

The McDonald's Project

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This ethnographic study has been done in McDonald's, on December 8 Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in Piazza della Repubblica which is one of the most famous and touristic places of Rome. It is also important to consider that the observations described in the following paragraphs are based on a one-hour visit.

I started the project by observing the age group preferring to eat at McDonald's and I realized that there is a great demand from every age group of people. For example; I saw parents eating with their children and babies, young couples, teenagers, middle-aged women and I also saw an old couple having coffee and dessert who argued with a beggar there. I think, number of women coming McDonald's is more than number of men, because most of the groups eating together were generally girls and women. Additionally, I should emphasize that there were many people from different nationalities and mostly Asians that give a reflection of a touristic location. On the other hand, there is a cinema and a subway exit very close to McDonald's which is a strong factor having citizens of Rome as well, as local consumers. I observed that McDonald's has not a specific target customer, it is possible to meet people from every age group and social/economic class as I witnessed three businessmen having their meal next to the table of teenagers.

The people stood in lines to make their orders and some talked to each other and some did not. The mode of dressing was generally casual, but I also noticed two women dressed elegantly who had shopping bags and they seemed they were waiting for their friends. Moreover; there was a beggar like I mentioned before, showing his passport and asking for money, he was trying to explain something about himself but it was very hard to understand him. Then a group of gypsy women sat next to my table, one of them started breast feeding her baby but she acted in a careless way, the other one was talking very loudly, all the attention was on them and the woman with the baby lighted her cigarette just before leaving there. When I analyzed the time period people spent there, I recognized that the couples with children stayed around 20 minutes whereas the others did not stay more than 10 minutes.

I believe that the architecture of the places have strong effects in preferences; and the McDonald's in which I made observations is located in Piazza della Repubblica which has

an important historical background and the people preferring to eat out have the view of Fountain of the Naiads. The restaurant has three floors; the main entrance where I was sitting, the ground floor and upstairs which was closed that day. But the dining areas I saw in the two floors were well designed; in the ground floor the walls were decorated with some colorful paintings, the tables and chairs were comfortable and clean; there was someone walking around and cleaning the tables, I also saw this person warning a customer to leave his tray to the waste bin after having his meal.

A meal in general consists of a hamburger (might be cheeseburger, Mc Chicken etc...), french fries and a Coke (might be another soft-drink), finally the coffee and the muffins complete the consistent American taste after the meal. McDonald's also offers local tastes like, McItaly, typical Italian toasts and tiramisu al panettone. The price of a menu is approximately 3.50. When we compare McDonald's prices to favorite Italian fast-food "pizza", we see that eating at McDonald's costs less than eating pizza.

One of the most important characteristics of McDonald's as a restaurant is its welcoming and warm environment; the staff greets you very friendly then every single person is treated equally, no matter what social or economic class s/he belongs to. The staff always acts patiently; they try to be kind and gentle while waiting for customers' orders. I think this way of service which is supported by the quality of food keeps its popularity as very positive and considerable aspects. I also want to point out the children's interest in eating at McDonald's; the colorful environment, the birthday decorations and the hamburgers make them real fans. On the other hand, I know some parents who take their children to McDonald's just to make them eat something, because they believe that their children will never say "no" to a hamburger.

The image that McDonald's created as an American style, taste and look is strongly recognized in most of the Asian and other countries in the world. The western side, the cultural and identical features which remain constantly make McDonald's a unique example giving the real impression of America. Most Americans prefer clean and quick service, easy and cheap food therefore McDonald's is a typical American restaurant that presents the absolute expectations.

