

**Burger Boom**

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**3 March 2008**

**Paper: 6 pages**

**Map and Chart: 1 page**

**Works Cited: 2 pages**

This paper will address the American restaurant McDonald's. Many aspects will be examined, including its history, trip overseas, and menu variations. McDonald's reception in Japan, China, the United Kingdom, and France will be addressed as well. Feeding the world with speedy and reliable food comes with great nutritional consequences, as will be elaborated herein.

Fishwick (1995) talks about the history of McDonald's. The McDonald brothers opened a small drive-in in 1937 and a larger one in 1948. Upon Ray Kroc's visit to McDonald's to sell milkshake mixers, he bought the store. McDonald's wanted to have clean, welcoming restaurants. McDonald's became more popular in the 50s and 60s. Couples moved to the suburbs with their young kids. It was convenient to get a quick bite to eat at a drive-in (DeBres, 2005). The restaurant did not have a drive-thru until 1974 (Fishwick, 1995). After hamburgers and Ronald proved successful in the United States, McDonald's expanded. The company swelled abroad in 1969 with McDonald's International (Fishwick, 1995). By 2001 there were over 28,700 restaurants in 120 countries (DeBres, 2005).

McDonald's put a lot of effort into architecture at atmosphere of International establishments. Den Fujita opened McDonald's in Japan. He founded a few main rules which are now used globally. Build in the heart of the city using local builders. Tout the three mainstays: hamburgers, milkshakes, and fries. Maintain sanitation and congeniality (Fishwick, 1995). These aspects have lead to McDonald's popularity and success worldwide.

McDonald's Corporation places emphasis on sprinkling local influences in their outdoor architecture, with one exception - the golden arches. The arches can be seen

from Des Plaines, Illinois to São Paulo, Brazil. In Beijing, traditional red, circular windows are integrated into the façade. In Athens, one can see marble columns on his or her way in to buy fries (Fishwick, 1995). In Bucharest, a former train station now sells happy meals instead of tickets (Fishwick, 1995). People are often uneasy with the unknown. If a McDonald's from Alabama dropped into Indonesia, the residents would probably be weary. Adopting local design styles makes the store seem a little less foreign.

Architecture is not the only thing for which they make concessions. After McDonald's has established itself in an area, the menu sometimes alters. With Ronald, many eat "Spicy Wings (red-pepper-laced chicken) in Beijing, kosher Big Macs (minus the cheese) in Jerusalem, vegetable McNuggets in New Delhi, or a McHuevo (a burger with fried egg) in Montevideo" (Watson, 2000:122). In the Netherlands traditional favorites of applesauce and fried chicken cakes are offered (Fishwick, 1995). In Holland the menu tweaking was as simple as replacing ketchup with mayonnaise (DeBres, 2005). Many European countries have more beverage options than milkshakes or Coke. In France wine is offered; in Germany the option is beer, and the English can order tea (DeBres, 2005). This flexibility contributes to customers' comfort while visiting a foreign restaurant, which in turn can lead to customer loyalty and respect.

There are many fast food places in Japan. McDonald's competes with those offering traditional foods like sushi and soba (Traphagan and Brown, 2002). Younger people are more likely to eat at the American restaurant than older people. Often a group of people go together and enjoy the food in the traditional pattern of communal

eating. Eating is also a very social activity in Japan (Traphagan and Brown, 2002). Communal consumption serves to reduce the amount any one person eats. Perhaps negative nutritional effects are less severe.

With McDonald's introduction to China in 1992, the "Communist Party officials could barely restrain their enthusiasm over this new model of modernization, hygiene, and responsible management" (Watson, 2000:132). After three years however, the government encouraged fast food that served food native to China (Watson, 2000). Nonetheless, the people of China still crowd in the restaurants started by Ray Kroc.

The restaurants in China are aware of local culture and integrate it into their structure or introduce new practices. It is custom to honor the elders in China. McDonald's caters to this with their offer of free drink refills for people 65 and older. People of all ages are attracted by the consistent, clean, calm, and crime-free environment. An atypical practice for the Chinese is to stand in line. It is accepted to gather around cash registers to try to get the attention of the cashier. In China, an employee was chosen to instruct people to stand in line until they got accustomed to it (Watson, 2000). It is only in the last 30 years or so that people in China began to celebrate birthdays. McDonald's offers American style birthday parties with cake and hats. Living spaces are often crowded, so the playful and clean atmosphere of McDonald's is conducive for celebratory gathering (Watson, 2000). With the one-child policy, many parents and grandparents want their little ones to be happy, so they take them to McDonald's.

McDonald's is a different story in Europe. While China enjoys the American style fast food restaurant with its cleanliness and safety; Western Europe focuses on another

aspect of the corporation: pro-Americanization. Initially McDonald's imported food to its restaurants in the United Kingdom in 1974. This was perceived negatively, implying that the local food was not up to the American company's standards. Also, the architecture was seen as "plastic," a fake façade processed and stamped out (DeBres, 2005). The French did not like the décor either. Recently McDonald's has projected a posh and pro-French style to compete with the popular fast baguette stores. In France, one can stroll under the golden arches across hardwood floors and purchase a brioche to enjoy in an armchair (Leung, 2002). Western Europe's early trepidation toward fast food has since dissolved. By 1999 France had 744 McDonald's restaurants (Watson, 2000). In Britain, the long hours and low prices have lead the British to consume the largest amount of fast food in Western Europe (DeBres, 2005).

The American company is taking on different roles worldwide. It is evolving more healthfully in countries with newfound nutrition interests. The "i'm lovin' it" corporation now provides websites assuaging health concerns about their food. These websites are available for the United Kingdom and Australia with the theme "make up your own mind." Interestingly, a website informing Americans is absent. Also of note, many McDonald's food items in Britain have less salt and fat than their American counterparts (DeBres, 2005).

The World Health Organization's list of top ten health risks includes: high cholesterol, obesity, and high blood pressure (2002). There are many aspects of McDonald's food which makes it have a high potential for health risks, which rises with the rate of consumption. Some include trans fats, large portion sizes, and preservatives.

Trans fatty acids (TFA) are detrimental to health. TFA

raise total and LDL [low density lipoproteins or bad] cholesterol and lower HDL [high density lipoproteins or good] cholesterol. Trans fats are found in foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils. (Trans Fatty Acids, 2008: ¶9)

In the United States, McDonald's says their goal (aspiration, not reality) is to eliminate trans fats from their fried foods (Frequently asked questions, 2006). High cholesterol build up in blood vessels can lead to coronary artery disease, in which lower blood flow restricts oxygen flow through the heart. If a blockage occurs, heart attack or death are potential consequences (Heart disease health center, 2008).

The rate of obesity is rising worldwide. Over 300 million people are obese. Obesity is defined as have a body mass index of 30 or above (Global strategy, 2008). Obesity comes with changing patterns. People are more sedentary, and the industrialization of food is largely unhealthy. McDonald's has a role in obesity discussions. In relation to obesity, portion sizes of food must be considered. People order more because it is less expensive per unit; a "Super Size" has the lowest cost per unit in relation to a "small," which is the opposite (Harnack and French, 2003). People get a good financial deal at the cost of their health. Also, many items on the menu have a high caloric, high saturated fat, and high sodium content (McDonald's USA, 2008). There are many health consequences to obesity. Obesity can lead to "type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, sleep apnea, and stroke" (Obesity – overview, 2008:¶1). Obesity lowers life expectancy as well.

While McDonald's touts all natural ingredients, upon investigation it is apparent that additives and preservatives are present in McDonald's food. Some include sodium

nitrate and sodium benzoate (Hickman). Research has indicated certain additives can lead to hyperactivity in children (Hickman).

Many claim that McDonald's prevalence worldwide is leading to "cultural homogeneity." While the hamburger is now available globally, it is not perceived the same everywhere. Many factors lead people all over the world to eat with Ronald. In Asia, the restaurant's atmosphere is appreciated, while in Europe it seems convenience has a larger influence. The predominating commonality of McDonald's food is its negative nutritional characteristics.

Map and Chart in regard to the aforementioned paper



(modified from Klein, 2007)

McDonald's Restaurants  
by Country  
(as of June 30, 1999)

United States	12,490
Japan	2,985
Canada	1,093
Germany	947
Brazil	771
France	744
Taiwan	310
China	235
Italy	211
Hong Kong	158
Other	5,397
Total	25,341

(Watson, 2000)

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