

## McDonaldization of Society

### George Ritzer and McDonaldization

In our modern society, trends and technology become such a large part of everyday life that people start to use them as verbs and adjectives. We google things we want to find out more about, blog about a recent trip, or friend somebody on Facebook. George Ritzer basically did the same thing with the fast-food restaurant McDonald's in his best-selling book, *The McDonaldization of Society*. He defines McDonaldization as the process by which principles of fast food restaurants have come to dominate virtually every aspect of society. McDonald's and other fast food chains offer an alternative to labour-intensive, home-cooked meals that have been attractive to busy families since the 1950s. Two of their most appealing defining attributes are convenience and affordability. These qualities and similar principles are becoming increasingly important in all aspects of our modern society.

### Rationalization

The building block of McDonaldization is Max Weber's concept of rationalization, which is the process of replacing traditional and emotional thought with reason and efficiency. Weber believed that most societies throughout history were governed by tradition and that the most significant trend in modern sociology is an increasing rationalization of every part of our daily lives. He was also convinced that rationalization would continue until our society would become an iron cage, dehumanizing everyone and creating an extreme level of uniformity. Likewise, Ritzer uses McDonald's as a metaphor for the over-rationalization of society. The popularity of the restaurant itself is a perfect example of rationalization because traditional, home-cooked family meals have been replaced with meals of practicality and convenience. Continued rationalization has led to sectors beyond the fast food industry becoming increasingly uniform and automated.

### Principles of McDonaldization

According to the author, the two main principles of McDonaldization are predictability and calculability. These are the characteristics of McDonald's and other fast-food establishments. However, they continue to be characteristics of other changing industries, such as shopping districts, education, healthcare, and more.

### Predictability

Customers of McDonald's can predict the food menu: you'll find the same Big Mac in California as you would in New York. The building, the decorations, and the uniforms are also usually the same. By the same token, other industries are becoming increasingly predictable. Most of the shopping malls across the country have the same stores. Popular fiction is 'rebooted' over and over again in all kinds of media. Many popular websites even have the same basic layout. Consumers seem to love predictability and they often go with what they know.

### Calculability

The second principle of McDonaldization is calculability, which can be seen at McDonald's in several ways. First, there's an emphasis of quantity over quality. The size and weight of a burger that you buy is the exact same as the size and weight of a burger someone else buys - and the bigger, the better. Second, the cost of that burger is a big selling point. The

appeal of low prices is obvious in their Dollar Menu. Third, speed is also considered extremely important and sometimes comes at the cost of quality. Similarly, quantity is increasingly important everywhere you go. Consumers often use price and number of items sold to gauge the appeal of a business. Many stores are now open 24 hours a day in order to stay competitive.

Adapted from [www.study.com](http://www.study.com)

**Ex. 1 Find the words or expressions in the text which mean the following:**

- 1) in the simplest terms: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) a rule: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) almost: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) to take away the human aspect from sth: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) the state of being the same: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) the way sth is arranged: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) the number of things / the amount of things: \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) how good sth is: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) clear: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) to measure sth: \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) similarly: \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) to control: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ex. 2 Match the expressions from the two columns into logical collocations:**

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1) a fast       | point              |
| 2) labour       | what you know      |
| 3) a defining   | competitive        |
| 4) the building | food chain         |
| 5) by the same  | at the cost of sth |
| 6) a shopping   | token              |
| 7) to go with   | intensive          |
| 8) a selling    | attribute of sth   |
| 9) sth comes    | mall               |
| 10)to stay      | block of sth       |

**Ex. 3 Provide English equivalents of these expressions:**

1) wygoda	7) sprawiać wrażenie, że ...
2) dostępność	8) atrakcyjność czegoś
3) rozsądek	9) nacisk na coś
4) być o czymś przekonanym	10)podobnie
5) przewidywalność	11)bestsellerowy
6) obliczalność	12)wyguglać coś

**Grammar corner...**

One of the most efficient ways of making new words in English is adding a small part in front of it. We call those small parts PREFIXES, because they're fixed BEFORE the word. So PRE- means before, just like in the word predict. Other prefixes also have their special meanings, e.g. over- (too much, e.g. overworked, overpaid, to overreact), under- (not enough, e.g. underpaid, underrated, underestimated), de- (without, e.g. to dehumanize sth, to demote sb, to demotivate sb), uni- (the same, one, e.g. uniform, unisex, unicycle), re - (again, e.g. to replace sth, to reboot a movie franchise, to reinstate sth).

**Ex. 4 Use the words in parenthesis with the right prefix to make meaningful sentences.**

1. I find it very \_\_\_\_\_ (MOTIVATING) when I can't see the results of my work.
2. You're \_\_\_\_\_ (REACTING), he didn't do anything wrong.
3. Governments very often \_\_\_\_\_ (ESTIMATE) the power of the people, and the people often teach them a painful lesson.
4. There's more and more gendered marketing and very few items on the market are \_\_\_\_\_ (SEX).
5. Many people believe that \_\_\_\_\_ (INSTATING) death penalty would solve the problem of increased crime.
6. You can't \_\_\_\_\_ (DICT) the future, but you can analyze statistics and make assumptions.
7. Most critics didn't like the movie, but I think it was very nice and much \_\_\_\_\_ (RATED).
8. I'm so \_\_\_\_\_ (WORKED), I can't stop thinking about a vacation.
9. Excuse me, could you \_\_\_\_\_ (PLACE) my dessert? There's a hair in this one.
10. Have you ever ridden a \_\_\_\_\_ (CYCLE)?

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	
<b>basically</b>	zasadniczo
<b>a principle</b>	zasada
<b>virtually</b>	niemalże
<b>to dehumanize sth</b>	odczłowieczyć coś
<b>uniformity</b>	jednolitość
<b>layout</b>	układ
<b>quantity</b>	ilość
<b>quality</b>	jakość
<b>obvious</b>	oczywisty
<b>to gauge sth</b>	zmierzyć coś
<b>likewise</b>	podobnie
<b>to dominate</b>	dominować
<b>a fast food chain</b>	sieć barów szybkiej obsługi
<b>labour-intensive</b>	wymagający dużo pracy
<b>a building block of sth</b>	część składowa czegoś
<b>a defining attribute of sth</b>	cecha wyróżniająca coś
<b>by the same token</b>	z tego samego powodu
<b>a shopping mall</b>	centrum handlowe
<b>to go with what I know</b>	wybierać znane sobie produkty
<b>a selling point</b>	mocny punkt
<b>sth comes at the cost of sth</b>	coś dzieje się kosztem czegoś
<b>to stay competitive</b>	zachować konkurencyjność
<b>convenience</b>	wygoda
<b>affordability</b>	dostępność
<b>reason</b>	rozsądek
<b>to be convinced about sth</b>	być o czymś przekonanym
<b>predictability</b>	przewidywalność
<b>calculability</b>	obliczalność

<b>to seem to be ...</b>	sprawiać wrażenie, że ...
<b>the appeal of sth</b>	atrakcyjność czegoś
<b>emphasis on sth</b>	nacisk na coś
<b>similarly</b>	podobnie
<b>best-selling</b>	bestsellerowy
<b>to google sth</b>	wygugłać coś
<b>rationalization</b>	racjonalizacja
<b>underrated / underestimated</b>	niedoceniany
<b>to demote sb</b>	zdegradować kogoś
<b>to reinstate sth</b>	ponownie coś wprowadzić

**ANSWER KEY:**

*Ex. 1*

- 1) basically
- 2) a principle
- 3) virtually
- 4) to dehumanize sth
- 5) uniformity
- 6) layout
- 7) quantity
- 8) quality
- 9) obvious
- 10) to gauge sth
- 11) likewise
- 12) to dominate

*Ex. 2*

- 1) a fast food chain
- 2) labour intensive
- 3) a defining attribute of sth
- 4) the building block of sth
- 5) by the same token
- 6) a shopping mall
- 7) to go with what you know
- 8) a selling point
- 9) sth comes at the cost of sth
- 10) to stay competitive



*Ex. 3*

- 1) blatantly
- 2) literally
- 3) innumerable
- 4) sth translated into profits
- 5) shamelessly
- 6) to embrace sth
- 7) these days
- 8) not infrequently
- 9) bankable
- 10) big-budget
- 11) indefinitely
- 12) pretty

*Ex. 4*

- 1) demotivating
- 2) overreacting
- 3) underestimate
- 4) unisex
- 5) reinstating
- 6) predict
- 7) underrated
- 8) overworked
- 9) replace
- 10) unicycle