

McDonald's, globalization and culture.

McDonald's in Globalization

Globalization has affected almost every aspect of life in almost every nation. From economic to social to culture, this widespread exchange of goods, services and ideas have influenced changes around the world. Even though the cultural influence in globalization is of slight significance to policy makers, its power has tremendous consequences to the nations involved and its people. Food is an important element in defining culture. Britannica (2007). "Food is the oldest global carrier of culture." (para. 1). Any changes in the foods that we eat, in its preparation, the way it is served and consumed diminishes the traditional beliefs of the people.

One of the most influential changes came with the introduction of fast food restaurants like McDonald's into foreign countries. Transformations have taken place which could be perceived as beneficial or corrupting to that culture. According to William Gould (1996), before the introduction of McDonald's overseas "fast food was almost unknown. McDonald's was the first company to try to export America's love of fast food and changes in eating habits of other nations." Catherine Schnaubelt (u.d.) in her study, has found that "McDonald's has over 1.5 million franchises in the United States and about half of the total franchises are outside the U.S. in over 120 countries.....Amidst all the fame and fortune of McDonald's, there are concerns about how the spread of standardization of the franchise is affecting culture, attitudes and the environment." (p.49).

The globalization of McDonald's has raised many debates on both sides of the issue. The pro-globalization belief is that it enhances culture rather than adulterate. Radley Balko (2003), states that "In most communities, in fact, the McDonald's has conformed to the local culture not the other way around. The McDonald's corporation notes that most of its overseas franchises are locally owned, and thus make efforts to buy from local communities. McDonald's also alters its regional menus to conform to local taste." (para. 12).

There has been a loss of traditional values with the introduction of non traditional food into the culture of foreign countries. The types of foods are symbolic to particular regions, religions and morés. In India, to the Hindu people, the cow is considered to be sacred as part of its religion. According to the AsianInfo.org (2007), "Diversity can be found in India's food as well as its culture, geography and climate."(para. 1). "Although a number of religions exist in India, the two cultures that have influenced Indian cooking and food habits are the Hindu and the Muslim tradition." (para. 3). With the introduction of non traditional foods into this society, as with many others, there are adverse effects on the traditions it tries to uphold.

McDonald's is viewed as American and the movement away from traditional foods towards fast food is considered to be "Americanization" of the diet. This concept has more far reaching effects than is seen on the surface. The "Americanization" of the food also means that of the culture and a way of thinking which is not acceptable to many nations. Sebastian Mallaby (2007), writes that "Hyperpower invites backlash, and McDonald's has not escaped such consequences. In 1999 a French farmer named Jose Bove ransacked a McDonald's and became a hero of the anti- globalization." (para.5). The restaurant stands as a symbol of an unwanted change sweeping across the borders of culture and tradition.

The content of the McDonald's diet has long been an issue of contention with nutritionist. In his book *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser (2002), states that "By eating like Americans people all over the world are

beginning to look more like Americans, at least in one respect. The United States has one of the highest obesity rate of any industrialized nation in the world.” (p. 240). “As people eat more meals outside the home, they consume more calories, less fiber and more fat.” (p. 241). The introduction of unhealthy eating habits as a result of the preambles of foreign foods into outside nations significantly affects the traditional culture. The World Health Organization (2002), believe that “within the next few years, noncommunicable disease will become the principal cause of morbidity and mortality.....The shift towards highly refined foods and towards meat and dairy products containing high levels of saturated fats,....contribute to rises in incidences of obesity and noncommunicable disease.” (p.952).

Not only has the content of the diet been an issue but also the way in which food is consumed. As the name implies it is “fast food” There is a movement away from a family oriented dining to individual dining. In a chart featured by Gardenswartz and Rowe (u.d.) shows that while mainstream American culture focuses on eating as a necessity and towards fast food other cultures view dining as a social experience with religion playing an important role in its practice. They value group orientation and conformity to facilitate harmony among families whereas American culture has a preference towards individualism and independence from each other.

Globalization of fast food culture has also proven desirable to the nations involved and their populations. Mallaby (2007), states that “As America’s car culture spread abroad, the hamburger followed. McDonald’s has opened restaurants in 119 countries and serves 52 million people daily.” (para. 3). “The appeal of the American way seems to transcend all boundaries. When McDonald’s opened its first restaurant in Kuwait in 1994, 15,000 customers formed a seven mile line at the drive through.” (para. 4).

These are just some of the concerns which affect the issue of food culture and globalization. Many more arise as a result of the introduction of fast food restaurants like McDonald’s into diverse cultures around the world. Some changes are embraced by the population while others are seen as a threat to the way of life that has been established for centuries. Some are adverse to the idea of globalization as a hold and perceive McDonald’s as a representation of this ideal and as a result hold them responsible. The question arises; does the globalization of McDonald’s adversely or positively affect the culture of different nations?

Even though there has been many changes in the eating habits of the nations influenced by the introduction of McDonald's there has been many positive aspects. With the advancement of technology and communication the world itself seem to be moving at a faster pace. The advent of fast food into foreign cultures allows the opportunity to keep up with this fast pace. Culture is ever changing and thus McDonald's marks another step in the evolution of culture with the changes in has brought about. The menu has given people a new choice over the traditional foods eaten in the past.

The McDonaldized institution has really spread across continents giving rise to a number of indigenous fast food chains. There is also the case of Asianization where Asian cuisine such as Fried rice is rapidly spreading all over the world. Unemployed youth are taking advantage of the McDonaldized institution to set up fast food businesses on the streets. This can be called fast food-street food. There are good and bad sides to this phenomena therefore we need to find out the bad sides and improve upon them. Some traditional foods may also come with problems especially in terms of health so while we criticise fast food we should also analyze some traditional food at least for their nutritional importance.

Joo Sam Lee from Korea

Nowadays, we can easily find American fast food restaurants in Asia. In Korea, there is always more than one American restaurant in a town. In downtown Seoul, which is the capital city of Korea, we can find Burger King across from McDonalds.

Inside these American restaurants, it looks almost the same as in the United States. The uniforms of the waiters are exactly the same, and they play American music.

Several years ago, I went to Tokyo, Japan. At that time, it wasn't difficult to find an American restaurants there, all are almost the same as in the United States. I could buy American fast food everywhere.

I think that American fast food restaurants are quite common in many Asian countries, but to be accepted they often have to adapt to local tastes. For example, at McDonalds in India, the taste of the food has been changed because the original American taste wasn't successful there.

I think these restaurants encroach on the food markets of other countries. The problem is that when American companies are set up in other countries, they don't just sell foods or goods. They try to sell American culture as well.

Speaking of fast food, there is no doubt its popularity all over the world; it is closely related with our daily life. Sometimes, I can't help thinking why it is so prevailing. As my opinion, it is mainly due to the fast pace of our life. In such a competitive society, everyone are pressed for time, they have too much work to day in every day. Take myself for instance, I work in a foreign company and I fell I am under pressure because I have a heavy workload each day, so that I order take away sometimes to save some time for work.

Fast food as new thing became more popular in China now, I think the main reason is that fast food is convenience for people working and living, especially popular in young people, be fit for their fast living speed. Even though from health point of view, most fast food are junk food, when restaurants were cooking food they ignore health of consumers.

There is no doubt that fast food has been a part of our lives. As for me, even though i know it's not good to us, I also like it especially McDonald's... I think it's delicious... what I can do now is just to control myself.

As its name suggests, it can be prepared fast, most of people have to go to job on time, so the fast food is the better choice. But from the nutrition, the fast food couldn't meet the human being's daily nutrient necessary. Eating a long time, which will make the people innutrition? So as for the fast food, we're better taking it by chance.

On the other hand, it's also have disadvantage of the fast food that can't contain much nutrition, so people can't refresh their power of body. What worse some fast food harms for people's health. So in my opinion fast food should eating when there is really make in time it's not essential food.

Fast food is very convenience for everyone, especially is 9 to 5 officer people. But the nutritional value of the fast food is very poor. For you and your family health, fast food try to eat less is good for all people.