Mcdonalization essay example

Technology, Innovation

George Ritzers (in Wallace & Wolf, 2006) founded the concept of McDonalization based on Max Weber's theory of rationalization. Therefore, at the basis of the McDonalization social phenomenon stands the economic theory of rationalization, which promulgates several principles significant for the nowadays living: efficiency, calculability, predictability and replacement of human effort (work) with technologized (mechanized) processes.

The efficiency principle consists in the fact that people nowadays developed mechanisms to ease life, based on a do – it – yourself (DIY) concept, which implies staying in line for being served, and not waiting at the tables for someone to take the order; preparing one's own meal (burger, salad mix, drinks, etc.), optimizing time and money, at the cost, however, of becoming unpaid employees of the companies that propose DIY services.

Calculability emphasizes quantity over quality and the current society seems to be based on this principle. The more the better, but no information is given (usually) about the quality of the purchased products/services. Great significance is being placed to concepts such as big (Big Mac, Big Gulp), extra, super (Supersize portions in McDonald's, Super Big Gulp at 7-Eleven). These concepts are even valuable for the dieting principle, opposed to fast food industry. Emphasize is placed on the quantity (how many calories will be lost) and not on the quality (what is healthy, proper for the organism).

Another principle of McDonalization, retrieved from the rationalization theory is the predictability. This principle imposes a standardized mode of living, where society absorbs known products/services (known fast food menus, known TV shows, known newspapers) because they are used to these and they do not include the surprise factor. In the McDonalized society people

tend to live the same, over and over, having the ability to predict everything, so that nothing would contradict their plans.

The McDonalization also came with another principle that sustains the rationalization concept – the replacing of people with nonhuman technology. The former salesperson have become ATMs and now everything is less time consuming when standing in line at the supermarket, because the products' barcodes are scanned, for reducing the human error factor.

All these principles of McDonalization, however, come with a price, the price of dehumanization, of transforming individual in just " another brick in the wall" (Pink Floyd, 1979), where, for the benefit of improving the efficiency and predictability, emphasizing the calculability and optimizing work by using machines instead of people, the society is becoming enslaved to standardization, losing the family connection (preference for eating out instead of having the family dinner), the spontaneity, the orientation towards quality or the human relations.

As such, as I am reading the news, I prefer having the very – short versions of the information, reading only the title and the lead, which give me all the needed information for what I want to know. I am purchasing online my Opera tickets and this is how I lose the contact with the salesperson from the Opera house and with actually going to the Opera House for buying the tickets. I am following some technical – assisted procedures assured by my phone provider for changing my subscription or for launching my roaming options. I am going to furniture stores where the furniture comes unassembled and I have to manage to put the pieces together, without the help of a specialized person, but only guided by a user manual.

All these are just few examples that indicate the diminishing of human relations, replaced with human to technology relations. These actions imply the time optimization in the current lifestyle that mostly urban societies promote, where everybody is on the run, with no time for staying in line at the bank, phone service provider, etc., losing the contact and the interaction with other people that was naturally associated with the classical human assisted services. Moreover, when an ATM is down or when the system is having an error in a middle of an online transaction, there is no human assistance to count on, just a technology that is programmed to offer limited assistance. Such moments, when you cannot receive human assistance, or when the telephonic robot is putting you on hold for hours, as you wait for receiving information regarding your bank account, for instance, makes McDonalization negative, more time consuming than time optimizing, more irrational than rational.

There are, however, positive aspects of McDonalization, that range from not having to face a salesperson who had a bad day and is treating the customers impolitely to actually optimizing time. As I order a pizza, I do not stay in line or wait at the table. I stay at home and in the meantime I can watch a movie or play my guitar. Indeed, this comes with a fee for the delivery, as paying my bills from home comes with an extra tax for the online services, but it reduces tremendously the time spent in line at the cash desk, filling up forms, traveling from one agency to another and wasting time and money (for gas and car parking, when traveling by car).

Therefore, the principles that McDonald's (as the leader of the fast food industry) and enunciated by George Ritzer impose on our current society

have both positive and negative effects, as McDonalization brings efficiency, optimization (more for less money), predictability and a more rapid delivery of services (because of the technologized work), while it gradually cuts the human relationships, the family values, jeopardizing the existence of some classical jobs (such as salesperson, replaced by ATMs), which can negatively impact the economy as a result of the unemployment rate.

References

Pink Floyd (1979) Another brick in the wall. Pink Floyd Music Publishers Ltd.

Ritzer, G. in Wallace, R., A. & Wolf, A. (2006) " The Weberian theory of rationalization and McDonalization on contemporary society". Classical Sociological Theory. Prentice Hall.