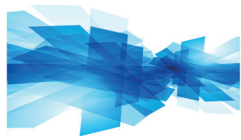




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Original Article

McDonaldization and technology: the control and rationalization of contemporary lifestyles

McDonaldização e tecnologia: o controle e a racionalização dos modos de vida contemporâneos

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study analyzes how the dimensions of McDonaldization (efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control), driven by technology, manifest and reconfigure work and consumption practices in the contemporary digital context (Ritzer, 2021).

Design/methodology/approach: This qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) is based on discourse analysis (Foucault, 2014) from five participants involved in different contexts of work and consumption, whose role as a “prosumer” is central to the analysis (Ritzer, 2021; Gadonski, 2023).

Findings: The findings indicate that digital McDonaldization manifests in the optimization of processes (efficiency), an emphasis on performance metrics (calculability), service standardization (predictability), and algorithmic control (Zuboff, 2019). However, this process also generates contradictions, such as dehumanization and new forms of precariousness, which are understood as the irrationality of rationalization (Ritzer, 2021).

Practical implications: The study highlights the need for managers to balance the pursuit of efficiency with the autonomy and well-being of individuals, suggesting the implementation of qualitative feedback systems to complement purely quantitative performance metrics (Sennett, 2006).

Originality/value: This study contributes by empirically applying the McDonaldization framework to emerging digital work and consumption arrangements in Brazil, expanding the discussion by including and justifying the “prosumer” perspective as a key element of analysis in the digital age (Ritzer, 2021; Gadonski, 2023).

Keywords: McDonaldization; Control; Technology; Rationalization; Society of Control



RESUMO

Finalidade: Este estudo analisa como as dimensões da McDonaldização (eficiência, calculabilidade, previsibilidade e controle), impulsionadas pela tecnologia, se manifestam e reconfiguram as práticas de trabalho e consumo no contexto digital contemporâneo (Ritzer, 2021).

Desenho/metodologia/abordagem: A pesquisa qualitativa, exploratória e descritiva (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) baseia-se na análise do discurso (Foucault, 2014) de cinco participantes inseridos em diferentes contextos de trabalho e consumo, cujo papel de “prossumidor” é central para a análise (Ritzer, 2021; Gadonski, 2023).

Constatações: As constatações indicam que a McDonaldização digital se manifesta na otimização de processos (eficiência), na ênfase em métricas de desempenho (calculabilidade), na padronização de serviços (previsibilidade) e no controle algorítmico (Zuboff, 2019). Contudo, esse processo também gera contradições, como a desumanização e novas formas de precarização, entendidas como a irracionalidade da racionalização (Ritzer, 2021).

Implicações práticas: Destaca-se a necessidade de gestores equilibrarem a busca por eficiência com a autonomia e o bem-estar dos indivíduos, sugerindo a implementação de sistemas de *feedback* qualitativo para complementar as métricas de desempenho puramente quantitativas (Sennett, 2006).

Originalidade/valor: O estudo contribui ao aplicar empiricamente o referencial da McDonaldização a novos arranjos de trabalho e consumo digital no Brasil, ampliando a discussão ao incluir e justificar a perspectiva do “prossumidor” como elemento-chave de análise na era digital (Ritzer, 2021; Gadonski, 2023).

Palavras-chave: McDonaldização; Controle; Tecnologia; Racionalização; Sociedade do Controle

1 INTRODUCTION

The McDonaldization of society is a concept developed by sociologist George Ritzer, describing the progressive adoption of efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability principles across different sectors of society (Ritzer, 2021). This phenomenon reflects a continuous rationalization process, in which bureaucratic logic and scientific management redefine social and productive structures, promoting a highly standardized and hierarchical organizational model (Weber, 2020; Taylor, 1995). Historically, rationalization was consolidated through the contributions of Frederick Taylor’s Scientific Management and Max Weber’s bureaucratic theory, establishing an organizational model based on standardization, hierarchy, and control of human activities (Weber, 2020; Wood Junior, 1992).

In the contemporary context, McDonaldization extends beyond industrial and commercial sectors, reaching the digital market and social interactions, promoting a

hyper-rationalized model that automates behaviors and restricts variability in social interactions (Gadonski, 2023). The rise of Information Technologies, big data, and artificial intelligence has accelerated this phenomenon, structuring increasingly automated and predictable environments where algorithms play a central role in regulating human interactions and organizational processes (Zuboff, 2019). According to Deleuze (1992), this process characterizes the transition from a disciplinary society to a control society, where regulatory mechanisms become less visible and more flexible, mediated by digital systems that shape behaviors based on predictive data (Rocha, 2022).

In this context, technology not only makes McDonaldization possible but also reconfigures everyday life, establishing new models of social organization and power relations by integrating algorithms and digital platforms as mediators of human interactions (Han, 2015; Gadonski, 2023). Algorithmic control, operated through big data and artificial intelligence, imposes invisible restrictions on individual autonomy, influencing consumption habits, work practices, and social interactions, consolidating an environment of constant surveillance and internalization of automated norms (Bruno et al., 2018). This scenario reflects Foucault's (2019) concept of the microphysics of power, in which subjects are not only surveilled but also self-regulate according to pre-established expectations and metrics.

Given this scenario, this study analyzes how the dimensions of McDonaldization (efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control), driven by technology, manifest and reconfigure work and consumption practices in the contemporary digital context (Gadonski, 2023).

The relevance of this study is justified by the scarcity of academic research on McDonaldization in Brazil, particularly regarding its impacts on digital labor, platform-mediated consumption, and the structuring of contemporary lifestyles (Gadonski, 2023). While phenomena such as uberization and labor precarization have been widely discussed in the literature (Franco, 2019; Abílio, 2020), McDonaldization and its effects on digital society still lack theoretical and empirical deepening.

By addressing these issues, this study seeks to contribute to academic debates on rationalization, technology, and control, providing theoretical insights to understand the structural transformations shaping contemporary society and the challenges imposed on Administration, Sociology, and the Humanities in an increasingly automated, predictive, and hyper-rationalized scenario (Ritzer, 2021; Zuboff, 2019; Han, 2015).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 McDonaldization and the Rationalization of Society

McDonaldization is a concept developed by Ritzer (2021) to describe the dissemination of the operational principles of fast-food chains into various aspects of social life. Inspired by the bureaucratic rationalization proposed by Weber (2020), this phenomenon is based on four main dimensions: efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability. According to Ritzer (2021), the relentless pursuit of efficiency leads to process standardization, reducing the variability of human interactions. When applied to diverse institutions, from commerce to education and healthcare, this model promotes a society structured around rigid rules and predetermined formats, eliminating spaces for creativity and spontaneity (Wood Junior, 1992).

Rationalization, as described by Weber (2020), is a process in which modern societies prioritize the logic of efficiency and predictability over tradition and subjectivity. The growing adoption of this organizational model in companies and daily life reflects the rise of what Weber called the “iron cage”, a system in which individuals lose autonomy and become mere components of a highly structured bureaucratic system (Ritzer, 2021). According to Fuchs (2014), this phenomenon has intensified in the digital age, as contemporary technologies not only reproduce bureaucratic rationalization patterns but also enhance them, making social relations even more predictable and monitored.

In the field of administration, McDonaldization redefines how organizations structure their processes and interact with both consumers and workers, imposing rigid and highly bureaucratic operational models, where performance metrics and automation become central to business operations (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). This phenomenon can be observed in the increasing dependence on management software, self-service systems, and digital platforms for performance monitoring (Ritzer, 2021).

However, this pursuit of efficiency results in a significant loss of cultural diversity and service personalization, as standardized processes eliminate variations and restrict the customization of experiences (Bruno et al., 2018). In sectors such as commerce and hospitality, for example, McDonaldization reduces flexibility and spontaneity in customer service, making interactions more mechanical and predictable (Ritzer, 2021). Additionally, Ritzer (2021) argues that this phenomenon is particularly evident in global franchise networks, where employees are trained to follow strict protocols, regardless of local particularities or individual customer preferences.

The impact of McDonaldization extends to the workplace, where control is exerted through rigid monitoring systems and productivity metrics (Sennett, 2006). This organizational model leads to increasing worker alienation, as individuals are evaluated based on numerical efficiency indicators, such as response times, number of completed tasks, or production volumes (Ritzer, 2021). According to Rocha (2022), this model aligns with Foucault's analysis of panopticism, in which constant surveillance induces individuals to self-regulate, internalizing organizational norms without the need for direct supervision.

In the digital era, McDonaldization takes on new dimensions, particularly due to the role of digital platforms and big tech companies in the standardization of experiences (Ritzer, 2021). According to Fuchs (2014), companies like Google, Amazon, and Netflix use predictive algorithms to structure user interactions, limiting their choices to content and products that fit pre-established patterns. This phenomenon reveals a new form of control, where predictability is imposed through massive data

collection and analysis (Zuboff, 2019). Furthermore, Bruno et al. (2018) argue that the growing homogenization of digital services reflects a McDonaldized logic, where personalization occurs within predefined boundaries set by algorithmic systems.

Thus, Ritzer (2021) asserts that McDonaldization, which initially emerged as an organizational phenomenon, has become a structuring characteristic of contemporary society. Its impact extends beyond the market and the workplace, shaping how people interact, consume, and even think (Sennett, 2006). As Foucault (2019) argues, modern social control is not only exercised through physical institutions but also through internalized norms and standards, which become even more clear in the digital age. Consequently, the expansion of the McDonaldized logic raises concerns about the loss of individual autonomy, the excessive standardization of social relations, and the growing dependence on technologies that restrict unpredictability and spontaneity in human life (Ritzer, 2021; Zuboff, 2019).

2.2 Control, Discipline, and the Society of Control

The concept of social control has been widely debated in sociological and philosophical theory, addressing both traditional regulatory mechanisms and new forms of digital surveillance and algorithmic governance (Lyon, 2018). Foucault (2014) introduced the notion of the disciplinary society, characterized by the normalization of bodies and minds within closed institutional spaces, such as schools, factories, and prisons. Later, Deleuze (1992) argued that with the advancement of technology and digitalization, this disciplinary model was replaced by a control society, in which behavioral regulation occurs continuously, without the need for physical confinement.

This transition reflects a fundamental change in the way power is exercised, shifting from a model based on explicit coercion to a flexible and decentralized system, where surveillance becomes permanent and integrated into everyday life (Bauman & Lyon, 2014). Hardt and Negri (2001) suggest that modern control is no longer

exclusively imposed through fixed rules and visible hierarchies but rather through fluid mechanisms that condition individuals' actions in an almost imperceptible way.

The pervasiveness of control is further amplified by the advancement of digital technologies, which enable massive data collection, predictive behavior analysis, and real-time monitoring (Zuboff, 2019). This phenomenon is observed in various social spheres, such as labor, where algorithmic management replaces traditional supervision, continuously monitoring and evaluating employee performance (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Additionally, governments have increasingly adopted artificial intelligence and big data-based population categorization strategies, impacting public security and access to social policies (Lyon, 2018).

For Han (2015), this new power structure no longer operates through direct repression but through a subtle induction to conformity, shaping subjectivities and leading individuals to internalize pre-established behavioral patterns. This phenomenon reflects a continuous modulation of conduct, where subjects do not need to be coerced but voluntarily adjust to the system's imperatives (Deleuze, 1992). Individual freedom, in this context, becomes an illusion, managed by engagement metrics, performance indicators, and digital reputation systems (Bauman & Lyon, 2014).

These developments raise significant ethical and political concerns, particularly regarding privacy, individual autonomy, and resistance to these new control mechanisms (Lyon, 2018). As Zuboff (2019) argues, the surveillance-based economy and behavioral prediction not only anticipate individuals' actions but also influence their choices, reducing their capacity for independent decision-making. This presents challenges to democracy and civil rights, as automated systems may reinforce structural inequalities and limit access to opportunities in a discriminatory manner (Han, 2015).

Thus, the transition from the disciplinary society to the control society demands a reassessment of traditional notions of power and resistance, as new social regulatory forms no longer operate through direct coercion but rather through invisible means of continuous normalization and adaptation (Hardt & Negri, 2001). Deleuze (1992) argues

that the contemporary challenge lies in understanding how these control systems are incorporated into everyday life, redefining the boundaries between autonomy and social conditioning. This new logic imposes new theoretical and political demands, requiring innovative responses to ensure that digital governance does not sacrifice fundamental rights in the name of efficiency and predictive control (Bauman & Lyon, 2014).

2.3 Technology and the Advancement of McDonaldization in the Digital Age

The concept of McDonaldization, as proposed by Ritzer (2021), describes the diffusion of the principles of efficiency, predictability, control, and calculability into different spheres of society. From the 21st century onwards, with the advancement of digital technologies and automation, these principles expanded beyond the corporate environment and began to structure everything from consumer relations to cultural production and the labor market (Gadonski, 2023).

Technology has been one of the main drivers of the intensification of McDonaldization, reinforcing the logic of standardization and predictability in services and social interactions (Hassan, 2020). Beer (2017) argues that recommendation algorithms, by filtering and ranking content based on engagement patterns, limit user choices, reinforcing a highly programmed consumption model. As Gadonski (2023) points out, this phenomenon not only structures digital interactions but also redefines contemporary lifestyles, in which operational efficiency takes precedence over spontaneity and cultural diversity.

In the service sector, digital McDonaldization transforms consumer experiences (Ritzer, 2021). Gershon (2019) observes that the adoption of automated services, chatbots, and digital platforms reduces unpredictability and makes interactions increasingly homogeneous and impersonal. Gadonski (2023) complements this analysis by highlighting that this standardization imposed by digital systems removes the human dimension from commercial interactions, converting customer-business relationships into automated processes, optimized to meet efficiency-driven parameters.

In the workplace, the McDonaldized logic manifests itself in the so-called “uberization” of labor (Gadonski, 2023). Platforms such as Uber, iFood, and Amazon Mechanical Turk implement strict evaluation and productivity systems, eliminating worker flexibility and subjecting them to rigid performance models measured by algorithms (Slee, 2016). Gadonski (2023) argues that this logic creates a work structure where employees become just another element within a programmed system, losing autonomy over their pace and working conditions. Raval and Dourish (2016) reinforce this perspective by observing that platform workers lack real freedom in their activities, as their decisions are strongly influenced by incentives and constraints imposed by management software.

Another key impact of digital McDonaldization is the standardization of information production and dissemination (Ritzer, 2021). Beer (2017) examines how digital platform algorithms prioritize easily digestible content, shaping user behavior and limiting access to diverse ideas. Gadonski (2023) adds that the relentless pursuit of engagement and monetization reduces the depth and diversity of consumed content, creating a digital environment dominated by pre-defined formats optimized for maximum commercial returns.

Additionally, the standardization imposed by technology affects individuals' subjective and social experiences, as highlighted by Ritzer (2021). Lash (2007) argues that the increasing automation of social processes reduces opportunities for spontaneous and unpredictable experiences. This phenomenon is also observed by Gadonski (2023), who emphasizes how digital McDonaldization transforms contemporary lifestyles by imposing rigid patterns of efficiency and predictability, eliminating spaces for innovation and creativity in everyday life.

Thus, the digital age not only reinforces the principles of McDonaldization but also amplifies and makes them more sophisticated, structuring a society increasingly oriented towards efficiency, control, and predictability (Hassan, 2020). As Gadonski (2023) synthesizes, technology not only sustains McDonaldization in

the contemporary world but elevates it to a new level, making it a diffuse, pervasive phenomenon deeply integrated into social life.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research characterization

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach. The qualitative research allows for an in-depth analysis of McDonaldization in the digital age, exploring how this phenomenon affects different sectors of society (Flick, 2018). The exploratory nature is justified by the need for theoretical deepening on the impacts of McDonaldization on consumption, labor, and cultural production, while the descriptive dimension aims to detail how these principles manifest in the experience of the interviewees (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, this is an empirical and field study, as it involves data collection through semi-structured interviews. These methods enable an understanding of participants' individual perceptions and how they experience McDonaldization in their daily lives (Gadonski, 2023).

3.2 Data Gathering

Data gathering occurred in two stages. First, a bibliographic review was conducted to provide a theoretical foundation for the study, using classical and contemporary references on McDonaldization, social rationalization, and the impact of digital technologies (Ritzer, 2021; Weber, 2020; Zuboff, 2019). Subsequently, field research was conducted with semi-structured interviews to capture the perceptions of individuals working in different professional sectors.

The participants were intentionally selected, ensuring diverse experiences. Five individuals from different areas were interviewed, as shown in Table 1 (Gadonski, 2023).

Table 1 – Characterization of Interviewees

Interviewee	Relevance to the Research
E1	Represents the technology-mediated service sector and labor uberization.
E2	Allows for a comparison between traditional food models and McDonaldized logic.
E3	Illustrates variations in rationalization in local commerce.
E4	Reflects technological changes and digitalization in the legal sector.
E5	Explores the impact of digital platforms on consumption from the “prosumer” perspective.

Source: Research data (Gadonski, 2023)

The inclusion of an “e-commerce consumer” (E5) is a deliberate methodological choice grounded in Ritzer’s (2021) concept of the “prosumer.” In the digital age, the consumer is not a passive agent but an active producer of value, generating data, reviews, and content that are fundamental to the operation of McDonaldized systems (Gadonski, 2023). This unpaid labor feeds the algorithms of prediction and control, making the prosumer an indispensable part of the rationalization cycle (Zuboff, 2019). Therefore, analyzing their perspective is crucial to fully understanding the phenomenon.

The interviews were conducted either in person or remotely, depending on participants’ availability. The semi-structured script included questions about efficiency, predictability, control, calculability, and the role of technology, allowing respondents to describe their perceptions and experiences with McDonaldization (Gadonski, 2023).

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed based on discourse analysis, an approach that allows for interpreting how subjects construct meanings and internalize social practices (Foucault, 2014). The analysis focused on identifying discursive patterns that sustain McDonaldization, exploring how interviewees perceive and experience the principles of this phenomenon in their work and consumption routines (Ritzer, 2021).

To deepen the analysis, responses were categorized according to the five main dimensions of McDonaldization: efficiency, predictability, control, calculability, and

the irrationality of rationalization. To ensure clarity and a direct connection between theory and data, the results section was structured into subsections corresponding to each of these dimensions (Gadonski, 2023).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles for research in the Social Sciences. All participants signed an Informed Consent Form (ICF), ensuring that they were aware of the study's objectives and authorized the use of their responses for academic purposes. The names of the interviewees were kept confidential, ensuring the anonymity and security of the collected data.

Additionally, the research followed the guidelines of Resolution CNS 466/12, which regulates studies involving human subjects in Brazil (Brasil, 2012). Academic integrity was ensured through the appropriate use of bibliographic sources and transparency in data interpretation (Flick, 2018).

3.5 Research Limitations

Since this is a qualitative study, the results are not generalizable, but they provide an in-depth understanding of McDonaldization from the interviewees' perspective. Future studies may expand this analysis by incorporating a larger number of participants and exploring quantitative methods to complement the qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was conducted through discourse analysis (Foucault, 2014) and structured based on the principles of McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2021). The interviews reveal how subjects experience rationalization in their professional and everyday contexts (Gadonski, 2023). Below, the main research findings are presented, organized according to the established analytical categories.

4.1 Efficiency: The Optimization of Processes

Efficiency is the choice of the optimal means to a given end, focusing on speed and streamlined processes (Ritzer, 2021). In digital contexts, this translates to the automation of tasks and the reduction of time (Hassan, 2020). This is evident in the legal sector, as reported by interviewee E4 (lawyer), regarding the digitalization of judicial procedures:

It makes things much easier, right? There's nothing to argue about. [...] Now, with video, it allows things that used to take much longer. Sometimes a party can't attend. [...] But now, it's more difficult. Physical presence, right? It allows you not to have to be there. [...] There's no comparison with how it used to be. In terms of speed, let's say (E4, as cited in Gadonski, 2023).

This statement explicitly illustrates the principle of efficiency. The adoption of technology (video conferences) is seen as the optimal means to conduct legal proceedings, as it eliminates physical barriers, reduces delays, and accelerates the entire process, aligning with the McDonaldized logic of achieving an outcome in the quickest way possible (Ritzer, 2021).

4.2 Calculability: The Emphasis on Quantification

Calculability is the tendency to emphasize the quantitative aspects of products and services over their quality (Ritzer, 2021). In McDonaldized systems, this manifests as a focus on metrics, numbers, and measurable outputs, often reducing complex activities to simple figures (Gadonski, 2023). This principle is clearly visible in the experience of the mobility platform driver (E1), whose work is intrinsically tied to quantifiable goals:

[...] it's autonomous, right, so it depends on that. So the more money, like, the more money you're making, the more money you want to make. And so much so that I work weekdays, weekends too. On weekends I can work 10, 11 hours a day, but because I want to, actually, not because I'm forced to (E1, as cited in Gadonski, 2023).

This discourse demonstrates how calculability shapes the worker's motivation. Success is measured in purely quantitative terms: "hours worked" and "money earned" (Ritzer, 2021). The platform's logic encourages a focus on maximizing these numbers, reinforcing a system where the quantity of work performed takes precedence over the quality of the work experience or personal well-being, a core tenet of calculability (Slee, 2016).

4.3 Predictability: The Standardization of Experience

Predictability refers to the effort to ensure that products and services are the same over time and in all locations, creating a uniform and unsurprising experience (Ritzer, 2021). This is achieved through standardization, scripts, and rigid routines (Gadonski, 2023). The owner of a non-franchised restaurant (E2) paradoxically highlights the importance of this dimension to ensure customer loyalty:

...there's that customer base that loves eating Shawarma, Parmigiana, grilled steak, hamburgers... They come specifically to eat that, right? ... I'm like that too. When I go to another restaurant... I go there because I like that place, because I enjoy eating a specific meal. You do your best to maintain the standard. You can't change it too much, right? (E2, as cited in Gadonski, 2023).

This statement is a perfect illustration of predictability. Even in a non-McDonaldized environment, the owner recognizes the consumer's desire for a consistent and reliable experience (Ritzer, 2021). The need to "maintain the standard" ensures that customers receive exactly what they expect, eliminating variability and surprise. This demonstrates how the logic of predictability has permeated consumer expectations far beyond fast-food chains.

4.4 Control: The Rise of Technological and Algorithmic Management

Control in McDonaldized systems is increasingly exerted through non-human technologies, such as software, algorithms, and surveillance systems, which standardize the behavior of both employees and customers (Ritzer, 2021). These technologies

replace human discretion with automated rules (Zuboff, 2019). The mobility platform driver's (E1) experience shows this algorithmic control in action:

We try to provide good service, you know, you have to provide good service. You always think, I'll keep my car clean, clean it every day [...]. And you have to be polite, drive well (E1, as cited in Gadonski, 2023).

This self-regulation is not spontaneous; it is a direct response to the platform's control mechanism: the rating system (Raval & Dourish, 2016). The driver's behavior (keeping the car clean, being polite) is conditioned by the need to maintain a high numerical rating to continue receiving work. The algorithm, not a human manager, dictates the standards and enforces compliance, demonstrating a shift from direct supervision to a more diffuse, technology-based form of control (Deleuze, 1992).

4.5 The Irrationality of Rationalization: Unintended Consequences

The pursuit of extreme rationalization often leads to its opposite: irrationality. These are the unintended negative consequences, such as dehumanization, inefficiency, and absurd outcomes that arise from overly rigid systems (Ritzer, 2021). The shoe saleswoman (E3) describes a perfect example of this paradox in the context of digital commerce:

...that was a dysfunction as well. Because people would come in, try on the shoes, like, taking up your operational sales time. And after trying them on, they would say they had seen them online or heard about them on the internet [and would buy it there] (E3, as cited in Gadonski, 2023).

This scenario highlights the irrationality of rationalization (Ritzer, 2021). The rationalized system of the physical store, designed for the efficient sale of products, is used by the consumer in a way that produces an irrational outcome for the business: labor is expended by the salesperson, but the sale occurs elsewhere (Gershon, 2019). The consumer's rational choice (buying cheaper online) creates an inefficient and ultimately dysfunctional result for the brick-and-mortar store, showcasing a key contradiction of McDonaldized systems.

5 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze how the dimensions of McDonaldization, driven by technology, manifest and reconfigure work and consumption practices in the contemporary digital context (Gadonski, 2023). The findings, based on discourse analysis, confirm that the principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control are not only present but are also amplified and transformed by digital technologies, shaping the experiences of both workers and consumers (Ritzer, 2021).

The analysis revealed that efficiency is pursued through process automation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014); calculability is evident in the primacy of quantitative metrics over qualitative aspects; predictability is ensured through the standardization of services (Beer, 2017); and control is increasingly exercised through algorithmic management systems that induce self-regulation (Zuboff, 2019). Furthermore, the study identified the “irrationality of rationalization,” where these rational systems produce counterproductive and dysfunctional outcomes (Ritzer, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by empirically applying Ritzer’s (2021) framework to contemporary digital arrangements in Brazil. By justifying and incorporating the “prosumer” perspective, the research expands the analytical model, demonstrating that the consumer’s role as a data producer is integral to the functioning of digital McDonaldization (Fuchs, 2014).

From a practical perspective, the findings serve as a warning for managers and organizations (Sennett, 2006). While the pursuit of efficiency is a central goal, its extreme application can lead to the dehumanization of work and consumption. It is recommended that organizations balance quantitative metrics with qualitative feedback systems that value human creativity and well-being, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for support rather than solely for control.

This study has limitations. The small, intentionally selected sample does not allow for statistical generalization (Flick, 2018). Additionally, discourse analysis carries

an inherent risk of subjective interpretation. Future research could overcome these limitations by employing mixed-method approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Further studies could also explore the impact of digital McDonaldization on other sectors or investigate the development of public policies aimed at mitigating the negative effects of algorithmic management (Lyon, 2018).

Finally, the findings reinforce that McDonaldization continues to structure daily life in the digital age, but its application is not absolute (Ritzer, 2021). There are spaces for adaptation and resistance, and understanding these nuances is essential for rethinking organizational models and public policies for a more balanced future (Bauman & Lyon, 2014).

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2. Data curation	√	√	√	√	
3. Formal analysis	√	√			
4. Funding acquisition	√	√			√
5. Investigation	√	√			
6. Methodology	√				
7. Project administration	√				
8. Resources	√				
9. Software		√	√	√	
10. Supervision	√				√
11. Validation	√	√			
12. Visualization	√	√			
13. Writing – original draft	√	√			
14. Writing – review & editing	√				

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The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest.

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Data will be available upon request