Project 1 – Planning an Original Research Agenda

and

Project 2 -- Developing an Appropriate Research Treatment, Methodology, and Analysis

Background and Problem:

A fast food chain is contemplating moving into the Belize market. It has looked at the success of McDonalds globally as an example of creating a product that has international appeal and is hoping to do the same thing starting with Central America and the Caribbean. The company knows that the process of managing and conducting business changes as a company moves from one country to another and crosses culture. It also knows that culture impacts the success of a business. It is trying to decide which corporate principles of ‘McDonaldization’ will work in the new target country. Sociologist George Ritzer, in his 1993 study entitled, *The McDonaldization of Society*, points out that Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's, applied the principles developed by Henry Ford to the preparation and serving of food. Ritzer sees the thousands of McDonald’s restaurants that dot the U.S. landscape—and increasingly, the world—as having much greater significance than the convenience of fast hamburgers and milkshakes. He coined the term the McDonaldization of society, to refer to the increasing rationalization of the routine tasks of everyday life. He argues that McDonald's has succeeded in the United States because it offers consumers, workers, and managers efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. My argument is that even though people from different cultures share basic concepts, they view them from different angles and perspectives leaving them to behave in a manner that might be contradictory to what the imported experts may expect. I will look at the McDonaldization process in the context of the Belizean Culture.
The managers of the fast food chain have been educated according to the most modern management philosophies but have not served a culturally diverse consumer base in a foreign country. The company has hired me as a local consultant to work with the managers that will be transferred to the franchise in Belize at startup.

**Research Question**

Does Belizean consumers value the principles of the McDonald’s model of international fast food chains over locally owned ‘greasy spoon restaurants’?

**Hypothesis**

McDonaldization will not work in Belize because Belizeans prefer greater interaction and personal attention than this model offers.

**Variables**

**Independent Variables:**

The participants will all be Belizeans. They will be randomly selected and divided into two groups totaling eighty-four members each, with twelve coming from each of the six districts and twelve coming from the largest city, Belize City. The twelve people from each district will be randomly selected by gender and age. A male and female from each of the following category: between seven and thirteen years old; teenager between thirteen and nineteen, and five adults in 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. In addition they will be randomly assigned to one of the two groups and conditions.

**Dependent Variables:**
The participants will be tested to rate personal satisfaction with regards to food, service, setting and efficiency as it relates to time.

Outcomes:

Belizeans, regardless of their age, economic background and geographic location, will prefer eating at the ‘greasy spoon’ restaurant; they will prefer the personal service and interaction that is a key ingredient of a ‘greasy spoon’ restaurant; and they will rate the ‘greasy spoon’ restaurant dining experience as better.

Definitions

For this research, the following definitions will be used:

1. Belizean - anyone who has lived exclusively in Belize for his/her entire life. He/she, if they have vacationed outside of Belize, must not have spent more than three months abroad at any given time.

2. McDonaldization as defined by Ritzer is a metaphorical device and an instrumental logic used to describe the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world. He divides the McDonaldization Process into four component elements:
   - efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. Each takes the form of a particular drive and can be characterized as follows:

   a) Efficiency - Rational calculation of best cost effective mode of production. Cheapest per unit price.

   b) Calculability - (or quantity rather than quality) Assessment of outcomes based on quantifiable rather than subjective criteria. Therefore, they extol the big Mac rather than the good Mac.

   c) Predictability - Organize production process to guarantee uniformity of product and standardized outcomes.

   d) Control - Substitution of more predictable non-human labor for human labor.
Design

The qualitative approach will be employed using the following tools – focus groups, surveys and exit interviews – to assess the degree of satisfaction that participants achieved as a result of the dining experience in each location. The participants will be fed daily at one of the labs following the guidelines established as indicative of the experience that one would have while dining at that establishment. Proctors/supervisors and human observers, trained to make observations following a strict recording procedure that include a specially created likert rating form, will be employed in this study.

Treatment

Each group will eat lunch on a daily basis for two months in one of two labs, in each district or municipality, to replicate a McDonald’s restaurant and a ‘greasy-spoon’ restaurant respectively. The labs will be created in trailer trucks that will be duplicated and strategically located in each locale. They will be placed on separate parcels of land so that both groups are not able to interact during the study. The groups will alternate on a fortnightly basis between the two labs. There will be three criterion variable employed: focus groups, surveys, and exit interviews.
Description of labs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>McDonald’s Lab</th>
<th>Greasy Spoon Lab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>Typical McDonald’s set up and layout</td>
<td>Family run restaurant decor with tables and chairs for groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uniformity to match generic nature of fast food restaurants</td>
<td>Curtains, wall hangings, more “homey” feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service</strong></td>
<td>Counter and self-service</td>
<td>Counter for take out and tables with waiter/waitress for service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automated functions wherever possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little interaction encouraged - estimated time necessary to complete an order</td>
<td>Interaction encouraged as light conversation might develop between consumers and employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burger, Fries, Sodas, value meals</td>
<td>Rice and Beans/white rice and stew beans/ with typical meats (beef; chicken; seafood - fish, conch, shrimp; local game meats - Gibnut, Armadillo, Deer); Cole slaw or potato salad, and fried plantains. Soda and local natural juices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td>Limited choices</td>
<td>Unlimited combinations possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepared off site and assembled by employees to guarantee standardization of taste and look</td>
<td>Prepared on site by workers following recipes learned on the job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Research Study: McDonaldization of Belize
Local Consultant: Wantime Kreeashions
Address: 30 Barrack Road, Belize City, Belize
Telephone #: 224-45794

INTRODUCTION
You have been asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Wantime Kreeashions. The purpose of this research study will help determine if Belizian consumers’ value the principles of the McDonald’s model of international fast food chains or locally owned ‘greasy spoon restaurants’?

PLAN AND PROCEDURES
You will be asked to participate in a study for two months that will require that you eat lunch at a designated location for that period of time. You will only be allowed to order only what is available on the menus and stick to a budget. You will be also expected to complete an exit interview, attend two focus group meetings and complete a survey.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
You may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable or just do not wish to continue for any reason. This is only a test to establish what restaurant model works best within the Belize market; we are not testing you. There is no right or wrong answer to these questions and the proctors/supervisors are only interested in your responses. We encourage you to be critical and totally honest without fear of any consequences. Please do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar or speaking ‘correctly’ as your opinion is what we are seeking and therefore critical to our study’s success.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
Your assistance during this study will help us understand the culture of McDonaldization as it relates to the Belize market and Belizian consumers.
SUBJECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Your name will not be attached to the data and will remain confidential. Your answers will be reported as a part of the group’s attitude. Your identity will not be shared outside the group and your privacy will be respected.

Name: ________________________________

Date: _________________
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Participating in this study is voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study after it has already started, you may stop at any time you choose without penalty or without causing a problem.

PERSONS TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS
The proctor/supervisor will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact Wantime Kreeashions, at telephone numbers 224-5794 (regular working hrs) or 610-8647 (nights and weekends).
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read all of the above information, asked questions and have received satisfactory answers in areas I did not understand. (A copy of this signed and dated consent form will be given to the person signing this form as the participant or as the participant authorized representative.)

Participant's Name (PRINT)  Signature  Date
Time

Guardian's Name (PRINT)  Signature  Date
Time
WITNESS: I confirm that the contents of this consent form document were orally presented, and the participant indicates all questions have been answered to their satisfaction.

Witness’s Name (PRINT)  Signature  Date

PERSON ADMINISTERING CONSENT: I have conducted the consent process and orally reviewed the contents of the consent document. I believe the participant understands the research.

Person Obtaining consent (PRINT)  Signature  Date

Principal Proctor (PRINT)  Signature  Date

Demographic questionnaire

The following questions are to confirm you are the right participant for this survey:

1. Are you a Belizean?
2. Where do you live?
3. Have you lived outside Belize for more than three months?

4. Have you ever visited the United States? If yes, please say places visited.

5. Do you eat outside your home on a regular/daily basis?

**Introduction letter**

Dear Belizean Consumer:

You have been selected to participate in a study that will help us decide what restaurant model Belizeans, countrywide, prefer. For the next two months you will dine at a specific location and we will pick up the bill. You will receive the best in food and service that each model offers and will get the opportunity to give us feedback that will determine what type of restaurant we will soon open in your area.
We identified you as a ‘typical’ Belizean who dines out regularly and we would love to see what factors impact your choice. We would like you to participate fully and freely and feel confident, any information you share, will be used only to decide on the best restaurant model for your area.

You will be asked to eat at a specific locality during your lunch break for two months. You will be expected to order from their regular menu and consume it on site. This is a test to establish what restaurant model works best within the Belize market; we are not testing you. There is no right or wrong answer to these questions and the proctors/supervisors are only interested in your responses. We encourage you to be critical and totally honest. Please do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar or speaking ‘correctly’ as your opinion is what we are seeking.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions you might have at 224-5794 (regular hrs) 610-8647 (nights and weekends) or Wantime Kreeashions.

Thank you for participating in this study.

William A. Neal

Survey and Exit Interview Questions

Date:
Restaurant #:
Age:
Location:
Gender:
Respondent Code

Instructions: Evaluate the services provided by this restaurant over the last week. A "5" represents excellent, "1" is poor, and "3" is average. Please use the remaining numbers to describe less extreme feelings.

In the last column indicate how important you feel this service is to you. If the statement describes a service that is important to you, please circle "H" for High. If the service is not important to you, circle "L" for Low. If you feel somewhere in between, indicate so by circling "M" for Medium.

If you wish to add information not covered by the statements or provide examples that describe your opinions about a service, please do so in the comment sections provided at the end of each question. The questions are general in nature yet comprehensive
when accompanied with your specific comments. Your comments are valuable in improving our understanding of your requirements, and we appreciate each one of them.

Please note. In the exit survey only the participant will first evaluate the model that he/she prefers. Next, he/she will evaluate the services provided by the alternative model. Again, a "5" represents excellent, "1" is poor, and "3" is average and the remaining numbers to describe less extreme feelings.

Thank you for your time and effort in helping us to provide the best dining experience for you.

A. Reliability — Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

1. Follows through with service in a timely manner.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

2. Shows a sincere interest in providing the best service.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

3. Performs the service right the first time.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

4. Is dependable.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

5. Insists on giving personalized service – meets it error-free records.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

B. Empathy — Caring, individualized attention a restaurant provides its customers.

1. Gives me personal attention.
2. Has convenient service features (switches menu choices readily).

3. Has my best interest at heart.

4. Tries to understand my specific needs.

C. Tangibles — Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, menus and displays.

1. Has modern and/or appropriate facilities and equipment.

2. Physical facilities are visually appealing.

3. Projects a professional image.

D. Responsiveness — Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

1. Employees inform me exactly what options are available.

2. Employees give me prompt service.

3. Employees are always willing to help me.
4. Employees are never too busy to respond to my requests.

E. Assurance — Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

1. The behavior of employees instills confidence in me.

2. I feel safe in my transactions with employees.

3. Employees are courteous.

4. Employees have the knowledge to answer my questions and make decisions.

F. Predictability — Confidence that establishment has organized production that guarantees uniformity of product and standardized outcomes.

1. The quality of the food instills confidence in my dining experience.

2. I feel safe that my transactions will be processed exactly the same way.
3. The taste of the food is always predictable.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

4. I know exactly what I will get each time I place an order.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Additional Comments
Exit Interview Questions

Date:
Restaurant #:
Age:
Location:
Gender:
Respondent Code

Instructions: Evaluate the services provided by this restaurant model over the two months. A "5" represents excellent, "1" is poor, and "3" is average. Please use the remaining numbers to describe less extreme feelings.

In the last column indicate how important you feel this service is to you. If the statement describes a service that is important to you, please circle "H" for High. If the service is not important to you, circle "L" for Low. If you feel somewhere in between, indicate so by circling "M" for Medium.

If you wish to add information not covered by the statements or provide examples that describe your opinions about a service, please do so in the comment sections provided at the end of each question. The questions are general in nature yet comprehensive when accompanied with your specific comments. Your comments are valuable in improving our understanding of your requirements, and we appreciate each one of them.

Please note. In the exit survey only the participant will first evaluate the model that he/she prefers. Next, he/she will evaluate the services provided by the alternative model. Again, a "5" represents excellent, "1" is poor, and "3" is average and the remaining numbers to describe less extreme feelings.

Thank you for your time and effort in helping us to provide the best dining experience for you.

A. Reliability — Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

a. Follows through with service in a timely manner.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L
Other model 1 2 3 4 5

b. Shows a sincere interest in providing the best service.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

c. Performs the service right the first time.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

d. Is dependable.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

e. Insists on giving personalized service – meets it error-free records.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5
B. Empathy — Caring, individualized attention a restaurant provides its customers.

a. Gives me personal attention.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

Other model  1  2  3  4  5

b. Has convenient service features (switches menu choices readily).

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

Other model  1  2  3  4  5

c. Has my best interest at heart.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

Other model  1  2  3  4  5

d. Tries to understand my specific needs.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

Other model  1  2  3  4  5

C. Tangibles — Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, menus and displays.
a. Has modern and/or appropriate facilities and equipment.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

   Other model  1  2  3  4  5

b. Physical facilities are visually appealing.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

   Other model  1  2  3  4  5

c. Projects a professional image.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

   Other model  1  2  3  4  5

D. Responsiveness — Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

a. Employees inform me exactly what options are available.

   1  2  3  4  5  H  M  L

   Other model  1  2  3  4  5
b. Employees give me prompt service.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

c. Employees are always willing to help me.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

d. Employees are never too busy to respond to my requests.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

E. Assurance — Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.

a. The behavior of employees instills confidence in me.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

b. I feel safe in my transactions with employees.
c. Employees are courteous.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

d. Employees have the knowledge to answer my questions and make decisions.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

F. Predictability — Confidence that establishment has organized production that guarantees uniformity of product and standardized outcomes.

a. The quality of the food instills confidence in my dining experience.

1 2 3 4 5 H M L

Other model 1 2 3 4 5

b. I feel safe that my transactions will be processed exactly the same way.
c. The taste of the food is always predictable.

d. I know exactly what I will get each time I place an order.
Focus Group Questions

Instructions: Proctor will notify the group that their responses will be recorded. He/She will merely guide discussions by stating questions exactly as written.

Participants will be encouraged to provide examples that describe their opinions about a service, options or particular feature. The questions are general in nature yet open ended to increase diversity of responses and personal interpretation. All comments are valuable in deciding on the best restaurant model for your area, and we appreciate each one of them.

Thank you for your time and effort in helping us to provide your dining desires.

1. Which dining experience did you prefer and why?
2. What would improve your experience in the other model?
3. What did you like best in each model?
4. What did you like least in each model?
5. What one thing would you change in each model?
6. Do you like automated services? Why or why not?
7. What side orders do you prefer and why?
8. Do you like the ambiance of model A/B? Why or why not?
9. What is the most endearing quality of each experience?
10. Complete the following:
    The menu choices in model A/B were_________?
Data Coding:

When collecting the data, I plan to record which model ranked highest with the participants in the survey and the exit interview. In order for the hypothesis to be correct, the data’s results should indicate that Belizean consumers prefer locally owned ‘greasy spoon restaurants’ over the McDonald model. The responses in the focus groups should also support that notion.

Data analysis:

I am collecting this data as a local consultant for an international food chain to determine which restaurant model Belizean consumers prefer. The questions looked at key indicators for customer satisfaction in restaurants such as reliability, empathy, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and predictability. In the exit survey the consumer will be asked to make a choice between the two models. Participants will be expected to choose one of the models and thereby indicating which restaurant model would be best for an international food chain to establish in Belize.

Bibliography

AT & T Small and Medium Business Resource Center  <http://www.att.sbrources.com/>  
April 23, 2004

