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The DeMcDonaldization of Society?

The focus of this book has been on McDonaldization as an increasingly omnipresent process not only in the United States, but throughout the world; not only in the world of fast food, or even in food more generally, but in many other aspects of the social world (family, religion, criminal justice, and so on).¹ However, the objective in this closing chapter is to take a critical look at this “grand narrative” of progressive McDonaldization, to examine whether there are important countertrends, and even whether there are signs that we are moving in the other direction toward “deMcDonaldization.” These issues will be dealt with in three sections in this chapter. First, we will examine a potpourri of changes that tend to suggest that deMcDonaldization is at least a possibility. Second, we will focus on the rise of Starbucks and the issues of whether it is of such great importance that a distinct process of Starbuckization has emerged and whether it threatens to replace McDonaldization and is thereby suggestive of deMcDonaldization. Third, we will turn to the Internet and offer a similar analysis of eBay and eBayization² and, most important, of the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (of which eBay is a part); we will analyze whether this realm offers the most definitive evidence of deMcDonaldization.

A Potpourri of Factors

One worrisome trend from the point of view of McDonald’s (and implicitly McDonaldization) has been the worldwide efforts, like those discussed in

Chapter 9, that oppose its operations, its practices, and even its food. Especially threatening is the coalition of groups convinced that McDonald's is a significant contributor to, and the major symbol of, environmental degradation, obesity and other health-related problems, the evils of capitalism, poor working conditions, faltering unionization, neglected children, and the global threat of homogenization and Americanization. As a national and international operation with tens of thousands of local outposts, McDonald's (although not necessarily McDonaldization which is far broader and less clearly defined than McDonald's itself) is vulnerable to opposition at various levels. Once, and still (although the case for Starbuck will be discussed below), the model corporation (in a positive sense) in the eyes of many, McDonald's was for a time, and may again be, in danger of becoming the paradigm for much that is bad in the world. While the tempo of anti-McDonald's (and anti-American) protests has abated in recent years, there is good reason to believe that we have not seen the last of them.

A very different threat to McDonald's stems from the difficulty any corporation has in staying on top indefinitely. Sooner or later, internal problems (such as declining profits, falling stock prices, or lack of managerial creativity), external competition, or some combination of the two, will set McDonald's on a downward course. In the end, it could become a pale imitation of what is now a corporate powerhouse. These factors might even lead eventually to its complete disappearance.

More generally, the franchise system of which McDonald's is a part is not an unqualified success. A surprising number of franchise systems have experienced serious difficulties (e.g., Krispy Kreme) and many have failed. For example, Wrap&Roll, which sold stuffed tortillas, closed its outlets because diners found the menu too limited.³ The huge Boston Market (formerly Boston Chicken) chain, pioneer in the "home meal replacement" business, went bankrupt, the victim of overexpansion, a questionable financing system, steep competition in the roast chicken market, and a failed effort to expand beyond its base in the chicken business. A regional developer of Boston Markets moaned, "We thought we had a concept that was the next McDonald's."⁴ Ironically, Boston Market was purchased by McDonald's in 2000, but Boston Market, in turn, was sold to a private equity firm in 2007. Even Starbucks has had its financial problems, closed hundreds of shops, and been the object of several protests. Although McDonald's is a great success in France, Burger King was forced to close its restaurants there, including the one on the Champs-Élysées. Holiday Inn has been experiencing problems, in part because it came to be perceived as "old and tired," and it has responded with a new logo and massive renovations of its motels. McDonald's works hard to maintain its franchises but could suffer in a general retreat from that business model.

Another potential threat to McDonaldization is "sneakerization." There is considerable evidence that we have entered a postindustrial era that disdains

the kinds of standardized, “one-size-fits-all,” products at the heart of McDonaldized systems. Instead, we are seeing much more of what seems to be something like customization. True customization (for example, made-to-measure suits) is certainly not easily amenable to McDonaldization. Sneakerization is more akin to niche marketing. For example, we now have hundreds, or even thousands, of different styles of sneakers produced for various niches in the market (runners, walkers, aerobic exercisers, and so on). The result, of course, is not true customization; sneakers are not being made-to-measure for specific users. Similar developments are everywhere. For example, hundreds, even thousands, of different types of watches, televisions, and the like are manufactured by the same company.⁵

However, sneakerization does *not* reflect a trend toward de-McDonaldization. Large companies such as Nike produce hundreds of thousands or even millions of pairs of each type of sneaker with the result that each is amenable to McDonaldized production (as well as marketing, distribution, and sales). In fact, one future direction for McDonaldization involves its application to products and services sold in smaller and smaller quantities. Undoubtedly, some absolute lower limit exists below which it is not profitable to McDonaldize (at least to a high degree), but that limit is likely to become lower and lower with further technological advances. That is, we will be able to apply economies of scale to increasingly small production runs. More and different sneakers, more sneakerization, do not represent significant threats to McDonaldization.

A similar argument can be made about what has been termed “mass customization.”⁶ Examples include Dell building a computer to customer specifications, fine hotel restaurants offering napkins and matchboxes with an individual customer’s name on them, and Planters offering different sized packages of mixed nuts to diverse retailers such as Wal-Mart and 7-Eleven.⁷ Logosoftwear.com offers customized caps, shirts, team uniforms, signs, and banners.⁸ They will print or embroider your name, address, or logo anywhere you want on, say, a T-shirt. This process is less McDonaldized than the mass production of thousands or even millions of the same T-shirt with, say, a Nike logo on it. Mass production is more efficient, it permits greater predictability, more of it is amenable to quantification, and it relies more on nonhuman technologies than the customized production of T-shirts, even the way Logosoftwear.com does it. However, the procedures at Logosoftwear.com are clearly far more McDonaldized than the traditional methods of producing customized clothing. Thus, we are talking here, as is usually the case, about degrees of McDonaldization. The production and sale of goods and services in increasingly small quantities and of higher-quality products represent new directions for McDonaldization, but they do not represent deMcDonaldization. Thus, although it is possible to conceive of the decline, even demise of McDonald’s,

there is little in the examples discussed in this section to support the notion that McDonaldization is decelerating, let alone disappearing.

Starbuckization

A second issue is whether the rise of Starbucks (despite its own recent setbacks) is sufficiently important that Starbuckization is replacing McDonaldization; thereby indicating deMcDonaldization. If it is, is Starbuckization simply another name for McDonaldization (and, more generally, rationalization)? Or, is it sufficiently different that it deserves its own distinctive label?

Although it has recently become a bit frayed at the edges, Starbucks created the image that it was “cutting edge.”⁹ Not only does this statement prioritize Starbucks, but it implies that McDonald’s no longer occupies that position. If Starbucks is on the cutting edge of the fast-food industry, then perhaps it, and not McDonald’s, should be the model for the process discussed here. One customer explicitly acknowledged this new prioritization when she said, “Starbucks is the new McDonald’s.”¹⁰ Among the indications of Starbucks’ ascendancy are the following:

- As was (and still is) the case with McDonald’s, other businesses now owe their existence to Starbucks and seek to emulate it in many ways. Said the CEO of the nearly 500-store Caribou Coffee chain, “I got into the business because of what they [Starbucks] created.”¹¹ In China, a small chain, Real Brewed Tea, aims to be “the Starbucks of tea.”¹²
- As has also been the case with McDonald’s, Starbucks clones have emerged around the world. For example, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, there is Kaldi’s that “has a Starbucks-like logo and Starbucks-like décor, and its workers wear Starbucks-like green aprons. . . . A small coffee is called a “tall.”¹³
- The *Economist* toyed with the idea of a “tall latte index” to play the same role as the “Big Mac Index” in comparing prices around the world.¹⁴
- A pastor saw the satellite locations created by megachurches as akin to franchises: “It’s kind of like going to Starbucks. You know the product you’re going to get.”¹⁵
- There is now a book that seeks to delineate the “leadership principles” behind Starbucks’ success and to communicate them to aspiring businesspeople who see Starbucks as a model.¹⁶

What Has Starbucks Added to, or Removed From, the McDonald’s Model?

Starbucks’ most obvious advance has been to move away from the mediocre quality of McDonald’s fare and toward the McDonaldization of

higher-quality products, especially its coffee. (However, it is not alone in this move—mid-level [e.g., Red Lobster, Olive Garden] and even high-end [e.g., Morton’s] chains have done the same [see Chapter 1].) There is no question that prior to Starbucks the quality of American coffee was quite dismal. Starbucks has spearheaded a now-widespread trend in the United States toward the appreciation and consumption of higher-quality coffee. (This has not been lost on McDonald’s, which is expanding its McCafes rapidly around the world). It has done the same in other countries—most notably Great Britain (664 Starbucks)—where the quality of the coffee served before Starbucks’ arrival was, if anything, even worse than in the United States. Starbucks has succeeded wildly in countries with a history of poor coffee and without a strong coffee culture (Japan, with more than 800 shops, being a good example). However, it will be a major challenge for Starbucks to succeed as well (or at all) in societies that already have high-quality coffee, and most would argue higher-quality than Starbucks offers, and are famous for their rich coffee cultures (for example, Italy, France, or Turkey). As of mid-2009 there are still no Starbucks in Italy, but there are 46 of them in France, most in Paris, as well as over 100 in Turkey.

In many ways, Starbucks’ most important innovation has been to soften McDonald’s hard-edged approach and image. For example, instead of the stiff and unwelcoming seats offered by McDonald’s, Starbucks has come to be defined, at least in part, by its overstuffed armchairs and sofas and its convenient tables and chairs. In fact, Howard Schultz explicitly seeks to distance Starbucks from McDonald’s-style fast-food restaurants by associating it with Ray Oldenburg’s more homey notion of a “third place”¹⁷ (see Chapter 7): “We’re in the business of human connection and humanity, creating communities in a third place between home and work.”¹⁸ Schultz associates several characteristics with Starbucks as a third place, including

- “a taste of romance” of coffee from far-off places in an otherwise routine day;
- “an affordable luxury” (the coffee is expensive, but many can treat themselves to it, at least occasionally);
- “an oasis”—a small escape from the hectic world (although Starbucks with its drive-throughs, to-go coffee, and [as of 2009] its VIA instant coffee—to say nothing of its caffeinated beverages designed to further stimulate those who drink them—have increasingly become an integral part of the hectic, highly McDonaldized world); and
- “casual interaction”—the social life available at Starbucks (although not to the vast majority of customers who get their coffee in line or at the drive-through windows).

The sense that Starbucks is a third place has been amplified by encouraging customers to come to Starbucks with their laptop computers and to

connect to the Internet through a Wi-Fi connection (for a fee for most customers). They can also browse not only the newspapers (especially the *New York Times*) for sale (or left behind by others) but also the books and CDs for sale, and they can stay as long as they wish. Regardless, even Schultz recognizes that Starbucks is “not yet the ideal Third Place,” with its lack of adequate seating and the fact that even the relatively few customers who choose (or are able) to stay for awhile rarely, in fact, get to know one another.¹⁹

In contrast, McDonald’s has focused on the dangers of people staying too long, affected by the experience of now-defunct chains like the Automat (cafeterias) that were hurt by large numbers of street people who occupied tables for long periods of time but bought little or nothing (see Chapter 6). The Automat’s paying customers were hard-pressed to find seats, and when they did, their appetites were not enhanced by the often-unappealing appearance of the people sitting nearby. To prevent this, McDonald’s created, among other things, that hard edge—garish colors, uncomfortable seats, and other amenities (or, rather, the absence of amenities)—that makes customers feel unwelcome. (In recent years, however, McDonald’s has altered the designs of its restaurants to reduce or eliminate some of these harsh characteristics. This, as well as the expansion of McCafes, is part of the growing convergence of McDonald’s and Starbucks.)

Indeed, the more general message from McDonald’s has been that the customer is less than welcome. Yes, customers can come in and buy their food, but the idea is that they are expected to eat it fast and get out as quickly as possible. Better yet—and in more recent years the message has become—don’t enter the restaurant at all! Instead, whenever possible, customers are expected to use the drive-through window, buy their food, and then leave immediately, taking their food and debris with them. *The ideal McDonald’s customer has become one who never sets foot in the restaurant.*

Starbucks has worked hard to create the opposite, or at least a very different, image—that customers are welcome, so welcome that they can stay for hours, if not all day. Of course, this message is more image than reality. While Wi-Fi is offered “from the comfort of your favorite cozy chair,” it is costly.²⁰ As one journalist put it, “how welcome can one feel when staring at a meter that is running?”²¹ Furthermore, if more than a handful of customers tried to take Starbucks up on its “invitation” to stay for hours, its shops would soon be inundated with people. There is a minuscule number of sofas, armchairs, tables, and seats for the enormous numbers of customers who stop at a Starbucks on a given day. The vast majority of Starbucks’ customers either pick up their coffee in the shop and leave immediately or use its drive-through window. In fact, according to Howard Schultz, 80% of Starbucks’ customers take their coffee and leave; they are “to-go” customers.²² Thus, almost all of Starbucks’ customers behave in much the same

way as many McDonald's customers—they take their drinks and food and leave. (In fact, it is undoubtedly the case that the vast majority of McDonald's customers remain in the restaurant longer than Starbucks' customers.) John Simmons goes further and argues that “the vast majority of Starbucks customers made no conversation or social interaction in the store. Come in, order, take away or sit down; there is no pressure to be sociable.”²³ The difference between the two food chains is much more appearance than reality.

Thus, it could be argued that *Starbucks' major innovation has been in the realm of theatrics*. It is not about the coffee alone; it's about “providing a great experience accompanied by coffee.”²⁴ Starbucks has succeeded in creating a kind of stage set in its coffee shops in which a few, unpaid actors (really paying customers who choose to linger awhile) act out the illusion of an old-fashioned coffee house. Although they may like watching the show, most customers do not want, or are unable because of time constraints, to be performers in it, and they probably could not be those performers even if they wanted to be (because of a lack of enough seating). They often do, however, feel good witnessing the performance (assuming they don't use the drive-through), in effect being the audience, as they line up for their coffee and then leave with it. They may even imagine that some day they, too, might have the time to be part of the show and linger in one of those armchairs. Starbucks has created great theater,²⁵ and in so doing, it has created a new way of doing something McDonald's invented—using customers as unpaid workers (or prosumers). McDonald's customers (at least those who still eat in the restaurant) line up for their own food, deliver it to their tables, and then clean up after themselves. Starbucks' customers do all of these things and sometimes more—such as adding the desired amount of milk and sugar to their coffee. And a few of them do something that is in many ways more important for Starbucks—they stay to drink their coffee in the shop, thereby serving as unpaid actors in the ongoing show taking place at their local Starbucks.

These “actors” include not only casual coffee drinkers but also people who use Starbucks as a place to meet dates or (with the Wi-Fi access) as a part-time office. In fact, some people regularly schedule business meetings there. Starbucks officials say that they encourage this sort of thing, but what is unsaid is that they can do so because only a small number of people are interested in working (or are able to work) there, and in any case, the possibility of working there is limited by the small number of tables and chairs. Even if they wanted to, the vast majority of customers (even businesspeople) could not stay.²⁶

Another aspect of its theatrics involves the ways in which Starbucks presents itself as a kind, gentle, and caring corporation. They manage this in various ways. First, they tell us (through their mission statement, endless public relations blurbs and efforts, and Howard Schultz's self-serving book,

*Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup at a Time*²⁷ a great deal about how much they care about their 176,000 (as of late 2009) employees. (In a blatant public relations effort, they call them “partners”;²⁸ if they are partners, they are certainly *not* equal partners with billionaire Schultz and his top executives.) The company demonstrates this care through, for example, the provision of seemingly generous benefits (e.g., health care, pensions, stock options). Schultz claims that these actions help Starbucks maintain lower turnover than the rest of the industry.²⁹ This practice stands in stark contrast to McDonald’s, which has often been criticized for employing young, part-time workers and for providing them with few, if any, benefits. Then there is their very public concern for the coffee growers, as expressed in their interest in fair-trade coffee. Again, the contrast is with McDonald’s, which is often accused of exploiting the land and those who provide them with beef, chicken, potatoes, and so forth.

There is growing evidence, however, that this contention, too, is more myth than reality; it is more public theater, or perhaps better public relations. In the examples mentioned above, Starbucks does *not* treat its employees as well as it would like us to think, and its commitment to fair-trade coffee is minimal. According to one source, less than 4% of Starbucks’ coffee is fair-trade coffee, it rarely offers fair-trade varieties as its coffee of the day, and it has not followed through on its promise to brew such coffee on demand for customers who request it. Starbucks’ commitment to the small coffee farmer is much more myth than reality, and there are other chains (Costa and Caffe Nero are large chains in Great Britain) that do much more to ensure that fair-trade coffee is sold.

Many critics see similarities between Starbucks and McDonald’s, as well as associate both with the “Wal-Martization” of society.³⁰ Supporters of small local coffee shops often oppose Starbucks in much the same way, and for many of the same reasons, that there is organized and widespread opposition to McDonald’s and Wal-Mart. To many, they are all part of the same general process. (There is a Web site, <http://www.ihatestarbucks.com>, for those with these and many other grievances against Starbucks.)

It is interesting to note that Schultz balks at such comparisons, especially with Wal-Mart. Of the association of Wal-Mart with Starbucks, he said:

The charge is unfair and inaccurate. First, we don’t change the economics of a town. We don’t undercut prices charged by other stores, in most cases our prices are higher, not lower. We don’t draw traffic out of town, . . . instead we enhance downtown traffic for neighboring shops.³¹

Whatever the accuracy of his comparisons, and the questions raised by what is left out (e.g., destroying small, independent coffee shops), Schultz’s defensiveness on this issue is fascinating. Perhaps he protests too much!

Should the Concept of “Starbuckization” Replace “McDonaldization”?

Are the successes of Starbucks, and the innovations associated with it, enough to conclude that “Starbuckization” should replace “McDonaldization” as the term to be used to describe the various changes discussed in this volume? I think the answer is a clear and resounding—No! After all, McDonald’s was the “pioneer” (although this is a much too heroic term to use for even its innovations) in the fast-food industry and in bringing the process of rationalization to its customers and to the process of consumption.

Starbucks clearly fits, and operates in accordance with, the principles of McDonaldization. Starbucks is:

- *Efficient.* Customers line up in the shops for their coffee (and perhaps some food), pay, make their way to the cream and sugar stand, fix their coffee to taste, and in most cases dutifully leave; the drive-throughs at those Starbucks that have them offer the same kind of efficiency that is provided by the McDonald’s drive-throughs. Since brewing and serving coffee are, by far, the major activities at Starbucks, they can be done far more efficiently than in McDonald’s where a couple of dozen different food and drink products are “made.” And, of course, the new instant coffee, VIA, allows for the more efficient preparation of a cup of coffee at home or in the office.

- *Predictable.*³² The logo, the shops,³³ the counters, the marquees listing available drinks, the coffee (especially the more exotic versions), the green aprons, the methods of preparation, the stand with cream and sugar, the carafes with half-and-half, whole milk, and skim milk, the array of other products, the shelves with goods for sale such as coffeemakers, mugs, books, CDs, and so on are all pretty much the same from one locale to another.

- *Calculable.* While there is no pretense of low cost, the emphasis on quantity is clear in the coffee sizes, especially the large sizes. There is *no* small Starbucks coffee; the smallest—in the best tradition of “newspeak” in George Orwell’s *1984*—is a “large!” (The other alternatives, using faux Italian names—and more theatrics—are venti and grande; the latter certainly communicates an even larger-sized cup of coffee than the tall—it is made to seem taller than tall.) Also indicative of calculability are the number of “shots” of espresso one can get as well as the (high) prices associated with the various drinks and sizes. In fact, while McDonald’s associates itself with low prices, Starbucks has succeeded in getting people to pay very high prices, sometimes \$4 (or more)—as a result, some call Starbucks “Fourbucks”³⁴—for some exotic varieties of its coffee. In fact, the high prices add to

Starbucks' effort to position itself at the high end of the market. And there is theater involved here, too. This is a high-end, "classy" show, not the cheap and garish one on view at the McDonald's down the road.

- *Controlled by nonhuman technology.* As in McDonald's, the system at Starbucks exerts great control through nonhuman technologies. For example, creative baristas have been replaced by (mostly) automatic espresso makers (with a corresponding loss of skill and magic). Although Starbucks' theater may lead customers to want to stay, lingering, as we have seen, is impossible for most, given other commitments and destinations, to say nothing of the drive-throughs that encourage them never to enter in the first place.

The Irrationality of Rationality at Starbucks

Starbucks has most, if not all, of the irrationalities associated with McDonald's (homogenization, disenchantment, dehumanization), as well as additional ones, like the much higher prices than at McDonald's.

Customers are paying an extraordinary amount of money for what is essentially flavored water; the profit margins on each cup of coffee are enormous, and those margins are even higher in the case of the high-priced and more exotic drinks. There is a huge markup on a cup of coffee—perhaps as high as 95%.³⁵ Thus, a venti coffee that costs the consumer more than \$2.00 might cost Starbucks as little as 10 cents to make. While Karl Marx wrote about the exploitation of the worker in the era of the domination of production capitalism, the focus has now shifted (although the worker is still exploited, as well) to the exploitation of consumers through not only unpaid labor but also extraordinary markups and price inflation.

The great expansion of Starbucks means that it must buy huge quantities of coffee beans, and that flow must continue uninterrupted. One negative associated with this need is that it cannot necessarily always get the best beans; indeed, the best beans may be grown in such small quantities that they are of little interest to Starbucks, given its enormous requirements. In spite of its claim to be selling high-quality coffee, many experts complain about its mediocrity.³⁶

While Starbucks has eschewed franchising, it has increasingly embraced joint ventures and licensing. These contradict what Schultz had to say about why franchising is a "forbidden word" at Starbucks: "To me, franchisees are middlemen who would stand between us and our customers. We prefer to train all our own people and operate all our own

stores, so that each cup of coffee you buy from Starbucks is the real thing.”³⁷ But immediately afterward, he describes how Starbucks had to relinquish reluctantly control because it couldn’t resist the possibility of so many new customers. Thus, in 1991 it gave Host Marriott license to operate Starbucks coffee shops in airports. The number of licensed Starbucks has increased rapidly (Safeway, Barnes & Noble, etc.), and now over a third of Starbucks in the United States are licensed rather than being run by Starbucks. And overseas there are more licensed and joint venture Starbucks than those that are company owned.

Although Schultz didn’t want franchisees to become middlemen between the company and consumers, those involved in joint ventures and licensees have nevertheless come to occupy exactly that position. And, it may be that Starbucks has *less* control over them than they might have had over franchisees.³⁸ The quality of what Starbucks has to offer has been compromised by licensing.

There are licensed Starbucks at my university; I frequent the one in the library (consorting with the enemy, doing research on Starbuckization, etc.). The coffee there is often lukewarm, the half-and-half jug is almost always empty, the stirrers are too short for the venti coffee and I frequently burn my fingers trying to use them to stir, the staff is awful—as are the pastries (standard University of Maryland offerings)—and the place is filthy; disgusting (if I wasn’t addicted to strong coffee, I’d stop going . . . maybe). Schultz’s fear of “losing control”³⁹ was quite justified; indeed, some of his worst fears seem to have become reality as a result of the rush to expand at all costs. Furthermore, I doubt that most of those who buy Starbucks’ coffee at my library realize that it is not company owned but rather a licensed location (and they may well not even know the difference between them). They may therefore develop a negative view of the company as a whole; the failures of licensees redound to Starbucks as a whole (the reason Schultz was originally afraid of losing control). Indeed, it is arguable that there is greater control over franchisees than licensees, one of the reasons Ray Kroc went in the franchise direction.

The problem of homogenization is reflected in a statement by Howard Schultz about the burgeoning number of Starbucks in China (269 at the end of 2008, but likely to grow dramatically in a short time), especially the one at the Great Wall: “Our stores there are a mirror image of what you see in Madison Park and Pike Place.”⁴⁰ In Taiwan the fear is that Starbucks is playing a major role in the disappearance of its distinctive tea shops and tea culture.⁴¹

There is also considerable uniformity to the coffee shops themselves both in the United States and the rest of the world, although in recent years Starbucks, like McDonald's, has grown increasingly sensitive to this issue and there is more variability in store designs and greater efforts to adapt to local environments.

Nevertheless, each shop is, and must be, unmistakably a Starbucks. In fact, conscious of this, Starbucks has opened one "stealth Starbucks" in Seattle—there is nothing to identify it as a Starbucks—and plans to open two more there.⁴²

Starbucks often drives small, local, and unique coffee shops out of business and, in fact, has been sued for antitrust violations.⁴³ (However, the opposing view is that Starbucks has helped small coffee shops by raising awareness of higher-quality coffee, helping to create an interest in coffee culture, pioneering high prices for coffee, and providing niches where smaller shops can survive within the context of the expansion of Starbucks.⁴⁴)

An issue at Starbucks, one that also dogs McDonald's, is the nutritional value of many of its products. This is particularly the case with many creamy, sugary, Frappuccino-type drinks (inherited by Starbucks from *The Coffee Connection*, which it bought out in 1994).⁴⁵ Such drinks tend to have about the same (large) number of calories and fat as a McDonald's milkshake.

Although it has a public policy of not marketing to children and of not hooking children on addictive coffee drinks, its "starter drinks"—such as cinnamon dolce latte, banana mocha Frappuccino, vanilla white chocolate mocha, and caramel macchiato—inevitably attract children (mostly pre- or early teens) because they have similarities to milkshakes and Slurpees. The types of music promoted also attract children and teenagers to Starbucks and therefore place them in a context in which coffee is purveyed.⁴⁶

This constitutes another way in which Starbucks has stood on the shoulders of McDonald's. It could be argued that what McDonald's did was to "infantilize" food.⁴⁷ First, it created a circus-like atmosphere (the playgrounds, for example) and used a clown (Ronald McDonald) and other cartoon-like characters (the "Hamburglar") to lure children who, in most cases, had to bring their parents along. It played into the needs and orientations of children by offering finger food: food that could be eaten with one's hands and without utensils. It also offered very basic and limited tastes—most generally the very sweet and highly salty, sometimes in the same food. Then there were the vast numbers of toys given away or sold, as well as the tie-ins to

movies such as those made for children by Disney. In fact, while infantilization was the source of McDonald's early success, it later became a problem when this strategy failed to attract enough adult customers who were being drawn to other chains (e.g., Burger King) that, while not eschewing children, appealed more to adults and adult tastes. McDonald's experimented with making Ronald McDonald more adult by, for example, presenting advertisements showing him playing golf, but that campaign failed. McDonald's continues to be hampered (and advantaged) by the orientation to children that was the initial source of its success.

But how does this apply to Starbucks, which is oriented to adults and sells a largely adult-oriented range of coffees? The appeal to young people and young adults of its higher-priced and exotic coffees is the source of much of its success and, undoubtedly, its greatest profits. Many of the drinks are very sweet, highly flavored, very creamy, and/or quite frothy. They are, in the main, *coffee for those who don't really like coffee*. Starbucks has infantilized coffee in order to broaden the market for its products. In the process it has, of course, created drinks that are extraordinarily high in calories, sugar, and saturated fat, in some cases being worse for consumers and their health than comparable McDonald's products.

In sum, Starbucks has been a phenomenal success, but that success has been built on the model pioneered by McDonald's. While it has made a number of innovations, it is better seen as another example of McDonaldization than as a new model that has earned an appellation of its own. McDonaldization has found a relatively new home in the coffee shop. It is not the first, or the last, locale to be invaded by the process of McDonaldization. However, the most important conclusion to be derived from this discussion is that, whatever else it is, Starbucksization is by no means an indication of deMcDonaldization.

The Internet and DeMcDonaldization

Two interrelated aspects of the Internet will be discussed in this section. First, we will discuss whether it is eBayization, not Starbucksization, that is replacing McDonaldization and thereby is indicative of deMcDonaldization. Second, we will look at the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (which subsumes eBay) and discuss whether a process of deMcDonaldization is involved in this transformation of the Internet.

eBayization*

Elif Izberk-Bilgin and Aaron Ahuvia issue a strong challenge to the McDonaldization thesis.⁴⁸ They argue that, while McDonaldization might have been an apt term to capture the reality of a material, Fordist world of consumption that existed a quarter of century ago when the term was first created, it does not well-describe contemporary realities. Among those changes are post-Fordist production techniques, more fragmented consumers and consumer tastes, and a growing desire for more individualized products and services. eBayization is proposed as a paradigm for this new world, especially as it relates to consumption. eBayization has three basic dimensions: *variety* (as opposed to the limited offerings at McDonaldized fast-food restaurants), *unpredictability* (as opposed to the predictability of McDonaldized systems), and *market-mediated control* (rather than the centralized control of a McDonaldized system like McDonald's). eBayization is a very attractive idea, at least as it applies to the Internet and consumption. Since it is likely that consumption (and much else) will occur increasingly on the Internet, there is a strong case to be made for eBayization as the paradigmatic process of our time.

There is no question that the three characteristics associated with eBayization not only differ from those that define McDonaldization but seem to point to less rather than more McDonaldization. McDonaldized systems were, and are, designed to limit or even eliminate variety and unpredictability and to seek to better control the market. However, the argument to be made here is that the basic characteristics of eBayization are superficial, and when one probes beneath the surface one finds the characteristics of McDonaldization that underly it. More strongly, it is the McDonaldization of the basic structure of eBay that makes variety, (seeming) unpredictability, and (seeming) market-mediated control possible.

The variety of products offered on eBay "can boggle even a jaded mind," but Izberk-Bilgin and Ahuvia neglect to analyze the structure of eBay that makes the existence of this great variety possible and makes it possible for the consumer (and the seller) to handle this enormous diversity. In fact, eBay is not unique in this; it is even the case in at least some McDonaldized structures in the material world. It is the McDonaldized structure of a shopping mall that makes possible the sale and purchase of the wide array of products and services on offer there (although they are minuscule in comparison to what is bought and sold on eBay). For example, most indoor malls have a "dumbbell" structure with corridors ending with a department store. Most shoppers know

*This section is coauthored by Margaret Austin Smith

this and, furthermore, are likely to make their way to one or more department stores (which specialize in great variety) and in the process pass by many specialty stores which, in total, offer additional variety. To take another example, Wal-Mart's corporate structure and its incredibly efficient behind-the-scenes operations enables it to sell, and its millions of customers to buy, a vast array of products. It may be more difficult to visualize a McDonaldized structure underlying the variety of items listed on eBay. However, that structure is the database itself and its interface with buyers and sellers on the eBay site. On eBay one may find anything from clothes to electronics to, say, week-old McLaks or McSpaghetti half-eaten by celebrities. This variety attracts buyers and sellers alike, but it would not be possible or manageable without the McDonaldized architecture of the database and the website that brings these items together in one efficiently searchable space. Without a McDonaldized structure to classify and to access the large number and wide range of entries, as well as to make entering and ordering easy, eBay's variety would quickly degenerate into unmanageable and unusable chaos.

There *is* unpredictability on eBay (that half-eaten McSpaghetti), but it, like variety, is made possible by the system's highly McDonaldized structure. Rational models that emphasize predictability very often make possible the greatest surprises. The highly unusual and unique products found on eBay could not be sold and purchased, at least in large numbers to a wide range of consumers, were it not for its McDonaldized structure. eBay gives no more space to one item than the next and does not promote one over the other. Each item on its database is searchable under a preset number of keywords and appears within the same layout customizable only in limited and unvarying ways. Thus, the elements of unpredictability are made tolerable by the frame and structure of predictability that surround it.

Furthermore, it could be argued that these limited elements of unpredictability serve to "enchant" what is otherwise a highly McDonaldized, disenchanting system. As I point out in *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*,⁴⁹ McDonaldized systems often conceal their rationalized core, and make it more acceptable, by surrounding it with enchantment and magic. The seeming unpredictability on eBay performs a similar function. Consumers are drawn to both its unpredictable offerings (amid, by the way, a vast preponderance of quite predictable ones) and the unpredictability of the price, to say nothing of the possibility of obtaining things at bargain prices. This seeming magic serves to obscure the McDonaldization at the heart of eBay as well as to make it and its repeated demands more tolerable.

Market-mediated control is an alternative to the strategy of centralized control employed by McDonald's. eBay's scheme is "to harness and ride the

cacophony of billions of buyers and sellers by shifting direct control from a centralized bureaucracy to the market.”⁵⁰ However, the existence of such a “harness” calls into question the meaning of market mediation in the eBay model. In fact, of course, the whole idea of a market, at least in this era dominated by neoliberalism, is that it *not* be harnessed; that it be a “free market.” However, the structure of eBay limits the free market in various ways in order to mitigate potential costs to consumers and thereby to promote more transactions. It is one user’s responsibility to decide whether to undertake the risk of buying or selling with any other user, but eBay seeks to allay the fears of those who might be deterred by the risks associated with such transactions. This is done through the eBay user rating system, which gives buyers a number by which they can judge the reliability of a seller and the potential risks associated with a given transaction. Then there are the standardized procedures for filing strikes or complaints against other users so that buyers and sellers are provided with another means (number of such grievances) of evaluating each other’s credibility. These sorts of things constitute interference in the free market of eBay, but they offer users a considerable amount of predictability in what appears on the surface to be an unpredictable world.

eBayizing McDonaldization?

In this section we will examine eBay more systematically, this time from the perspective of the basic dimensions of McDonaldization. As a publicly traded company, eBay’s chief goal is profit. To maximize profit, an enterprise must be efficient. However, to understand the details of how any given process operates efficiently, we must examine the context in which it operates. While the goal for any capitalistic enterprises is profit, the means of achieving maximum profitability may appear on the surface quite different according to the context of the enterprise’s operations. eBay’s means to the end of profitability requires listing (for a charge) as many entries on its database as possible, thereby making more likely the sale of many items and attracting the attention of, and payments from, more users. For eBay to make the sale of entries in its database efficient, it must appeal to as many potential entry-makers and searchers as possible, get them to register relevant information with the site, try to make sure they spend large amounts of time interacting with the database and perusing what has been entered there, and make the process of converting an entry into a sale easy and low in risk. This ease of the transition from entry to sale also encourages users to enter items for sale and to buy items listed for sale by others. While it operates in a different, material context, McDonald’s does many of the same things with both its suppliers and its customers.

While Izberk-Bilgin and Ahuvia seek to define eBay as unpredictable due to the surprise factor found in either or both the items for sale or the prices they might be sold for, the processes that surround the entry and sale of each item are highly predictable. Entirely predictable is the appearance of each entry as it is listed for sale. What is listed in the “box” might be anything, but the box itself is always the same. Entirely predictable are the filters that appear when a user searches within a particular category—for instance when searching clothes, filters may be set to sort for size, color, style, brand, or condition.

Further increasing predictability is the fact that the seller of an item listed toward the top of any search result will be a “Power-Seller.” To be included in that category, one has to have paid a fee after having been involved in at least 100 transactions that produced at least \$3,000 in sales during the preceding twelve months. Furthermore, over the course of that period, the seller had to have received a rating of 98%. The Power Seller Program promises, among other things, that dedicated and predictable eBay sellers will have increased visibility in search results, including top-of-the-list placement in relevant searches. Also increasingly predictable is that the eBay seller, and especially the Power Seller, is increasingly less likely to fit the image of an unpredictable weekend yard-sale host and has more in common with a corporation producing a major portion of its income through sales on eBay.

In terms of calculability, the eBay model allows buyers to access an extraordinarily large number of items. Furthermore, each seller pays an insertion fee for the listing of an item, as well as a final value fee once the item is sold. The eBay site even hosts a value calculating tool, yielding results on the average price, full price range, and number of listings sold within a particular category during the preceding three weeks. Items, descriptors, and users are all coded by their own algorithms, enabling the connection of search to item. These complex equations allow items, terms, and users to be identified from the database instantaneously. Sellers are therefore encouraged to create effective listings by buying additional descriptors beyond the limited number allowed in a standard listing. Sellers may also block particular users from viewing a listing by entering specific user names, who will then be identified from the database through their particular algorithm. More generally, the focus of eBay is on maximizing the quantity of items listed and sold, as well as of the number of users.

Returning once more to the issue of control, it is possible to think of the eBay model as powering interactions through a formally rationalized system, of which centralized control is an essential element. The basic concept at the heart of eBay—the “global yard sale” (like the possibility of getting a bargain)—is enchanting. Yet a global yard sale on this scale is made possible only because

of a rationalized system that can embrace and encompass unpredictability and variety within a framework that is efficient, calculable, predictable, and centrally controlled.

We can find other websites (e.g., www.freecycle.com) with a great variety of items for sale, trade, or giveaway—websites that are not McDonaldized to a high degree. However, should such sites wish to strengthen and extend their reach, they will need to McDonaldize their underlying structure much the way that McDonald's—and eBay—have rationalized theirs. This is an important correction to the Ebayization hypothesis: user-generated variety not only coexists with but thrives because of the rationalized structure of eBay.

Web 1.0 and 2.0*

Web 1.0 and 2.0 have been differentiated from one another in various ways. Web 1.0 could be described as the Internet as it existed before the dot.com bubble burst or as the first decade of the Internet (the 1990s). That which exists as of this writing, or the Internet's second decade (the 2000s), can be seen as Web 2.0 (and whatever the Internet has in store in the future as the tentatively-labeled Web 3.0). Another way to contrast the two is by the change in connectivity speed, with Web 1.0 likely being much slower than Web 2.0.

However, Web 1.0 and 2.0 are viewed here mainly as temporally overlapping phenomena. Not only have Web 1.0 and 2.0 always coexisted, but they continue to coexist. *It is the explosion of user-generated content that defines Web 2.0 and differentiates it from the provider-generated content of Web 1.0.* To put this another way, Web 2.0 is a bottom-up system controlled to a large extent by its users, while Web 1.0 is more centrally conceived by providers and is more top-down.

Web 1.0 encompasses Web sites of the past that had not yet taken advantage of the user-generated content that is popular today as well as today's sites that remain top-down. Examples of Web 1.0 include Switchboard.com and YellowPages.com, which centrally conceive how users find people and businesses through the framework of the sites; the Apple Store and other shopping sites that dictate the content and users' browsing (i.e., shopping); and Fodors.com, which uses its own tastemakers to point tourists to various hotels, restaurants, activities, and so forth.

*This section was coauthored by Nathan Jurgenson and is derived, in part, from Nathan Jurgenson, "The DeMcDonaldization of the Internet." In George Ritzer, *McDonaldization: The Reader 3*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2010:159-170.

It is very tempting to offer a “grand narrative” of a shift over time from a top-down Web 1.0 to a bottom-up Web 2.0. However, this would be far too simplistic. First, it is recognized that the degree to which users produce content on a site is not a dichotomous variable, but rather it represents a continuum where some sites are further toward either end of the 1.0–2.0 spectrum than others. At least some user-generation occurs on many Web 1.0 sites and some top-down structures exist on Web 2.0 (e.g., the format of articles on Wikipedia, profile pages on Facebook, and important to the previous discussion, the way in which eBay structures its marketplace). Second, the “cyber-libertarian” ideology behind Web 2.0 that seeks to keep the Internet free and open (including to inputs by users) was present in Web 1.0, indeed, at the very beginning of all thinking about the Internet’s possibilities. The Internet, much like many other technologies, was conceived by some as a revolutionary, if not utopian, development that would bring great increases in freedom to those involved. In spite of such great hopes and grand ambitions, the Internet has not fully resisted corporate structures, hierarchies, and control. AOL and Microsoft, among others, sought to control the Internet with their patented products and to purchase online real estate in much the same way this occurs in the material world. As a result, Web 1.0 came to lose many of its libertarian ideals as corporate entities began to control it and to create centrally conceived Internet products and sites that structured and greatly limited the ways in which individuals used them.

However, the cyber-libertarian ideals that predated Web 1.0 had not disappeared. Those who bought into these ideals saw the bursting of the Web 1.0 bubble at the end of the 20th century as an opportunity, as offering the potential for “creative destruction.”⁵¹ The destruction of Web 1.0 (or at least some aspects of it) was seen as a necessary prerequisite to the emergence of Web 2.0. Here, once again, was the opportunity to attempt to actualize the libertarian project online. This time it was fueled by, among other factors, the failure of the Internet to produce the expected profits and, more positively, the power of new high-speed technologies that enabled infinitely more users to interact online. The Internet as fast, accessible, and something that is always on, akin to other utilities, not only makes it more useable but opens the door to new kinds of richly social and more humanized online experiences.

In contrast to Web 1.0, Web 2.0 accords far less power to the creators of these systems and much more to their users; Web 2.0 sites, or at least the material on them, are, to a large extent, user-generated. In addition to the Web 1.0 experience of reading, browsing, and consuming online content, Web 2.0 *also* allows for writing and producing such content. It permits the greatly increased ability to network with others socially. One way of describing this is to see the implosion of the consumer and the producer on Web 2.0

into the prosumer. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the prosumer and putting the consumer to work at McDonald's.) That is, on Web 2.0, users produce that which they consume (e.g., users both produce and consume the profiles and networks on Facebook). Because of their interactive character and their user-generated content, sites on Web 2.0 are by and large more humanized and a more fluid than the more static Web 1.0 sites.

Major examples of Web 2.0, and of the centrality of user-generation on them, include:

- Wikipedia, where users generate articles and constantly edit, update, and comment on them;
- Facebook, MySpace, and other social networking websites, where users create profiles composed of videos, photos, and text, interact with one another, and build communities;
- Second Life, where users create the characters, communities, and the entire virtual environment;
- The blogosphere, blogs (Web logs), microblogging (e.g., Twitter) and the comments on them are produced by those who consume them;
- eBay and Craigslist, where buyers and sellers create the market;
- YouTube, Flickr, and other media sharing sites where mostly amateurs upload and download videos and photographs;
- Current TV, where viewers create much of the programming, submit it via the Internet, and decide which submissions are aired;
- Linux, a free, collaboratively-built, open-source operating system, and other open-source software applications, like Mozilla Firefox, that are created and maintained by those who use them;
- Amazon.com, whose users do all the work involved in ordering products and writing the reviews;
- Yelp!, whose users create an online city guide by ranking, reviewing, and discussing various locations and activities in their area.

This explosion of user-generated content has dramatically transformed the Internet. There are many different ways to describe the nature of this change, to describe what is new and unique about Web 2.0, including: the populist notion that many minds are better than one (the “wisdom of the crowds”); the view that emphasizes the productivity and originality of mass self-expression; or the cyber-libertarian notion of the advantages that accrue from breaking down barriers and structures online (creating a “flattened world”). It is likely that these views, and many others, are important in thinking about the shift from Web 1.0, where the user experience is best characterized as “looking stuff up” (consuming) that was produced by others.

Increasingly popular is talk of your GPS-enabled cell phone being constantly synced to this type of geo-database so that it can always tell you where

you are, the history of the place (by linking to Wikipedia), reviews of the restaurant you're standing near, and so on. Japan is already doing this in the social-networking sense where people post blogs in real time from their cell phones that tell where they are . . . allowing for people to meet in the real world. This, not surprisingly, is often used to solicit dates (where you snap a picture of yourself in the blog that you post at a café or the like) and also is used more directly to solicit sex. Without the strength of a prostitution taboo as we have here, it is very common for young girls to use this technology to solicit dates. Businessmen can check on their phone for girls nearby. They call this "compensated dating," which, while not always accepted, is very popular (and does not necessarily involve sex—more like "escorts" than prostitutes).

Like material realities such as fast-food restaurants, Web 1.0 was, and is, highly McDonaldized. As discussed above, Web 1.0 websites are constructed in a one-size-fits-all model, and from the point of view of those who own, control or work on them, this makes the sites highly efficient to create and to maintain. They are also highly efficient from the point of view of users, largely because they are created and designed with their efficiency in mind. There are, of course, failures in this regard, but they can be fixed relatively easily.

User efficiency is enhanced by the predictability of websites on Web 1.0; they are more or less identical from one time or place to another because content follows a predictable top-down pattern. The ubiquity of Web 1.0 sites like Yahoo! or the services of AOL serve(d) to eliminate inefficiencies associated with having to deal with different or changing websites. Because user choices are limited or nonexistent on Web 1.0, there is also great predictability for those in control of the websites. The major source of unpredictability in any McDonaldized system—human behavior—is largely eliminated from these websites, especially relative to Web 2.0. In addition, once a website is created, it can remain in place indefinitely, further enhancing predictability from the perspective of the website's creators and users.

Calculability is no problem on Web 1.0 since those in control of the sites can *easily* monitor their use and calculate precisely variables such as the number of users and how the sites are used. Similarly, users can compare available sites to assess which ones allow them to use their time on them most efficiently.

Web 1.0 is, of course, dominated almost completely by the websites that are, in effect, nonhuman technologies. Once in place, these websites control what users do on them and give users few options. Since the websites are largely static, and the goal is to keep them that way, control is exercised over those who produce content on the sites.

Thus, a strong argument can be made that Web 1.0 is McDonaldized to a high degree. However, anything that is McDonaldized to such a degree is

subject to the irrationality of rationality. One such irrationality that stands out in this case is dehumanization. On one hand, the humans who work on, or for, Web 1.0 websites are highly limited in what they can do; they cannot fully exploit their creative human capacities to improve the sites or respond as fully as possible to user needs and complaints. In addition, these websites are largely dehumanized from the point of view of their users. If they want to use a site, people must use it in the way its designers and operators intend. They cannot use their skills and abilities to alter the site or to use it in highly creative ways. Furthermore, the sites are structured in ways that are relatively uncollaborative and much less social than on Web 2.0. This is irrational, an irrationality of rationality, in the sense that Web 1.0 squanders its ability to make use of the skills and abilities of both those who work for the sites and those who use them. It is especially in the latter case that Web 2.0 has a huge advantage over Web 1.0. In one sense, Web 2.0 has reduced or eliminated the irrationalities of rationality associated with Web 1.0. In another sense, it could be argued that it has greatly heightened the rationality of these systems by figuring out how to get the most out of the people who use the sites without allowing them to compromise the basic functioning of the system. In this way, while Web 2.0 can be viewed as a rational next step, often pushed by profit-based motives, it exists partially outside the principles outlined by the McDonaldization thesis, and thus Web 2.0 can be seen as having, to some degree, a tendency toward *de*McDonaldization. This constitutes an important segue into a fuller discussion of Web 2.0 and its relationship to (de)McDonaldization.

*De*McDonaldizing the Web? In many ways Web 2.0 is *less* efficient than Web 1.0, especially for users. The amount of time and energy users spend producing content on social networking sites (often, users are involved with more than one, including MySpace, Facebook and others), as well as blogging and microblogging (e.g., Twitter), writing comments on other's blogs, writing reviews on sites like Amazon, scanning items on offer on eBay, and so on far exceeds the amount of user-generation that existed on Web 1.0. If efficiency is defined as the amount of output relative to the amount of input, then the massive amount of input that the user-generation of Web 2.0 encourages, even demands, tends not to be as efficient as a centrally conceived system such as Web 1.0. Since Web 2.0 is defined by the ability of the masses to create content online, the general abundance of profiles, reviews, comments, opinions, news, photos, videos, and much else would be seen as wasteful in an efficient system, but is embraced on Web 2.0. How many users ultimately contribute, or how much time they spend on their contributions (for example, editing a Wikipedia entry), matters little. Instead, the focus is on the quality of what they produce (leaving aside the debate on the actual quality of Web 2.0 content such as Wikipedia entries). That Web 2.0

involves a focus on output irrespective of the amount of input is an example of its relative *inefficiency*.⁵²

All of this also means that there is far more *un*predictability on Web 2.0 sites than on Web 1.0 sites. As is the case with eBayization, the basic structure of many sites on Web 2.0 is predictable, (e.g., the nature of a Facebook, YouTube, eBay, or Yelp! page), but what does or does not find its way onto that page is largely unregulated and unpredictable. There are limits that vary by site, but they are quite wide, with the result that users are unable to predict what they will find when they log on to most Web 2.0 sites.

It is also much harder to quantify, to calculate, exactly what is transpiring on a Web 2.0 site. In part, this is because there is so much more going on and it takes so many different forms. More important, while Web 1.0 sites tend to be restricted to objective matters (did one order something? how much was paid for it?), Web 2.0 sites allow, and are even defined by, much more subjective inputs such as personalized messages, photos, and the like. Such things are harder, if not impossible, to quantify.

There are certainly nonhuman technologies involved in Web 2.0—for example computers, the web sites themselves—but human users are, by definition, much more able to manipulate content on Web 2.0 than on Web 1.0. While Web 1.0 sites are centrally conceived, prestructured, and largely immune to manipulation and alteration by users, Web 2.0 sites are based on the whole idea that users can, indeed must, manipulate and alter the sites in innumerable ways. In other words, humans have gained some control over the technologies that on Web 1.0 totally controlled them.

This leads to the issue of the irrationality of rationality and to the conclusion that Web 2.0 serves to reduce or eliminate such irrationalities, especially dehumanization, in comparison to Web 1.0 (to say nothing of irrationalities associated with material realities such as the fast-food restaurant). Web 2.0 is clearly a far more humanized technology than Web 1.0. Indeed, in more fully utilizing the skills and abilities of users, it could be argued that Web 2.0 is a far more “reasonable” system than Web 1.0. On Web 2.0, human users remain human and are valued for their unique contributions. User behavior is not highly directed, as is the case with Web 1.0, but is, instead, more creative in nature.

Furthermore, we can ask whether the content on Web 2.0 sites such as Flickr or YouTube is McDonaldized. Even a casual examination of, for example, Flickr or Picasa photo sites reveals no evidence of McDonaldized photography. Photos are not created to please as many people as possible. The photos are human and enchanting and are not created in a mechanized, standardized, calculable, or efficient way. On the other hand, the underlying structures behind the pictures *are* standardized across these sites.

Overall, then, Web 2.0 involves a process of the *de*McDonaldization of the Internet, at least in comparison to Web 1.0. In those senses, it contradicts the argument of ever-increasing McDonaldization. Because of user-generated content, Web 2.0 loses something with respect to calculability, efficiency, predictability, and control through nonhuman technologies; but these dimensions, and McDonaldization more generally, have not disappeared completely on Web 2.0. Although content might be personalized and creatively produced on Web 2.0 sites like eBay (in the realm of consumption) and Facebook (in terms of identity and socialization), McDonaldization continues to exist (as we saw above in the case of eBay) on those sites, especially in their underlying structures. For example, efficiency is manifest in Facebook's (and other Web 2.0 companies') largely hidden profit models that are based on the utilization of the creation of value by an unpaid workforce.

Facebook also exerts control, and in fact constitutes an unprecedented intrusion of technology into socializing and selfhood, through the application of nonhuman technologies to these processes. Facebook, for instance, structures social networking by dictating the look of the profiles. Interaction on Facebook follows preset and centrally controlled principles and structures. Examples include writing on someone's "wall" and the constant feed of updates on everything your Facebook "friends" are doing with their profiles. Identity is chosen by selecting from Facebook-determined options and checkboxes, with the result that profile pages look very similar. MySpace, on the other hand, while still very much part of Web 2.0, has lost much market share to Facebook by giving users not expert in web design the ability to customize and personalize their digital presentations of self to a far greater degree than has Facebook. In other words, the underlying structure of MySpace is not as McDonaldized as that of Facebook. As a result, MySpace profiles are often difficult to navigate. Facebook, however, has much more uniform profiles, where everyone's page has a very similar look. By imposing more structure, Facebook has provided a clean interface that is user friendly and promotes content development. In structuring the processes of online social networking and the digital presentation of self, we might argue that, on Facebook, socializing itself has been McDonaldized.

However, this is not to downplay the importance of the customization allowed by Facebook. While there are ways in which Facebook McDonaldizes socialization, Facebook is also *de*McDonaldizing the web experience. Facebook makes the web more human through increased social interaction. The experience is highly unpredictable since one is interacting with fellow

(unpredictable) humans. It is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify such interactions; it is their quality that matters most. Facebook makes keeping in touch with distant friends efficient. However, it also is highly inefficient since it also facilitates *more* socialization through the maintaining of social ties that one might, in the past, have lost. And it is inefficient because of the huge amount of time and energy people devote to these sites. The time spent uploading pictures or socializing online is hardly an efficient use of one's time.

One of the things that the preceding discussion makes clear is that while Web 2.0 is not without its McDonaldized elements, it is certainly less McDonaldized than Web 1.0. Another is that, while Web 2.0 has been discussed as if it is of one piece, there are important differences among its sites (e.g., Facebook vs. MySpace). Further analysis is needed to deal with McDonaldization and deMcDonaldization as they relate to *each* of these sites to say nothing of sites now emerging or not yet created or even envisioned.

This analysis of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (including eBay) constitutes a kind of test of McDonaldization as a "grand narrative" and the idea that we are likely to see an ever-increasing McDonaldization of society. To the degree that Web 2.0 is a later stage in the development of the Internet than Web 1.0, and of increasing relevance in society in general, it would be predicted that Web 2.0 would be *more* McDonaldized than Web 1.0. That this is not the case, and the fact, that at least on the surface, Web 2.0 is far *less* McDonaldized than Web 1.0 casts considerable doubt on McDonaldization as a grand narrative.

This leads us to a more nuanced conclusion to this book and to this discussion of McDonaldization and deMcDonaldization. That is, the McDonaldization process continues apace in the infrastructure of Web 2.0, and it is that which, paradoxically, has allowed for the deMcDonaldization of the surface-level content to be found there. This is a more complex conclusion than one which simply depicts a grand narrative of ever-escalating and -expanding McDonaldization. This change is not surprising since the McDonaldization thesis was developed to analyze the material world of fast-food restaurants and the like, but the digital world—especially the more advanced digital world of Web 2.0—is a very different place. We should not be shocked that the McDonaldization thesis requires some emendation in this new context. Indeed, it would have been shocking had it not required any alteration. In any case, the distinction between surface-level deMcDonaldization and underlying McDonaldization should prove useful, especially in analyzing the Internet of the future—Web 3.0, or whatever that next stage is to be called—as well as the future of society more generally.