

# Opinions of Gen Z Surabaya Regarding the Effectiveness of the Spokes Character Ronald Mcdonald in Communicating McDonalds' Brand Image.

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## ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to determine the opinion of Gen Z in Surabaya regarding the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's Spokes Character in communicating the McDonald's brand image. McDonalds as a fast-food restaurant uses a mascot to communicate its brand image, namely Ronald McDonald. The elements that determine the effectiveness of spokes character include Relevance to product, Expertise and Nostalgia. To measure the effectiveness of the spokes character, opinions were measured among Gen Z Surabaya, which is the dominant population and is interested in McDonalds. Gen Z Surabaya's opinion will be based on three progressive stages, namely Awareness, Acceptance and Action. So, to find out the opinion of Gen Z Surabaya regarding Ronald McDonald's spokes character, researchers conducted descriptive research with a quantitative approach. The method used was a survey of 100 Gen Z McDonald's Surabaya customers. The results of the research show that the Opinion of Gen Z Surabaya regarding the Effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's Spokes Character in Communicating the McDonalds Brand Image is positive and Expertise as the favourable element.

**Keywords:** *Opinion; Spokes character; Brand Image; Generation Z; Marketing Public Relations.*

## INTRODUCTION

The S-O-R theory was proposed by Hovland, Janis and Kelly in 1953 which stands for Stimulus (message) – Organism (communicant/recipient) – Response. This theory originally came from psychology, which later became a theory in communication. This matter is a natural thing because the material objects of psychology and communication science are the same,

namely humans whose souls include components: attitudes, opinions, behaviour, cognition, affective, and conation (Effendy, 2003: 225). The S-O-R theory can be utilized by the Marketing Public Relations concept according to Thomas L. Harris, where both aim to gain awareness, stimulate sales, facilitating communication and building relationships between consumers, companies and brands. MPR is a process of planning and evaluating programs that stimulates sales and consumer satisfaction through communication of information trustworthy and through impressions that connect the company and its products according to the needs, desires, concerns and interests of consumers (Ruslan, 2007). Therefore, consumer opinion is an important element in Marketing Public Relations.

In general, opinions can be measured by the direction in which opinions are moving. An opinion can be seen from a positive or neutral perspective or with feelings of like, hate and neutral. An opinion can be divided into three categories, A) Positive opinions, causing someone to act pleasing to another person, a policy or an organization. B) Neutral opinion, where someone does not have an opinion on an issue that affects the situation. C) Negative opinion, causing someone to give an unpleasant opinion or opinion bad about a person, an organization or a problem (Effendy, 2003: 10).

So, it can be concluded that the elements in communication are: (1.) Message (Stimuli), (2). Communicant (Organism), (3). Effect (Response). In the process of changing attitudes, the communicant's attitude can change if the stimulus that hits the person really exceeds that experienced (Effendy, 2003). In this research, the author used the Stimulus Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory which consists of the spokes character of Ronald McDonalds as the stimulus, McDonalds Gen Z Customers Surabaya as the organism, and Opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald as the response. Gen Z Surabaya's opinion regarding the effectiveness of Ronald McDonalds as a spokes character who communicates the McDonalds brand image, would be either positive, neutral or negative opinions.

McDonalds is one of the largest fast-food restaurants in the world with 40,300 outlets. This company started in 1955 in California, United States and currently McDonalds has thousands of restaurants spread across more than 100 countries, one of them is in Indonesia. One way to gain competitive advantage between other fast-food companies is to maintain Consumer loyalty is by establishing good product quality and brand image in the eyes of consumers (Widiana & Sukawati, 2016).

As an effort to communicate its brand image, McDonalds has a spokes character named Ronald McDonald. Spokes characters are living creatures or animated objects that are used to promote or communicate the benefits of a product, service feature, or concept (Phillips, 2019). Ronald McDonald as a spokes character appears in television commercial, where he lives in a fantasy world called McDonaldland, where he goes on adventures with his friends Major McCheese, the Hamburglar, Grimace, Birdie the Early Bird, and The Fry Kids.

However, in 2016 McDonalds stated that the spokes character Ronald McDonald had been put on hiatus. "In 2016, McDonald's officially retired Ronald after a series of cases of scary clown sightings appeared across United States. When the case went from a harmless random sighting to sightings of clowns carrying guns, it's a bad time to be a clown. Although

it is difficult to verify these sightings, the public's fears are convincing. It's time for McDonald's to eliminate Ronald McDonald's for a while" (Kompas.com).

Even though Ronald McDonald's spokes character was dismissed, the case of the mascot's hiatus remains a topic of news and public discussion to this day. Ronald McDonald, who has been dismissed since 2016, is still often the subject of discussion in the news, articles and social media in the next few years, namely 2020, 2021, and even 2023. This phenomenon proves that Ronald McDonald as a spokes character has quite significant effects, especially in communicating the McDonalds brand image. Keeping mind that the definition of brand image is brand associations that are interrelated and creates a series of memories in consumers (Durianto, Sugianto and Sitinjak, 2004), it safe to say that Ronald McDonald is still effective in communicating the brand image among McDonald's customers even though it has been on hiatus. This makes the author interested in examining more deeply the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's spokes character in communicating McDonalds brand image.

A customer is "someone who comes or has a habit of buying something from the seller. This habit includes the activity of purchasing and paying for a number of products repeatedly" (Rusydi, 2017). As a fast-food restaurant, the majority of McDonald's customers are people whose birth years were 1997-2012 or called Generation Z. This statement is supported by the results of a research conducted by Morgan in 2018, a survey from GoodStats in 2022, as well as Online Voting Marketeers Youth Choice Award (YCA) in 2023 which states that generation Z prefers McDonalds among other fast-food restaurants. In conclusion, the majority of McDonald's customers are Gen Z. Although Millennials may be more familiar with Ronald McDonald's spokes character due to older marketing campaigns, this research's focus on Generation Z may provide more relevant insights in a changing market context and adapt to ongoing changes in consumer behaviour. "Currently, Gen Z is the main target market for many businesses because their numbers are not small. They are a generation born in an era where smartphones are commonly used and familiar with various digital devices. Apart from that, Generation Z has a different perspective about shopping and consumption compared to previous generations" (Paper.id). Therefore, this research focuses on Gen Z as the research subjects with the hope that the research results can be useful in providing new insights to companies, especially to consider reusing spokes character for Gen Z as the target market.

The reason why this research's subject is limited to Gen Z customers who live in Surabaya, is because Surabaya is the second largest city after Jakarta and is an area with the highest number of Gen Z residents in East Java. The second reason, is from the fact that the fast-food restaurant with most outlets in Surabaya is McDonalds. The number of Generation Z that dominates and their tendency to buy fast food is the reason why this research focuses on the opinions of Generation Z Surabaya towards effectiveness of Ronald McDonald. Therefore, researchers limited the respondents from this study to McDonalds Surabaya customers who are in the Gen Z group and know Ronald McDonald's spokes character.

As a reference in this research, researchers used several previous studies. The first research that was used as a reference is the research made by Monica Engelica Wewengkang, Dudi Anandya, and Indarini from the University of Surabaya in 2019 with the title "Pengaruh Spokes-Character Terhadap Komponen Brand Equity Alfamart di Surabaya". This research

focuses on knowing and analyzing the dimensions of likability, Expertise, and relevance in reflecting spokes-character and analyzing influence spokes-character towards brand equity components. The results of this research show that Brand awareness or association has no effect on brand loyalty.

The second research used as a research reference is the research created by Desy Ariskawati from Petra Christian University in 2012, with the title “Opini masyarakat Surabaya terhadap kemampuan spokes character Albi dalam mengomunikasikan corporate identity Alfamart”. This research uses quantitative methods descriptive which focuses on the opinion of the people of Surabaya regarding Albi's spokes character in communicating Alfamart's corporate identity and obtaining positive results.

The third research used as a reference is research by Bambang Setyadarma from Wijaya Kusuma University Surabaya in 2018 with the title “Pengaruh Fitur Karakter Terhadap Sikap Konsumen Atas Merek Melalui Kepercayaan Karakter Pada Produk Es Krim Paddlepop”. The focus of the research is to measure the influence of Features Character on Customer Attitudes towards the Brand through Trust in the Character of Paddlepop Ice Cream Products. This research also shows that Trust of Customers has influence on The Customer Attitude.

Unlike from the three previous studies, this study focuses on Ronald McDonald's, which is the spokes character of McDonalds as an object and its relation to brand image, instead of corporate identity, brand equity or character beliefs. This research focuses in exploring the opinions of Generation Z in Surabaya, which is the dominant population and prefers McDonalds as a fast-food restaurant, regarding the effectiveness of Ronald's spokes character McDonald's. This opinion will be measured using three indicators; Awareness, Acceptance and Action, which then will be categorized into three classifications, Negative, Neutral or Positive Opinion. The effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's Spokes character is also measured through three determining factors; Relevance to product, Expertise and Nostalgia.

Overall, it is hoped that this research results will provide significance for the McDonald's company regarding the decision to retire Ronald McDonald as a spokes character. Supposedly the results concludes that Gen Z Surabaya has a positive opinion of the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character, then McDonalds might consider reusing the mascot again. Likewise, other companies may be able to consider using spokes characters to improve brand image communication from this research results.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *S-O-R Theory*

The S-O-R model shows that communication is an action-reaction process. This means that this model assumes that verbal words, non-verbal signals, certain symbols will stimulate other people to respond in a certain way (Effendy, 2015). The emphasis in the S-O-R communication model is more on the message delivered can foster enthusiasm for the communicant so that communication can be done quickly receive the message received and then a change in behaviour occurs. The components covered in this theory are: attitudes, opinions, behaviour, cognition, affective, and conation (Effendy, 2003: 225). For this reason,

it is an important element in this communication model there are three, namely: 1) Message (Stimulus, S), 2) Communicant (Organism, O), 3. Effect (Response, R).

This research uses the S-O-R model where the Stimulus is the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character. The stimulus is sent to the target Organism, which is Generation Z Surabaya who are McDonalds customers and the response that will be examined more deeply is Opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald. Furthermore, the S-O-R Theory is used as a basis for the Marketing concept Public Relations, which is the function of Marketing Public Relations according to Thomas L. Harris is to stimulate purchasing and consumer satisfaction through communication regarding reliable information and through generating impressions.

### ***Marketing Public Relations***

Marketing Public Relations is a process of planning, implementing, and evaluate programs that encourage purchasing interest and consumer satisfaction, through conveying convincing information and impressions, in business shows that the company and its products meet needs, consumer desires, interests and interests (Elvirano, 2008).

According to the initiator, namely Thomas L. Harris, Marketing Public Relations functions to stimulate purchases and consumer satisfaction through communication regarding reliable information and through generating impressions. Apart from that, in his other book, Value Added PR, Thomas L. Harris defines Marketing Public Relations, namely, the use of public relations strategies and techniques to achieve marketing goals. The main goal of marketing public relations is not to selling (as in advertising activities), but more about providing information, education and efforts to increase understanding through increasing knowledge about a product/service/company. Marketing public relations is a higher and more complete concept than ordinary advertising because it will be stronger impact and so that it is remembered by consumers longer.

A consumer is said to be loyal if he shows purchasing behaviour from time to time by several decision-making units (Rimiyati & Widodo, 2014). One way to gain competitive advantage is to maintain Consumer loyalty, which can be obtained by establishing good product quality and brand image in the eyes of consumers (Widiana & Sukawati, 2016).

### ***Brand***

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them all of which are intended to identify goods or services from one seller or group of sellers and differentiate products or services from competitors (Kotler, 2012). The purpose of branding is to identify products or services offered by competitors. In the journal "The Affect Transfer Effect On Spokes-Characters", Chiu (2009), said that "To create a stronger corporate image and strengthening the degree of identification, more and more companies are starting to use innovative and unique names as their brands. Additionally, some company has created a distinctive spokes character for its product or brand."

Brand image is what consumers think or feel when they hear it or looking at the name of a brand or essentially what the consumer has learned about brands (Supranto, 2011: 128). Brand image is utilized by the company as a means of differentiating from competitors' products in the form of names, characteristics or design (Manullang, 2017).

McDonalds is one of the fast-food restaurants that uses Ronald McDonald's as an effort to develop brand image. The McDonalds Brand Image is communicated through Ronald McDonald through several strategies as follows (Bourgue, 2020):

1. The Ronald McDonald character was designed as a clown because clowns are usually associated with joy, entertainment and child-friendly characters in accordance with McDonald's vision and mission
2. Ronald McDonald is synonymous with dominant colours red and yellow, according to the McDonald's logo. The colour red is used because it stimulates a person's brain to be more active. Apart from that, the colour red can also function to increase heart rate, which helps to improve appetite. Meanwhile, the colour yellow is associated with happiness and is the easiest colour to see during the day.
3. Ronald McDonald wearing a jumpsuit with the McDonald's logo on the side left of his chest.

Therefore, spokes characters are personified and characteristic the design has an impact and increases the effectiveness of non-verbal communication with target consumers which increases a more favorable brand attitude as well building a positive brand image (Garretson and Burton, 2015).

### ***Spokes Character Effectiveness***

Spokes Character is a branding element that helps consumers to remember more about a company's products. Mascots are based on objects, animals, and humans to help people identify with a product, remember it and understand the product better (Garretson & Burton, 2005). Spokes characters have often been used as promotional and marketing communication tools for years (Phillips et al. 2019). The spokesperson character can be considered as type of support. It serves as a reminder of the brand value and product quality. Different from a spokesperson, spokes character is often the character design based on humans, animals, or objects (Kang et al., 2012).

Garretson and Niedrich (in Chiu, et. al, 2009) state that spokes characters are considered to function effectively if they fulfill three factors, namely Relevance to product, Expertise, and Nostalgia.

#### a. Relevance to product

Drawing from the congruence literature in consumer psychology and advertising (Goodstein 1993; Heckler and Childers 1992; Kamins 1990; Sengupta, Goodstein, and Boninger 1997), relevance is considered as the degree to which two stimuli match or match. In the context of spokes character, namely the extent to which the spokes character is considered appropriate for the product linked to promotional campaigns. So, in short, Relevance to product refers to the relationship between product characteristics and the spokes character known to consumers.

#### b. Expertise

Expertise is a perception that can be made valid statement or have knowledge about the product (Hoviand, Janis, and Kelley 1953; McGinnies and Ward 1980; Ohanian 1991). The importance of this perceived expertise lies in the fact that it can influence consumer perceptions of spokes character trustworthiness. Consumers judge the trustworthiness of an individual based on the individual's personal abilities, consistent with deep attribution theory making inferences (Kelley, 1972). Briefly, Expertise refers to spokes character's ability to make true product statements and demonstrate a level of product knowledge.

c. Nostalgia

Several previous studies have shown that spokes character is a representation of nostalgia (Callcott and Alvey 1991; Callcott and Phillips 1996). Consumers are exposed to characters at an early age, for some characters support children's products (Callcott and Lee 1994; Mizerski 1995). These characters survive from generation to generation and can maintain a constant presence in consumers' lives, as they appear in advertisements, on product packages, and on consumer sales promotions. In short, Nostalgia refers to spokes character's ability to trigger consumer memories.

Based on research by Garretson and Niedrich in 2004, if the spokes character has the characteristics above, the spokes character will be more effective and consumers will prefer it. Relating to the concept of Marketing Public Relations, where it is important to pay constant attention to how the organization is affected by social, legal, professional, and economic trends—and surrounding public opinion, it is also important to research public opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's spokes character.

## *Opinion*

According to Cutlip and Center, opinion is a statement about attitudes regarding certain controversial issues (in Ollii and Erlita, 2011: 39). Opinions arise as a result of discussions about controversial issues that give rise to different opinions. Opinion is a response or open answer to a stated problem based on words (intangibles), both in the form of written and oral opinions. Opinions can also be behaviour, attitudes, views and responses and so on.

In connection with the concept of Marketing Public Relations, in his book, Ronald D. Smith said that “In Public Relations communications, we want to be sure that our message will reach our primary public, who will approve of the message and will then act according to that message.” Furthermore, according to Smith, there are three progressive levels of the objective process of opinion formation from the message, namely:

- a. Awareness
- b. Acceptance
- c. Action

In the Awareness stage, the main focus is on information and providing cognitive component of the message. The aim of the Awareness stage is to determine what information does the public want to know first and then to know, understand and remember. Next, the Acceptance stage is related to affective, or public “feeling,” part of the message—how people respond emotional about the information they have received. The final stage is Action. When awareness and acceptance have been achieved, the next step is how the public as communicants acts on this information. In particular, the conative, or behavioural component of the communication process offers two types of action general. The first type of action can be an

opinion or behavioural intention—action verbal expression that expresses receipt of the message. The second type is behaviour—action physical expression that expresses such acceptance. In this research, the main focus is the first type of Action, which is Gen Z's opinion on the effectiveness of Spokes Character Ronald McDonald in communicating the McDonalds brand image.

This research uses Marketing Public Relations Theory, where this research explores how stimuli or messages in the form of Ronald McDonald's spokes character are received by communicants, namely Gen Z Surabaya, has been effective according to Marketing Public Relations or not. Measuring Ronald McDonald's effectiveness as messages can be highlighted through consumer opinions. Therefore, this research focuses on researching Gen Z Surabaya's opinions on the effectiveness of spokes characters Ronald McDonald in communicating the McDonalds brand image.

Furthermore, public opinion can be measured and categorized. Opinion measurement used to measure the direction in which opinions are moving. The direction of opinion can be seen from positive or neutral aspects as well as like, hate and neutral. All three directions of opinion. This can be explained further as follows, (Effendy, 2003: 10):

- a. Positive opinion  
Causing someone to act favourably towards another person, something policy / an organization.
- b. Neutral opinion  
If someone doesn't have an opinion on an issue affect the situation.
- c. Negative opinion  
Causing someone to give an unfavourable opinion/think badly about a person, an organization or something problem.

In order to collect concrete and representative opinions, this research examined the opinions of the age group that dominates the population, namely Generation Z. Apart from dominating the population, surveys have also proven that Generation Z is most interested in McDonald's as a fast-food restaurant. Therefore, the opinion that will be examined more deeply is the opinion of Gen Z.

### ***Generation Z***

A generation is a group of individuals who identify based on a group on the year of birth, age, location, and events in the lives of that group of individuals that have a significant influence on the growth phase (Schmidt, 2000). The classification for the birth year range for Gen Z or Generation Z is used in Indonesia starting from 1997 to 2012 based on official data determined by the Agency Indonesian Statistics Center (BPS) on the 2020 Population Census.

Customers are people whose activities are buying and using products, both goods and services continuously. Customers or users of a product are people who have direct or indirect contact with it with business companies (Daryanto and Setyobudi, 2014:49). So, it can be said that Gen Z customers are people who actively buy a product and are in the birth years 1997-2012.

According to various studies, this generation is known to be materialistic and accepting

instant gratification (Saputri et al., 2022). Generation Z values brands' presence on social media and their ability to connect with their followers, and influence generation Z's product purchasing behavior through social media (Halim et al., 2023). Therefore, Gen Z is an important target market and is the focus of this research. In this research, the opinion of Generation Z that is highlighted is the opinion regarding the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's Spokes Character in communicating the McDonalds brand image

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research used a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach. According to Rukajat, (2018) descriptive research is research that attempts to describe phenomena that occur realistically, real and contemporary. To achieve this, the research methodology involved the use of the survey method by distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents who are McDonalds customers and Generation Z. The steps utilized by the researcher are as follows:

1. Researcher distributed questionnaires in the form of Google Form to McDonald's customers who are Gen Z at 13 McDonald's Surabaya branches.
2. After obtaining 30 respondents, researcher did validity and reliability tests using JASP software.
3. Since the results are positive, the researcher continued to distribute questionnaires until 100 respondents are obtained.

The respondent criteria are as follows:

1. Respondents are generation Z who are at least 18-27 years old, in accordance with Hurlock's theory (2003) which explains that early adulthood starts from the age of 18 years when a person already has independence in making decisions.
2. Respondents are McDonalds customers, namely buying products McDonalds at least 2 times a month (according to the definition of customer by Daryanto and Setyobudi (2014:49), that customers are people whose activities are buying and using a product, both goods and services continuously)
3. Respondents are familiar with Ronald McDonald

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Data Analysis***

In this research, the analysis technique used is descriptive analysis based on statement of each indicator (Awareness, Acceptance, Action) along with the indicators effectiveness of spokes character (Relevance to product, Expertise and Nostalgia). Data obtained from a total of 100 respondents will be described by calculating the average (mean). The average value is obtained from the sum of all existing values from each data, then divided by the amount of existing data (Ghozali, 2016). Using interval calculations, where the highest value on the Likert scale is reduced by the lowest value and divided by the number of classes, the following interval is found:

**Table 1.1 Table of Interval**

1.00<a<2.33	Negative (Respondents did not agree that Ronald Mcdonald was effective in communicating the McDonalds Brand Image)
2.34<a<3.67	Neutral (Respondents agreed that Ronald Mcdonald was quite effective in communicating the McDonalds Brand Image)
3.68>a>5	Positive (Respondents agreed that Ronald Mcdonald was effective in communicating the McDonalds Brand Image)

Source: research report, 2024

**Data Findings**

**Table 1.2 Table of Mean Indicators**

Indicator	Mean Total	Class
<i>Awareness (Relevance to product, Expertise, Nostalgia)</i>	4.203	Positive
<i>Acceptance (Relevance to product, Expertise, Nostalgia)</i>	4.262	Positive
<i>Action (Relevance to product, Expertise, Nostalgia)</i>	3.907	Positive
Total	4.124	Positive

Source: research report, 2024

**Analysis and Interpretation**

The total mean value of the three progressive stage opinion formation and the spokes character effectiveness indicator is 4.124, which is positive. Out of the three effectiveness indicators, it can be seen that the Acceptance indicator is higher compared to Awareness and Action. The acceptance stage is related to affective, or “feeling,” part of the message—how people respond emotional about the information they have received. This shows the level of interest or type of attitude (positive or negative) that a person wishes to generate organization among its public (Smith, 2008). In accordance with the brand image concept, “A brand identifies and represents a particular product, but it is more than just a name. A brand is an image in its customer's mind reflects what they think and feel about a product –how they value it” (Yadav, 2017). In this case, Ronald McDonald as a spokes character has played an important role in shaping the affective aspects of Gen Z Surabaya towards the McDonalds brand image.

Therefore, this research found that the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's spokes character has been accepted by Gen Z Surabaya positively.

Meanwhile, the Action stage has the lowest total mean, but is still classified as positive, namely 3,907. At the Action stage, it means that the Awareness and Acceptance stages have been achieved, hence the next step is how the public takes action against information that has been obtained (Smith, 2008). In this case, it means that Gen Z Surabaya has realize and accepted that Ronald McDonald as a spokes character is effective in communicating the McDonald's brand image. However, the mean results are not high, indicating that this effectiveness does not have the power to make Gen Z Surabaya choose McDonalds just because Ronald McDonald has effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out more MPR strategies so that the Action stage can get a higher number, where Gen Z Surabaya have the tendency to choose McDonalds because of the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald.

### **Awareness**

The first stage in forming an opinion according to Ronald D Smith is Awareness, where the main focus is on information and providing the cognitive component of the message (2003: 61). At the Awareness stage, the opinion that is measured is how much someone's awareness regarding something, in this case this research measured Gen Z Surabaya's awareness regarding the relevance of Ronald McDonald's spokes character to McDonald's. According to Garretson and Niedrich (in Chiu, et. al, 2009), spokes character can be declared effective if it has Relevance to product, namely the extent to which the spokes character is considered appropriate for the product associated with the promotional campaign.

**Table 1.3 Table of Awareness Mean Indicators**

Indicator	Mean Total	Class
Awareness – Relevance to Product	4.273	Positive
Awareness – Expertise	4.286	Positive
Awareness – Nostalgia	4.05	Positive
Total	4.203	Positive

Source: research report, 2024

The research results show that at the Awareness stage, Gen Z Surabaya Opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald, is at the total mean of 4,203, which is classified as positive. This number shows that Gen Z Surabaya is aware of the expertise that Ronald McDonald has as a spokes character. Among the three elements, it is found that the awareness of expertise received the highest number. According to Hovland and his colleagues (1953) who found that the most significant factors that cause the perception of communicator credibility are Expertise (expertise) and trustworthiness (trustworthiness). "Expertise" refers to the spokes character's ability to make true product statements; in fact, it refers to the product of the character's level of knowledge. Spokes character has made many product claims and has done so repeatedly from campaign to campaign and as a result consumers can perceive spokes characters as experts (Garretson and Niedrich, 2004).

In this case, Ronald McDonald as a spokes character has expertise in promoting products, differentiating McDonalds from other brands and help consumers recognize McDonalds. The positive mean result of 4.286 means that Ronald McDonald's expertise has been effective, especially in strengthening the brand image of McDonald's as a brand. Therefore, it is proven that Ronald McDonald doesn't just act as a memorable spokes character but also, as an effective and expert representative in promoting products and McDonald's values.

### ***Acceptance***

The second stage according to the theory of progressive opinion formation is Acceptance, which relates to the affective, or public "feeling," part of the message—how people respond emotionally to information they have received. The Acceptance stage also explains how a person responds emotional information received. This refers to the level of interest or the attitude (negative or positive) of the message received. In this case, the Acceptance measured is Gen Z Surabaya's acceptance of the three spokes character effectiveness factors. Through three questionnaire statements, researchers measure the extent to which Gen Z Surabaya accepts Ronald McDonald's and McDonalds relevancy, both in terms of the colours used and the vision and mission represented.

**Table 1.4 Table of Acceptance Mean Indicators**

Indicator	Mean Total	Class
Acceptance – Relevance to Product	4.3	Positive
Acceptance – Expertise	4.273	Positive
Acceptance – Nostalgia	4.213	Positive
Total	4.262	Positive

Source: research report, 2024

The research results show that at the Acceptance stage, Gen Z Surabaya Opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald, is at the total mean of 4,262, which is classified as positive. Among the three elements, it is found that the Acceptance towards Relevance to product is the highest. This shows that Ronald McDonald's efforts as a spokes character by promoting McDonald's products, such as Happy Meals and merchandise have helped consumers see direct connection between Ronald and McDonald's products. Because there is relevance between Ronald McDonald and McDonalds, when Gen Z Surabaya sees the figure of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character, Gen Z Surabaya is more likely to accept and feel interested. Therefore, it is proven that Ronald McDonald as a spokes character has worked effectively because strengthen the McDonalds brand image to a positive Acceptance stage.

### ***Action***

The final stage according to the theory of progressive opinion formation is Action, where when awareness and acceptance have been achieved, then the next step is how the public

as communicants acts on that information (Smith, 2003: 61). Upon knowledge and acceptance of information has been received, then the next stage is how to take action that will emerge is related to a person's understanding and feelings. In this research, the action measured is the tendency of Gen Z Surabaya to choose McDonalds because of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character.

**Table 1.5 Table of Action Mean Indicators**

Indicator	Mean Total	Class
Action – Relevance to Product	3.823	Positive
Action – Expertise	3.95	Positive
Action – Nostalgia	3.95	Positive
Total	3.907	Positive

Source: research report, 2024

The research results show that at the Action stage, Gen Z Surabaya Opinion on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald, is at the total mean of 3,907, which is classified as positive. Among the three elements, it is found that the Action towards Expertise and Nostalgia are an equal and highest number. This means, Ronald McDonald's expertise doesn't stop as a mascot, but also as a symbol of the values and experiences offered by McDonald's, which helps to strengthen brand image and influence consumer behaviour in choosing this brand. The high Nostalgia element also means that the nostalgia associated with the brand creates strong emotional ties with Gen Z Surabaya, so they are more inclined choose McDonald's to create or relive an experience happy from their childhood, compared to other brands.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research "Opinions of Gen Z Surabaya on the Effectiveness of Ronald McDonald's Spokes Character in Communicating the McDonalds Brand Image", then, the conclusion was obtained that Gen Z Surabaya's opinion regarding the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald is positive with an average result of 4.124. The mean value is obtained through a survey method distributed to 100 Gen Z McDonalds customers in 13 branches McDonalds Surabaya City, where respondents who are willing to fill out an online questionnaire via google forms. Positive results mean that Gen Z Surabaya agrees that Ronald's spokes character McDonald's is effective in communicating the McDonalds Brand Image.

The results of the research show that at the Awareness stage, the opinion of Gen Z Surabaya on the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald, the number was 4,203 which is classified as positive. This shows that Gen Z Surabaya is aware of the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character. At the Acceptance stage, Gen Z Surabaya Opinion on Effectiveness Ronald McDonald got the number 4,262, which is positive. Positive reception results towards the effectiveness of Ronald McDonald as a spokes character means that Gen Z Surabaya can take action based on the receipt. Therefore, the Action stage obtained a positive number of 3,907 concluding that Ronald McDonald was effective in communicate the McDonalds brand

image. Each element gets a positive value, so the average result of the three indicators is also positive, namely 4.124.

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