

A Study of American Fast Food Culture

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Abstract

In this paper, I am going to state something detailed about American fast food culture. With the continuous development of the global economy and the deepening of global economic integration, the influence of culture on the national economy is becoming more and more important. As a successful case, the penetration and development of American fast food culture to various countries in the world has important reference significance for us. This article introduces the definition, characteristics and representatives of fast food, expounds the cultural background of fast food from the origin and development of American fast food, and analyzes the American lifestyle, customs and values reflected and metaphorized by American fast food culture. The development and influence of American fast food culture in China will also be mentioned.

Keywords

America; Fast food culture; American values; China.

1. THE DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FAST FOOD

Fast food refers to popular catering that is quickly supplied by commercial enterprises, eaten immediately, and at reasonable prices to meet people's daily needs. The main tableware forms of it are plastic and paper. At this stage, with the continuous development of social economy, the pace of people's life is getting faster and faster. Fast food has become an indispensable part of people's lives, such as hamburgers, French fries, sandwiches, pizzas, chicken legs, salads, etc. They are all classic fast foods, and the content of fast food is constantly expanding. Some drinks such as soft drinks, juices, etc. are also included in the category of fast food.

As far as the word "fast food" is concerned, it has three meanings: firstly, fast food refers to convenient food which can be prepared quickly; secondly, it's about a fast and convenient way of eating; thirdly, it's also a new business model in the catering industry. Compared with other restaurants, fast food gets rid of the shackles of the traditional table, and can be taken away and eaten after purchasing. In addition, the tableware used in fast food is also simple and disposable, and most of them can be recycled. Fast food has significant external characteristics, but for fast food, the most important part should be the fast food culture hidden under the external characteristics.

2. THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN FAST FOOD

2.1. The Origin of American Fast Food

The prototype of American fast food can be traced back to the early 19th century, when the French brought the cooking method of French fries to the United States. Hamburg originated from Russia. Hamburgers originated in Russia. German sailors brought the food to Hamburg when they visited the Baltic Sea. Later, these sailors settled in the United States, and hamburgers spread from Cincinnati.

The first fast food restaurant appeared in 1885 in New York. However, it was not until the 1940s that fast food became popular in the United States.

After World War II, with the rapid development of national economy, Americans gradually entered a fast-paced life. For young people, their consumption concept is also ahead of time. These factors put forward higher requirements for food supply, which greatly promoted the development of American fast food industry.

2.2. The Development of American Fast Food

As one of the most successful companies in the development of the fast food industry in the United States, McDonald's was not the beginning of fast food. However, McDonald's did have a huge impact on the development of the fast food industry. McDonald's brothers have revolutionized the traditional fast food industry by using the production line used to prepare hamburgers.

Later, Burger King, KFC and other similar fast food restaurants have been constantly emerging. These fast-food enterprises quantified their management, and further improved the enterprise standards, which played a very positive role and influence on the development of American fast food in the future.

3. THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AMERICAN FAST FOOD: MCDONALD'S

3.1. The Origin, Development and Brand Image of McDonald's

McDonald's, a catering brand founded in the United States in 1940, has developed into a world-famous fast food brand, mainly engaged in hamburgers, French fries, salads, fried chicken, drinks and so on. Because McDonald's products are fast in production, easy to carry, and delicious, they are widely welcomed all over the world.

McDonald's also has a distinctive brand image. Its logo is a yellow M (yellow can stimulate people's appetite and make people more willing to try); the cartoon image of it is a red-haired clown in yellow clothes, which is a classic of McDonald's.

3.2. Fast Food Culture Embodied by McDonald's

3.2.1 "Fast" culture

McDonald's pays great attention to the control of time when making fast food. There are strict rules about how long it takes to make a hamburger and how long it takes to make an ice cream. McDonald's in the world basically adopts the way of window order. Consumers, whether driving or walking, only need to wait for a few minutes at the window, then the fast food will be ready and quickly delivered to them. Therefore, we also see that McDonald's has occupied almost all the railway stations and airports in China's cities, and has become the first choice for those who are in a hurry.

3.2.2 "Compatible" culture

McDonald's always keeps its own product uniqueness, and at the same time, it pays great attention to combining with the local cultural characteristics. It often combines with the current cultural market to launch some cartoon toys and decorations to attract the attention of children and young people.

For example, after the release of McDull (MaiDou) series films in China, McDonald's has designed food souvenirs related to McDull because both of them have the character "Mai" in their Chinese name. This strategy has achieved good marketing effect and promoted the sales of McDonald's.

3.2.3 "Lasting" culture

McDonald's emphasizes all-weather, all year round service for consumers. Therefore, McDonald's products are supplied 24 hours a day. Consumers can go to McDonald's to buy food at any time of the day. Compared with those shops that only operate at a certain time, this is undoubtedly a huge advantage.

4. AMERICAN VALUES REFLECTED AND METAPHORIZED BY AMERICAN FAST FOOD CULTURE

4.1. The Definition of Cultural Metaphor

Cultural metaphor refers to the cultural phenomenon, activity or custom that all members of society agree on emotionally or cognitively. It is used to symbolize or express the shared values of a nation, such as Italian opera, American football match, French wine, etc.

Fast food has become the national staple food of Americans in the continuous development. In many people's eyes, hamburger is the symbol of the American way of life. With the improvement of the openness of American society and the acceleration of national integration, the "American" characteristics of fast food are further highlighted, and gradually become a symbol of American cultural homogeneity.

4.2. Values metaphorized by American fast food culture

4.2.1 The pursuit of efficiency

For most Americans, time is extremely important. After the development of society to large-scale industrial production, people's pace of life has obviously accelerated. They have got rid of the meticulous work and low efficiency of the manual era, and began to work in strict accordance with the law of daily work and rest. The high demand for time also requires Americans to quickly and efficiently finish everything in their work and life. As a result, fast food culture has been popular with Americans.

4.2.2 The pursuit of ease

Pursuing a relaxed attitude, Americans have a more casual lifestyle. They don't care about the dining environment or whether the dish is a combination of beautiful color, fragrant smell and delicious taste, as long as they can eat happily while filling their stomachs.

4.2.3 Individual effort and cooperative competition

Equal opportunity, independence, self-reliance, and pioneering spirit are national ideals and values throughout American history. America is a highly individualistic country, and the above basic values and ideals are strongly individualistic. McDonald's provides opportunities for everyone who seeks personal development opportunities, but everything depends on personal performance. Each employee submits an application, goes through interviews and internships to a formal position; employees must start from scratch, start with French fries, and move toward success down-to-earth. Everyone is in charge of their own destiny, and those with fast adaptability and strong ability can quickly master the technology at all stages to quickly improve.

At the same time, Americans also advocate fair competition. The company provides an orderly and benign competitive environment. Employees both compete and cooperate with each other, embodying personal value in cooperation, and integrating personal struggle with team spirit.

4.2.4 The gain of the biggest profit with the least investment

The United States is a typical "doing" society, which means transformation, and the ultimate goal of reform and innovation is to satisfy people's needs. This reflects the pragmatism of Americans. This way of behavior and attitude towards life has created a large-scale, batch-

oriented, and standardized "Made in America System" with the goal of obtaining the greatest benefits at the lowest cost, and it is the driving force for American society to move forward.

5. THE DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN FAST FOOD IN CHINA

With the deepening of China's reform and opening up process, American fast food represented by McDonald's and KFC has gradually entered the Chinese market. In this process, people's concepts are constantly altering, and they are more and more willing to accept these new things. This quick way to solve the three-meal problem has also led to great changes in people's living habits.

However, Chinese and Western diets are very different in terms of dietary structure, cooking skills, cooking skills and table habits, which makes the introduction of American fast food to Chinese traditional diet has a great impact. Here are examples: eating fried chicken and other fast food is not conducive to people's health; many American fast food products are accelerating the process of localization, such as the introduction of "love fried dough sticks" and "breakfast porridge", which has impacted the small businesses of street vendors.

6. CONCLUSION

While American fast food is rapidly occupying the global market, it also reflects American values and life concepts. We can project many American cultural concepts through the research on it. This is not only helpful for us to study American culture, but also can strengthen the construction of traditional Chinese culture by referring to the successful cases of American fast food culture expansion and penetration, and increase our international influence, so as to promote the development and progress of China's social economy.

More importantly, in the context of global economic development, food culture has become the "tether" of different cultures, which is subtly changing countries in the world, and promoting their mutual understanding and appreciation. Only on the basis of understanding the differences between Chinese and Western cultures can we truly promote cultural exchanges and integration around the world. In this process, food culture occupies a significant position.

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