this specific kind of McDonaldization. What is the type of outcome or the negative aspects of that? He calls it an irrationality of rationality. If you look into the theory, we can see that what Ritzer is talking about is an extension of Max Weber's argument about rationalisation.

I do not know if you are familiar with Max Weber, one of the most significant social thinkers who defined modernity as the era of rationalisation instrumental rationality. He argued that in the age of modernity, we are increasingly, doing things in an instrumental rational manner. We want to get something most efficiently. According to Weber, this efficiency seems to be an efficient social action; reasonable social movement appears to be the most dominant kind of action of modern society.

So, in a sense, Ritzer is extending Weber's argument of an extreme form of rationalisation. When things become a powerful form of rationalisation, then they will have a set of consequences, and that is what Ritzer is talking about. The downside of McDonaldization will be dealt with most systemically under the heading of the irrationality of rationality. Paradoxically,

the irrationality of rationality can be thought of as the fifth dimension of McDonaldization. The basic idea is that the sound system inevitably sports in irrational consequences.

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of the irrationality of rationality; in fact, paradoxically, the irrationality of rationality can be thought of as the fifth dimension of McDonaldization. The basic idea here is that rational systems inevitably spawn irrational consequences. Another way of saying this is that rational systems serve to deny human reason; rational systems are often unreasonable.

For example, McDonaldization has produced a wide array of adverse effects on the environment. One is a side effect of the need to grow uniform potatoes from which to create predictable French fries. The huge farms of the Pacific Northwest that now produce such potatoes rely on the extensive use of chemicals. In addition, the need to produce a perfect fry means that much of the potato is wasted, with the remnants either fed to cattle or used for fertilizer. The underground water supply in the area is now showing high levels of nitrates, which may be traceable to the fertilizer and animal wastes. Many other ecological problems are associated with the McDonaldization of the fast-food industry: the forests felled to produce paper wrappings, the damage caused by polystyrene and other packaging materials, the enormous amount of food needed to produce feed cattle, and so on.

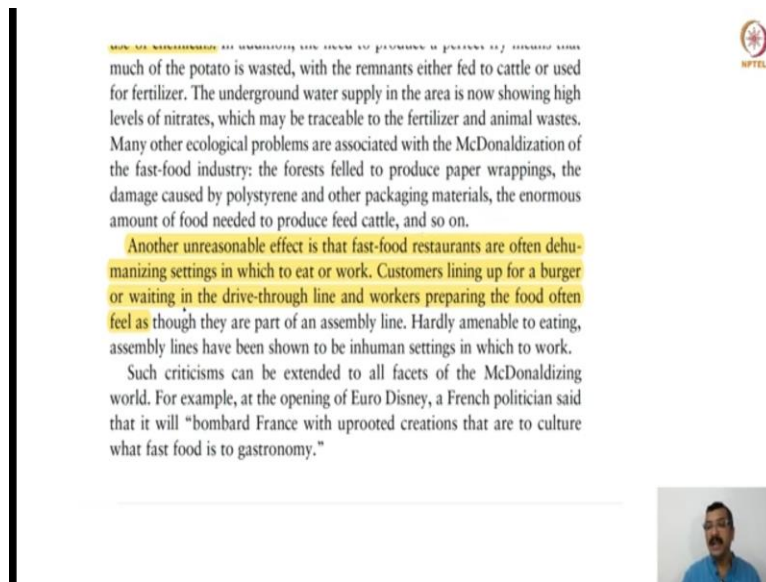
Another unreasonable effect is that fast-food restaurants are often dehu-



Another way of saying this is that rational systems serve to deny human reason. The sound approach also offers unreasonable, and again, Weber comes to mind because Weber talks about bureaucracy as the most rationalised system of executing things. Bureaucracy is inhuman; it is utterly atrocious. We know people always blame bureaucracy for being such a cruel system. It is not sensitive to individual people. It works as an iron cage. People call it an iron cage.

So, for example, one is a side effect of the need to grow uniform potatoes from which to create predictable French fries. The vast pacific Northwest farms that produce such potatoes rely on the extensive use of chemicals.

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much of the potato is wasted, with the remnants either fed to cattle or used for fertilizer. The underground water supply in the area is now showing high levels of nitrates, which may be traceable to the fertilizer and animal wastes. Many other ecological problems are associated with the McDonaldization of the fast-food industry: the forests felled to produce paper wrappings, the damage caused by polystyrene and other packaging materials, the enormous amount of food needed to produce feed cattle, and so on.

Another unreasonable effect is that fast-food restaurants are often dehumanizing settings in which to eat or work. Customers lining up for a burger or waiting in the drive-through line and workers preparing the food often feel as though they are part of an assembly line. Hardly amenable to eating, assembly lines have been shown to be inhuman settings in which to work.

Such criticisms can be extended to all facets of the McDonaldizing world. For example, at the opening of Euro Disney, a French politician said that it will "bombard France with uprooted creations that are to culture what fast food is to gastronomy."

In addition, they need to produce a perfect fry means that much of the potato is wasted with the remnants either fed to cattle or used for fertilisers. The underground water supply in this area is now showing high levels of nitrates which may be traceable to the fertilisers and animal waste. Mainly about the ecological degradation and obsession with the kind of standardised procuring mechanisms.

Another little effect is that fast-food restaurants are often dehumanising settings to eat or work; of course, we are not talking about the whole argument about the nutritional value of fast food culture. There are many campaigns against them, saying that they are the main reasons behind the obesity of children, especially in India; we know that junk foods are being banned, at least in school canteens and other places. So, what kind of ethical business model are these people doing and the argument that this place is inhuman for the workers.

The workers are supposed to work like machines, and customers are again expected to act like machines to buy the food, eat it fast, leave it, or buy the food and then walk out. So, customers lining up for a burger or waiting in the drive-through lines and workers preparing food often feel like they were part of an assembly line. Hardly available to eat, assembly lines are being shown to be inhumanly sitting to work. So, he talks about a host of other issues, especially the negative issues of McDonaldization as this irrationality of this rationality.

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more surprises, when people were freer, and when one was more likely to deal with a human being than a robot or a computer. Although they have a point, these critics have undoubtedly exaggerated the positive aspects of a world without McDonald's, and they have certainly tended to forget the liabilities associated with earlier eras. As an example of the latter, take the following anecdote about a visit to a pizzeria in Havana, Cuba, which in some respects is decades behind the United States:

The pizza's not much to rave about—they scrimp on tomato sauce, and the dough is mushy.

It was about 7:30 p.m., and as usual the place was standing-room-only, with people two deep jostling for a stool to come open and a waiting line spilling out onto the sidewalk.

The menu is similarly Spartan. . . . To drink, there is tap water. That's it—no toppings, no soda, no beer, no coffee, no salt, no pepper. And no special orders.

A very few people are eating. Most are waiting. . . . Fingers are drumming, flies are buzzing, the clock is ticking. The waiter wears a watch around his belt loop, but he hardly needs it; time is evidently not his chief concern. After a while, tempers begin to fray.



So he compares it, for example, with a scenario in Havana in Cuba where there is no efficiency, there is no predictability, and there are no things in a very chaotic situation. So, Ritzer says that this is the kind of thing to come. You cannot escape from this situation because you cannot be in a past where things were, organised in a very different scenario.

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#### THE ADVANTAGES OF MODERNIZATION.

This chapter should be giving you a sense not only of the advantages and disadvantages of McDonaldization but also of the range of phenomena that will be discussed throughout this book. In fact, such a wide range of phenomena can be linked to McDonaldization that you may be led to wonder what isn't McDonaldized. Is McDonaldization the equivalent of modernity? Is everything contemporary McDonaldized?

Although much of the world has been McDonaldized, at least three aspects of contemporary society have largely escaped the process:

- Those aspects traceable to an earlier, "premodern" age. A good example is the mom-and-pop grocery store.
- New businesses that have sprung up, at least in part, as a reaction against McDonaldization. For instance, people fed up with McDonaldized motel rooms in Holiday Inns or Motel 6s can instead stay in a bed-and-breakfast, which offers a room in a private home with personalized attention and a homemade breakfast from the proprietor.
- Those aspects suggesting a move toward a new, "postmodern" age. For example, in a postmodern society, "modern" high-rise housing projects make way for smaller,



- Such movements have often sprung up, at least in part, as a reaction against McDonaldization. For instance, people fed up with McDonaldized motel rooms in Holiday Inns or Motel 6s can instead stay in a bed-and-breakfast, which offers a room in a private home with personalized attention and a homemade breakfast from the proprietor.
- Those aspects suggesting a move toward a new, "postmodern" age. For example, in a postmodern society, "modern" high-rise housing projects make way for smaller, more livable communities.

Thus, although McDonaldization is ubiquitous, there is more to the contemporary world than McDonaldization. It is a very important social process, but it is far from the only process transforming contemporary society.



So, then what is not McDonaldization? He spends some time on that. The chapter should give a sense of the advantages and disadvantages of McDonaldization and the range of phenomena discussed throughout this book. Such a wide range of phenomena can be linked to McDonaldization that you may let to wonder what is not McDonaldization. Is McDonaldization the equivalent of modernity? Is everything contemporary McDonaldized? He says no.

Those aspects are traceable to an earlier premodern age. A good example is the mom-and-pop grocery store. These stores are not yet McDonaldized. A new business has sprung up at least in part as a reaction against McDonaldization. Those aspects suggest a move towards new postmodern age. For example, modern high-rise housing projects make way for a smaller, more liveable community in a postmodern society. So, he ends this essay by giving a kind of limitation to this particular idea of what constitutes McDonaldization and what does not.

As I mentioned initially, this essay or this book instead became highly influential because it presents a fundamental argument about McDonaldization, about bringing in uniformity concept of practices. Still, Ritzer has been criticised as well very heavily by many other scholars talking about that it is not only this kind of uniformity standardisation of predictability that is coming. There are fascinating arguments about this new giant online service provider like Flipkart or Amazon. So, they increase your possibility of unpredictability in terms of products, services, and everything.

So, this theme of McDonaldization was prevalent but not something that every scholar agreed to. So, I thought it was essential to introduce you to this important topic that was popular during 2000. So, let us stop here, and we will meet for the next class. Thank you.