Summary of “The Irrationality of Rationality” from Ritzer’s The McDonaldization of Society

Although McDonaldization is “rational,” it has also created irrationalities that lead to inefficiency, unpredictability, incalculability, and loss of control. These costs of McDonaldization include:

• Inefficiency: McDonaldization isn’t efficient for everyone, including customers.

• High cost: Rationalization may cost extra.

• The illusion of fun: Fun has become a guiding principle of many McDonaldized institutions.

• The illusion of reality: “Many aspects of a McDonaldized society involve deceptive settings and events.” (p. 140)

• False Friendliness: “Because fast-food restaurants greatly restrict or even eliminate genuine fraternization, what workers and customers have left is either no human relationships or ‘false fraternization.’” (p. 141)

• Disenchantment: “Efficient systems have no room for anything smacking of magic and systematically seek to root it out.” (p. 143)

• Health and environmental hazards: Includes health risks of fast food, food poisoning, litter, environmental hazards of factory farms.

• Homogenization: “Anywhere you go in the United States and, increasingly, throughout the world you are likely to find the same products offered in the same way.” (p. 147)

• Dehumanization: McDonaldization de-humanizes customers, workers, families and students.