Welcome to McDonalds, How May I Exploit You? Fast food’s corporate social responsibility to lower-income areas

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Abstract:

Despite the admiral design and effectiveness of the fast-food business model, it also creates a dilemma between economic prosperity and the social influence of the fast food phenomena, particularly in lower-income areas. Research indicates that demands are dictated by what is available to one’s environment and the social conditions in which one lives. Therefore, the continual marketing and supply of fast food to lower-income areas where people are limited to different food options is a type of exploitation. To alleviate some of the problems associated with fast-food culture, fast-food corporations should consult with community leaders, community members and healthcare officials to develop solutions to do “good.” The “good” in this sense would be to provide healthier foods options in urban areas where socio-economic limitations and restrictions prevent people from accessing healthier foods options. The initiative for fast-food corporations to do this type of “good” would help areas with dietary limitations and also result in better perceptions of fast-food corporations, which, in turn, could be used for stronger marketing campaigns to elicit sales.
I. Introduction.

The fast-food model is an impressive example of industrial design, efficiency, and advertisement. McDonald’s has helped bring mass production and industrial assembly-line delivery into the dining experience. This, coupled with years of effective marketing and advertising, has placed McDonald’s at the top of the fast-food industry. Despite the admiral design and effectiveness of the fast-food business model, it also creates a dilemma between economic prosperity and the social influences of the fast-food phenomenon. These social implications include issues in health, social behaviors towards food consumption, and concerns in social classification, specifically in lower-income urban areas. Research indicates that demands are dictated by what is available in one’s environment and the social conditions in which one lives (i.e. economic, social, working, and education status). Therefore, the continual marketing and supply of fast-food corporations to lower-income areas that have restrictions to available food options, is a type of exploitation.

To alleviate some of the problems associated with fast-food companies, I propose that fast-food corporations consult with community leaders, community members and healthcare officials to develop solutions to do “good.” Of course, by doing “good,” I mean provide healthier foods options to those living in urban areas where socio-economic limitations and restrictions prevent people from accessing healthy food options. This would be seen as corporate social responsibility as defined by Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee. The initiative for fast-food corporations to do “good” would help areas with dietary limitations and also result in better
perceptions of the sometimes leviathan and exploitive traits exhibited by fast-food companies, which, in turn, could be used for stronger marketing campaigns to elicit sales.

II. Fast Food in Lower-Income Areas.

Research demonstrates there is a higher concentration of fast-food chain restaurants in urban areas. In 2004, a study was conducted using geographic information system software to geo-code the placement of fast-food restaurants such as Church’s Chicken, Pizza Hut, Subway, Burger King, and Taco Bell in New Orleans. The results showed that predominantly African-American, lower-income neighborhoods had 2.4 fast-food restaurants per square mile and white upper-income neighborhoods only had 1.5 restaurants per square mile; nearly two times as many fast-food chains.\(^1\)

These findings were echoed in research done by Powell, Chaloupka, and Bao as well. Their research concluded,

Higher income neighborhoods had fewer available full-service and fast-food restaurants compared to lower-income areas. Near low- and middle-income neighborhoods were found to have the highest number of available restaurants with 1.24 and 1.22 times the number of full-service restaurants and 1.34 and 1.28 times the number of fast-food restaurants compared to high-income areas.\(^2\)

Additionally, a University of Michigan study conducted in New York, Maryland, and North Carolina also found that neighborhoods of color and ethnically diverse areas had half the number of supermarkets as predominately white neighborhoods and twice as many small corner-stores and bodegas, which carry little or no fresh produce.\(^3\) Furthermore, low-income neighborhoods were found to have half the number of supermarkets as the wealthiest

\(^1\) Powell, L., F. Chaloupka, and Y. Bao, *The Availability of Fast-Food and Full-Service Restaurants in the United States, Associations with Neighborhood Characteristics*, 211.

\(^2\) Ibid., 240.

communities, but four times as many of the small corner-stores. Low-income and non-white communities in general had fewer natural food stores and produce markets.\(^4\)

The fast-food restaurant is a modern social phenomenon that has shifted the perception of food socially and has revolutionized the food service industry. For a moderate price, customers can enjoy meals on the go in little to no time, in which case they are able to keep up with their fast pace lives. The suburban working mom can afford to feed her family quickly on a tight budget by simply stopping at a fast-food restaurant on her way home. The busy sales representative can pick up a burger en route to an important meeting. Fast-food companies delight in reminding their consumers of the quickness of their services without sacrificing quality for the customer—you. Throughout the years, McDonald’s has reminded consumers that “McDonald’s is your kind of place” and that “We love to see you smile.”\(^5\) Likewise, Burger King has reminded consumers that you can always “Have it your way.”\(^6\) On the other hand, the convenience that fast-food restaurants promise in marketing campaigns overlooks the social impacts and dilemmas that have surfaced from the introduction of the fast-food model in modern America, particularly in lower income neighborhoods. As a result, fast-food marketing campaigns spend a large amount of resources to hide negative health implications associated with a long term fast-food diet. Here, I will argue that it is better strategy for fast-food corporations to invest in being “good” instead of investing in the image of “good”.

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\(^4\) Ibid.
Fast-food stores differentiate the prices on their menu based on the healthiness of the item. Healthier food is often upcharged to cater to a wealthier demographic, while unhealthy food can be purchased at lower prices. For example, the McDonald’s Dollar Menu, which consist of a small fry, McDouble (double cheeseburger), McChicken (fried chicken sandwich), hot fudge sundae, small beverage, Fruit N’ Yogurt Parfait, baked apple pie and a small side salad. Each of these options is more than 300 calories, with the exception of the Fruit N’ Yogurt Parfait (160 calories), baked apple pie (250 calories), and the small side salad (calorie intake based on salad dressing). The same is true for the value meals that are offered. A traditional “Number One,” which consists of a medium fry, Big Mac and medium drink consists of 1,130 calories if you order a Coke. In Orlando Florida, a “Number One” will cost roughly $6.00, which sounds inexpensive. For just $1.00 more, one can add two apple pies (and add an additional 500 calories to the meal). In contrast, a premium salad alone costs about $6.00, not including a side item or drink. Adding those to your meal will cost about $8.00 to $9.00—a $2.00 to $3.00, and significance difference. Therefore, at McDonald’s, the healthier options are priced higher, marketed to those who can afford the “better” option. If fast-food restaurants implemented a price reversal between healthy and unhealthy food items, this could lead to the gradual social conditioning of eating healthier food options regularly.

III. Fast-Food Rituals: Inside and Outside Meaning.

This is not to say that simply providing healthier foods to an area is going to change consumption patterns. Due to the deep socio-psycho imprint fast food has left on society, the issues are far more complex and will require innovative solutions. One of the major indications of the social implications of fast-food restaurants is the ritualistic behavior that has derived out of
the phenomena. Conrad Kottak offers a description of this behavior. Kottak’s article entitled *Rituals at McDonalds*, suggests that products and propaganda can lead to ritualistic behavior. It conditions the behavior of people through the repetitious actions associated with ordering and eating fast food. As Kottak explains, ritualistic behaviors are defined formal events that occur in special places, at regular times and “include liturgical orders—set sequences of words and actions laid down by someone other than the current performer.” Although these characteristics of ritualistic behavior are often associated with religious or sacred affiliates, Kottak makes the point to acknowledge the primary definition and function of ritualistic behavior. He writes:

> Rituals convey information about participants and their cultural transitions. Performed year after year, generation after generation, they translate enduring messages, values, and sentiments into observable action…all people who take part in joint public acts signal their acceptance of an order that transcends their status as individuals.

Through this definition, fast-food restaurants can easily be classified as ritualistic places in which people exhibit ritualistic behavior, at least metaphorically speaking. Symbolically, a customer who consumes McDonald’s regularly from childhood would develop certain ritualistic or “sacred” habits associated with the act of eating at that particular restaurant, thus fostering deep-rooted emotional connections that help define their identity. For example, the ritualistic behavior of fast-food consumption could be figuratively compared to the rituals of a church. A customer can be considered a “follower,” their sacred space would be the interior of the restaurant, and they would be engaged and focused on the “religious doctrine” or lightened menu “divinely” displayed above their heads. “Religious utterances” would be memorized orders recited and said in beat: “I’ll have a Number One, no pickles, with a diet coke, please.” Sometimes suggestions are made by a fast-food crewmember or a “representative of the holy

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8 Ibid., 371.
order” to encourage the follower to try something that might make their meal better: “Would you like to try one of our desserts today?”

This ritualistic behavior subsequently becomes habitual and can result in a deep connection between the consumer and the fast-food experience. The repetitive nature of the food ritual or any ritualistic behavior, for that matter, would result in deep-rooted behavioral changes that would add to a person’s culture and self-identity. Therefore, this connection is much deeper than the connection with the actual food itself and can run far deeper than engaging in carnal compulsions. The view of the Golden Arches, the bright colors of the interior of the restaurant and the iconic image of Ronald McDonald engage other sensory satisfactions besides hunger. Therefore, when one thinks of McDonald’s, they are not just thinking of food, but also of one’s childhood, traditions, familiarity, etc. It can trigger a wide array of memories. Subsequently, the ritual of consuming fast food is more complex in that it satisfies a variety of hungers, whether emotional, psychological, or physical. In addition, when the fast-food ritual, triggers other emotional and sensory responses, the food itself becomes a minor player in the overall experience. Essentially, the ritualistic behavior associated with fast-food culture can disconnect the consumer from the food itself and where it comes from.

As a child, I recall my mother frequently taking me to McDonald’s for a Happy Meal after school. The fun of placing my order into the speaker and the joy of receiving my colorful Happy Meal box from the attendant in the window was all accumulated in the joy I received in pulling out my toy and unwrapping my tiny cheeseburger like a present. There was delight in going through the process of the experience, so much so that I would not even eat the whole meal. I would remove the bun from my cheeseburger and eat the meat alone with a few fries on
the side. I spent most of my time enjoying my toy, my colorful Happy Meal box and living in the moment.

From childhood, I learned “my order.” I learned what I liked and how to place it, which resulted in a common ritual that continued, as I got older. The only difference that occurred was instead of Happy Meals, I began eating from the “grown up” menu and replaced Happy Meals with a “Number One” (Big Mac, medium fries and medium drink). In light of this, from a child on to my young adult life, I never cared to think of where my food came from and what it consisted of. I was primarily motivated to crave the McDonald’s experience. I likely never thought of my burgers as beef. Well, truthfully speaking, it was not a “beef burger;” it was a “Happy Meal” or a “Number One.” I never called French fries “potato fries,” and eventually they were not even French—they were just “medium fries.” Nothing had names to match the source of their origins. I no longer was a consumer of food; instead, I was a consumer of the process—the ritual.

This may explain the perception of food in lower-income areas. When food is treated as an experience and there is no connection to the source of where the food is coming from, how can there be a concern—especially, when economics are involved? For example, if I am on a tight budget and hungry, then I am going to make an economical choice and buy the cheapest food that grants the quickest and easiest satisfaction to my needs. Often in impoverished neighborhoods, a “buck” burger can bring more than a satisfaction for hunger; it can also bring a moment of relief and happiness in hard times of stress.

Thinking of food in terms of ritualistic behavior then allows us to understand how, as a culture, it can change under various circumstances and conditions. Sidney Mintz makes a similar point as that of Kottak’s; however, instead of using the term ritual, he developed his own
terminology: inside and outside meaning. According to Mintz, “The daily life conditions of consumption have to do with inside meaning, the environing economic, social and political (even military) conditions with outside meaning.”9

He further explains:

*Inside* meaning arises when the changes connected with outside meaning are already under way. These grand changes ultimately set the outer boundaries for determining hours of work, places of work, mealtimes, buying power, childcare, spacing of leisure, and the arrangement of time in relation to the expenditure of human energy.10

In contrast to inside meaning, [outside meaning] is those larger forces expressed in particular subsystems, together with the state, that have to do with what I mean by the term outside meaning. Thus, outside meaning refers to the wider social significant of those changes effectuated by institutions and groups whose reach and power transcend both individuals and local communities, those who staff and manage larger economic and political institutions and who make them operate.11

In his book entitled *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, Mintz analyzes how society's concepts or institutions that are in power (outside meaning), help define the daily behaviors (inside meaning) of individuals, including their daily consumptions. In particular, his work discusses how the early sugar business affected the consumption of Great Britain in the eighteenth century. Of course, here, I contend that Mintz’s concepts are easily transferable into contemporary conditions, especially if we think of the power that corporations have in marketing campaigns. Corporate institutions of power have helped shape how and what our society eats. For example, let us consider the working mother scenario represented earlier. Let us further imagine that she is single with four children. Her daily routine would include various errands such as getting her children up and ready for school in the morning, working an average nine hour day in an office, picking her children up from school, picking up the dry cleaning and

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 21-22.
dropping Timmy off at 7:00 p.m. for his Karate lesson. As she drives around town completing her very full day, she will pass several fast-food billboards and restaurant signs. She will also hear several advertisements on her car radio. She may have come from a single parent home in which her very own mother had the same lifestyle. Therefore, her response to solving the very familiar question, “What is for dinner tonight?” will be to stop at a fast-food restaurant on her way from picking up her kids. She is not the best cook anyway, since her own mother never taught her how. This mother is operating in a system of several institutions that are governing over her consumptions:

A. Her working class status does not permit her the time to actually learn to cook or to shop for healthier foods.

B. Her economic status has determined how much she is willing to spend on a meal for her family.

C. The generational imprint left by her mother has fostered her trust in fast food.

D. The marketing and media stimulation she has continuously been bombarded with has encouraged her that their food will solve her problems in their promises of quality and quickness.

This scenario is a clear example of how many people are met with decisions of their consumption, but are limited to options based on the restriction of the institutions they are governed by. Mintz explains, “Individuals are thus presented with a series of situations within which they may begin to make meaningful constructions for themselves, as long as such constructions do not violate the outer situational boundaries that have been established for them.”12

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12 Ibid., 21.
But who caused these implications? This subsequently creates a “chicken and the egg” scenario: Which came first? The demand for the service or did the availability of the service create the demand? It could be suggested that,

Restaurants and stores adapt their selection to the food preferences of individuals living nearby. Therefore, they may not offer healthy food options in black and low-income neighborhoods because their market research indicates that demand for such products is weak in those communities.\textsuperscript{13}

On the other hand, based on the arguments provided by Kottak and Mintz, it would seem the best argument demonstrates that demands for food are heavily dictated by what is available to one’s environment, the institutional systems that one is governed by and the ritualistic behavior associated with prolonged exposure to fast-food customs and propaganda. Therefore, the extended supply of fast food to lower-income areas could be viewed as exploitation because as long as fast-food restaurants remain a predominant food source in urban areas, a demand will continue to exist.

Food preferences could partly be dictated by available selection in a neighborhood, especially because of the lower access to transportation in black and low-income communities. Likewise, because of limited financial resources, black and low-income populations may simply seek out the most calories for the lowest price.\textsuperscript{14}

But if fast foods were replaced with other food options, and reasonably priced, then individuals in urban areas would be obligated to use the alternative food sources. Over time, this could increase a new demand for healthier products. In addition the new prolonged exposure to healthier foods would create new ritualistic behaviors and customs that would dictate different diet trends.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
The principles Kottak and Mintz bring to our attention demonstrate the deep social conditioning that fast food has ingrained in the food habits of the American diet. This coupled with the social and economical restrictions certain individuals exist in also guides and dictates what their diet will be. These examples of the intricate and deep rooted conditioning of fast food eating in our culture helps indicate the long term commitment required to help introduce any real social change. This could explain the sometimes “leviathan” feeling food advocates have towards mega fast food chains such as McDonald’s. This is not to say that McDonalds is the “devil”. In the practical sense, they are a shining light to efficiency and effectiveness of good economics and profit. However, over time, McDonald’s as a globalized industry has made it into a larger than life entity that can seem overwhelming and imposing. Therefore, it should be understood that McDonald’s (or any fast-food restaurant’s) agenda to maximize profit is not immoral. Rather it is simply good business. However, what becomes an ethical issue is when profit is made at the expense of others. When this happens, fast-food institutions resemble exploitative institutions of the past. No region knows the horrors of exploitation better than Africa, where everything from natural resources to the very people were plighted away for the sake of profit. Similar to the criticisms of imperialism and exploitation in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, fast-food corporations can also be criticized. In the same sense, with the research that demonstrates the over population of fast-food chains in lower-income areas and its negative effect on these demographics puts fast-food restaurants in the same realm of abuse. What we learn from Conrad’s narrative is that imperialism and exploitation leads to degradation, destitution and death—a grim prophecy for lower income areas if changes are not made.

IV. Solutions.
At this junction, an important question remains, namely: What would be an adequate solution to meet the dietary needs of an area while still allowing corporations to flourish economically? Some researchers have suggested that food taxations on soft drinks, snack foods, and/or fast foods would help in decreasing the rising obesity epidemic in America. One rationale for this proposal is that a statewide tax could aid in funding more marketing campaigns for healthier foods to help counter-act the numerous fast-food commercials currently on air.\(^{15}\) For example, McDonald’s spent $1.2 billion in 2001 and all other fast-food companies spent $3.2 billion in 1998, while the National Cancer Institute’s “5 A Day for Better Health Program” to promote fruit and vegetable consumption was $1-$2 million annually in 1991.\(^{16}\) This may have resulted in distorted information among consumers about healthy eating.\(^{17}\) Others have advocated for a statewide tax because the costs that obesity transfers to society. Daniel Kim and Ichiro Kawachi explain, “Negative externalities may occur from obese individuals onto individuals in the general populace in the form of increased premiums for health and disability insurance and Medicaid.”\(^{18}\) In comparison, this could be implemented in the same way that taxes are levied on cigarettes. “Economic analyses have estimated that smokers appear to ‘pay their way’ through cigarette excise taxes…”\(^{19}\)

Additionally, the overall argument for a tax on fast food is the belief that it could potentially modify the consumption of these foods that could help aid in the prevention of obesity. It is believed that higher taxes on fast food would increase its overall cost, thus making it a deterrent in lower-income areas.\(^{20}\) This suggestion is derived by the examination of the state-

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 434.
\(^{20}\) Ibid.
level taxation on snack food/soft-drinks from 1991-1998 and relative increases in obesity prevalence over the same time period.\textsuperscript{21} It was evident that “States without a soft drink or snack foods tax were more than four times more likely than states with a tax to undergo a high relative increase in obesity prevalence.”\textsuperscript{22}

Despite these reasonable suggestions for taxing fast food to help prevent the obesity epidemic by deterring consumers from fast-food products, there could be some unwanted behavioral consequences. “Behavioral economic theory posits that access to some behaviors may positively or negatively reinforce the choice for other behaviors.”\textsuperscript{23} In other words, if low-income individuals who are restricted by their economic limitations are further taxed on fast food, they may simply substitute bad eating behaviors with other unhealthy foods or other non-dietary health behaviors such as food restriction or smoking.\textsuperscript{24} Or, it could also cause people to spend more on fast food without deterring any behavior. The primary problem with this suggestion is that it attempts to use a government plan to provide a solution for an economic and interdisciplinary social problem.

What can be more effective is commissioning fast-food corporations to consult with community leaders, community members and health officials for proper discourse to develop solutions to do “good”. “Good” in business is also known as corporate social responsibility. \textit{Corporate social responsibility} is defined by Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee as, “A commitment to improve community well being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources.”\textsuperscript{25} “Good” in this case would be for fast-food companies to provide

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{21} Ibid., 431
\bibitem{22} Ibid., 434
\bibitem{23} Ibid.
\bibitem{24} Ibid.
\bibitem{25} Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee, \textit{Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause}, 3.
\end{thebibliography}
healthier foods options, at reasonable prices, in urban areas where there are limitations and restrictions preventing people from accessing healthier foods.

People can argue extensively that leaders of businesses should hold some moral responsibility whenever negative environmental or social consequences follow from their practices. The truth remains that good business and economic prosperity comes about when profit is the primary goal. Therefore, corporation’s social responsibility will come about if there are incentives that will help promote the overall growth of their organization.

Such incentives for corporate social responsibly are incumbent on all good businessmen, i.e. doing “good” makes good business. Participation in corporate social initiatives looks good to potential consumers, investors, finical analysis, business colleagues, etc. Doing good also makes employees, customers, stock holders and board members feel better about where they work and what they are investing in. There is also evidence that suggest that it helps in branding and helps companies last longer. The incentive would be to make McDonald’s “peculiar”—in a good way. They could separate themselves from the rest of the fast-food pack. No other fast-food corporation has ever re-invested into communities in this way. These ideas would be revolutionary, and would set a corporation apart and in the end become an incredible marketing campaign. Who could imagine an actual “good” fast-food restaurant—One that catered to the needs of the “least-of-these” of our society in the best way? The alternative to this, and the current practices by corporations is a blatant declaration of lower-class exploitation.

There are 6 distinct ways in which a corporation can participate in corporate initiatives according to Kotler and Lee:

26 Ibid., 10.  
27 Ibid.  
28 Ibid.
- **Cause Promotion**, where a corporation provided funds, in-kind contributions or other corporate resources to increase awareness and concerns about a social cause or to support fundraising, participation, or volunteer recruitment for a cause.

- **Cause-Related Marketing**, where a corporation commits to making a contribution or donating a percentage of revenues to a specific cause based on product sales.

- **Corporate Social Marketing**, in which a corporation supports the development and/or implementation of a behavior change campaign, intended to improve public health, safety, the environment, or community well-being.”

- **Corporate Philanthropy**, in which a corporation makes a direct contribution to a charity or cause, most often in the form of cash grants, donations, and/or inkind services.

- **Community Volunteering**, where a corporation supports and encourages employees, retail partners, and/or franchise members to volunteer their time to support local community organizations and causes.

- **Socially Responsible Business Practices**, where a corporation adopts and conducts discretionary business practices and investments that support social causes to improve community well-being and protect the environment.²⁹

McDonald’s has already done great work in all six categories by participating in programs such as being a major sponsor of the Olympic Youth Camp in 2002 and spearheading a volunteering program for the Ronald McDonald House Charities and other children programs in 2002. McDonald’s is also affiliated with the American Academy of Pediatrics in 1994 to help spread the importance of families immunizing their children against vaccine-preventable diseases, through marketing awareness campaigns. It’s philanthropy also includes its close relationship with the Ronald McDonald House Charities and their community volunteering outreach include a long history of using members of the McDonald’s organization to help in disaster relief programs. One of its socially responsible business practices includes its transition into a recycling oriented business back in the 1990s.

²⁹ Ibid., 23-24
All of the programs that McDonald’s has participated in are clear examples that corporate social responsibility is not an unusual characteristic of good business and actually adds to a business’ overall wellness and economic success. In terms of helping lower-income areas increase their healthy food options, corporations like McDonald’s could accomplish this through corporate social marketing and socially responsible business practices. It also demonstrates the amount of financial resources companies already have for community/charity projects (and money that could be set aside to handle any loss) that could be used in diet changing programs in lower income areas.

Also, as previously noted the eating habits of urban areas are very complex and involve a variety of social concerns and therefore is not something that can change quickly. Corporations that participate in corporate social marketing and socially responsible business practices should be aware that it would require a long-term commitment. Kolter and Lee explain, campaigns require more “than simply writing a check to work well.” For a successful campaign, it will require time, strategy, resources and careful communication with experts to effectively develop a plan to stimulate actual change.

Other solutions can come about through the socially responsible business practices corporate initiative. If McDonald’s targeted lower-income areas, where transportation and economics help dictate diet trends, and offered healthier food options at reasonable prices, then in time it would create a new demand and create a profit. More significantly, it would allow them to meet the health needs of those areas. This could be considered a socially responsible business practice because McDonald’s would be developing a system that would require time to develop a profit. Therefore, profit would not be the primary focus in this endeavor, but instead it would be done solely to improve the health needs of urban areas.
This would not be a completely unusual system. After all, McDonald’s already makes menu accommodations for different countries in which it is enfranchised. For example, India is the only country in the world that does not offer beef burgers at their McDonald’s restaurants.\(^{30}\) Instead, their burgers are substituted with a “look-a-like” burger patty that consists of potatoes, peas, and carrots, and Indian spice.\(^{31}\) This menu accommodation was created as a result of the large Hindu population of India that believes in the karmic effect that eating meat has on the afterlife. Other examples include the halal meat products that are offered in most of the Middle East to fit the religious dietary needs of the Muslim population. A kosher menu is also offered in Israel and Argentina to accommodate the Judaic dietary requirements.

My solutions therefore require creative and innovative menu changes for fast-food chains like McDonald’s. As previously stated, although fast-food restaurants have “healthy” food options such as salads that are priced higher, it does not guarantee that one is necessarily choosing a healthier option. Salad dressings that accompany premium salads run anywhere from 40 to a whopping 170 additional calories. This does not include the actual salad itself that can range from anywhere from 90 to 360 calories, depending on the salad type and whether or not one orders grilled or crispy chicken. This also does not include the calories from the fries and drink one may order as well. Therefore, even in their “healthy” options, McDonald’s, overall, may not be satisfying the dietary needs of an area.

Fast-food corporations, such as McDonald’s could use the Healthy Eating Index to evaluate the quality of fast foods offered in specific areas that show an epidemic. Since research indicates, “the choices people make about what to eat are limited by the food available to

\(^{31}\) Ibid.
them,”32 and based on the definition of socially responsible business practices, it is up to fast-food corporations to accommodate the missing nutrients of targeted areas to stimulate healthy eating in these areas. The HEI-2005 shows that in order for fast-food restaurants to align with the national dietary guidance, there would need to be an increase in the intake of “fruit, dark-green vegetables, orange vegetables, legumes, and nonfat milk; replacement of refined grains with whole grains; and reduction in foods and food products containing sodium, solid fats, and added sugars.”33 Therefore, in theory, fast-food restaurants could alter their menus to make these needed accommodations for populations that have obesity epidemic or limitations to access healthier food options (i.e. lower-income areas).

V. Conclusion.

Of course, in the end, some might suggest my ideas are utopian and impractical for fast-food restaurants to execute, which is why fast-food restaurants have yet to implement them. In response, I say these ideas are not utopian—they are simply good forward-looking business suggestions. I don’t assume to have all the details but I do trust that the fast-food industry is much more resourceful and innovative to execute a plan for change, however complex it might be. The impractical argument I can agree with. I would never assume such a daunting task as re-educating a generation as easy, but I do not believe it is impossible. It is sure to be a difficult task that will require time, resources and commitment, but it is necessary, especially in areas that are starving for nutrition and food availability. The idea is to think of rebuilding social habits and mental perceptions—Re-instituting society to healthier eating practices. But it is something

that is much needed and long overdue, and continuing to ignore the “least-of-these” of our society by corporations would be a blatant declaration of lower-class exploitation.
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