

# The four basic factors of mcdonaldization

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In today's' complicated and ever changing society, we often try to achieve a sense of stability and familiarity around us. One way our culture has tried to make life a little easier is by implementing a function now known as "McDonaldization". McDonaldization is defined as "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 the rest of the world." (1) The success of McDonalds, and of McDonaldization as a whole, is due to four basic factors--efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.

One of the first functions of McDonaldization is efficiency. Efficiency means choosing the optimum means to an given end. In our society, people like to have things go as quickly and as smoothly as possible, but they do not want to find out the fastest way themselves. Instead, people like to have a system that has already been used and that they know works. Efficiency has its advantages for both consumers, who get what they want quickly and with little effort, and for workers, who can perform their tasks in a simple manner.

The fast food industry is very streamlined, because hamburgers are the simplest food there is to make. Other foods also do not need a lot of ingredients, and they are simple to make and to eat. Most of the food is also prepared so one can eat it with their hands, thereby reducing the need for utensils. In the process of McDonaldization, consumers are forced to do a good deal of work as well. They have to stand on line, carry their own food, and throw out the garbage. This is not as efficient for the consumer, but it saves time for the workers.

Education, healthcare, and the work place are all becoming McDonaldalized in order to become more efficient. Efficiency in McDonaldization has streamlined many processes, simplified goods and services, and forces the consumer to do work as well. Another factor of McDonaldization is calculability. This tends to put more of an emphasis on quantity rather than quality, but it allows the consumer to get a lot of food quickly. When things are easily counted, it facilitates the process by making it more predictable by using the same amount of materials. Part of McDonalds is an emphasis on size.

Everything is "super sized," or have names that make food items seem larger than they actually are. Calculability, however, also leads to the quality of the food being neglected. Because people feel as if they are getting a lot of food for their money, they are not as worried about how good it tastes.

Food is always weighed and measured precisely, which is another part of calculability. All burgers weigh the same amount, there are the same number of fries in each container, and the new drink machines dispense the same amount to each cup. This same theory is seen in our education system.

Students are herded through, and no one really pays much attention to what or how they are earning, just that they receive high grades so they can get into a good college. Health care has also seen the impact of these, because now patients are mainly treated just to squeeze some money out of them, and doctors seemingly don't truly care about their patients anymore.

Calculability basically reduces the quality of goods, but improves the The

third function of McDonaldization is predictability. In our society, people usually want to know exactly what to expect from a given situation.

Predictability gives the consumer a break from having to make difficult decisions, and the worker can perform their task with little effort. The needs of everyone become easily anticipated. One of the first places predictability became common was with motel chains. Before motels became franchised, guests didn't know exactly what they would be getting, for the good or the bad. But then hotels such as Holiday Inn and Howard Johnson's started, and guests knew exactly what they were going to get when they stayed there. This new practice was copied in the food industry, namely by McDonalds.

First, they started with a large and noticeable sign, that could be easily recognized. People from around the world now know the McDonalds symbol is a giant yellow "M". Something else that is predictable is the way employees are forced to interact with customers. Employees have a set script that they must follow, and this gives them some control over their customers. Their work is also done in the same manner, for example, the hamburgers all must be cooked the exact same way for the same amount of time. They also must dress and act in a certain way.

Customers themselves behave predictably in fast food restaurants, as they get their food, carry it to their table, eat, clean their trash, and leave. Now everyone knows this is the way one must act in a fast food restaurant. The food itself is predictable as well, and there are not many choices in fast food restaurants. It is basically the same from food chain to food chain.

Predictability is also found in other institutions, such as in education.

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Professors usually stand in the front of the class, near a blackboard while they lecture.

Most colleges offer the same type of classes, and even testing is similar, if multiple choice tests are used. Health care as well is based on a series of rules, regulations and controls that restrict the physicians and keep their behavior controlled. Malls, home cooking, housing, and vacations are all getting very predictable as well. Predictability is achieved in a number of ways, mainly by the replication of settings, the use of scripts and a routine way of acting, as well as a routine product. The final dimension of McDonaldization is increased control.

Recently, new technologies have been developed in order to control the actions of the people. Robots and computers are both easier to deal with and to manage than people. Organizations hope to gain control over people by using and developing new and more effective technologies. One people are controlled, their behavior is easily manageable and machinelike, and when that happens, people can then be replaced by robots. Fast food restaurants do not have cooks, because that would mean they were forced to rely on one person.

Instead, there is a simple process that anyone can be trained to do, and following certain steps leads to the same product. McDonalds already as a number of new technologies which reduces the need for actual people to work. There is a soft drink dispenser that shuts itself off automatically, a french fry machine that can cook the fries itself, and a cash register with the prices preset. Robots have a number of advantages over people, because

they cost less, increase efficiency, need fewer workers, and they are never absent. Customers are controlled by the management as well.

People know exactly what they must do in a drive through window, and also what to do inside the restaurant. Management discourages people from staying in the restaurant for very long, so that there is more room for other customers. The food is designed to be eaten quickly, and with little mess. In most food industries, technologies where humans basic role is only to plan and maintain the system is becoming dominant, and replacing the processes where people must be skilled in order to work. Education is McDonaldized as well, because professors must follow a set curriculum, and class periods must conform to a certain length.

Health care is controlled by various rules and bureaucracies, which are designed to control both the patient and the doctors. Advertising is used now at a more personal level, and tries to control the minds of the people into thinking a certain way. The main objective of control is to reduce the uncertainties of a business, and technology tries to control work related processes, as well as the finished product. McDonaldization is found all around us, even at Hofstra University. One aspect of university life which has become greatly McDonaldized is the registration process.

At Hofstra, students must choose their own classes from a given list, and then meet with their advisor to approve it. They then have to take their registration card to Memorial Hall, where they take a number, and wait for their turn to be called. Only then can your For the first factor of McDonaldization, efficiency, the registration process is definitely not up to

par. When students first get to Memorial, they are forced to take a number, like at a deli counter. They then must wait. And wait. And wait, just for their number to be called.

Students are forced to wait for sometimes as long as three or four hours to make a schedule. Although it is better than a random free for all, with everyone scrambling around at the same time, there is still much that can be done to improve it. At some parts of the day, there are as few as three windows open, with more than one hundred students waiting. This process can hardly be called efficient, when some other niversities have phone or electronic registration, which can be completed in a few Calculability is also seen during the registration process.

The main idea is to try to complete as many schedules in the shortest amount of time. However, this causes students to not receive any individualized attention, and they are forced to make their schedules on their own with little guidance. This is because the main interest is on quantity, rather than the quality of the schedules. In fact, the school prefers to have the lack of guidance, because it causes students to take unnecessary credits, and they then ust spend more time in school, while paying even more money. This system is fairly predictable, although not in a good way.

During registration time, students know that they will have to spend many hours just waiting in line with nothing to do. They also can predict there will not be any seats left, that half of the windows will be closed by lunch time, and that it will always be about a million degrees in the waiting area.

Students also are used to the gray schedule booklets, as well as the yellow

registration cards. Seeing either of those items leads the students to think about exactly what they must go through, in order to register successfully.

The final element, control, is seen as well. Students are being controlled by a tiny little slip of paper they hold in their hand, which has a simple number on it. That number signifies their place on line, but it was generated by a computer, which keeps track of how many people are waiting. Students also rely on the kiosk system, which shows which classes are still open, and which have been closed out. These factors help keep registration as a controlled process. McDonaldization is becoming more and more prevalent in today's changing world.

However, it allows us to expect certain things, helps us to manage our time better, and make life in general a little bit simpler. It also, however, cuts down on the individuals of our society, and forces them to conform to a set standard, which is considered the norm. Some places are able to use McDonaldization effectively, while others are still struggling to implement it in a way which makes it work. It is a complicated process, which requires a good deal of thinking and brainstorming to manage successfully. All in all, McDonaldization has both positive and negative impacts on our world.