

Fast food and mass culture

[Food & Diet](#), [Junk Food](#)



Fast food has no doubt been considered as a part of the lives of everyone who is living in the evolved and modernized world. Around the world, especially in first world countries, fast food franchises such as McDonalds and KFC are available in abundance and made salient with the help of mass media. Fast food's advertising and the prominence of these establishments' logos everywhere are considered as a sort of culture made available to the masses. The masses refer to the most average and regular culture being perceived by the most number of the population at that moment. Whatever that is not recognized on a global scale is considered not part of the masses and be considered a minority.

Fast food in one's diet has always been considered an unhealthy way of life because of the lack of nutrition in the food fast food joints offer. And this unhealthy way of life causes obesity, with the combination of an individual's inactivity. Health specialists noted that one-thirds of Americans are obese. Also, children in between six and nineteen are overweight. Experts warn that this way of life will be more of a critical situation rather than just an issue. However, the fast food culture has enabled employed fathers and mothers with busy schedules to 'put food on the table'. Initially, the evolution of the fast food mass culture started with the beginnings of the McDonalds restaurant chains. A man named Ray Kroc helped the McDonald brothers globalize the McDonalds brand name. Beginning with the first McDonalds restaurant, Kroc envisioned that people who visit other states in America will experience the same food off the menu and service McDonalds offered. Food revolutionized and became simpler to store, prepare and serve in the household as the food are being processed and preserved so that they are in

good condition before they hit the restaurant kitchens or supermarkets. This developed into a way of life for many American families at that point of time. Sociologist George Ritzer named this transformation of food the “McDonalization of Society”.

As a result, working parents would now have a painless time preparing meals or having dinner outings with their families. One way to interpret culture is the definition of a specific way of life and the explanations of the meanings and values of that way of life, which is known as the social description of culture. The arrangement of this culture is the preference and arrangement of activities, creating a specific system which is the ‘way of life’.

As a society, people do things based on historical meaning, or in other words, things that the society has been doing for a long time. While fast food is unhealthy, working individuals have been utilizing the convenience of patronizing fast food restaurants for family dinners or takeaways for personal or family dinners after the normal nine to five work day. This is an indication that the social aspect of mass culture based on the fast food industry is integral in the normalcy of how things run as per usual for the common man and the fast food organizations.

As mentioned before, fast food has been around since the early 1900s. During this period of time, countries and governments are shaping up and wars are occurring as well. The Americans viewed fast food as an aspect of mass culture and an important political symbol to boast their patriotism and ‘Americanness’. Coca-cola is one of the brands that exemplify the American state during the World Wars. Coke’s branding was heavily concentrated to

promote the American identity by associating individual interests and political status through war propaganda. Also, the American government and Coke accord brought about positive potential effects such as increasing the self-esteem of American soldiers and reducing their alcohol usage. However, Coca-cola started an orange soda brand called Fanta and distributed to the opposition, the Germans. No matter how politically inappropriate the decision is for Coca-cola to sell to the enemy, the company had a strong footing for economic domination in the period after the war as now they have many factories ready to distribute products of Coca-cola all around the world. American soldiers look at Coca-cola as a symbol of sentimentality and the ordinary life they once had and would to get back again. With the aid of notoriety with the masses around the globe, Coca-cola became a symbol for the Americans.

The commercial power of mass culture can be seen when for example, a popular fast food chain such as Kentucky Fried Chicken has franchises all around the globe. Some of the largest exports from America are what we as a society outside America cannot live without such as fast food, music and television. When KFC sells its products, the products which stems from Americanization, they are also selling the fast food culture of America along with the product. Even if for example, a KFC branch in Singapore is offering to sell a product that is unique to Singapore, the consumer will be buying an element of America's culture and beliefs. This integration of the American fast food culture into the everyday life outside of America will in turn become normality and the society as a whole would accept that Americanization has slowly wriggled its way into everyday life. Having a meal at a fast food

restaurant with a cola or a soda would not be an odd occurrence.

Inadvertently, the prominence of commercials running on billboards plays a huge part in the construction of mass culture and from the success of this mass culture, people unconsciously are absorbing what is being offered by Americanization.

In conclusion, the larger the availability of fast food around the world, it shows that mass culture is effective in bringing cultures to a different and foreign territory. This demonstrates with the right way of introducing cultures that include food, etiquette or technology to a foreign place, they might make that culture a part of their culture and that is how modernization progresses with mass culture.