

PECULIARITIES OF RUNNING THE BUSINESS OF THE MOST PROFITABLE FAST-FOOD CHAIN IN THE WORLD

Особенности ведения бизнеса самой прибыльной сети фастфуда в мире

We will analyze the specifics of running the business of the most profitable fast-food chain in the world with a focus on the key strategies that ensure its financial success and competitiveness. The research includes the study of management methods, marketing approaches, optimization of operational processes and factors affecting customer loyalty in order to identify best practices that can be applied in other segments of the catering market.

McDonald's, the world's fast-food giant, is constantly making huge profits. The real financial engine of McDonald's is not only burgers and fries, but also real estate. This unique business model helps McDonald's maintain steady revenue streams by relying on ownership and lease agreements with franchisees.

Globally, 93 per cent of McDonald's restaurants are operated by independent franchisees who pay for the right to use the brand, operate on the company's system and sell its products. However, the crux of McDonald's profitability lies in the way it structures its franchise deals. Rather than simply licensing its brand and business model, McDonald's plays a significant role in real estate. When franchisees buy a McDonald's franchise, they are buying more than just the right to sell hamburgers and fries. McDonald's offers a turnkey model that includes site selection, construction, and even lease management. Franchisees lease space from McDonald's, and the majority of the company's revenue comes from that lease. In fact, the majority of all franchise fees – more than half – come from real estate.

This strategic focus on real estate creates a stable cash flow and allows McDonald's to overcome economic downturns more effectively than a company dependent solely on food sales. The exception is Russia and Belarus

Unlike the global franchise-centric model, McDonald's operated differently in Russia and Belarus. Instead of franchising, the company directly owns the majority of its restaurants, giving it more control over operations. This ownership structure has allowed McDonald's to respond quickly to geopolitical changes.

On 8 March 2022, McDonald's announced a temporary suspension of operations in Russia due to international sanctions imposed. Although the company continued to pay salaries to employees during the suspension, McDonald's ultimately decided to leave the Russian market. On 16 May 2022, the company announced its complete withdrawal from Russia and sold its entire Russian business to entrepreneur Alexander Govor. The deal included a buyout clause giving McDonald's the right to re-acquire its assets in the future.

After McDonald's left Russia, the business switched to a new brand, «Vkusno i Tochka». Due to the absence of the need to pay commissions for the brand, the new business structure showed a sharp increase in profits in the first year of operation. The absence of franchise fees and royalties significantly reduced operating costs, making the company more profitable despite the changes in branding and marketing strategy. This success illustrates that while McDonald's global system is highly reliant on real estate, alternative strategies can still thrive in specific contexts. The rapid adaptation in Russia highlights how even without the golden arches, customer loyalty to the familiar menu and locations remains strong, underscoring the importance of brand recognition over operational structure.

In summary, McDonald's profitability is a tale of two strategies: globally, the company thrives through its real estate-focused franchise model, which ensures stable, long-term income. In exceptional markets like Russia, a direct ownership model has proven to be agile and profitable when necessary. This dual success underscores that while business models are important, brand strength and customer loyalty remain the bedrock of McDonald's enduring success. Whether through rental income or food sales, McDonald's continues to adapt, ensuring its place as the leader in the fast-food industry.

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NEW TRENDS IN SCIENTIFIC TOURISM IN RUSSIA

Новые тенденции в научном туризме в России

The purpose of the study is to describe the concept of scientific tourism and to assess the prospects for the development of scientific tourism in Russia.

Scientific tourism is a type of travelling aiming to participate in scientific programs. These programs can include monitoring animal migrations and population changes, participating in archaeological excavations, and other activities. According to the experts of the Russian Geographical Society (RGO) [1], scientific tourism can be divided into two main categories: expedition scientific tourism and independent research. Expedition scientific tourism involves working as a part of a scientific expedition (for example, in archaeological excavations). Independent research involves groups of enthusiasts going to understudied areas to conduct their own research, filming their findings, and then sharing them with the public. There is an increasing interest in scientific tourism in Russia, as it not only helps spread knowledge but also draws attention to scientific research in various fields.