

Analysis of the mcdonaldisation of society concept



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Food: Critical Perspectives

Critically assess the McDonaldisation of society thesis.

The McDonaldisation of society is a theory that was introduced by George Ritzer after a clear observation of society and all the ways that modern society is conforming. The theory is mainly focusing on the sociology of globalisation and the effect that it has on society. For this reason, Ritzer identified traits in fast-food restaurants that appeared to originate from one region of the world and contagiously spreading to other parts of the world without alteration or corruption (Crossman, 2019). The McDonaldisation of society is a rationalisation theory adopted by organisations, corporations, and companies in their production efforts, work and consumption (Ritzer 1995, p. 146). These aspects bring a new social and economic order to the society today which can be characterised by, control, efficiency, predictability and standardisation, and calculability.

In the sociology of globalisation, the values, preferences, goals and other aspects of life are significantly affected, and this affects social relationships. Ritzer also argues that the modern form of social order is engineered by countries and other powers that are in the top class of society to remain relevant and dominate the world indirectly (Ritzer 2008, p. 15). The theory assumes that the west is determined to influence the homogenization of social and economic life throughout the world via globalisation. As opposed to Weber's bureaucratic theory of social organisation and structure, Ritzer argues that the McDonaldisation of society is taking the lead due to the changes in the economic and social status of the society (Kumar 2017, p. 09;

Mises 2018, p. 88). As the globalisation takes effect, there is a change in tactics to ensure and guarantee control and dominance (Laberge 2016, p. 34). This paper is a critical assessment and analysis of the McDonaldisation of society thesis and theory using sociological theories.

Society is made of independent entities which are always competing for positions, space, dominance, power, and resources resulting in conflicts and struggle every day. The McDonaldisation of society theory acknowledges that business is also an entity and with globalisation taking effect, businesses are in constant competition to dominate and gain their rightful place in the society (Aneesh, Hall and Petro 2012, p. 234). Like the conflict theory, the McDonaldisation of society theory emphasises the western corporations are dominating the world and making their products more similar and recognisable. Quantity matters while the quality does not necessarily matter given that money and the accumulated wealth is what counts to the investors. All efforts by business to homogenise their products all over the world are a business strategy to ensure and guarantee survival (Alderson 2009, p. 123). All these attempts are to out-do the competitors from other regions and eventually gain control and dominance over the others.

As the disregard for human resource and expertise is taking effect, the conflict between the humans, governments, institutions, and robotics escalates. The primary objective of human beings is to survive through adequate satisfaction of their needs. As they get replaced by machines, societal conflicts arise as all parties fight for their rightful space in the market where their needs can be met. The employers are conflicting with

their employees due to retrenchment and laying off workers, the government making policies to ensure that people are protected and protests increasing day by day. The McDonaldisation of society theory shows how different societies are similar and their predictability in behaviour when subjected to certain stimuli. With Ritzer accusing the west of seeking and striving dominance in the world market, a conflict from fear of lack and losing dominance by other firms (Eagly, Baron and Hamilton 2010, p. 31). All in all, the McDonaldisation of society theory shows the quest for power by firms as the globalisation is becoming part of life.

The centralisation of power by the McDonald's company is a force that ensures control of the brand and at the same time, increasing their bargaining power in conflict management. McDonaldisation of social theory is a power-seeking societal entity where the more outlets, personnel, and customers the organisation has the more likely; it will have a stronger base and chances of survival. McDonald's has thousands of outlets worldwide and serves millions of customers every day (McDonald Coats 2014, p. 20; Tavidze 2007, p. 11). These outlets are distributed across the world with most of these outlets in the United States. The company headquarters control the quality and the blend of all their products across the world. However, they are introducing different products depending on the locality to ensure inclusivity of all customers and respect for cultures and differences in the way of life. Thus, attack on McDonald's corporations and their services are an attack on thousands of workers and restaurants worldwide.

McDonaldization has made the company a global leader in fast-food restaurants and in all policies, they will be forever considered. The theory is

just an illustration of how strategies are made to dominate the world markets in the age of globalisation.

With globalisation and the intensifying competition in the modern market clarity of goals and objectives are necessary for societal stability. George Simmel argues that conflict is necessary for a stable society and as globalisation is gaining roots in every society, homogenization may be a reality (Crossman, 2019). If all communities are bound to live together in all countries in the world, a common thing and standard must be adopted to ensure that all parties live together harmoniously. As the conflict theory argues, the McDonaldisation of society theory has a clear objective that for them to get relevant in all these societies, efficiency, standardisation and control must be the goal (Eagly et al. 2010, p. 35). This will minimise conflicts in the society and ensure that all people are accommodated and can identify themselves with the product in the market regardless of their origin or locality. McDonaldisation of society theory depicts homogenization as the bottom line to conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence.

McDonaldisation of society theory is disfiguring the society starting from families to the general community. Fast food restaurants allow people to eat what they want when they want and where they want it (Scherer 2014, p. 29). This is a direct conflict to the societal values where people used to come together and enjoy such moments and opportunities. With people taking their food outside their families, has separated them and the family connections that initially existed and build during such times are no longer viable. Since the establishment of fast food restaurant in America, most families are growing further apart as the outlet's increase. The

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homogenization of society is spreading this vice in all parts of the world, and therefore, the human interrelationships will slowly fade away (Scherer 2014, p. 77). This corresponds with the conflict theory, where the families' interests on one end and the restaurants on the other hand will forever conflict (Woolridge and Stanley-Stevens 2016, p. 29). Also, the McDonaldisation of society theory also denies the people the human touch and connectivity. The McDonaldisation of society theory is more of a conflict theory as both enhance and reflect on each other.

Human beings behave in a particular fashion when subjected to a certain circumstance. All the behaviour of human beings is somehow predictable, their interactions with other people are based on visible and fully predictable. Social interactionism depicts that communication is the minimum threshold in which people interact (Harris 2012, p. 241). The sharing of meaning makes people form bonds that are necessary and crucial for societal coexistence. The McDonaldisation of society theory also operates on this social order; the process cannot be possible without a common platform in which effective communication is made. For homogenization of society occurs, the basic requirement for people from different races and ethnicities to coexist peacefully through globalisation, communication is of the essence (Thomas, 2016). The symbolic interactionism theory, like the McDonaldisation of society theory, attempt to make a healthy society through quality goods and effective communication.

The McDonaldisation of society theory upholds the predictability of human behaviour in a society. The aspect of the social order, predictability, and standardisation, where the customer experience can be predicted is the <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-mcdonaldisation-of-society-concept/>

backbone of the theory (Ritzer 1995, p. 150). The rationalisation of products and their consistency in production is based on earlier human experiences and therefore, using the same as the base to the argument, the customer is also expected to have the same experience in other countries and communities in the future. The cause and effect relationship of life is evident in both theories, and the customer experience is relied upon to sell the brand. The company like McDonald's can predict that when a specific locality loves their brand, it is almost evident that other regions and communities will also do the same. For this reason, the aspect of control and standardisation is used to ensure that the satisfaction got from the product will be the same and will not change with the change in the blend or other changes in the product. All in all, humans are predictable, and this aspect is the reason behind globalisation and peaceful coexistence in highly diverse populations.

Lastly, the replacement of human labour with technology and machines denies the human touch and experience in social interactions. The McDonaldisation of society theory denies human beings their interaction, opportunities, and capabilities. Human beings should interact with other humans for healthy social relations and stability (Kellner n. d., p. 7). However, the replacement of these humans with machines weakens the customer experience and denies them an opportunity to grow their interactions as a society. With globalisation, people should interact more to establish more cohesive societies. The McDonaldisation of society theory is more likely to bring conflicts among the people and without proper communication, healthy societies may be impossible. The satisfaction in the

product does not only originate from the actual product but also, the human experience about the services given. Additively, human recommendation and interaction promote the rationalised product even more. Machines are limited in many ways, and their dominance in the market may be more harmful than useful for society. Thus, with machine dominance, social interactions are likely to be severely affected.

The theory argues that reality and truth are subjective, and they are what society makes of them. The cognitive ability of humans to make meaning of something makes the theory strong and rational. For example, bhang is legal in some countries while in others illegal, this is the bottom-line of the theory where people interpret the society differently. In the same way, the rationalisation of products as proposed by the McDonaldisation of society theory is a subjective affair, and the legality or rationality of the same is what people think or want it to be (Harris 2012, p. 251). The theory depicts the negative side of homogenization of products as a result of globalisation. The theory also opposes the replacement of human workers with machines. Ritzer sees the attempt to rationalise these products as a negative attempt to control and dominate the market. Thus, the rationality of the McDonaldisation of society theory is dependent on what perspective that is more weighted.

The McDonaldisation of society theory changes the way in which humans interact and at the same time how they relate to each other. The society is constructed in a particular fashion and according to certain structures and classes. With globalisation, different people view society differently; they also view perspectives in society differently (Dahms 2011, p. 59). The

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McDonaldisation is aimed at ensuring that all people can argue and see things on the same side. The theory has both its strengths and downsides, and this makes it favourable to some while unfavourable to others. The constructivism theory, therefore, holds in this situation where all options are weighed and depending on the logic of the situation, which varies with individuals, determined. As the theory is said to dominate the fast food restaurant markets, if looked at the business aspect, it is a growing business while others may see it otherwise. Thus, the society in which the McDonaldisation of society theory is applied is the one to decide, the impact of rationalised products locally.

The structural functionalism theory is more different from the McDonaldisation of society theory than all the other theories. Analysis of the two theories reflects a contrasting view of how the society functions. The societal structures are greatly disregarded in the McDonaldisation of society theory, and this makes the functioning of the two theories different. For example, the McDonaldisation of society theory sees the society in manners that depict equality in all societies across the world. Regardless of the group served and their social standards the products will be the same, and the outcomes in customer satisfaction are expected to be the same. Although the unity of the many outlets is controlled from a central point, they do not operate as individual and independent entities, and therefore their functioning as a unit for the common good is absent. This theory analyses the resemblance and differences between the two.

McDonaldisation of society theory argues that globalisation is bringing about the homogenization of society. This assumes that all agencies in a society

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work in the same way and their roles can be the same and the society will still function (Courses. lumenlearning. com, 2019). However, Herbert Spence introduced the functionalism theory to depict the interdependence of society. According to this theory, all societies are fashioned in a particular manner to make a unit structure (Kumar 2017, p. 78). Just like the human body, the society works in the same way for the common good of everyone and the stability of the society. All social institutions, government agencies, families, beliefs, and worldviews all have their role to play in making the society, and this cannot be overlooked (Turner 2013, p. 7). This is in direct contrast with the McDonaldisation of society theory which views the society to strive to dominate and homogenise everything.

As opposed to the functionalist theory, the McDonaldisation of society theory is a competition-based theory. By use of the McDonald's company as the backbone of the theory, Ritzer ignores the art of business and the where the quality also matters. The theory argues that the sales and quantities matter, but the quality does not (Long-Crowell, n. d.). According to the functionalist theory, business is vital of the society, and all strategies in business are aimed at gaining a larger market share and surviving in the competitive business market. As Ritzer amplifies the dominance and homogeneity, he ignores the issues that govern social life, for example, the laws, beliefs, morals, values, rituals, fashion and others in shaping society (Ritzer 1995, p. 120). Regardless of the competition aspect of business and society, all people from all walks of life have a significant role to play in ensuring that society is peaceful and habitable.

Functionalism acknowledges and upholds specialisation and the division of labour, however, the McDonaldisation of society theory does not.

McDonaldisation of society theory assumes that expertise in a certain field is not required and all people are expected to conform to the popular code for them to achieve the efficiency, predictability, and control over their products. People from all areas can be trained to do a certain job; on the other hand, robotics and artificial intelligence are replacing humans in their jobs since the uniformity is of the essence (Ritzer 2008, p. 113). This is a direct contradiction to functionalism theory where the people are expected to go to school, specialise and perfect in their fields and later join the society and perform what they learned with perfection and improve the current and existing methods. The functionalism theory appears logical given the current dynamism and advancements in different fields (Laberge 2016, p. 2). All in all, with reference McDonaldisation of society theory, does not have all the facts that are seen to improve society.

Lastly, the functionalism theory views the society as a whole and a unit, the same way McDonaldisation of society theory shows the holistic view of the society, production, distribution, and consumption. These two theories uphold each other in viewing the society. Without these aspects the society cannot be a unit, consumers of one product are the producers of the other, this includes both specialisations and at the same time, the homogenization of society and its dependability: (Horton and Hunt 2007, p. 131). All these producers and consumers must make their products distinct t and gain control of their markets for a peaceful and stable society. The structural concept of the society rhymes with the dominance quest of the producers

and global powers (Kumar 2017, p. 05). By so doing the dynamic equilibrium of society is easily achieved. Regardless of the points made, the McDonaldisation of society theory sees society as an indirectly dependent body.

The McDonaldisation of society theory as proposed by George Ritzer is an expansion of Max Weber bureaucratic theory (Mises 2018, p. 37). The theory acknowledges that there has been a tremendous change in the structure of society and societal order and has greatly affected the way humans interact and act. McDonaldisation is the process of dominance by fast-food restaurants in American society and around the world. The corporation is used as an example given its massive size and market share around the world and taken to be the basis of many other firms. However, although other forces, like Ebayization, are working against this form of social order, it is gaining its roots slowly (Ahuvia and Izberk-Bilgin 2011, p. 365). The theory operates under the following tenets, calculability, predictability, and standardisation increased control, efficiency and replacement of human labour by technology.

The theory depicts the struggle among corporations to gain dominance and control like the conflict theory. Like the postmodern theories, McDonaldisation of society theory depicts changes in the structure of the society and subjectivity of the impacts of the process on the society (Elg, Hadjikhani and Ghauri 2012, p. 86). The rationalisation of products is aimed at gaining and sustaining customer satisfaction in all areas as different ethnicities make a single society as a result of globalisation. The functionalism theory, though depicting differences, McDonaldisation of

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society theory does not indicate the contribution of the process to the society rather than for individuals (Tavidze 2007, p. 52).

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