

# Japan - From traditional home cooked meals to dining alone at McDonald's

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## Abstract

Title: Japan - From traditional home cooked meals to dining alone at McDonald's.

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Keywords: Japan, McDonald's, fast food, household, lifestyle-changes, singles, fieldwork.

Theoretical perspective: Existing theories within anthropology, globalization of McDonald's and Japanese culture (household etc.) were used as providing explanations of the collected data.

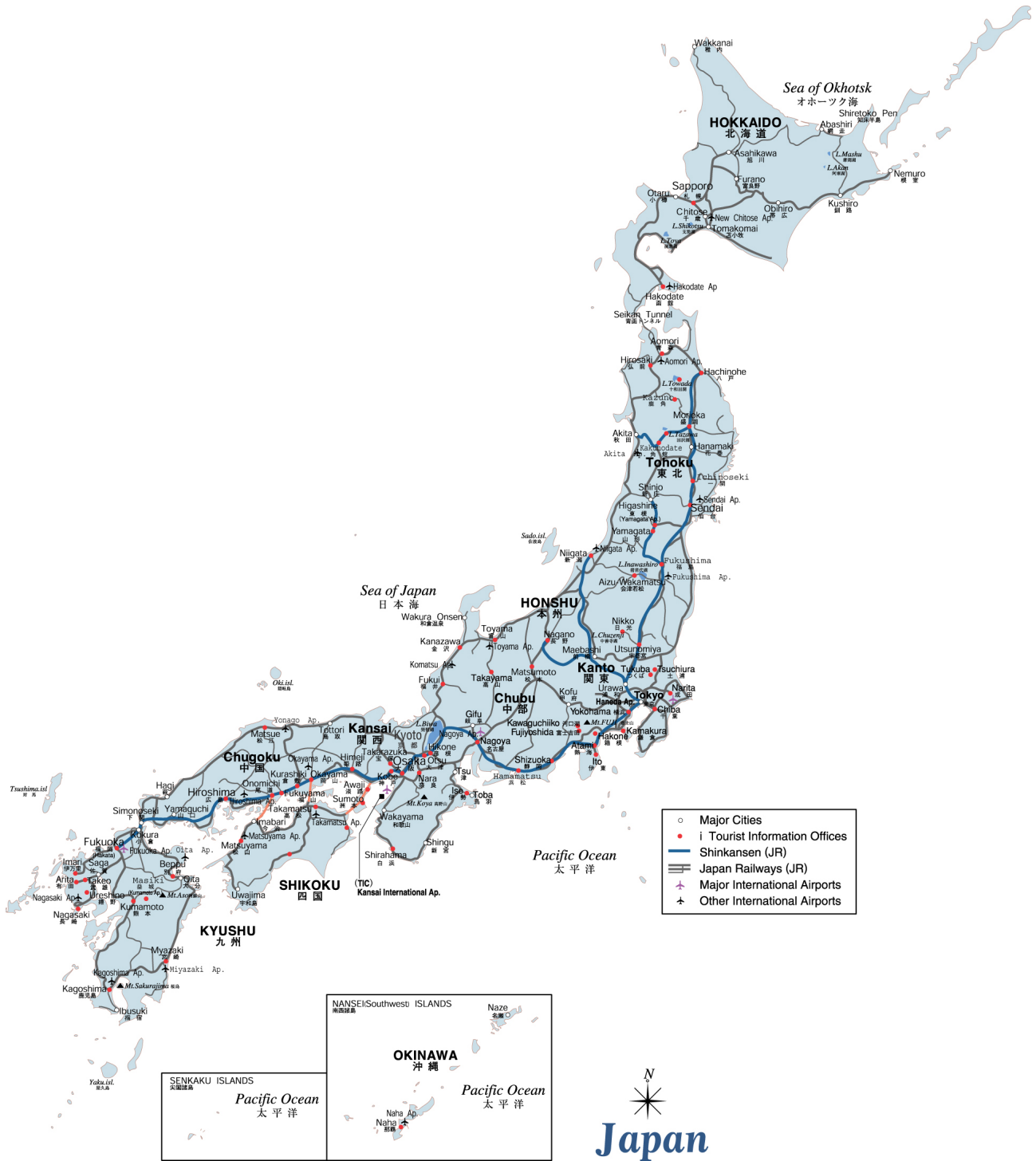
Methodology: This research uses McDonald's as an example of fast food consumption in Japan. The fieldwork includes interviews, observations, and questionnaires.

The research has an interpretational approach to the empirical data.

Empirical data: The empirical data is collected using a multi-method approach. Life story interviews from two families, a group interview, an interviews with Japanese health experts, observations made at 4 McDonald's restaurants in Hiroshima and Tokyo and questionnaires.

Conclusion: The Japanese consumption of McDonald's fast food has increased rapidly the last 40 years because of different reasons. One reason is the Japanese household, which is changing from containing three generations to only containing two generations. That happened according to an increasing number of people, which choose to stay single and more and more old people who choose to live for themselves and not with their children and grandchildren. The role of the housewife is changing and by that also the food habits. Moreover, according to the Japanese informants, their view of healthy living is eating a varied and balanced diet. Fast food is tolerated in small amounts even in their view of a healthy diet.

Another reason is the Bubble Economy in Japan in the 1980's and the increasing amount of restaurants in that period. Also, in the post-war period Japan has been under strong influence of the U.S. and therefore been influence more by globalization and international brands in the post-war period.



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<sup>1</sup> Image.google

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## 1 Introduction

*“Young people don’t think about health. They just wanna get it over-with so that they can talk. Young ladies do not think about health until they get married and get children.” Hiroko<sup>2</sup>*

The Japanese diet is known world wide as one of the world’s healthiest, and many Japanese people are both slimmer and live longer than the average person living elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Presumably because of their diet habits with small sized portions and varied diets eaten 3 times a day.<sup>4</sup> Many Japanese people are taught to sit down while eating, chew the food carefully and have a varied diet all their life.<sup>5</sup>

In Japan, people have primarily been eating a diet containing no meat, but after the meeting with the Europeans meat was introduced in Japan. Even until 2nd World War the diet was mainly fish, vegetables and tofu.<sup>6</sup> The housewives are respected and appreciated in the Japanese kitchen and even in university many young students get at Japanese lunch box, an “O bento” made by their mothers.

Nonetheless, Japan has a huge number of fast food chains; From the world’s best known fast food chain, McDonald’s, to small sushi rolls you buy in convenient stores all over Japan. For a low price you can get a fast service, good taste, varied meals, food in your near surroundings, at all time of the day. Japan seems to prefer convenience. Even if you stand on one of the beautiful mountaintops of rocky Japan, you will find a vending machine (a vending machine provides snacks, beverages and other products).

This research has studied the globalization process of the growth of McDonald’s in Japan as one examples of the growth of fast food chains in the country.

The goal is to discuss and analyse one specific anthropological problem. How a culture get use to eating fast food. Through a fieldwork in Japan this study tries to describe this cultural change.

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<sup>2</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

<sup>3</sup> OECD

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

<sup>5</sup> The Japanese Dietetic Association

<sup>6</sup> Watson James L, 2006 p. 167

## 1.2 Research question

*“Why has the Japanese consumption of McDonald’s and fast food in general, increased over the last 40 years”?*

### 1.2.1 Purpose

The aim of this research is to describe why the consumption of McDonald’s has increased so significantly in Japan since the chain was introduced in Japan in 1971. This should be seen in a wider view not only about McDonald’s but also about fast food in general, in Japan. Other questions concerning the adaption of McDonald’s and the Japanese health opinion have also supplied this research with understanding of this situation in Japan; the McDonald’s adaption to Japan, Japan’s adaption to international food. This study seeks to illustrate how Japan is different from other places. What is considered fast food in one country is not necessarily considered as fast food in other countries.

After one year of living and working in Japan as a Danish cultural adviser some elements of Japan was interpreted and evaluated. The balance between fast food and home made food seemed different from the culture of my native country. After returning to Denmark in May 2009 a research had been carried out in November 2009 to uncover some of the elements in the balance between home cooking and fast food consumption in Japan. The perspective is taken from the consumption of McDonald’s because there is lot of literature about this American chain. Moreover, most readers, know about this chain.

This analysis is qualitative and it is built on interpretations of interviews and observation. It uses quantitative statistics to illustrate the extent of the problem. It uses theories about Japanese history to discuss the interpretation of the collected data from the fieldwork.

Through a fieldwork in Japan it has been the goal to observe Japanese lifestyle today and through home visits and semi-structured interviews the goal was to learn about how some selected Japanese people have experienced the increase of McDonald's and fast food consumption. The interest in this topic is from an anthropological view but also from the view of global health concerns according to fast food.

Besides that, this study is taken from the point of view of a Dane and therefore this research also includes some parallels with facts from the Danish fast food environment.



### 1.3 General framework of this thesis

This research consists of 7 chapters and the general framework is following. First chapter is an introduction to the research question and the research method. Second, in the chapter of Theory and Method, this research look at the consumption of McDonald's in Japan. Then the research looks at the method for this research. In the method chapter, the goal is to discuss and analyse one specific anthropological problem. This assignment is based on a fieldwork and a thick description of the method used. The method of the fieldwork is interviews, life stories and participant observation. In this part the fieldwork is introduced. The multiple methods are discussed; University, office, and two different family households and McDonald's. This research has chosen to unify the part of theory and the part of the method as a way to lead the reader through the text. In chapter 3 this research look at changes in Japan in the last 40 years, which are relevant to the change of the increasing consumption of McDonald's and fast food in general. Bubble Economy, family and household changes and the school lunch in the elementary schools. The 4th chapter is named empirical results and analysis. This is an analysis, which discusses the empirical data and the theory. This analysis is qualitative and it is built on interpretations of interviews and observation. It also uses questionnaires with both quantitative and qualitative questions. The study uses theory to illustrate the extent of the problem. Chapter 5 is the conclusion and last is the biography in chapter 6.

### 1.4 Previously scientific work and collection of data

This research uses theories of fieldwork from the books "Social Research Methods"<sup>7</sup> and "The Ethnographic Interview"<sup>8</sup>. The writers of these books are, regarding the first book, a professor in social research at Loughborough University. The writer of the second book, James P. Spradley, was a professor of Anthropology at Macalester College. The part which contain the theory will mainly concentrate on theories of changes in Japan since 1970ties. It shows examples of globalization of food in a dynamic world. This research uses theories of Japan from the books "Golden Arches East", "A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan"

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<sup>7</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Spradley, James P., 2006

etc. The sources from the Internet have been chosen if they were reliably represented. This research recognises risks for sources of error from the internet but they are used as reliable sources when the author is an Anthropologist or come from a reliable institution. The collection of own empirical data is made in two weeks in Japan, observing and interviewing. The home visits show how two selected families live. It shows a Japanese everyday in more details than the outcomes from the questionnaires. The home visits also shows Japan from two perspectives; One family from Yuki town and another from Tokyo. These life stories supply with perspectives on how these Japanese experienced the last 40 years and again shows perspectives on the theory about the changes in Japan over the last 40 years. The observations supply this research with a classic anthropological method. Observing the routines in a McDonald's store gives insider knowledge of that special "universe" at McDonald's. The group interview gives more open answers than the questionnaires and the meetings with the Japanese health experts, shows some theory from a professional Japanese perspective. The questionnaires show the change of different opinions according to age and they show how and why a selected group of Japanese chose to buy McDonald's and fast food in general.

## 1.5 Delimitation

Hiroshima was chosen because of familiarity to this city through one years job contact in Hiroshima. Tokyo is represented because it is the capital and therefore it must be the presumptive leading city according to fast food. This research shows some opinions from different groups of Japanese. The goal is to understand their point of view and not to solve any possible problem or making a market analysis.

Definition: Consumption is a term for private purchase of services and products. This research seeks to describe how a group of people purchase McDonald food and why. Fast food is a term, which literally means food, which is prepared and served very fast. Because of the fast preparation the terms often relate to low preparation moral and fast food is therefore often related to food with a lower nutritionist benefits than home cooked food. In this research the term is used to cover fast and convenient service.

## 2 Theory and Method

The theory section of this study will give a brief review of relevant theories, which will help generate the hypothesis of the study, and guide the interpretation. The theories give a foundation of the study, which will supply the research with reliability of the environment studied. It also presents the method of how the empirical data was collected.

### 2.1 The Changes in Consumption of McDonald's in Japan

Consumption of McDonald's has changed rapidly in Japan even since it opened in 1971 in Japan. Through the last 38 years it has spread to almost every big city of Japan. It started with five restaurants in 1971 and by 1986 there were 556 shops. The economic boom in Japan in the 1980ties made good investments. In 1991 the chain had expanded to 860

	1990	1995
<b>Systemwide</b>	<b>11,803</b>	<b>18,380</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>8,576</b>	<b>11,368</b>
<i>Japan</i>	<i>776</i>	<i>1,482</i>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>902</b>
<b>Germany</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>649</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>577</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>530</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>429</b>
<b>Brazil</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>132</b>
<i>Taiwan</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>111</i>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>106</b>
<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>98</i>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>78</b>
<i>China</i>	<i>1<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>62</i>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>58</b>
<i>South Korea</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>48</i>
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>

SOURCE: 1995 Annual Report, McDonald's Corp., McD6-3030, p. ii.  
<sup>a</sup>Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.

Figure. 1. Watson James L., 2006, p.3

shops and by 1994 there were 1048 shops. As illustrated in figure 1, the amount of McDonald's shops doubled in the years from 1990-1995 in Japan.<sup>9</sup> As a contrast, an

<sup>9</sup> Watson James L., 2006, p.3

internet source shows that Denmark has 83 McDonald's shops 2009 while Japan has 3598 in 2004.<sup>10</sup>

Even though Japan is approximately 8 times bigger than Denmark, the majority of the Japanese population lives on 20% of Japan and in 2005 Japan's population density is 337 compared to 128 in Denmark.<sup>11</sup> These numbers simply estimate population divided by total surface area. It does not reflect density in the urban sense or consider territory, which is uninhabited like approximately 80% of Japan.<sup>12</sup>

When McDonald's opened in Japan, it was not only a commodity; it was also a representation of America. Nonetheless did this chain sell more than American beef in Japan, it also sold MacChao which is Chinese Fried Rice and many other products which had a Japanese taste.<sup>13</sup> Other countries had their specialities as well. In Norway McDonald's sells salmon wrap, in Ohio it sells Filet-O-Fish'en to supply the Catholics with an alternative to beef on the Fridays, in India they don't eat much beef and pork therefore McDonald's sell chicken in the burgers with Indian spices.<sup>14</sup>

The ingredient of bread and meat was not included in the traditional Japanese stable food as rice, vegetable and fish and Japanese theories discusses if these ingredients are still related to an uncompleted meal.<sup>15</sup> There have been different opinions about meat. In some relations meat could be related to "the others" as foreigners and rice could be related to "self" as the Japanese. Before the 2nd world war some debates discussed that the Japanese bodies could never become as strong as the meat-eating Westerners if they continued only eating rice, vegetables and fish. A dish of rice, meat, onions, eggs and sauce even got the name "a civilized bowl of rice".<sup>16</sup> Bread was introduced to Japan in the nineteen century but first became more usual as breakfast after 2nd World War. When it comes to lunch and especially dinner, these Japanese meals include a lot of side dishes and still today most Japanese don't

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<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia.org List of countries

<sup>11</sup> Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division.

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedis.org Geography

<sup>13</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.163

<sup>14</sup> McDonalds.dk

<sup>15</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.165

<sup>16</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.166

feel satisfied if they don't have rice for their dinner. Rice is often shared from one big bowl, which symbolize socializing. Burgers are not popular for party-food because it is not designed for sharing.<sup>17</sup> The absence of rice simply downgrades McDonald's burgers a snack in relation to dinner, especially in the opinion of older Japanese. Nonetheless the majority of McDonald's stores in Japan are designed with counters and stools so the busy customers can get a quick rest while their body gets charged for the next work hours.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1.1 Japan and fast food in general

A large number of foreign food had been adopted, even before the introduction of fast food from Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's.<sup>19</sup> Some had become part of Japanese cuisine for example, Ramen a Chinese noodle dish and Indian curry. Mos Burger<sup>20</sup> is a burger competitor to McDonald's. It was founded in 1972 and known for its chicken breasts, fish, shrimp and teriyaki burger, which has a Japanese taste because teriyaki sauce is used in many Japanese dishes. Mos Burger introduced the rice burgers with meat, fish or vegetables or lettuce leaves. The rice is pressed, bun-shaped and grilled on the top.<sup>21</sup> You can also find the distinct Japanese taste in the dessert with sweet red beans and chestnut and green tea ice cream. Mos Burger focus on Japanese ingredients and more healthy variants of burgers than McDonald's. Mos Burger has a more organic image. The burgers are twice as expensive as McDonald's burgers and the stores have table serving. It is popular among young Japanese and among Japanese mothers.

Other burger competitors are the Japanese Lotteria and God Burger. Besides from the Burger concepts, concepts like Mr. Donut, and Wendy's — rapidly spread across the country during same decades as McDonald's.<sup>22</sup>

As more Japanese succumb to eating out, a rising popularity of western style food outlets and Japanese family-run food shops has appeared.<sup>23</sup> There are fast food stores all over in

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<sup>17</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.169

<sup>18</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.171

<sup>19</sup> Watson, James L, 2006, p.165

<sup>20</sup> Mos Burger

<sup>21</sup> Watson, James L, 2006 p.165

<sup>22</sup> Mister.donot.com

<sup>23</sup> Foodservice Industry Research Institute/Center

Japan's big cities. Fast food in Denmark less varied. It is for the mainly salty and fatty. The main variants in Denmark are Kebab, hot dog, pizza, and burgers or food from "Grillen" which is often find on pull-ups in the countryside.

The Japanese fast food is, just to mention a few, noodles: *Ramen*, *Udon*, *Soba*. The rice: *kaiten-zushi*, *donburi*, *oyakodon* and *curry rice*. Besides that, you can often buy *yaki-tori* or vegetable on a stick from the street and the same types of fast food as in Denmark.

As a nation known for simple and convenient living, there have been significant changes in traditional Japanese eating habits. Japanese society has undergone from eating mainly different home-prepared meals to more and more takeout foods or frequently dining out. In outlets you see the take away food stores and diners all over. It is more usual than unusual that these stores gives you discount coupons or membership cards. Most Japanese people have a secondary wallet only for membership cards and coupons for these stores.

Supermarkets offer tempting ready-made "quick and easy" dishes, instant food packages,

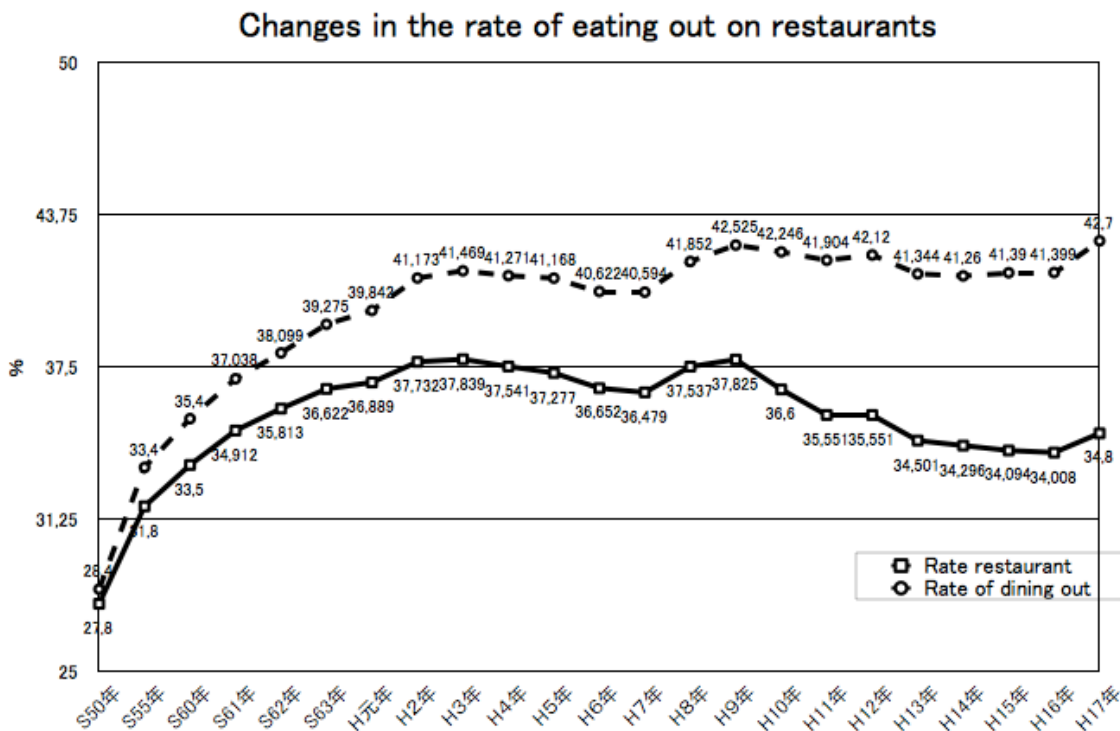


Figure 2. "Foodservice Industry Research Institute/Center". [Japan's year counting system is different from the rest of the world. It is called Nengo, and each era is associated with one Emperor. Shōwa 50 is 1983 and H1 is 1989. Heisei 12 is year 2000 and H17 is 2005].

frozen foods, microwavable foods, and take away bentos (lunch boxes). As illustrated in figure 2, there has been a change in dining out since the 1980ties.<sup>24</sup> The numbers of restau-

<sup>24</sup> Foodservice Industry Research Institute/Center

rants and other food suppliers has increased from 1989-1997. The rate of eating out at restaurant has also changes. Like the rate of restaurants the rate of eating out does not fall significant after 1997. However it rises quickly after a short decrease.

Restaurants can be put in three categories. The restaurants for adults cost per person from 3000 yen and up. The Family restaurants, which cost from 650 - 2000 yen, and then the fast food restaurants like McDonald's where a burger cost between 100 - 500 yen, in general.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 Overall information about the data collection

The study is an investigating research, focusing on gaining a deeper understanding of how Japan McDonald's and fast food habits are today and how it has change since the 1970ties.

To support the research, a fieldwork was done in Tokyo and Hiroshima in 2 weeks in November 2009. The theoretical part occasionally mention Danish culture to give an indication of what factors might have affected the change of fast food consumption in Japan more than the majority of other countries.

The choice of doing a fieldwork, even though there was an extremely short time limit, was made to improve the understanding of behavior in this specific environment. To improve the skills and knowledge a classical Social Anthropology fieldwork in Japan was chosen.

To get closer to the Japanese and their fast food habits, this fieldwork includes visits in two Japanese family homes for life stories and meetings with a team of nutrition experts. The observation is done at two McDonald's in Hiroshima and two McDonald's in Tokyo. The questionnaires are done at a university class, an office canteen and at McDonald's restaurants.

My key informants were people who were familiar with me as a cultural communicator in Japan the year before. They are native speakers and good English speakers which, was a demand and very important for this research to avoid language misunderstandings.

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<sup>25</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

They provided this research with knowledge about their everyday life and gave me the contact to other relevant Japanese. The interview- and life story participants are cited under pseudonyms in the study.

#### Key Informants:

Sofie, a Danish girl, who lives in Japan and speaks Japanese, translated my questionnaires with help from a Japanese woman, who writes questionnaires. Sofie also arranged a meeting with a nutritionist at an elementary school on Miyajima, which was deselected from this research.

Ron, a professor in English at Jogakuin University in Hiroshima, arranged meetings with some nutrition experts and with a group of students from the university. Jogakuin is a women university, so the information from this group is only from a female perspective.

Tomoko, a Japanese woman from Yuki, gave me contact to three elderly people in Yuki. Yuki is a small mountain town outside of Hiroshima. She invited me to her home and her family told me about their food habits, everyday life and opinion on fast food. This family supplied the research with a life story.

Hiroko, a Japanese woman from Tokyo, introduced me to the office people in Tokyo and in Hiroshima. She also opened her home to me and told me about her everyday life in Tokyo, her family's food habits and her opinion on fast food. Her family also supplied the research with a life stories.

The ideas behind this hermeneutic research approach are to understand and bring out the meaning of a culture.<sup>26</sup> This research has a multi-method approach to interpret the subject from different perspectives and to reach a more evident connection between empirical data and theory.

This research uses the classical steps from a qualitative research to find a conclusion and the process of data collection has inspired and developed the analysis.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004, p. 394

<sup>27</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004, p. 368



The empirical outcomes were expected from interviews with three people from three decades, questionnaires from ten people per each three decades and observation of daily routine at McDonald's restaurants. It was the intention to get ten questionnaires from children, but the letter of application to the elementary school was rejected when there was now more time to find another school. Instead the school offered a meeting with the kitchen manager to give me the information about children's everyday food habits but this has been in this research.

Because of changes in schedule, instead the outcomes were received from life story interviews,<sup>28</sup> group interview<sup>29</sup>, interviews with Japanese health experts<sup>30</sup>, observations in McDonald's<sup>31</sup> and 82 questionnaires from people between 14 and 66 years old.<sup>32</sup> This fieldwork showed that, some of the best information was received when it was not expected from two family visits and spontaneously arranged meetings with health experts. The situation resulted in changes from one research strategy to another.

The participants of this study were asked if they wanted to be voluntary and they were insured that the collected materials were only to be used for the intended research purposes.<sup>33</sup> The interview- and life story participants are cited under pseudonyms in the study. That has been decided because of the privacy of these persons.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2.1 Life stories

Life stories were used to gain information on long-term periods like one person's or family's life in Japan. It gave a wide view of reasons for opinions and habits.<sup>35</sup> The information from the life stories was collected by flexible semi-structured interviews. The questions and answers were open-ended and an interactive process created the discussions.

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<sup>28</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family - Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

<sup>29</sup> Annex 3: Group Interview

<sup>30</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>31</sup> Annex 5: Observations

<sup>32</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>33</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004, p. 511

<sup>34</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004, p. 513

<sup>35</sup> Bryman, Alan, 2004, p. 113

The life stories were done in Yuki and Tokyo. Hiroko lives with her husband and son in downtown Tokyo in the Shinjuku area. Their family is named, Shinjuku family, in this research. Both Hiroko and her husband have a full time office job. Hiroko's mother is a housewife and lives far from Tokyo. This family was chosen to show a family who lives in the big city like the majority of Japanese. It is also chosen to show the new Japanese household where both parents work, the child goes to school from 9-18 and the mother still is the one preparing the dinner. It shows a family, which lives, in the middle of one of Japans food utopias, a place filled with opportunities of eating out all day.<sup>36</sup>

Through an earlier employment in Japan, Hiroko was not a total stranger but she was a former colleague from the periphery. This is relevant for the role as a researcher and informant. Our relationship was former colleagues whom had worked in the same company but not in the same city. Because she worked with life style research and had knowledge in how to get useful information she was selected as a useful informant. Though other persons could have been relevant too, they were deselected because these relationships already were settled as friendship. To avoid any awkwardness of the role as a researcher and informant, a person in the periphery was chosen. Hiroko lived in central Shinjuku and became the informant from midtown Tokyo. With Hiroko, it was easy to construct a definition of what was going on. She knew that the goal for this research was to discover what she and her network know about their culture and what concepts she uses to classify their experiences.

Conversely, the Yuki family did not know anything about making research and sometimes there was a feeling of crossing the limit of privacy if some information from Denmark was not given in return. Tomoko's role as an informant was relevant to this research because it gave different perspectives on how a fieldwork is received by informants. It supplied this research with a reminder of the importance of informing about the anthropologist's aims. In this research the information should be communicated regularly, because we constantly returned back in the roles of new friends.

Tomoko provided this research with the life story of her parents and family in Yuki. The family in Yuki was very different from the one in Tokyo. Yuki is a mountain town, which is almost self sufficient with vegetable, tofu, rice and fish. This family is chosen in this research to show the old Japanese food habits and "political consumers" in Japan. Their family is not a typical

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<sup>36</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

nowadays-Japanese family living in the big cities but as the traditional. The daughter, Tomoko, is the key informant and the parents and her and her sister are the ones giving information during my visit in their home and through a taped semi-structured interview. The role of the family from Yuki is to show Japanese living on the countryside in relation to the urbanized Japan as for example the Tokaido Megalopolis (a belt of big cities along the Pacific coast of Honshu main island). The family from Yuki shows Japan not just from a countryside view, it also shows how people from the urbanized Japan have chosen not to live; the classic Japanese family.

In Japan, it is not normal to invite guests to your home, because the homes are so small. It was not expected to be invited to their homes but after being invited in their homes the research strategy changed as written in chapter 2.2. The visits generated useful information about their fast food consumption. The result was two very different families in Japan, but both showed Japanese lifestyle and knowledge about the general Japanese everyday. It gave a wider experience of the Japanese everyday life.

### 2.2.2 Group Interview

Four people from an office in Hiroshima offered to attend an interview about their answers in the questionnaire sheet. I had met these people before as my former colleagues, and one of the reasons of their interest in attending in the research, perhaps was to show their thankfulness of my returning to Hiroshima. Nonetheless they supplied the research with insider knowledge and interesting point of views of Japanese lifestyle. This group was very informative and they wanted to give me as much information as possible.

One of the four attendees and I met the day before the interview. The research was introduced to describe the purpose of this trip to Hiroshima. A meeting was arranged the following day at 7 p.m. Three more women were coming. To protect the privacy of the informants the persons are listed as (a), (b), (c) and (d).

This group shows the perspectives of (a) a married 40 years old women living alone because her husband works in another city, (b) a single 40 years old man who lives with his mother, (c) a single 54 years old women living alone, and last (d) a 25 years old women living with her mother. They are all full time employees in a private company.

Because (a) was late, we started with a dinner at a restaurant close to their office. The intention was to create a safe atmosphere. When (a) arrived we started the interview. It lasted for 45 minutes. (A) translated from English to Japanese because (c) could not understand all of the English words.

The questions were asked slowly and clear to allow the attendees to reflect on their opinions and habits. It is to be hoped that this showed mutual respect and that it had a positive influence on the results. From my experience from Japan I knew how to show signs of respect to meet their cultural norms. Nonetheless to have simple and clear questions to avoid any language barrier. It was experienced that humour could loosen up a nervous respondent but too much would make them feel more nervous or make the situation less serious. They all knew that I had studied Human Nutrition and perhaps they had an expectation that I had a prejudiced idea about fast food consumption. Because of that reason the questions were focused on not to seem prejudiced. It was a goal to show the respondents accept to make them feel that they gained something too. Like Spradley writes *„Every ethnographer bears a responsibility to weigh carefully what might constitute a fair return to informants”*.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.2.3 Japanese health experts

Moreover this research also includes meetings with Japanese health experts to see if they had some interesting points of view. These meetings were held at Jogakuin University in Hiroshima in the department of Nutrition. There were two meetings, one with Ms. Mizuhasei a teacher in nutrition and another with the professor of the nutrition department, Mr. Sakai-sensei.

### 2.2.4 Participant Observation

The participant observation was done in Tokyo and in Hiroshima. 6 hours in Tokyo and 20 hours in Hiroshima. The goal was to see who would go to these McDonald's stores and how they spend their time there. Because of the extremely short time limit only four McDonald's are used. Four shops out of 3598 cannot tell how the consumption is in the whole Japan, but it can give an idea of how to relate the cases of this research to the statistics.

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<sup>37</sup> Spradley, James P, 1979, p. 38.

The restaurants in Tokyo are the on Minami Shinjuku (N 35° 41.280 E 139° 41.940) located near southern entrance/exit of JR Shinjuku station, Tokyo and in Shinjuku Nishiguchi (N35°41.297 E 139°41.527) located near Mode Gakuen Cocoon Tower. The restaurant in Hiroshima are located on 6-8 Hon-Dori, Naka-ku, Hiroshima (N34° 23.365 E 132°27'27.3) and on Hiroshima JR Station South Exit 2-37JR, Matsubara-cho, Minami-ku, Hiroshima City (N 34°23.508 E 132°28.277). The observation in Hiroshima is done in the day hours between 10 a.m - 7 p.m over 7 days.

The staff in McDonald's did not know about the purpose of my consumption of more than 30 oranges juice over the two weeks in Japan. But I blended in as a customer as much as possible.

### 2.2.5 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were easy because then the Japanese did not have to speak English. The people from the questionnaires were collected in random places. The goal was to get attendees from different ages. The respondents were office workers, university students and customers from McDonald's. The goal of the questionnaires was to get ideas about why these respondents consume as they do. The questionnaires from the office places was distributed by Hiroko and collected after one week. The questionnaires from the university were collected the same two days they were distributed. In return for helping with the research, I offered Ron to give a lesson in Danish food customs in a Cross Cultural class. The class consisted of 42 young women in their 20's. This group was chosen because the majority of Japanese people in this age live with their parents but also have pocket money to spend on their friends, and interests. They show the women's interests before they perhaps become mothers.

The questionnaires from McDonald's gave results from many different ages. These questionnaires were collected in the day hours between 10 a.m - 6 p.m over 7 days.

It cannot be expected to see a significant difference between the teenagers and the selected women in the twenties, because the age difference is between 6 - 2 years. The majority of the attendees in the twenties are 20 and 21. Therefore all the respondents were divided in 3 groups. First group is teenagers and Japanese in the twenties. Second group is Japanese in

their thirties and forties and last group is the Japanese in their fifties and sixties. The reason for dividing the respondents in age groups is to interpret any difference in opinion on consumption of McDonald's and fast food according to age. Number of people, in first group is 49. Number of people in second group is 22 and number of people in the third group is 11. The time for the collection of questionnaires is November 3rd-13th. The range of age is 14-64 years old. There has not been any analysis of the gender differences, but most of the respondents are female. The questions are both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative questions are to show an overview of the problem area. The qualitative questions is to show some different opinions from the Japanese

### 2.2.6 The role as a researcher

This research seeks to keep in mind that the researcher also brings a personality to the culture, which is studied. The identity and appearance affect the people studied, and the culture, which was studied, can change by the appearance of the fact that it is a researcher or because of the fact that it is a foreigner. This research seeks to understand what ideas, which the studied Japanese have of being an anthropologist and of the culture of my origin.<sup>38</sup> This research seeks to see through the eyes of the research participants to describe the context of the culture and to measure, which roles people were given in this research, the researcher included.

After just a brief look at the collection of data in the annex, the reader sees that most of the Japanese whom attended this research happened to be females. More or less, unknowingly the Japanese have provided me with female respondents; Or more females have shown interest in my research. What comes to the questionnaires at the university, the reason is of course that it is a women university. This could have hidden relevant data about the male consumption of fast food.

When it comes to this research in Japan, I could very easily have been put in the box of being a *Gaijin*. *Gai* meaning "outside"; and *jin* meaning "person". Literally the word means "outside person" and it can also refer to nationality, race or ethnicity. Because of familiarities to this culture this role did not seem awkward. It is not my impression that any of the informants or respondent has anything against Denmark or being a Dane. In fact, the attendees from the

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<sup>38</sup> Hume, Lynne, 2004, p. 32

group interview are interested in Scandinavia and Europe because their company sells Scandinavian food products and design. That could have given them a prejudice interest in talking with me. Nonetheless, it is not my opinion that this interest affected the outcomes.

The interpretations of this research are not trying to claim what all Japanese people are doing, but they are meant to give examples of the Japanese lifestyle, which in general, has increased its consumption of McDonald's and fast food.

Through the participation in the social life, which is observed, it was the goal to develop a greater understanding of the culture. To provide the reader with an understanding for the studied culture, this research seeks to provide the reader with what Clifford Geertz calls, thick description,<sup>39</sup> but this is done under the circumstances of a word limit.

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<sup>39</sup> Geertz, Clifford, 1973

### 3 Brief look at some changes in Japan over the last 40 years

*This chapter shows some relevant changes in Japan. During the fieldwork the informants and respondents explained their experience of these three topics, School lunch, Family changes and Bubble Economy. Below is shown the theory, which explains these terms. It is illustrated to give the analysis a substance for interpreting the empirically data.*

#### 3.1 Family change

The Japanese family *ie* is changing (*ie* can be defined as the physical household itself).<sup>40</sup> It is not the same unit as before with three generations; children, parents and grandparents. It is changing because an increasing number of families split so that the grandparents live for them selves and don't influence the children and grandchildren's life.<sup>41</sup> It is also changing because more women enter the labour market and leave the home and kitchen. Moreover it is changing because an increasing number of Japanese choose a life as singles.

In 1960 the worse rebound after the 2nd World War was over. The verse, "rice, soup and side dishes" had become a national norm and the ability to cook was an essential part of adult womanhood. The housewives (*shuhu*) are said to be one of the reasons for the miracle of the Japanese economy boom. There is even is a word for the good wife and wise mother, *ryosai-kenbo*.<sup>42</sup> The next decades introduces international courses, including fast food chains, convenient stores and vending machines and step by step the role of the national meal had to compromise with the globalization of international courses. For housewives, meals are still an important component for the family and the role of a mother, but for the increasing number of unmarried- and young women, it is only an ambition for some. Also recent surveys shows that the new generation of housewives, born in the 1960ties and up, is adapting to the convenient and modern life with fast food and convenient alternatives. Some even find everyday cooking boring.<sup>43</sup>

When it comes to the fact that an increasingly amount of elderly choose to live by them selves it is often related to the children's relationship situation. Many couples choose to live by

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<sup>40</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p.355

<sup>41</sup> Annual Report on the Aging Society: 2008

<sup>42</sup> Shelley Rex, 2001, p. 29

<sup>43</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p. 416



themselves nowadays and singles often stay living with their parents. These facts also change in different areas of Japan.<sup>44</sup>

The change of diet could be because of the decreasing number of three-generation families and mothers working. There are less and less housewives and more businesswomen. Like in any other cultures a good health can often be related to ones social status. If the person has a partner, children or family they often feel they have stronger reasons for preparing 3 meals a day and thinking more about health.

Today The Japanese Dietetic Associations guide you to, among others, eat well-balanced meals. You should make a combination of various foods and cook in various ways. Moreover, the guidelines even tell you to eat out some times and eat processed and already prepared food products. Eating out is accepted as part of keeping a varied diet.<sup>45</sup> However, the increasing consumption of international food has also fostered new opinions among the citizen of Japan. It has developed ideas of a better future with native surrounding, domestically harvest and production. One term is *furusato*, which means native place and another term is *kokusan*, which means domestically harvest.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.2 School Lunch

Rice has always been the staple food in Japan but after 2nd World War wheat became a part of the stable food in Japan. Especially the school children felt the difference. After the second WW the Americans wanted to export wheat to Japan. The children got bread rolls in school instead of rice as part of the Japanese government's Food Control Act.<sup>47</sup> School lunch was from the 1950ties based on bread.

Kyuushoku is school lunch. The tradition of school lunch started in the early 20th century. School lunch was extended to all elementary schools in Japan in 1952 and to junior high schools in 1954. Dietitians plan the menu and the average menu has gone through a large deal of change since the basic meals of the 1950s, as Japan grew economically.

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<sup>44</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p. 355

<sup>45</sup> The Japanese Dietetic Associations

<sup>46</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2001, p.424

<sup>47</sup> Ohnuki Tierney, 1993, p. 16

Rice got a comeback again in 1976, following a surplus of (government-distributed) Japanese rice, and became increasingly frequent during the 1980ties.

Today, school lunches are a diverse affair, including soup and side dishes and meals range from Asian dishes to western dishes.

The government is controlling the school lunch and the nation's economic situation and safety plan is reflected in the school lunch. The government's programs seek to give the children a balanced and varied diet in their childhood.<sup>48</sup> The average of calories in the school lunch is for example settled to 850 in whole Japan. The supply of bread in the Japanese school lunch developed a generation used to eating bread and moreover, a generation used to the Americans brands like, McDonald's and Burger King. The children were the new consumers who got a light transition of eating foreign food. The Ministry of Education today claims that elementary schools should give the children sea weed in school because the consumption of seaweed seems to be decreasing in the Japanese homes. Also they want to use local or domestic produced food. Still many schoolchildren prefer *gyoza* (Chinese dumplings), French fries, instant noodles and pizza if they can choose between different meals.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.3 Bubble Economy

Some fact of the Japanese economic history is addend to this research because the informants explained that it had influenced on the rise of restaurants, fast food chains and indirectly it influenced the consumption of fast food in Japan. The Bubble Economy is a period of economic wealth in Japan. It started in 1986 and ended in 1990.<sup>50</sup> In the post-war the Japanese government stimulated the private sectors growth. Small banks were control by the national Bank and therefore the government could institutionalize the country's industry, infrastructure and trade. In the 1950ties the Ministry of International Trade and Industry made important trade dealings, which had a huge impact on the growing Japanese economy. Through the 1950ties and 60ties the infrastructure got improved dramatically the Ministry of

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<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

<sup>49</sup> Yates, Ronald E., 1990

<sup>50</sup> Ellington, Lucien, 2004

International Trade pushed for trade liberation with extremely low tax and promote export to foreign countries.<sup>51</sup> After the 2nd World War Japan was undergoing big changes. American became a status symbol because of the American conquer of Japan and because of its American high-class brands and marketing.<sup>52</sup> After the war the citizen of Japan was recommended to save their money, but as the Bubble Economy started people wanted to spend money and they had dinner in restaurants more often as shown on figure 2. The Bubble Economy made almost any investment in Japan a good investment also for American brands like McDonald's.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ellington, Lucien, 2004

<sup>52</sup> Nagashima, Akira, 1970

<sup>53</sup> Watson, James, 2006, p. 162

## 4 Empirical data and Analysis

*There are many reasons for the fast increasing consumption of McDonald's and fast food, in general. McDonald's smooth adaption to the respondents food habits is discussed here.*

The anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1992)<sup>54</sup> follows the spread or globalization of ideas, people and food etc. though flows more than through cultural coherence and patterns. He follows the globalization and the dynamic culture always adapting to new flowing elements. The same way this research describes a global tendency in Japan. How an American fast food chain spread and developed in the receiving, reproachful and innovative Japan. McDonald's has got a stable role in Japan beside of the native fast food chains. This study follows the McDonald's as fast food chain. It describes it's adaption in Japan and how McDonald's has fit into Japan as a chain delivering fast service, American symbols like simply meat, Coca Cola and fast consumption, comfortable interior for singles, take away options and many new varieties which fit into the Japanese's preferences and taste.

The goal for this research is to find out how the Japanese respondents experience their consumption of McDonald's and fast food. From the empirical data this research seeks to find out what cultural elements they consider as significant and how they experience the subject of this research; How the Japanese McDonald's consumption has increased over the last 40 years.

Four topics are repeated in the empirical data. One of the topics is that the Japanese household is changing including the fact that more live as singles. Another topic is how the Japanese respondents have adapted the taste for international food through school lunch and how McDonald's has approached the Japanese demands and preferences for fast food. Third topic is the respondents' experience about the influence of the Bubble Economy and 4th topic is about the respondents idea of balance in their diet. This is included because almost all respondents mentioned the balance in diet.<sup>55</sup>

### 4.1 Households

Through the life stories from Shinjuku and Yuki it can be interpreted that the life as a housewife also is changing in Japan like it has in the Western world. The example from Tokyo

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<sup>54</sup> Hannerz, Ulf, 1992, Chapter 7

<sup>55</sup> Annex 1,3,4 and 6

shows a housewife who also has a full time job and the example from Yuki shows a mother having a part time job besides the role as a housewife. Nonetheless it can be interpreted from the empirical data and theory<sup>56</sup> that housewives still remain a female role in the cases of the Japanese respondents. The empirical data shows, that the traditional view of women is still dominant today though these Japanese women have a full time job. These women still take care of the household, but the element, which is changing, is the content of the role as a wife and mother. The empirical data indicates that this role adapts more and more to the new life with new possibilities. One example from the Group Interview shows the developing mother role. Here we talk about the changes in lifestyle,

*„One of the negative perspectives is that parents gives their children fast food to make them happy. That is something which I were not used to in my childhood.“<sup>57</sup>*

There are arguments for and against if home cooking is the only right thing for the mother to choose, but the empirical data shows that more and more housemothers accept fast food for themselves and sometimes also for their children. A respondent argues, that today still some housewives refuse fast food. The example is from a young woman from the office questionnaires. She writes that,

*„My mother 55 and grandmother 84 do not like fast food. I think over 50 years old people hesitate to eat fast food.“<sup>58</sup>*

The woman argues that this is concerning people over 50 years old and therefore it can be expected that she thinks people under 50 has another opinion; that the new generation of housewives is different. Maybe the change is still not concerning every housewife, but the respondents speak both, from a specific example and in general so it can be interpreted that for Japanese women under 50 years old more and more accept to have fast food now and then.

When the adaption to fast food occurs and why it happens is difficult to say. Japanese food is an essential part of Japanese culture. It has identified the culture and classified what is Japanese and not Japanese. Step by step Japanese food culture contains more

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<sup>56</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p. 416

<sup>57</sup> Annex 3: Group Interview

<sup>58</sup> Annex 4: Questionnaires

compromises. One could argue for ideas that the changes occur when people are children and grows up adapting some international habits. Women under 50 have had bread and meat in the school lunch, but this discussing is mentioned later in the analysis. The women above mentioned a relevant element. That the old generation has had another opinion of what the family should eat. One of the health experts puts it this way,

*„ I think it is a big problem that Grandparents are away from grandchildren. We have a Japanese culture. Japanese culture change. Grandfather and grandmother have Japanese culture. But now children are not influenced from grandfather and grandmother. I am affair!”<sup>59</sup>*

The theory from Jennifer Robertson (2008), shows that more grandparents don't live with their children anymore.<sup>60</sup> None of the families, which were visited, were living with three generation. The fact that the grandparents are absent in the home of the children and grandchildren could be a reason for the changes of accepts of fast food.

Some of the nowadays-household elements are discussed here from the point of view of the two families. For the family in Shinjuku, restaurants and fast food is mostly for the weekends. During the week they have a homemade dinner.

Hiroko lives with her husband and son in downtown Tokyo in the Shinjuku area. Both her and her husband have a full time jobs. Though Hiroko is working she prepare the dinner every night in the weekdays. In the weekend the family dine out or the husband prepare the dinner. Her and her husband get their lunch from take away restaurants, like Starbucks, street stands or sometimes they get homemade bento boxes. Her son eats lunch at school. The family eats breakfast together. Often they have toast. When Hiroko was a young girl she did not care about healthy eating. It came later when she became a mother. Now she cares about how to make three proper meals a day, how to be a wise mother and she prioritize life as a mother.<sup>61</sup>

She doesn't like McDonald's because she relates it with junk food. Her husband likes it because he had it in his childhood. Instead Hiroko prefers Mos Burger. She says this chain

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<sup>59</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>60</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p.355

<sup>61</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

focuses on health and good Japanese products. Her opinion is that it is more proper for mothers to take their kids to Mos Burger than to McDonald.

*„Young people don't think about health. They just want to get it over-with so that they can talk. Young ladies do not think about health until they get married and get children. Mothers like MOS Burger better because they have the impression that Mos is more healthy.”<sup>62</sup>*

What she is saying can be interpreted, as McDonald's is not for mothers. It gives her the impression that the mother is not being a wise and good mother, who are thinking about health if she chooses McDonald's. Nonetheless she likes the concept, fast and creative service and food if it is mixed with a sense of ethics for local food products. She accepts that busy people and young people go to McDonald's but it would never be a solution for her. According to the theory about dissolution of the household,<sup>63</sup> she is an example of the mothers born in 1960ties choosing compromises to home cooking, but again, not any kind of compromises. Mos Burger gives her a solution with quick food, family friendly interior and Japanese food products. She is willing to pay the price for these extra elements in her fast food consumption. She tells how she thinks fast food chains are tempting for many people who want to save their money or for people without a job. Also she tells me how she thinks that the Japanese Bubble Economy made many Japanese lifestyle changes:

*„As you know, there are a variety of food service shops in Japan. We are used to using these shops depending on the situation. Going to fast food shops is easy and convenience. Therefore many people intend to use a cheap food service for example McDonald's because their incomes is decreasing”.<sup>64</sup>*

Hiroko mentions that children who are studying, sometimes get money for a fast lunch solution because it is cheap money. She shows the menu from her son's school. They have both Japanese and international courses like spaghetti and meatballs. She tries to be aware of what he is eating, but in general, she relies on the school's ability to feeding her son.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Annex 2: Life story Shinjuku family

<sup>63</sup> Robertson, Jennifer, 2008, p.416

<sup>64</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

<sup>65</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

Both parents in the Yuki family know the American fast food chains and some Japanese, but they don't prefer any one of them. The mother though eats burger with potato some times when she works. For her it is a question of fast service, acceptable taste, low price and a good location of the burger shop. She eats out on restaurants approximately once a month while her husband only joins her two or three times a year. This can show an example of a family whom have good possibilities for home cooking but still choose convenient and cheap solutions when they are available. The mother is ready to compromise her own dinner, but always cooks dinner for her husband and daughters. It is anticipated of the women.

It is feasible that many tourists who visit Japan will experience two strong elements in the Japanese culture. One of the elements is the old traditional culture still living and the other elements is an extremely modern culture, where many young and also many old Japanese uses the modern possibilities like international restaurants, convenient and high technological transportation. The observation showed that both young and old Japanese uses McDonald's; If not for eating burgers, then to have coffee or other Japanese products.<sup>66</sup>

The father in the Yuki family, FY, explains me that for him, a meal is completed if it is something his wife has made. If she is not home he define his dinner as a snack. FY sees a tendency for elderly people to live alone and young couple to choose to live for themselves and not with the family. As he explains,

*„That makes it necessary for both the man and the women to work, if they will afford an apartment and have a good economy.” He also says, „that makes the life of young couples busy and it will affect that they will have to choose the fast food restaurants some times”.<sup>67</sup>*

This can be interpret as if he is saying that the changing of household patterns gives the Japanese a more busy everyday and restaurants and fast food gets tempting to cope with the busy schedule. When he talks about fast food, this should be read as a general term for all fast food brands including McDonald's, but this is an interpretation.

He explains that more women started to work in the 1970ties in Japan. They started as a part time employee but today an increasing number of young couples need the payment from a full time job from both man and women. He explains that his family chooses to live

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<sup>66</sup> Annex 5: Observation

<sup>67</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family



more like an old style Japanese family. The father and mother are neighbours with their two daughters and share their everyday together. The mother prepares all the meals for breakfast lunch, lunch packets and for dinner and she has a part time job as a teacher. They both define healthy food as homemade food and something from their local area.<sup>68</sup>

Both families relate McDonald's to America and new living. They have seen how other Japanese people have accepted burgers, fast costumer service, international food, and alternative to the Japanese food. The family from Yuki has decided to live in the mountains without these convenient food possibilities. It can be discussed if this family has a penchant for local food and simple living. Taken from the conversation with the father the family has their opinion because of a long life in Japan under the Japanese Government.

*„Our life is like old style. It is different. Popular in a way. Because I not believe in government. Japan is many small islands, but the government has control and take the money.”<sup>69</sup>*

The family from Shinjuku has chosen to live in the middle of an area with restaurants from all over the world. They like a convenient life and they like to chose between many possibilities. Hiroko appreciates Japanese food products because she is a mother, she says.

*„McDonald's is junk and Mos Burger has a healthy image. McDonald's shows their calories, but Mos show that they use safe ingredients from Japan. Some are organic. McDonald is cheaper than Mos.”<sup>70</sup>*

Hiroko explains how she can have fast food at Mos Burger and still have Japanese and organic products and keep her healthy image.

From the empirical data it can be interpreted that fast food is for lunch and dinner is taken more serious. Most of the answers from the questionnaires showed that lunch is the time where the respondents use fast food. Dinner is respected as the most important meal of the day and it is expected of the housewife that she prepares a homemade dinner. One example is from the group interview where a woman says,

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<sup>68</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

<sup>69</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

<sup>70</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

*„fast food consumption is for lunch not dinner. A Japanese dinner is heavy. The most heavy in the day.”<sup>71</sup>*

The man from the interview agrees with her. He says,

*„My mother prepare the dinner. For her, the dinner is the most important”.<sup>72</sup>*

He is an example of the single adult Japanese whom still lives with his mother. For this respondent, the family community and solidarity is important and enjoying the dinner together symbolized the family. The topic about, singles, will be discussed in the next part of this chapter.

Most of the respondents answered that fast food is considered a meal for lunch, not dinner. These data comes from the questionnaires. In the questionnaires from the youngest group more than half of the attendees said that fast food could only be an alternative to lunch, not dinner. The rest said that fast food could be eaten all time of the day; From morning to midnight.<sup>73</sup> Also the adults from 30-60 years old agreed that fast food is mainly an alternative to lunch. In light of these data it can be understood that the tradition about dinner is a habit, which still remains in the opinion of the young Japanese. One can ask why dinner is more important. An idea could be that for dinnertime even the working mother and father are home. For lunch nobody is home today; Not even the grandparents. Therefore fast food has become an alternative to the lunch or the lunch packet. There are so many lunch variants and presumably one of the kinds will fit the persons preferences; It could be according to price, locality and taste. Previously theories from Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) argue that a burger cannot become dinner because of the absence of rice.<sup>74</sup> The respondents could eat burgers for lunch, but none of them would choose it for dinner. It can be discussed, if the absence of rice is more accepted for lunch than for dinner. The questionnaires show some differences in opinions according to age differences. The youngest group choose fast food because of the price and taste. The respondents in the 30ties and 40ties plus 50ties and 60ties mainly choose fast food because of taste and fast and good service. From these small data it can

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<sup>71</sup> Annex 3: Group Interview

<sup>72</sup> Annex 3. Group Interview

<sup>73</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>74</sup> Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993 p. 41

be interpreted why the different ages buy fast food. For the young respondents the low price is tempting and for the adults the fast service is important.<sup>75</sup>

Good manners are often expected from the elderly generation. Therefore this outcome is not surprisingly, but it is relevant to remember. You can argue that the young respondents use McDonald's because of its cheap products. Moreover, one could argue that because of cheap prices, the young respondents get the habit of eating McDonald's and fast food. It can be discussed if they eat more than their parents did when they were teenagers. Because of the increase of shops that is a possible result. Presumably, these young people accept even more fast food for their children than nowadays-Japanese parents do. Again, like the women from the group interview said,

*„one of the negative perspectives is that parents gives their children fast food to make them happy. That is something which I were not used to in my childhood.“<sup>76</sup>*

Therefore she sees a change in Japan. Hereby she says that the mother's moral has changed. The same changes are happening in the western world and in Denmark. The difference from Denmark is that the variation of fast food is much smaller than in Japan and that it not as convenient as in Japan according to the amount of shops, fast service and low price.

The group interview shows that this group related fast food to something not healthy but in a positive way to something, which is convenient because it is all over and open 24 hours. The respondents of this research are read as if they consider the change of the housewife significant to the Japanese fast food consumption.

## 4.2 Singles

One of the women from the group interview has chosen to live separated from her husband because of their job position. Also they have chosen to live separate from both their parents and not to have any children. She talks about the single culture of Japan.

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<sup>75</sup> Annex 6: Questionaries

<sup>76</sup> Annex 3: Group Interview

*„The number of singles is increasing in Japan. Because (especially for young people) they don't see any good reason to get marry. You can eat dinner without a wife who cooks for you. There are so many supermarkets, fast food chain, casual restaurant, takeaway restaurants in Japan and they can be so cheap. No need to cook at home. Taste is not so bad. And Japanese office worker are so busy. They don't have time to cook. That's what I think.”<sup>77</sup>*

When she talks about “fast food” and “take away” restaurants it can be read as, including McDonald's.

Observations clearly show that McDonald's in Japan has adapted to the customers who comes alone, the Japanese single and business peoples. The most obvious is the interior with counters and single tables, but the observations also show that the majority of customers come alone.<sup>78</sup> This single-interior fit perfectly into the convenient living in Japan. Like Watson (2006) explains, McDonald's food is related to single food. It is convenient and it is not good for sharing.<sup>79</sup> The man from the group interview puts it this way

*„One person goes to the fast food store. It is more private. If I want to be alone I eat fast food like McDonald's. ”*

He simply uses McDonald's when he don't want company. This is a relevant perspective of this research. It can be interpreted as if the Japanese respondents wish a private sphere and that they can create this even though they sit side by side at McDonald's. McDonald's here seems adapted to the Japanese demands with their single tables places so that the majority of the customers faces a wall. As a Dane I would not choose to go to McDonald's if I wanted privacy. This can be interpreted according to how I as a Dane relate to the idea of home and of privacy. It tells me something about being a Dane and about being a Japanese. Another example of the Japanese creating a private sphere at McDonald's, is from the observations where young women were putting on make-up in the restaurants side by side with business people.<sup>80</sup> The observations shows that McDonald's had furnished it's restaurants with mainly

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<sup>77</sup> Annex 3: Group Interview

<sup>78</sup> Annex 5: Observation

<sup>79</sup> Watson, James, 2006, p.169

<sup>80</sup> Annex 5: Observation

single tables. Business people and single people shopping are stopping at McDonald's to get a rest and to fuel their body with a convenient burger, which is consumed without chopsticks. The observation showed many customers coming alone, eating alone and leaving alone.<sup>81</sup>

The reason for this cultural difference can be a result of the small Japanese homes and maybe because some parents still live with adult children. This gives McDonald's a different role than in Denmark. Observations in McDonald's in Hiroshima and Tokyo also showed that from morning to the evening, McDonald's like many other restaurants are not used simply to feed the customers. McDonald's has fast service, no table serving but private settings and it seems like the customers go there to get the whole package, not just the food. It has a strict and functional design, it supplies the customers with electricity outlets and it seems to attract many singles that just want to have a place to sit while they take a rest or wait for someone. The big difference from the Danish McDonald's stores is that the tables are mainly single tables. In Japan the customers in McDonald's could be businessmen in all ages, women and elderly people. In Denmark it is rarely elderly people who buys McDonald's and most often, customers who comes alone, would have their burger as take away. Another difference from the Danish McDonald's stores, which was observed in Japan, was that none of the costumers were obese or even had the tendency to look like they were becoming obese. This research will not analyse any further on this observation, because of space and time limits. In Japan the customers get the whole package of having international food and a comfortable rest getting service suited for singles and being accepted by the Japanese under 50 years old. If you go to Mos Burger you get another package. This place is more for families and groups. The concepts are suited to what you need and prefer.

#### 4.3 School lunch and adjustment of international taste

„*School lunch has affected us*”<sup>82</sup> The interview with the Japanese health expert, Sakai-sensei, supplied this research with information about his own childhood and how he grew up with bread in the elementary school and got used to eating bread and to the taste of McDonald's. Like Sakai-sensei has quoted,

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<sup>81</sup> Annex 5: Observation

<sup>82</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

*„We were used to the taste of McDonald’s”.<sup>83</sup>*

After 2nd World War the Americans wanted to give wheat to the Japanese people. The adults were not used to eat bread so it ended on the table of the school children.<sup>84</sup> It can be understood from this, that the generation, which grew up eating bread daily is more used to bread in their meals than the earlier generations. This could possibly lead to customers choosing fat food like McDonald’s more and more instead of for example Japanese meals.

McDonald’s is known for it’s Happy Meal and their marketing target of children but another marketing element in Japan is it’s rapidly changing menus. It shows McDonald’s adaption to Japanese customers. The Japanese customers have a demand for “something new”. They have a marketing strategy, which is called *Anata dake* (only you) and *Kyu dake*,<sup>85</sup> (only today). It raises the Japanese demand for entertainment and it is not just functional. It is interpreted as if the customers feel that their consumption is both lucky and personal if it is the burger of the day. This is one of the reasons for the many variants of food in McDonald’s.

For the breakfast egg burger and after 11.30 a.m to the shrimp and teriyaki burger. This is special for Japan and McDonald’s has successfully adapted to this. Examples from Hiroko,

*„Japanese would like something new. If they see a sign, which says; NEW, they buy it. They likes everything which is new. But they also choose the cheap products like McDonald’s.”<sup>86</sup>*

In according to adaption, one can argue that the Japanese living in the big cities more easily adapt the habits of fast food consumption. The fact that a huge numbers of people live very close in Japan makes it obvious that there are many McDonald’s stores in each city; A lot more than in Copenhagen. For the individual it means seeing the commercials and stores more often than in Denmark. In Tokyo the shops were places close to Shinjuku where extremely many people passes everyday and then it can be expected that these people get used to a brand.

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<sup>83</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>84</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>85</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>86</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

#### 4.4 Bubble Economy

The economy in Japan rose in the period were McDonald's opened in Japan. According to Watson this could be one of the reasons for the popularity of fast food and McDonald's. People could afford to try something new. As one of the health experts says,

*„There are more than one reason for the increase of fast food in Japan. One reason is Bubble Economy. People got more money, around 40 years ago. They wanted to consume. The bubble years. It was based on real estate. Bubble years started in and it ended in 1992. There has opened more restaurants and dining places, so it is possible for every one to find something they like and can afford, dining out. It gave many more shops that people want to try.”<sup>87</sup>*

This could easily be a reason for dining out more often. Also the Japanese government also made it possible for more international brands to enter the Japanese market in the post-war period. (A word missing from the transcription; Bubble years started in 1986).

The father FY from the Yuki family tells about how he thinks the government and the economy has changed the Japanese fast food habits.<sup>88</sup>

FY is a ceramicist and his oldest daughter is taken over his shop when he retires. It is old Japanese custom they tell. He chose to live in Yuki far from the Japanese business life in the big cities after he lived two years in Norway. He tells me about how he has seen a Japan changing the last 40 years. How the car- and technology industry made it difficult for the Japanese food productions and how the Japanese government stopped the support to the farmers and instead prefers to import food from other countries, which imported Japanese cars and technology. FY says about the government's food control, „import, import import”.<sup>89</sup>

Again, this import has made it possible for many international chains to sell food in Japan. Because of the historical facts about the American occupation after World War 2 this can be interpreted as if this food control have made many possibilities for American chains especially McDonald's. The Bubble Economy, of course, did not influence of the fast food before the 1980's but it had something to do with the increase of fast food restaurants from the 1980's

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<sup>87</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

<sup>88</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

<sup>89</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

and up. It can be interpreted that the Bubble Economy and increase of fast food concepts has created a demand, which still exists.

FY now sees a tendency that Japanese don't want to buy Chinese food anymore because of the risk of poisoned food.<sup>90</sup> In some way it spread to include all international products. This has started a demand for Japanese food products he says. It can be discussed if this is going to have a big influence on the consumption of McDonald's or if McDonald's is considered a chain supplying Japanese with Japanese demands. Hannerz discusses creolization and how cultural flows spread from center to peripheries. If America is the center and Japan in this case is the periphery, McDonald's has become a creolization of American and Japanese culture according to Hannerz's theory.<sup>91</sup> Jonathan Friedman's (1994) argument is different from Hannerz's. He says, that people uses cultural elements from their point of origin.<sup>92</sup> In that sense McDonald's is not only a representation of American culture, it is also a part of Japanese culture. It has got a role in the Japanese society, but it is not the same role as in America or in Denmark because it fit in under other circumstances in Japan. The Japanese use McDonald's for what they think it is usable for. Fore example by innovating a concept with single tables, counters, scrimp burgers, green tea drink and teriaki sauce for the burger. McDonaldization is a term created by George Ritzer.<sup>93</sup> It describes a sociological situation, which is happening in many societies. McDonaldization can be interpreted as rationalization. You make all steps more simple and predictable consumption. Fast service, simple ordering and standardized products and concept. It is difficult to analyse if the huge number of fast food shops in Japan is a result of McDonaldization or if convenient concepts, fast service and predictable products already were part of Japanese culture before the term McDonaldization was introduced. Nonetheless the theory from Watson<sup>94</sup> and data from the Foodservice Industry Research Institute/Center<sup>95</sup> shows that Japan was more than ready to increase the number of fast food and convenient shops in the post-war period when the

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<sup>90</sup> Annex 2: Life story Yuki family

<sup>91</sup> Hannerz, Ulf 1992, p.219

<sup>92</sup> Friedman, Jonathan, 1994, Chapter 10

<sup>93</sup> Ritze, George, 2004

<sup>94</sup> Watson, James L., 2006, p.3

<sup>95</sup>Foodservice Industry Research Institute/Center



term, McDonaldization was created. Below, the questionnaires show some results of why the respondents think the number of fast food shops has increased.

No. 8, (21 years old): *"it is cheap and speedy"*.<sup>96</sup>

No. 9, (21 years old): *"If your parents are working, no one can cook for you, and you have to finish up the meal (fast food) your self"*.<sup>97</sup>

This still does not show which was the first; the Japanese demand or McDonaldization. It can be discussed if Japan was part of the centers and part of creating McDonaldization in the rest of the world. Because of the American occupation in the post-war period and the strong economy from the 1980's it can be interpreted as if Japan has been one of the operators in the McDonaldization.

#### 4.5 The Japanese perception of a balanced diet.

One thing has been omitted from this analysis because it did not have a direct relation to the research question and the conclusion. Nonetheless it shows us something about this culture. It is the discussion about, a balanced diet.

The majority of the informants, respondents and interviewed people used the word, balance. This could be interpreted as if balance is an important part of respondent's culture. The translator from the interview with the experts describes it this way;

*„I am thinking in Japan the idea that having balance is important, means that most people internalized that they know that the need to have many different kinds of food. It is not something in the distance. It is actually something you can do every day."*<sup>98</sup>

From this angle it could be interpreted that, having balance can be understood as if the respondents accepts fast food in balances amounts. Then the respondents' experience of fast food is that you cannot categorise fast food as unhealthy unless you eat it daily and don't have variations in your meals. This can be interpreted as every Japanese respondent eats

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<sup>96</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>97</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>98</sup> Annex 4: Interview, Japanese health experts

fast food sometimes. Not like in some cultures where fast food can be related to only some socio-economic groups, only young people or only in metropolises.

One of the questions from the questionnaires is if they think fast food is a threat to their health. Some examples of answers from the group between 14-29 are:<sup>99</sup>

No. 25, (21 years old): *„If you eat it regularly it is unhealthy. But it is tasty”*

No. 24, (21 years old): *„Unbalance for nutrition”*

One from the group with the 30-40ties writes:<sup>100</sup>

No. 5a, (49years old): *„it would be OK unless you eat everyday”*

Their experience of a balanced diet is from this angle both Japanese meals, international meals and also fast food. Like Hiroko puts it,

*„I think there is a balance between the healthy and unhealthy in Japan. We can eat some very healthy food and also some very unhealthy food, It is the balance”.*<sup>101</sup>

It can be interpreted as if the Japanese respondents experience fast food more as a threat to the home cooking than to their health directly. Another questions which was asked was, what they think is healthy, was in all groups mainly answered with, home cooking or Japanese food in general.<sup>102</sup> Here I should add again that there is a lot of Japanese fast food variations.

Japanese meals are not just raw fish and vegetable.<sup>103</sup> It is difficult to conclude if the respondents means healthy Japanese food or all kinds of Japanese food. According to the respondents answers about balance it can be interpreted that their opinion of health is that they should have a wide variation in their diet and therefore eat all kinds of courses: Implicit, this is understood as if fast food is tolerated also.

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<sup>99</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>100</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>101</sup> Annex 1: Life story Shinjuku family

<sup>102</sup> Annex 6: Questionnaires

<sup>103</sup> Hosking, Richard, 1996

## 6 Conclusion

*“Why has the Japanese consumption of McDonald’s and fast food in general, increased over the last 40 years”?*

According to the interpreted empirical data the increase of fast food and McDonald’s consumption in Japan can be attributed to many reasons. The different empirical methods show perspectives of this topic.

The most obvious reason for a change in fast food consumption is concluded to be the change of lifestyle in the households. The increasing number of businesswomen and decreasing number of housewives has changed the respondent’s norms for home cooking. Part of this should be seen from the angle that an increasing amount of women is entering and staying in the work force even if they have a family. That, of course, shortens the time for home cooking. The empirical data shows that fast food is accepted for lunch while dinner is kept for home cooking in Japan. The Japanese nowadays-mother accepts fast food with their children because the mother’s role is changing in relation to the household changes. Nowadays fast food is tolerated as lunch, and over time I presume it is more and more tolerated for dinner as well.

Another part of the household change should be seen from the angle that a decreasing number of three-generation families also change the household structure. The grandparents are now to a less extent delivering the habits of Japanese home cooking to their grandchildren. The respondents pointed out that more people prefer a life as singles and that this increases the demand for fast food. They want convenient, fast and private service.

The conclusion should be seen in the perspective of a historical coherence. It is concluded that some of the respondents have had a light adaptation to some American food products in the post-war period. These adaptations have happened in the elementary school lunch controlled by the Japanese government after the 2nd World War. Moreover has McDonald’s adapted to the Japanese taste preferences and demands for something new and for ongoing menu changes. It can be concluded that according to the demand of fast food some of the respondents see the increase of fast food according to the Bubble Economy in the 1980’s. The Bubble Economy in Japan made the Japanese consume more and spend more money on restaurants and convenient living.

It is interpreted that Japan has not only been McDonaldized, but was also been an operator in this standardization of food concepts. Though McDonald's is an American concept this research concludes that McDonald's has adapted to the Japanese demands and that McDonald's is consumed from a different demand in Japan than in Denmark. Fast food is tolerated in Japan because of the health opinion about balance. Therefore fast food is not categorized as unhealthy unless you eat it regularly according to the Japanese from this research. The conclusion on this research is that Japanese consumption of McDonald's and fast food is part of an adaptation from home cooked meals with the three-generation families to dining alone at McDonald's. The concept, McDonald's, has easily been spread in Japan through the last 40 years because of the above-mentioned elements. The traditional home-cooked meal with the family has met its convenient alternative; fast food, international taste and no need to think about a hard time preparing meals.

In a global perspective the single culture is rising in the most of the world and Japan is just one of the places who experience this change in lifestyle. Also there is a dynamic exchange of cultural element between the West and the countries in Asia. Cultural elements from the West continue spreading to the East and create concern about rising obesity levels. If Japanese eating habits change their health prognoses can change too. The opposite situation would be that the Japanese people are able to live in a balance with fast food without getting the same health problems as the West. Then the West has a lot to learn from the Japanese lifestyle. One never knows for certain, maybe the Asian cultures are going to spread to the West even more than today. This could be an example of the next study about globalization. Another study could illustrate the meaning of health from the perspective of Japanese women. That could show a deeper illustration of how this group has changes and hopefully show more reasons for the Japanese lifestyle in a global perspective.

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