



i'm lovin' it™

McDonald's
is lovin' it: Retaking Power

Introduction to "I'm lovin' it"

McDonald's seeks to be a leader in the fast food business. One of the reasons for their success has come from effective advertising. However, "early in 2003, fast-food giant McDonald's announced losses of \$343.8 million for the final quarter of 2002. It was the first time in the company's 48-year history that it had reported red ink" (McDonald's Sets). This decline occurred for a variety of reasons, including

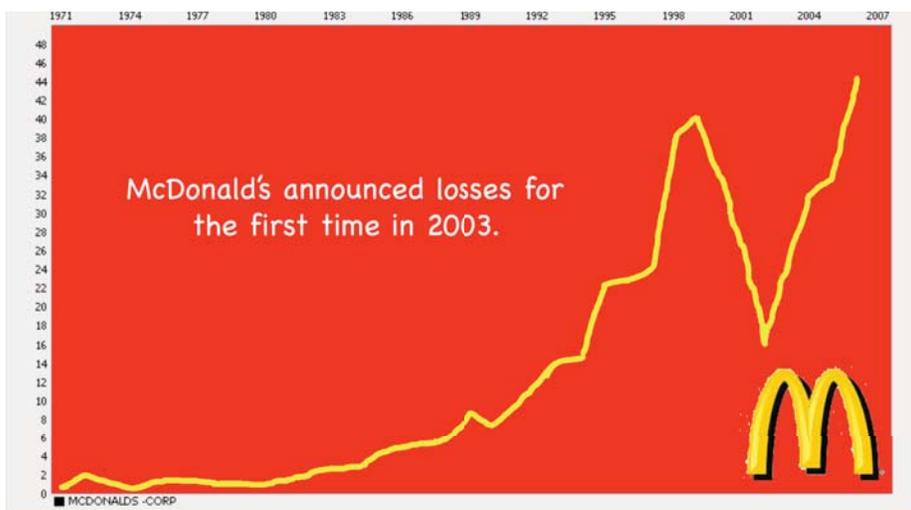
a ridiculous obesity lawsuit, price wars with competitors, and a mad cow disease scare.

While all of these contributed to the quarterly loss, "the real growth problem confronting the king of hamburgers was the change in consumer habits. More and more, people are looking for healthy food that is low in calories" (McDonald's Sets). Consumers have become more health conscious. In order to help alleviate their loss, McDonald's instituted a new global campaign featuring a new slogan, jingle, and commercials designed to take

the focus off the fatty foods and more onto the social pleasures of eating at McDonald's.

Power = I'm Lovin' it

As a leader in the industry, McDonald's has maintained power for several decades. Brumett defines power as "the ability to control events and meanings" (Ragan). When people hear words and phrases such as "golden arches," "Ronald," "big mac,"





and even "fast food," they immediately think of McDonald's. However, the meaning of these items has been changing due to people's desire for more healthy living. Once, these words evoked feelings of joy and happiness, now they mean a nation, even a world, that is becoming supersized (Supersize Me). McDonald's is losing power.

Healthy = "I'm lovin' it"

The basis of McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" campaign is to reclaim this power. "I'm lovin' it" is McDonald's slogan, which seeks to invoke in people a feeling of enjoyment when they think of McDonald's. It is part of a larger marketing strategy called "Rolling Energy" (McDonald's Sets). This campaign wants to counteract the bad publicity, which states that their product is not good for young people (McDonald's Sets). As Miguel Angel Gavira, a reporter for Expansion, stated, "McDonald's is trying to increase the loyalty of its

customers . . . Specifically it is trying to get young people to identify with this brand" (McDonald's Sets). McDonald's wants these young people to associate fun, which they will further equate to happiness, with the thought of McDonald's.

The campaign began with a series of television commercials. The commercials contained quick-paced, rapid images of ordinary people in everyday situations. While the screen showed these images, up-beat, hip rap music played in the background. Brummett states, "The most powerful signs are those that offer people a chance to return to that original state of being a whole, complete person" (168). McDonald's is attempting to create this state for these young adults by "portraying youth as robust and healthy" (McDonald's Sets). All of these youth are portrayed as having fun: a state that youth are constantly looking for.

Happy = "I'm lovin' it"

McDonald's is also attempting to create a desire for youth to obtain social pleasure through McDonald's.

The primary advertisement, a one-minute commercial that was produced for this campaign contains 31 different scenes of people. Most of the shots contain a group of people in a social setting enjoying themselves, periodically eating McDonald's. These groups include friends, co-workers, and sport teams. They even have a dog, "man's best friend," in one of these shots eating a french fry (Brand 1). These shots are seeking to appeal to the youth according to the third level of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, a need to belong and feel loved.



The third level of Maslow's pyramid is one in which many teenagers and young adults seek.

They want to belong. While some may belong to a family, many are seeking to break away from that family and belong to a group of friends. McDonald's further attempts to create this need within the same commercial.

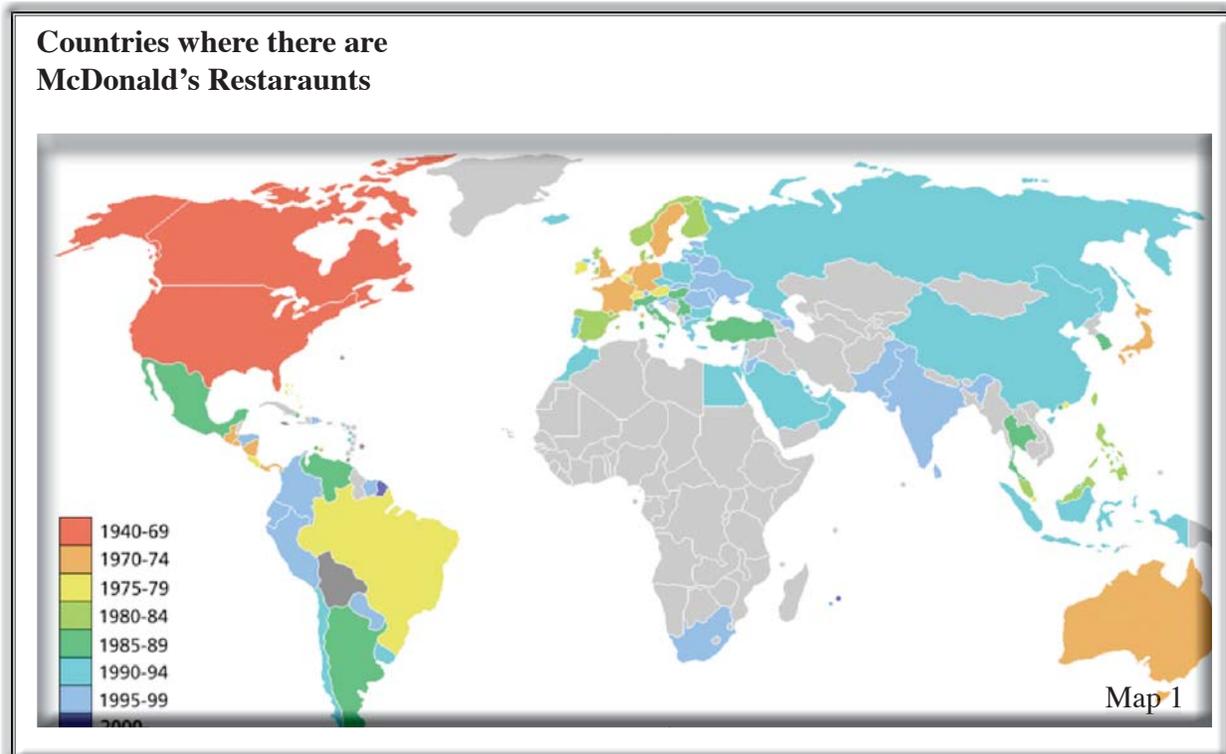
In the rare instances that they do show individuals alone, they encounter a problem. One lone guy walks on the wrong bus. He encounters the opposing team. A girl is trapped outside her apartment without a shirt. The very next scene shows a different girl on the roof of her apartment with a male friend. A man in a nice red car drives by McDonald's. A group of girls wave to him. The scene pans out and the viewer sees the car is being towed. All of these examples illustrate that McDonald's wants to create a desire of



belongingness with a group of friends, which will, in turn, give the group a feeling of belongingness with McDonald's. Therefore, once there is that feeling in the commercial, the words "I'm lovin' it" are displayed and sung, lest the viewers forget why they belong to that group.

Cutting Costs = "I'm lovin' it"

In addition to a change in consumers' tastes and preferences, McDonald's realized they spent too much money on advertisements throughout the world. In an attempt to conserve this monetary resource, McDonald's scaled down the cost of producing advertisements by using the same "I'm lovin' it" campaign worldwide. McDonald's receives almost 50% of their revenues from overseas operations (**See Map 1**) (ElBoghdady). This campaign hopes to create these same desires in young people worldwide. Dina ElBoghdady, a staff writer for the Washington Post wrote, "According to company sources, the advertisements have been adapted to each market in which the company has a presence" (ElBoghdady). McDonald's wants the



Rhetorical Writing: “McDonald’s is Lovin’ It.

world to think they have a global market. However, in a closer look at the previous commercial, it appears that the advertisements continue to focus on the United States’ culture.

**America =
“I’m lovin’ it”**

McDonald’s translated the commercial into 12 different languages. Although the song has been retranslated, most of the images remain the same. They appear to be images of youth from the United States doing United State’s youth things. McDonald’s is a United States company. Its campaign says nothing to contradict that. While it may be a tactic to entice other cultures into American McDonald’s, it is also sending the message that in order to have the fun and happiness that is displayed in the advertisements, you must be like people in the United States.



Further illustration of this point is shown in the language of the commercial. While the words to the song are translated in the native tongue of the country, it leaves “I’m lovin’ it” in English, both in written and verbal words. This is not done because of complications in translations, for any bag, cup, or box received from McDonald’s will have the words, “I’m lovin’ it” translated into several different languages in print (brand 1).

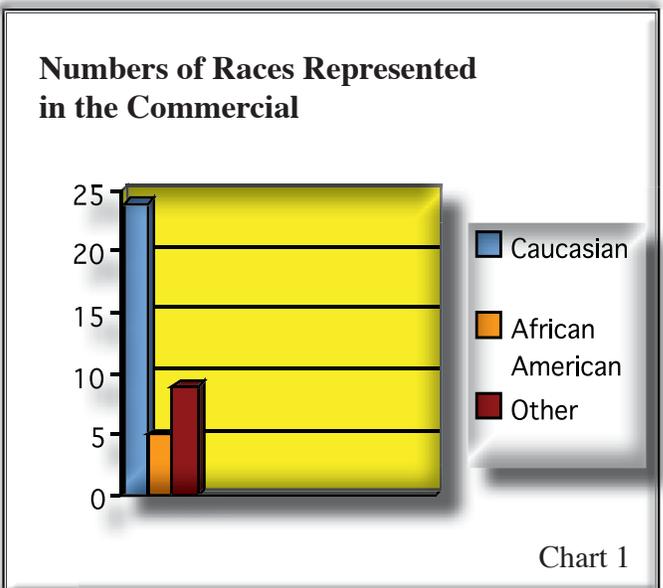
A more extreme example is an advertisement designed for Israel. The entire commercial is in

English. A guy enters hell, the words “This is Hell” is displayed on the gates. The remaining commercial continues in English. In addition, the clothing is the typical T-shirt and jeans people wear in the United States. The commercial ends in the native language so that it can give the vital information on the product they are selling. Not only is this campaign telling other cultures they must be from the United States and eat McDonald’s in order to have fun and happiness, but they’d better be able to speak American as well.

**Diversity =
“I’m lovin’ it”**

Even within the United States, this campaign is not as culturally diverse as it would like viewers to believe. While it appears that McDonald’s is fairly diverse in their advertising because they celebrate black history month, they have an entire web site dedicated to Asian Americans, and Hispanics are a major source of their employees, McDonald’s still privileges the presumed majority of Caucasians by better representing them in their commercials.

McDonald’s first “I’m Loving’ it” commercial contained 22 different shots of people. Within these 22 shots, I counted 24 Caucasian individuals. There were only 5 African American and 9 other



ethnicity. 5 of these others were two shots thrown in at the end as a group of Asian people (See Chart 1). In addition to the 24 white individuals, there were shots of entire groups who were all white. One was a business, which was having fun rolling on their chairs. Another was a bus full of athletes. Neither of these situations had reason to only contain white individuals. While it does show different ethnic groups having fun, white Americans continue to be the majority of those having fun.

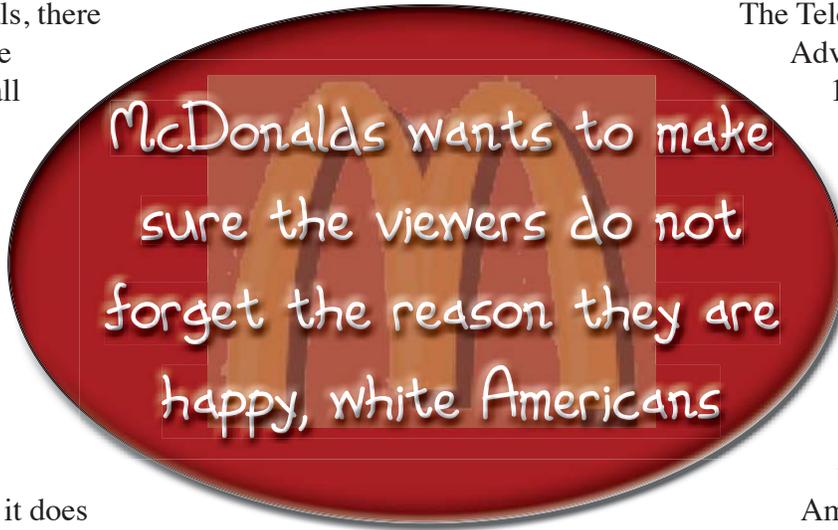
In addition to showing limited numbers of ethnicity, the fun McDonald's creates for them is also segregated in several instances. White business people play at work. African Americans dance in the street. This segregation leads to the typical power struggle of whites coming out as the leaders in business (Brand 1).

While McDonald's attempts to be marketed towards a global economy, they continue to allow certain cultures to remain privileged, particularly white Americans. In order for these ads to truly become culturally global they need to eliminate the American slogan from the commercials and incorporate more nationalities in their commercials. Only then will these cultures be able to truly say, "I'm lovin' it," "Ich liebe es," "c'est tout ce que j'aime," or "Wǒ jù xǐhuān."

Advertising = "I'm lovin' it"

Despite seeking to control advertising costs, McDonald's still attempts to keep their product

on every customer's mind. They do this through aggressive advertising. Last year they spent \$141,859,040 in television advertising. The Television Bureau of Advertising ranked them at 17th for spending the most on advertising through television. No other food business was within the top 25 (Tv Basics). McDonald's wants to make sure the viewers of these advertisements do not forget that the reason they are happy, white Americans, regardless of the country or race they actually are, is because they belong to McDonald's social group.



Lovin' "I'm lovin' it"

While this campaign began as a struggle for McDonald's to regain the power it once held, the campaign has surpassed the expected limits. When it began, the campaign was designed to cut cost by eliminating unnecessary duplication of advertisements, changing environments, and recreating McDonald's image as a place to obtain fun. Four years later, it appears McDonald's has recovered their power. They have changed the meaning of yet another artifact. We can now add the phrase "I'm lovin' it" to that list for people to think of McDonald's.



Works Cited

- Brummet, Barry. Rhetoric in Popular Culture: 2nd Ed. 2006. Sage Publications Inc.
- "Brand 1." Learnin' it, livin' it, lovin' it: A video series designated to inspire all of us with the power of the McDonald's Brand. DVD. McDonald's Corporation. 2004. ElBoghdady, Dina. "At McDonald's, Supersize Problems With Sales Flat, Chain Revises Menu, Marketing." Washington Post. 18 September 2002. Newsmine.org. Retrieved 07 February 2007. <<http://newsmine.org/archive/cabal-elite/corporate/mcdonalds-decline.txt>>
- "McDonald's Advertisement – Israel." 16 October 2006. Retrieved 02 May 2007. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsujRWX7flw>>
- "McDonald's Sets Out to Conquer the World by Changing its Image." Universia Knowledge @ Wharton. 22 October 2003. Wharton. Retrieved 07 February 2007. <<http://www.wharton.universia.net/index.cfm?fa=viewfeature&id=671&language=english>>
- Ragan. "McDonald's Re-energizes Brand." PR Intelligence Report. September 17, 2003. Igor. Retrieved February 07, 2007. <<http://www.igorinternational.com/press/printel-tag-line-brand-agency.php>>
- Supersize Me. DVD. Roadside Attractions, Samuel Goldwyn Films. 2004.
- "TV Basics 2004: A Report on the Growth and tScope of Television." tvb.org. Retrieved 25 October 2004. 02 May 2007. <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/statuniv/document?_m=e49145dee181c877770f29850140b250&_ansset=C-WA-A-A-A-MSAYZA-UUW-U-U-A-U-U-AAYUZZZWAB-AADYWVDUAB-EBUWBAYCD-A-U&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtb-zSkVV&_md5=7c32b1fe96371fae9a0dac5c3d68b8d1>.