The Spread of McDonald’s and Globalization

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**Introduction**

The term “globalization” is now used everywhere in the world. However, what exactly is globalization? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, globalization is “the fact that different cultures and economic systems around the world are becoming connected and similar to each other because of the influence of large multinational companies and of improved communication.” However, considering current world situation, it might be easier to understand if people explain globalization as Americanization.

Since the Cold War ended, the United States stands as the only superpower in the world, and the American culture and ideology have been exported to the world through globalization. It is obvious considering pervasion of McDonald’s in the world. However, globalization does not mean homogenization; in each country, people transformed American culture so that it can coexist with their original culture. In other words, culture changes as the globalization proceeds, and people’s perception, menu, and price of McDonald’s differ in each country. In this project, by taking McDonald’s as an example, we would like to confirm whether the statement above is true through researches on several countries.

**Japan**

The first country we are going to observe is Japan. Firstly, we will observe its history. Den Fujita, who was a president of a trading company, got the right of franchise of McDonald’s and became the first president. In 1971, the first McDonald’s in Japan opened in Ginza Mitsukoshi, and since then, it has grown at rapid speed. Now, McDonald’s in Japan has become one of the most powerful firms of the food industry. But how could this firm be such powerful? The reason is that they succeeded in “Japanization”.

Mr. Fujita chose Ginza for the first store because he believed that Ginza is the center of popularity, which gave an impression to people that “McDonald’s is urban”. Also, Mr. Fujita made a big change in pronunciation. The pronunciation “McDonald’s” in English and ”マクドナルド” in Japanese is obviously different. Actually, he changed this pronunciation to make a rhyme of Japanese. From these facts, we can see that Japanese McDonald’s is not just the copy of McDonald’s in United States. In fact, many changes were made to fit Japanese culture and people.

One example of changes is products sold at the store. Chicken Tatsuta was born in Japan, and Japan is the only one country that serves this product. Its basic content is Tatsuta Age. It was once the regular menu for over 10 years, but now it is not on menu anymore because of avian influenza in 2004. However, it sometimes revives as a limited period product. This burger is still popular among Japanese people. What we can see from here is that McDonalds in Japan has been becoming more Japanese taste and style by adopting Japanese food. This is one aspect of Japanization.

Moreover, Japan has unique way of selling products. “Keitai Coupon” which uses cell phones enables you to purchase McDonald’s products much cheaper than normal price. This system is very effective in the age when almost all people own cell phones. And this service can only be done in Japan where technology is high and cell phones are necessity for people’s life.

**South Korea**

The second country we are going to present is South Korea. Firstly, we are going to look at its history. In 1988, when Seoul Olympic was held, McDonald’s started their business in South Korea, and they have continuously expanded themselves since then. At the beginning of 1990s, they secured the cooperation of Merger Corporation in Pusan. At first, their business focused on cities, and gradually, they expanded into northeast. Although they ran a series of advertisement when opening their stores, it took several years until Korean consumers came to accept McDonald’s. However, Korean consumers are now strongly attracted to the taste of their products. We can say that the catch copy “Let’s go to McDonald’s!” has spread among Korean consumers.

To succeed in a market, McDonald’s research Korean consumers’ wants and make necessary changes in order to fulfill such demands. Therefore, they focus on talking with consumers through official visit to stores, and give Korean consumers a feedback about what people demand. One example of changes McDonald’s made when entering Korean market is price. McDonald’s products in Korea are said to be relatively low or reasonable. For example, most of value-sets cost 3000~4200 won. However, because of low wage, Koreans cannot buy Big-Mac-set even if they work as McDonald’s crew. They earn 4500 won per hour (equivalent to 320 yen per hour in Japan), and Big-Mac-set in Korea cost 6000 won (420 yen in Japan). McDonald’s have also made changes in menu. They created Bulgogi Burger, Big Breakfast, and Affogato which is Italian dessert. Although there are similar products in different countries, they have made changes to tastes and the name of products.

There are other unique characteristics as well. For instance, Big Bulgogi Burger is covered by paper cylinder in order not to lose its shape. Also, soft drinks are served in plastic cups so that the cups can be used again and again. Finally, coffee is 2000 won, but served in mug.

**India**

The last country we are going to discuss is India. Since the first McDonald’s was built in 1996, it has continuously expanded and currently, over 100 stores exist. McDonald’s is considered a little high class family restaurant in India. There are many salesclerks within stores; however, they act more slowly than Japanese salesclerks. Moreover, salesclerks act as if they are working in classy restaurant and serve consumers with politeness of the Western style. Prices of products are little bit high. For instance, the price of Mac coffee is as same as lunch of a dining-room. In addition, guards stand near the door because near the door of McDonald’s, there are many beggars. From these facts, it is clear that McDonald’s is not a fast food store for Indian people but rather an expensive restaurant.

Products sold in India are also different. 80 percent of people are Hindus, and they cannot eat beef because they consider cow as sacred animal. McDonald’s also do not use pork because there are 100 million Muslim. Thus, McDonald’s uses lamb, chicken, white-fleshed fish, and vegetable croquette for their products. Instead of Big Mac there are Chicken Maharaja Mac, and Chicken McCurry pan. Moreover, water is a product sold at McDonald’s. The perception toward McDonald’s for Indian people is completely different from other countries.

**Conclusion**

As transportation system and information technology improved, obtaining information about other countries or other ethnic groups became so much easier. As a result, cultural barriers that existed between people became lower, and the world is becoming “borderless”. Nevertheless, the world never became homogenized. It is obvious if you consider differences of McDonald’s between countries. McDonald’s is not producing a copy of American styles, but rather making new styles every day. In other words, culture transforms in the shape that is suited for each country.