

# COMPANY REPUTATION AND IMAGE ANALYSIS

Case: Game Central

LAHTI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED  
SCIENCES  
Business  
Marketing  
Thesis  
Spring 2009  
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Company Reputation and Image Analysis  
Case: Game Central

Bachelor's Thesis in Marketing

70 pages, 66 appendixes

Spring 2009

## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines company image and reputation through theory and research. The theory explains how images are created and managed, how to achieve a strong image and how image affects a company. Also the relation between reputations and images is explained, as well as why they matter and why they should be treated as assets. The research was done on Game Central, a company that buys, sells and trades retro videogames. The objective of this research was to gain insight into the company's current image through the eyes of the company employees, customers and local college students. The quantitative research was made with the help of an Internet survey-implementation program, called Webropol. Potential respondents in the customer category was 3232, 3707 in the college student category and the 16 in the employee category. These numbers come from the amount of people that were given the survey. The response rate was relatively bad as only 3% of the customers and 4% of the students took the survey, regardless of the incentive that was offered upon completion. After the data was collected all the results were examined and contrasted between each group to get an idea of the company's current image. The responses showed a positive relationship, depending upon how familiar the company was to the group – the employees were very happy with Game Central and the working environment and the customers were pleased with the company in general, even though they would appreciate some slight changes. The local college students had naturally more neutral comments, as most of them were not familiar with the company, but as a company with a concept of buying, selling and trading games the image was somewhat good. All of the groups described Game Central as friendly, easy to approach, responsible and interesting but not cheap. Furthermore Game Central is seen as very authentic as it is appealing to deal with and straightforward. The company has some issues with transparency and distinctiveness, as Game Central lacks visibility and information flow.

Key words: Company reputation, Image, Image analysis

## TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee yritysimagea ja -mainetta teorian ja käytännön tutkimuksen kautta. Teoria osuudessa tarkastellaan miten image luodaan ja miten sitä hallitaan, miten saavutetaan vahva image ja miten tämä vaikuttaa yritykseen. Lisäksi yhteyttä maineen ja image välillä tarkastellaan, kuten myös näiden tarkoitusta ja syytä miksi nämä tulisi käsittää vahvuutena. Image tutkimus tehtiin yritykselle nimeltään Game Central, joka myy, ostaa ja vaihtaa vanhanaikaisia videopeljä. Saadaksemme käsityksen yrityksen tämänhetkisestä imagesta kysely lähetettiin kolmelle eri otosryhmälle – työntekijöille, asiakkaille ja paikallisille opiskelijoille. Tämä kvantitatiivinen tutkimus tehtiin Webropol internetohjelmiston avulla ja kyselyn linkki annettiin yhteensä 3232 asiakkaalle, 3707 opiskelijalle ja kaikille 16 työntekijälle. Näiden kahden ensimmäisen ryhmän vastausprosentit olivat huonoja, sillä vain 3% asiakkaista ja 4% opiskelijoista vastasi kyselyyn, vaikka osallistumisesta palkittiin. Saatua aineistoa tarkasteltiin ja verrattiin keskenään näissä mainituissa ryhmissä saatukseen kuvan yrityksen imagesta. Vastaukset olivat laskevia verraten siihen, miten tuttu kyseinen yritys oli otosryhmälle. Game Centralin työntekijät olivat erittäin tyytyväisiä yrityksen imageon ja työympäristöönsä, joka on erittäin suuri tekijä image muodostuksessa, kun taas asiakkaat olivat lähes tyytyväisiä kunhan saisivat pieniä muutoksia. Paikallisten opiskelijoiden vastaukset olivat luonnollisesti neutraalimpia, sillä suurin osa tästä otosryhmästä ei tuntenut Game Centralia. Mutta yrityksen, joka myy, ostaa ja vaihtaa tietokonepelejä oli imagea jokseenkin hyvä. Jokainen otosryhmä kuvaili Game Centralia ystävällisenä ja helppona lähestyä. Yritystä kuvailtiin myös vastuuntuntoisena ja mielenkiintoisena mutta ei halpana. Game Central on tutkimuksen perusteella erittäin aito, sillä yrityksen kanssa on miellyttävä käydä kauppaa ja se on suoraviivainen. Yrityksellä on joitakin ongelmia avoimuuden ja omaperäisyyden kanssa, sillä sen näkyvyys tai tietovirta eivät ole kovin hyviä.

Avainsanat: Image, image, imageanalyysi

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays competing in the business world can be extremely difficult. Not only do companies have to worry about the efficiency of their operations but with so many companies looking similar, how do they differentiate themselves from the masses? Customers appreciate a good reputation as everything you do and say affect stakeholder opinions. This is why reputations matter. Companies need to stand behind their words and meet the stakeholders' needs in order to maintain their reputation, since strong reputation takes years to form yet it can be destroyed in a flash. What makes a reputation or image so fragile that merely a circulating rumor can be the end of it? This thesis will introduce the reader to the rough world of organizational reputation creation and will examine the reasons behind it. Company reputation and image will focus around the case company, Game Central, and provide insight into its current image and recommend improvements based on these results.

## 1.1 Research focus

To be a successful company, a good product or service isn't enough. Differentiation is the key and in order to do that you need a strong reputation. Since reputations are formed by everything you do and say, through very personal stakeholder opinions, this thesis concentrates on the details affecting these perceptions and how to manage images in order to gain the most from them. Following that logic this thesis examines the details affecting images and perceptions surrounding the case company Game Central and recommends a number items to improve the reputation of the company.

## 1.2 Research question and objectives

The objective of this thesis is to define Game Central's current image – what kind of impressions customers, potential customers (Minnesota State University students), and personnel have of Game Central. With the examination of three different target groups, the goal is to get different people to share their opinions about gaming stores. The summary of responses of each group will be compared and contrasted to get an idea of the company's actions or lack thereof to generate positive company image. Based on the analysis, conclusions will be drawn, and recommendations on how best to alter the current strategy will be made.

## 1.3 Research implementation

The data for this survey was collected through multiple quantitative methods. A total of 3232 customers were invited to take the survey, as they received the link with every transaction. All of the 16 employees received the link through their email and total of 3707 Minnesota State University students were invited through Facebook and the College of Business eNews. More detailed information is explained in chapter 4.1, background information for the survey.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

As for the structure of this thesis, the first part will examine the theory of image and reputation – how to form an image, how bad or good image affects a company and how to manage it. Also the relation between company image and reputation will be researched, as well as the meaning and the financial value of a reputation. In the second half of the thesis the results of the survey will be examined to define Game Central's present image.

## 2 IMAGE

The term ‘image’ has many definitions in Encyclopædia Britannica (2009). Image can be an impression– “a mental picture of something not actually present”– or an idea or concept– “a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation”– or “a popular conception (as of a person, institution, or nation) projected especially through mass media.”

Related to this, Bromley (1993, 158) mentions that a name or icon represents the company and people associate emotions to those giving it its meaning or psychological significance.

### 2.1 Forming an image

As a concept, image is an essential part of consumer psychology and information processing (Kahle & Kim 2006, 79). A company image is formed by all the constituencies’ images of your organization, and people’s buying decisions are based on these images (Argenti & Forman 2002, 57; Marconi 1996, 67). Images are reflections of very precise, yet personal opinions and emotions. People can look at the same thing seeing it very differently (Marconi 1996, 67).

Nowadays it is not enough to have an awesome product, service and a solid business plan. A company has to have a good image. Every time you hand out a business card, welcome a client to your office or store, send a letter or an email, you tell something about the company. (Lesonsky 2007, 258.) You can also express your personal identity through your logos, products, services, buildings, stationery, uniforms, and any other public side of you shown to your constituencies (Argenti & Forman 2002, 70-71). Everything you do and how you look creates an image (Marconi 2002, 70). Your look helps you promote your business by creating a good image (Lesonsky 2007, 258). Advertising and public relations are also greatly involved in creating a company identity and image (Heath 2001, 170).



But the most important part of your image is yourself and your employees. All your marketing materials may be professional but if your employees are rude and uncaring towards customers, all the company's efforts trying to promote a good image will be in vain. (Lesonsky 2007, 535). The most fundamental part to a corporate identity is the vision that covers your company's core values, philosophies, standards and goals (Argenti & Forman 2002, 71). The groups and organizations without a clear corporate identity probably won't be able to promote a clear public image (Bromley 1993, 121).

## 2.2 How to affect company image

In the process of forming and nurturing your image, companies must fully understand the large spread of influencing factors and measure the many stakeholders' perceptions. And of course, you must do what you say. (Alsop 2004, 10.)

Customers form the image of a company based on their perceptions and sometimes these prejudices aren't reflecting the company's actual profile. For the stakeholders their perception is the true image. (Gregory 1991, 2.) That in mind companies must decide whether they will passively let others develop opinions about them or actively manage and maximize their most valuable asset (Alsop 2004, 10). It is the people who will decide whether or not you succeed, often simply based on your reputation. Rather than giving consumers what you want them to have, you need to provide them what they want. Doing this will increase your chances of succeeding. (Marconi 2002, 85.)

You need to control the flow of information to your stakeholders and the provided information must be something that clearly defines you. You need to know what kind of an image you want to present, you need to initiate the contact with stakeholders and not wait for them to come to you, you need to be forthcoming yet subtle, and don't overstate your case or wear out your welcome. You also need to identify and use tools to control the flow of information and with that the creation of your image. If it is not you who creates your image, someone else will and the

the likelihood of that being someone in your favor is slight. (Marconi 1996, 13-14.)

By making investments in creating an outstanding company name, a noticeable logo, and well-matched graphics you can build your obtainable image to be strong and positive. These small things you can be the most cost-effective marketing expenditure. “It’s like having a permanent round-the-clock salesperson.” Every time the logo, package or name is recognized you construct your image, which makes it easier to create a more correct image for the company. (Gregory 1991, 93.)

Also one very important part is doing research. By doing research on image companies can find out what they need in order to set and achieve objectives successfully. And to do that, companies need to know where they are with their image, “If you don’t know where you are, you may not be there.” (Gregory 1991, 47.)

### 2.3 Image marketing

One of the fastest growing parts in marketing communications is image marketing (Kahle & Kim 2006, xv). You must classify your target market and let your potential customers know who you are, what you do and why they should care. A company’s image is a reflection of people’s perceptions and the perceptions are based upon what they know of your company, so it is essential that you manage and control that flow of information. But the most important part is that there is information about you available, that you raise awareness. (Marconi 1996, 12.)

One way to do this is image advertising. Image advertising has many possible missions to many possible target groups, and it is viewed from a variety of perspectives. Properly implemented, whatever the perspective, image advertising can drastically help the company to reach their goals. Image advertising is certainly at the forefront of corporate strategies, and it is a necessity to situate a company for maximum growth. (Gregory 1991, 1.)

When it comes to customer relations, image advertising has the greatest effect on the perceptions people have. We have the expression, “the customer is always right.” But when it comes to company image it isn’t about being right or wrong, only what the customers think about you is the thing that counts. (Gregory 1991, 2.) In the long term, a properly executed image advertising can be helpful in terms of increasing brand sales and in accomplishing other important goals (Gregory 1991, 3).

You need these five things to make your image advertising successful:

1. The guidelines for an image campaign should be coming from the top management, like the CEO. They are the only people who truly understand the company from all perspectives, and who can keep the campaign in line, and find the necessary funding.
2. You need to know yourself in order to know where you want to be heading. What is your image and do you even need an image campaign? Research should be employed beforehand, throughout, and after any image campaign.
3. Focus on your target group. You can influence your target audience’s perceptions better if you know them.
4. By studying your target audience you can find out how your campaign has worked, what is it saying to your public and what is remembered the best.
5. The advertising needs to answer to the questions to who and what. The implementation needs to be consistent. (Gregory 1991, 22-23.)

Advertising only products isn’t, by itself, sufficient to market successfully. Despite the target group having a good image, your public will assume you have good products and they will be even willing to pay the premium price of these products. Image advertising is the means to prepare your audience for the company’s standpoint and products. (Gregory 1991, 26.) And to know your standpoint, the company image needs to be the compound of all of its actions (Gregory 1991, 23).

## 2.4 Related terms

Terms that relate closely to image forming are being examined in the following chapters.

### 2.4.1 Reputation

The term ‘reputation’ is defined in Encyclopædia Britannica (2009) as the “overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general” and as the “recognition by other people of some characteristic or ability”. Reputation refers to general beliefs or impressions of something, or to its evaluation (Bromley 1993, 2). People and other entities have reputations that are important and valued. The extent and the subject of a reputation vary. People can have reputations for many things, or of being or doing something. There are many kinds of reputations and all of them can be manipulated. (Bromley 1993, 3.)

Reputation is a company centric concept that concentrates on the respect and credibility the organization has among its constituencies. It is affected by a numerous set of factors that include not just the treatment of employees, handling ethical issues and commitment to the environment but also the company’s management, financial performance and innovativeness. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 19.) Reputations change due to the demands of a situation, it is never static (Bromley 1993, 13). A solid reputation is highly desirable since ultimately all businesses depend on goodwill. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 19). Reputation is a precondition for people’s willingness to do business with a company (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 20). Moreover it has an influence on people’s actions based on their beliefs and impressions (Bromley 1993, 12).

### 2.4.2 Brand

Encyclopædia Britannica (2009) defines brand as “a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm or manufacturer” and as “a characteristic or distinctive kind.”

If you want your reputation to be superb, you need the help of a strong brand (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 20). Brand is an essential part of reputation and they need to work together. The brand can suffer if you focus only on reputation at the expense of the brand. On the other hand, if you neglect reputation it can lead to difficulties, for example attracting talented work force. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 19.) You can influence the consumers buying behavior by a powerful brand image created by strong brand associations. Image has the capability to influence the information processing of consumers and therefore it can evoke certain psychological patterns or behavior. (Kahle & Kim 2006, xv.) Brands are only as good as how the consumers see them (Satterthwaite 2007, 16).

“Brand describes the associations that customers have with the company’s products.” A poor brand has a weak awareness and functional appeal to customers whereas a good brand has high awareness and appeal. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4.) Brand focuses on the promises and commitment the product, service or company has for the customers. Brand is a customer centric concept. The brand’s value and strength depends on the fulfilled promises of the product or service to the customers. A strong brand helps to communicate with customers how the company’s products are relevant and unique for their needs. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 19.) As Keller (1993) mentions a positive brand image boosts the brand awareness of a certain product or service and it improves customer based equity and satisfaction. Consequently a good brand will be beneficial for enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty on a long-term basis. (Kahle & Kim 2006, xvii.)

A strong brand doesn’t necessarily mean you have a good reputation, and the other way round, a solid reputation doesn’t equate with a good brand. A company

with a poor reputation can have a brand with high awareness, and in contrast, a weak brand doesn't always result a strong reputation. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 20; Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4.)

Branding is a part of reputation management as it affects the possibilities of customers favoring certain purchase decisions, while reputation affects the supportive behavior from the brands stakeholders (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4).

### 3 REPUTATION VS IMAGE

The company's image is a reflection of an organizations identity, so everything you do and how you look creates an image and over time these images create a reputation (Argenti & Forman 2002, 69; Marconi 2002, 70; Alsop 2004, 10).

These images can speak to you in levels of beliefs, impressions or perceptions and these beliefs can be formed by a single word or a name. The impressions can be formed after reading persuasive research, impressions created over a lifetime, a series of impressions or our first impressions. Whoever your customer or client is, everybody acts on the basis of what he or she have seen, heard and learned and everybody has his or her own image of your organization. (Marconi 2002, 1; Argenti & Forman 2002, 69.) After every interaction with your company the lingering associations and impressions together form the image of your company (Argenti & Forman 2002, 69).

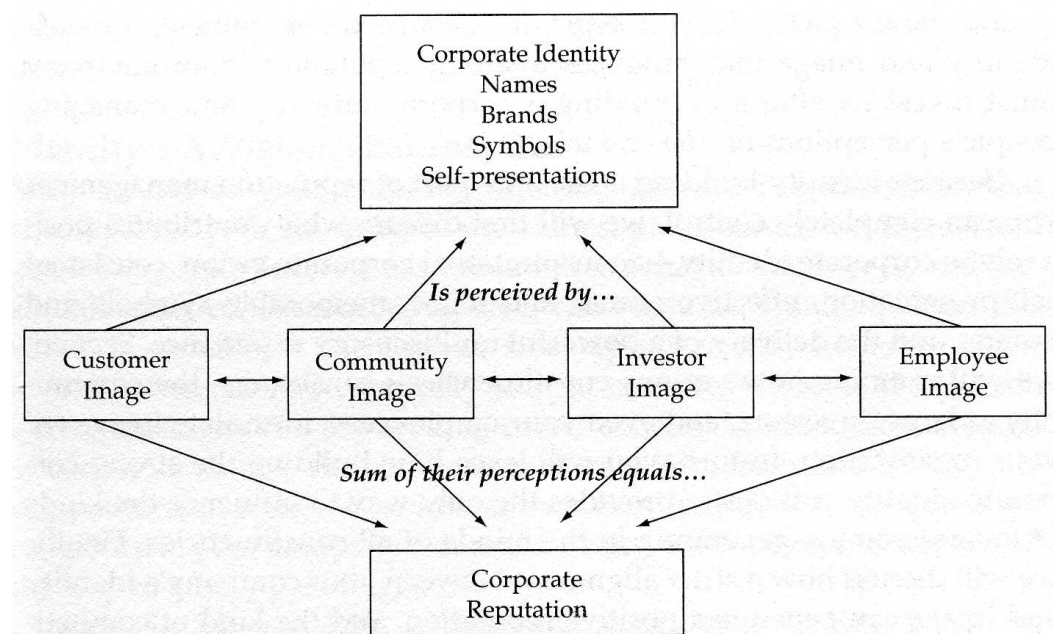


FIGURE 1. What are identity, image, and reputation? (Argenti & Forman 2002, 69.)

As seen from figure 1, a good reputation is formed by a strict alliance between a company's identity and image (Argenti & Forman 2002, 70). It is a compilation of all the images formed by your constituencies' impressions (Argenti & Forman 2002, 57). A strong and long-lasting image is built through the organization's identity, the overall coherence of the images the public perceives, and the association of the organization's identity with the images held by its constituencies (Argenti & Forman 2002, 68).

### 3.1 Building a reputation through image

As stated before, everything you do and how you look creates an image (Marconi 2002, 70). A name, or a single word, can imply an image. It can speak in levels of beliefs and perceptions. The impressions can be formed after reading persuasive research, impressions created over a lifetime, a series of impressions or our first impressions. The targeted segment may be made of students, housewives, corporate executives or security analysts but every one of them is a consumer who acts on the basis what they have seen, heard and learned. (Marconi 2002, 1.) Hence companies must earn their reputations (Satterthwaite 2007, 16). Over time every organization, company and individual creates a reputation through images and perceptions (Marconi 2002, 70; Alsop 2004, 10). Companies position themselves through advertising, public relations, package design, delivery system, unique selling points, presentation, performance, and quality of service (Marconi 2002, 70).

Reputations are the stakeholders' opinions about the company's ability to fulfill their expectations (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4). Trust is the foundation of good reputations (Alsop 2004, 12-13). Customers also look for the value behind the brand, so everything companies do in creating their brand becomes a more serious factor in choice. Companies need to take care of their employees, environment, all the ingredients in creating the brand. Information flow to customers, detractors, stakeholders and employees is very important. The people closest to you tend to be your most brutal critics. (Satterthwaite 2007, 16.) In addition to these, companies can guide stakeholders' perceptions through advertising, public relations,



package design, delivery system, unique selling points, presentation, performance, and quality of service (Marconi 2002, 70).

The most enduring reputations are shaped by the emotional bonds between the company and stakeholders. It is also affected by financial performance, the workplace environment, the quality of products and services, corporate leadership, and vision. The company image is affected negatively or positively through every customer contact. Was it the company truck, website or just a phone call (Alsop 2004, 10.) Reputations take years to form yet they can be ruined in an instant (Smith 2003, 28; Alsop 2004, 19; Argenti & Forman 2002, 82). Therefore you must be concerned of each and every customer contact and their quality (Argenti & Forman 2002, 82).

### 3.2 Creating emotional appeal through expressiveness

To create a strong reputation, companies need to build emotional appeal. It requires companies to express themselves, credibly, authentically, sincerely, and convincingly to their stakeholders. Companies need to be willing to convey who they are, what they do and what they stand for. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 95.)

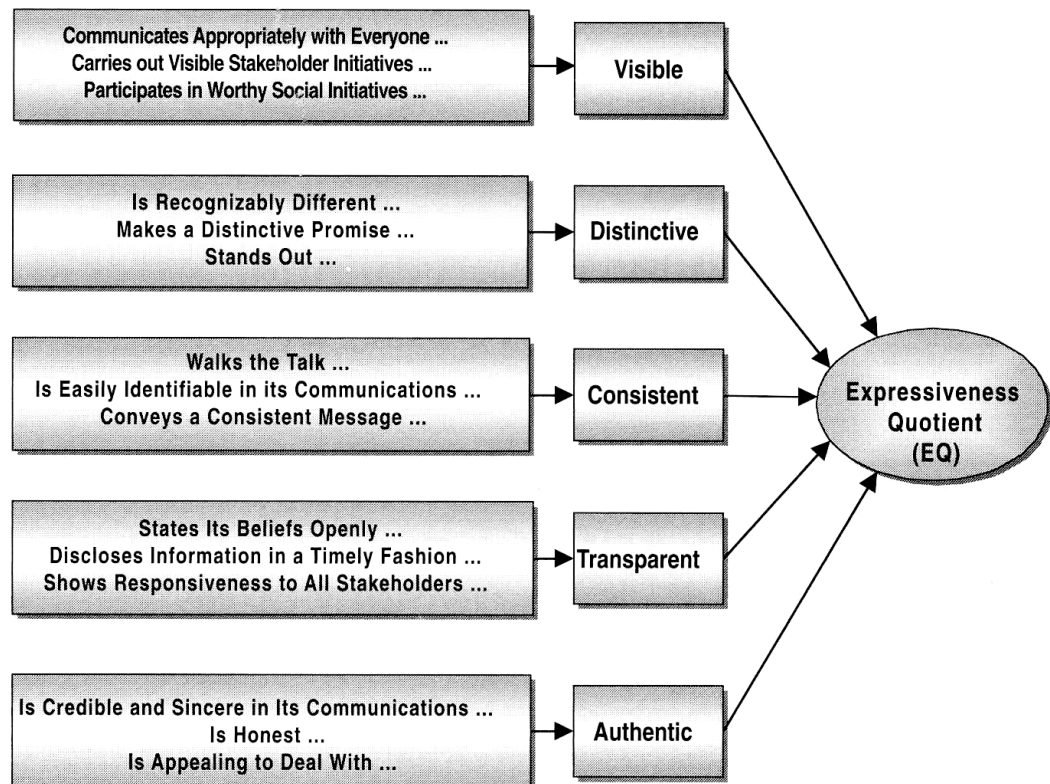


FIGURE 2. The expressiveness quotient. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 96.)

The five core dimensions of expressiveness are being visible, distinctive, consistent, transparent and authentic, as seen from figure 2. The better the expressiveness, the more possible it is to be appealing to stakeholders. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 96.)

### Visibility

Without visibility even good companies don't have real reputations. A company having visible communications enhances the possibilities of stakeholders perceiving the organization as genuine and credible, subsequently attracting advocacy and support. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 87.)

## Distinctiveness

When companies achieve a distinctive position among the stakeholders they develop their reputations (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 89). Being seen as a distinctive company can say they stand for something. Telling a story that affects all the stakeholders builds the company “core reputation platform”. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 133.) Companies tend to look very alike because of the competition. Therefore you need to manage the company distinctiveness, and not just wait for it to develop by chance. Creating just small differences in stakeholder perceptions are often enough to generate recognition, support and reputation. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 134.)

## Consistency

The best-regarded companies also tend to be more consistent in their procedures and interactions with the public (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 94). As consumers, we are being attacked by a massive flow of information, forcing us to be selective with what gets through. The ones that normally get through are the most relevant and emotionally appealing. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 217.) In order to achieve the most favorable reputation through a strong reputation platform, companies need to implement campaigns, communications by creating a discussion with stakeholders, enforced identity, implementing an integrated communication system, training employees and embracing a capacity and tracking scorecard (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 218-219).

## Transparency

A reputation can grow to be stronger by being transparent in the company interactions. Staying away from communications with the public, granting only minimal information and avoiding any details why, how and what the company is doing, is a good way to get rid of the public's positive interest towards the company. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 93.) As Fombrun and van Riel put it, “transparency helps build, maintain, and defend reputation”. By having more and better information available public will consider the company more credible and accountable. (Fom-

brun & van Riel 2004, 94.) The more transparent a company is, the more accurate information the public perceives (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 185). Subsequently the public can rely and have more faith in the company (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 187).

### Authenticity

Authenticity generates emotional appeal that is essential to reputation building as the public values authenticity. You have to be real in order to be well regarded, faking it doesn't ever work for long. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 91.) The communications have to be truthful with all of the stakeholders because any dishonesty or disbelief will be immediately disseminated through all of them, damaging any support the company might have had (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 163).

Authenticity needs to come from within, by everyone working together and having similar goals. A company can only be truly authentic if the employees express the organizational values in their everyday interactions. Also the company's core essence needs to be expressed, emotionally appealing to all stakeholders. (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 165.)

### 3.3 Managing reputations

Merely a circulating rumor can cause opinions to change instantly and dramatically. You need to have a strategy for predicting risks and protecting your reputation. It is subject to knowing your market and being responsive to it. (Marconi 2002, 10.)

Reputation management is an unrelenting, never-ending job. It should be considered as an essential part of companies' strategies, if they wish to maximize the value of their reputation, and make it clear for all the employees how they affect reputation every day. Reputation must be the fundamental part of the company identity and not just advertising or public relations. (Alsop 2004, 13-14.)

Reputation management is the mission of keeping the positive image in the minds of stakeholders (Heath 2001, 309). However you need to remember that you can't please everyone at the same time (Alsop 2004, 40). The reputation management starts from building an alignment between the company identity and image. You need to create your identity and manage the people's perceptions. (Argenti & Forman 2002, 70.) Remember that you do it through creating and managing your identity (Argenti & Forman 2002, 89). You also need to measure the reputation for managing it (Alsop 2004, 25).

"It is important to create a perception of being the best" (Marconi 2002, 4). The most successful marketing efforts embrace reputation marketing, even if the process was not described as such an important factor (Marconi 2002, 8). Like an old saying in business admonishes, "If you can't be the first, be the best" (Marconi 2002, 4). Your reputation management is a success if all the images of your company align with the organizations reality (Argenti & Forman 2002, 69).

The figure 3 states the seven key elements that form the basis of a reputation. The significance of each one is determined by the company type, sector and country.

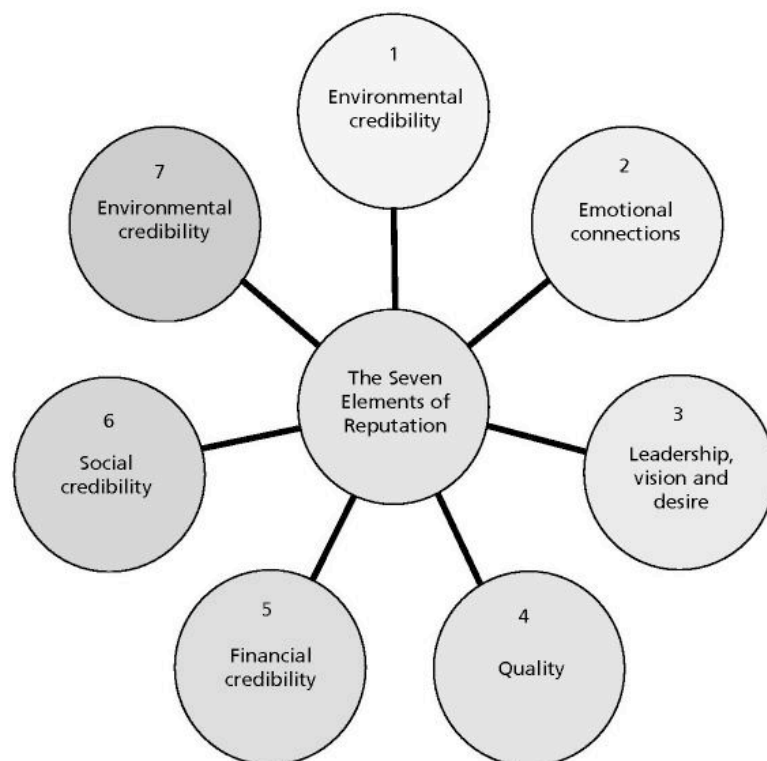


FIGURE 3. The seven elements of reputation. (Brady 2005, 12.)

1. Knowhow and expertise: Employees define the success of a company and using their skills is vital to growth.
2. Emotional connections: Several companies would be identical without any stakeholders having feelings about the company products and services.
3. Management, vision and desire: High value is connected to companies with strong vision and desire. Companies also need to be conscious of their visions and not just have them.
4. Quality: Companies need to constantly meet the customer's requirements.
5. Financial credibility: This is the most common way to evaluate company performance. Having a strong and up to date documentation of good profits for stakeholders, companies build credibility.
6. Social credibility: By generating goodwill companies increase their credibility in the society.
7. Environmental credibility: Being environmentally responsible and considering the carbon footprint companies can reach the maximum value.

For creating better reputational value in comparison to rivals, companies need to keep this list in mind. Having a spotless or improving reputation companies need to communicate, keep sustainable reporting and reach all these seven levels. In the process of mastering these levels the benefits can be instant or not. However in long term the indicators will grow and become solid. During this time the levels will go through reorganizing in building up their importance in influencing impressions, hence the reputation. (Brady 2005, 13.)

### 3.4 Reputations in good times and bad

Every business, despite of size or industry, must accept that sometimes things might go wrong (Marconi 2002, 13). During good times companies build up reputation capital to help them carry on after some rougher times. It is like a savings account for rainy days. If a company is hit with a crisis or profits decrease, their reputation suffers less and they are able to get back on their feet more quickly. Every negative development eats up the company's reputation capital but with a good reputation it is much easier to bounce back to business. (Alsop 2004, 17-18.)

First impressions do count a lot and all of your actions influence your image, despite how correct your behavior is (Gregory 1991, 47; Marconi 2002, 16). Bad news, like ethnical gaffes, boycotts or negative PR-campaigns, stay in people's minds longer than positive ones (Hilton & Gibbons 2002, 98; Marconi 2002, 16). Thus it is more difficult to change people's perceptions, especially negative ones, than creating impressions in the first place. (Marconi 2002, 16.) It is essential to know if your company has any reputation at all, and if so, what kind of a reputation it is. For a successful business it is important to have a good reputation. (Marconi 2002, 19.) And of course the CEO's repute affects the company's reputation also. A survey by the PR firm Burson-Marsteller in 2003 showed that a half of the respondents believed the company's reputation is attributable to the CEO's reputation, since the CEO is seen as the ultimate spokesperson for the company. (Alsop 2004, 10-11.) Though it is good to remember that in the end a strong reputation makes stakeholders more willing to forgive you for the mistakes you may do (Argenti & Forman 2002, 88).

### 3.4.1 Good reputation

A company with a strong reputation has integrity, it is reliable, accountable, responsible and quality-conscious (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 20). A good image can have an effect on product sales and the overall image of the company (Gregory 1991, 93). Companies generating goodwill by regularly taking part in charity or cause related events naturally create a positive image (Marconi 2002, 7-8).

A good reputation attracts investors, customers and helps in recruiting and retaining employees leading to increase of sales and enhancing stock prices (Gunderson 2008, 24; Alsop 2004, 10). Also mergers, acquisitions, trade-association activities and regulatory environment are all heavily influenced by reputation and it enhances the relationships between partners, suppliers, dealers, creditors, and regulator by creating goodwill (Marconi 2002, 13; Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 27). A good and strong reputation affects a company's ability to make sales, negotiate a contract or buy equipment. Strong reputation is crucial when people are deciding what products to buy, where to work, or which stocks to invest in (Argenti &

Forman 2002, 5, 88.) It also has an effect on employees by improving their efficiency and effectiveness by stimulating their productivity. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 27). The positive stakeholder relationships can also shield your reputation during unstable times (Alsop 2004, 41).

A strong positive reputation attracts better people and allows companies to charge a premium price as they are seen as providing more value (Eccles, Newquist & Schatz 2007, 104). It adds to the persuasion that the company holds products with better quality, which leads to better prospects of purchasing the products (Gregory 1991, 93). Strong reputations make the customers more loyal and they tend to buy from a broader range of the company's products. It is also believed that companies with stronger reputations have sustained earnings and good future growth, higher market value and lower cost of capital. (Eccles, Newquist & Schatz 2007, 104.)

Because of the value that reputations hold with customers, investors, employees, and even with competitors, a company wants to preserve a good reputation (Marconi 2002, 13).

With a strong reputation comes great responsibility. If customers are used to a high standard and you fail to deliver that image, your customers judge it more harshly than they do others (Alsop 2004, 13).

Ultimately a good reputation depends on company reliability. A good basis is to keep all your promises, but in the end, you need to know who you are and what you stand for. In the closing stages you can see the proof in the numbers. (Satterthwaite 2007, 16; Alsop 2004, 10.) A good and strong reputation enables higher revenue and improved sales and profit which in turn make it possible for companies to develop corporate social responsibility programs for improving the community, environment, labor practices, health and safety. (Stephenson 2009.)

A lack of any of those traits will put your stakeholders off. (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 20.)



### 3.4.2 Bad reputations

Even though building a reputation takes years to form, the whole image can be lost in an instant (Alsop 2004, 10, 19; Smith 2003, 28; Argenti & Forman 2002, 82).

Companies need to be aware of possible threats to their reputation and have defending strategies, procedures and allies on hand to block or quickly defeating damages to the reputation (Alsop 2004, 19). In regards to preventing damages companies should focus on integrity, accountability, have respect for people and serve the customers by the same means. The reputation should be assessed, the risks need to be evaluated and every stakeholder's engagement for guarding the reputation should be ensured by making crisis management plans. (Gunderson 2008, 24.)

“Unethical practices, unhappy labor forces and environmental breaches are situations that can damage an organization's reputation.” Also the affects on the reputation can be specific depending on the company or industry. (Gunderson 2008, 24.) A company's stakeholders can become angry and resistant to the organization if their interests are not met by the company's actions. It can also lead in falling sales while the consumers may choose not to buy the products sold by the company. (Stephenson 2009.)

A bad reputation can even affect your employees when, for example, they are laid off. In the future they might have problems in recruiting themselves for a new job. (Alsop 2004, 20.)

It is very hard to restore a wounded or lost reputation (Gunderson 2008, 24). Getting back on your feet can be extensive and long lasting (Alsop 2004, 19). It is hard to predict how long it can take since every reputation and problem is different (Alsop 2004, 21).

### 3.5 Why reputations matter

“Anyone who follows the news knows that reputations matter.” Following the media our attention is mostly caught by the negative news about accidents or scandals – events that are not beneficial for company or individual reputations. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 1.)

People’s buying decisions are greatly influenced by nonrational factors. We act based on rumors and hearsay when choosing which DVD-player or a TV to buy, we are influenced by advertisement, and we pick a movie by a critic’s endorsement. People act on perceptions, not by careful calculations about the objective features of the products themselves, and these perceptions are heavily influenced by our own greatly personal, emotional, nonrational reactions to products that are presented to us by companies, journalists or friends. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 2-3.)

A strong reputation is like a magnet. It is drawn to those who have it. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 3). It brings in new opportunities, attracts talented work force, customers and investors (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4).

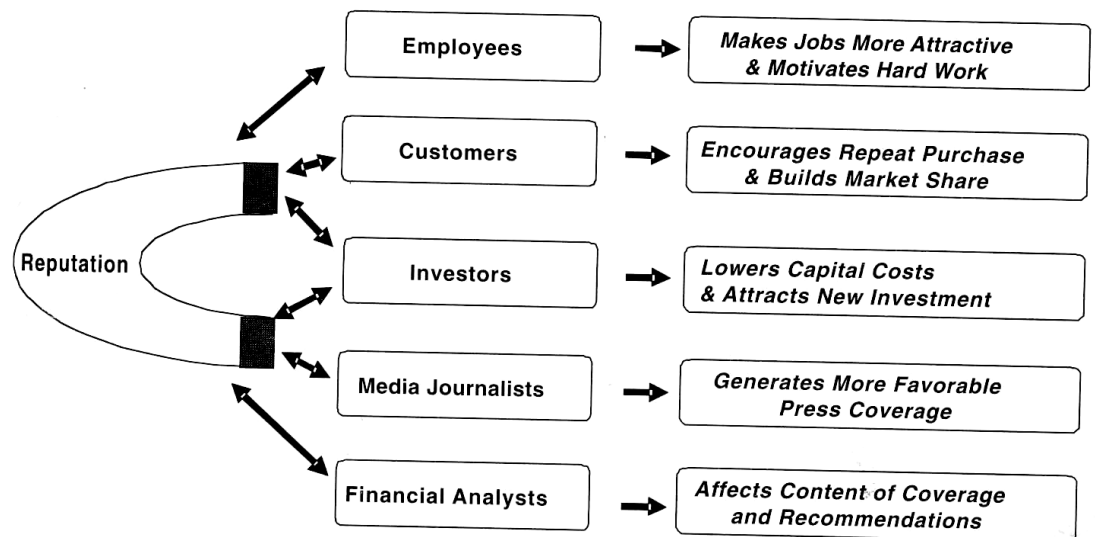


FIGURE 4. Reputations are like magnets: They help a company attract resources. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 5.)

Figure 4 indicates how reputations affect on people's decisions. It implies that a good reputation has an effect on a person's decision which company to work for, which products customers should buy and which shares investors should accumulate. Also journalists' and financial analysts' decisions are being affected. Reporters tend to write more favorably and frequent of the companies, organizations or individuals whose reputations are strong. As well financial analysts are affected by the companies established visibility, notoriety, and reputations. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4-5). For you to succeed, your reputation or brand equity needs to be reinforced in the minds of these important stakeholders (Heath 2001, 301).

You should care about the cumulative effect of the messages you deliver to your constituencies because all the stories contribute directly to the impressions people have of your company and depending on how well they align with your company's reality, which can be negative or positive (Argenti & Forman 2002, 88).

### Customers

With positive associations consumers transfer positive attributes to the company's products (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 8). Hence a strong reputation enhances the company's credibility and transfers the good effect from the company to the product while poor reputations detract from product sales (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 9). Well-built emotional associations between consumers and companies improve the customer's identification with the company and as a result the possibility of product purchases (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 8).

### Employees

Reputation is built from the inside out, which makes employees the key stakeholder group (Alsop 2004, 42). A strong reputation attracts and retains talented workforce (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 11). A good reputation forms a sense of pride and motivates them to maintain it. It is also a great lure for new hires. (Alsop 2004, 42.) Even if you don't hire much a good reputation is appeal-

ing to potential employees. It also strengthens the employee commitment to the company's values, beliefs, mission, and objectives. Building company identification and reputation as a good employer fuels employee motivation, loyalty, engagement, and commitment. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 12.)

In order to boost your reputation through employees you must create a motivating and supporting work culture. You increase the loyalty of your workforce by stroking them and in return your employees can feel a strong allegiance and improve their performance. (Alsop 2004, 146.) Also the quality of the work they will do is determined by the perceptions your employees have of your company and its visions (Argenti & Forman 2002, 86).

### Investors

There are two kinds of investors: individual investors and institutional investors. Individual investors are also people like us who every now and then decide to gamble with their savings and trade corporate shares for their own account. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 12.)

### The media

The only knowledge many people have of companies comes from the media (Alsop 2004, 33). So the media has a great influence on the issues and therefore also the corporate reputation, even though the media is run by people who themselves are affected by everything around them (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 14, Alsop 2004, 33).

### Financial analysts

Financial analysts are influenced by each other, and ongoing financial and operating results in addition to strategic changes that can affect the corporation's prospects and trust in the management (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 16). Reputation

has an effect on the content of coverage and recommendations (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 5). Nowadays financial analysts also include reputation in their investment criteria (Ettenson & Knowles 2008, 19).

## Conclusion

Reputation influences customers making purchase decisions, employees making decisions to engage, commit and stay, investors making investment decisions and the media affects the coverage a company gets. In conclusion reputations matter because they affect strategic positioning (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 8-20).

Reputations matter because they are connected to the strategic positioning. A company reputation is like a mirror that reflects the relative success at its ups and downs, the current and the future strategic direction. But the mirror can also be like a magnet. If people like what they see and hear, they start supporting the company and as a result it attracts more resources to the company. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 20.)

### 3.6 Treating a reputation as an asset

There is no doubt that a strong reputation would not be an asset to a company (Fombrun & Shanley 1990; Williams & Barrett 2000; Roberts & Dowling 2002; Sabate & Puente 2003, according to Bertels & Peloza 2008, 56).

Managing that asset to its fullest potential requires marketing at levels of management and labor, and in all of its characteristics such as pricing, promotion, positioning, and distribution. It is also important to know who you really are. Impressions of your company and product should sync with reality. Marketing is a critical part of the production process that should not be separated from reputation at any time. (Marconi 2002, 8.)

### 3.6.1 Reputations create a differentiation and competitive advantage

Organizations compete on several levels to maximize profits and diminish future risks. Reputation is one of the key elements in creating differentiation from other companies in uncertain environments and competing for economic resources. (Allen 1984; Horner 2002; according to Rhee & Valdez 2009, 146.)

A strong reputation is a relevant benefit to a company because it has an impact on almost all the levels of the organization. Through corporate social responsibility programs companies can build and boost their reputation. Developing a solid reputation the organization can expand its business, draw new customers, improve shareholder value and enhance outcomes for the community. (Stephenson 2009.) Reputation for good product and service quality attracts loyal customers that are willing to pay a premium price (Alsop 2004, 15). Also the level of comfortableness in buying and consuming products is directly proportional to reputation and the sales, which make the company reputation very important for sales (Gregory 1991, 96). A solid reputation is a magnet for talented workforce, it boosts the employee confidence and performance, and it strengthens stakeholder relationships (Alsop 2004, 16-17). Furthermore, a company achieves competitive advantage through this positive image (Stephenson 2009).

A good reputation is the key source of distinctiveness. A strong reputation is supportive and distinguishing when it comes to competition. Reputation based differentiation has become more important to companies because of many environmental trends; globalization, information accessibility, product commoditization, media mania, ad saturation and stakeholder activism. The trends reinforce the significance of a good reputation and the meaning of nurturing and protecting them. Reputations matter a great deal also for smaller companies since they are both valuable and vulnerable. For bigger companies reputations are the basis of continued competitiveness. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 5-7.)

Also a solid reputation creates important strategic value. It calls attention to the attractive company features and enables wider options for managers, such as higher or lower price implementing. Consequently the intangible entity of reputa-

tion is without a doubt a source of competitive advantage. (Argenti & Forman 2002, 88.)

### 3.6.2 Reputations and financial value

Reputations indeed have financial value and they are interrelated in three ways. First, reputations have an effect on company profitability through operating performance. Second, it influences the level of demand, that is, its market capitalization, through perceptions of the company's future prospects affected by profitability. Third, building reputation capital companies are seen more attractive for working and investing, also increasing profitability. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 26.) Having a strong reputation the companies are granted with higher level of operating performance that can almost assure positive endorsements from stakeholders and the media (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 28).

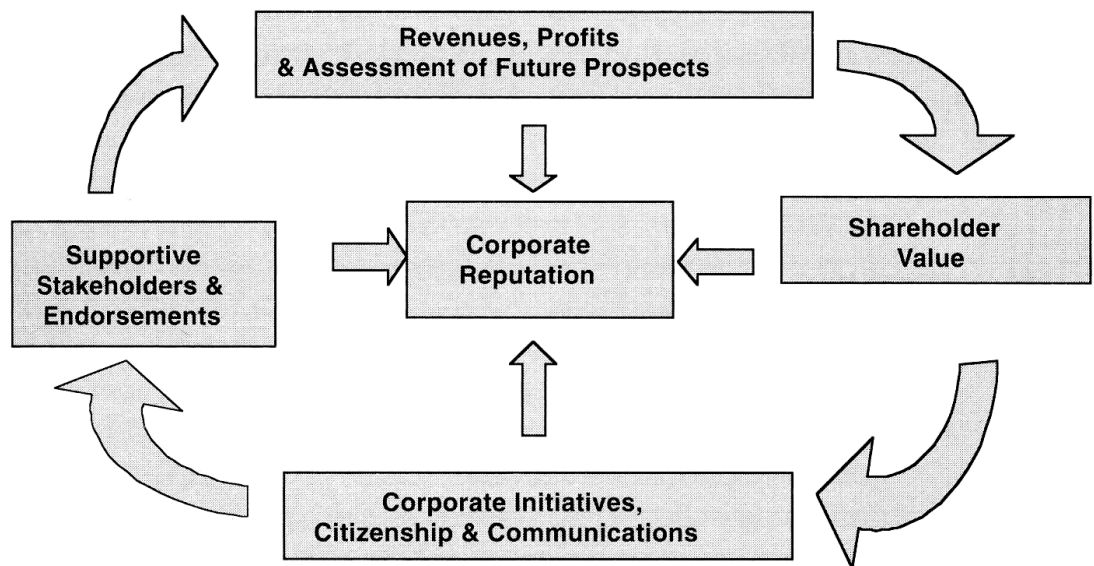


FIGURE 5. The reputation value cycle. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 29.)

The relationship is described in the figure 5 in terms of the reputation value cycle. The figure exemplifies how stakeholder support and financial value are dynamically intertwined, whereupon value is built by endorsement. The stakeholder endorsement enables funding for advertising, philanthropy, and citizenship that generate media endorsements, attract investors and add financial value. Also com-

pany performance through reputation is seen in the reputation value cycle. If companies would take advantage of handling the above cycle they can gain from the benefits while reducing the risks of potential loss of value that can come about due to mishandling. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 29.)

Increasing customer loyalty and repeating business can be attributed to advertisement campaigns that are aimed at increasing current sales and support. The significance of intangibles is great by creating value and companies should consider them as valuable shadow investments by tracking them systematically.

As Dowling (2006, 137-139) puts it, company reputation's value influences corporate value through the following eight effects:

1. Sales revenue:
  - The buying quantity of every consumer is increased.
  - You can charge a higher price.
  - The number of loyal customers increases.
  - You build up customer satisfaction and therefore the chance of repetitive purchase.
  - Competitor price changing is not as effective.
2. Company brand effect:
  - Company can use its name as an umbrella, for example when entering the markets with a new product you can charge a higher price and the distribution can be taken care of more rapidly (Keller 1998).
3. Lower sales variance:
  - Sales are more constant due customer loyalty.
4. Performance bond and effect:
  - Performance bond effect enables better trading terms between companies (Milgrom and Roberts 1992).
5. Corporate brand effect:
  - Corporate brand effect makes it possible to spend a reduced amount of financial support in marketing than less appreciated counterparts (Keller 1998).
6. Profit effects:
  - Company profitability can be lengthened through reputation.



- Stakeholder relationships are considered less risky.
- 7. Investor base:
  - Good reputations lure more investor attention.
- 8. Credit rating:
  - Investing in a company with a strong reputation is believed to be less risky.

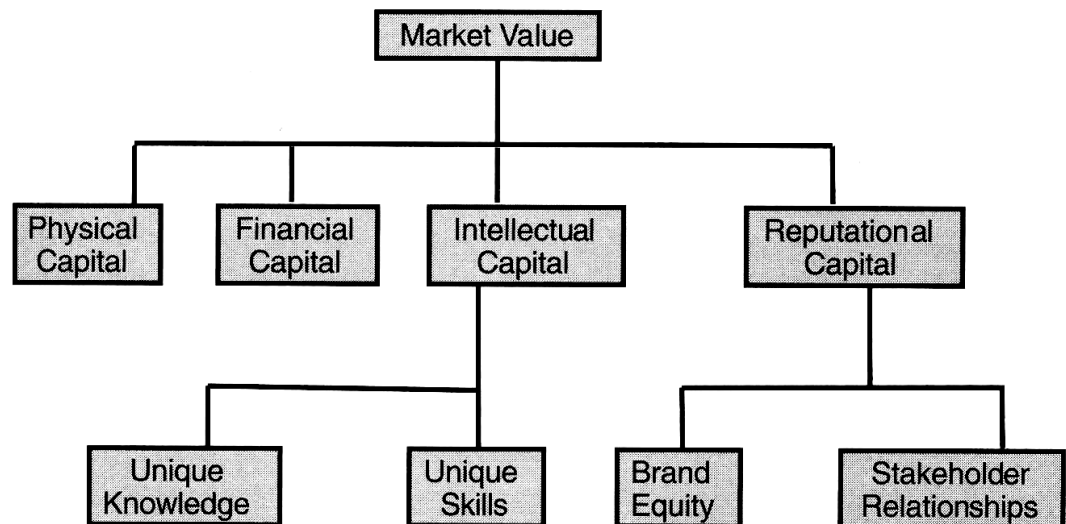


FIGURE 6. Reputation capital is a subset of market value. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2009, 33.)

The value of an intangible asset can be estimated from four different elements:

1. Physical capital: Tangible assets such as appliances and machinery.
2. Financial capital: Liquid assets such as bank deposits.
3. Intellectual capital: Company expertise.
4. Reputation capital: Good relations with the stakeholders and positive perceptions of company brands. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 32.)

These four and their relationships are illustrated in the figure 6. The company's physical capital embodies the non-financial tangible assets, in other words the net value of all the equipment and plant. Financial capital consists of the liquid assets. Intellectual capital represents the company know-how, unique skills and knowledge in everyday practices. Reputation capital describes the social assets through the stakeholder relationship value, and perceptual assets with brand. The four col-

lectively form the company's market capitalization. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 32.)

## 4 SURVEY RESULTS

The following chapters conclude the results from the four different groups – customers, employees and the Minnesota State University students that are familiar and unfamiliar with Game Central. Whenever a group is left out, it means that the question has not been included to their part of the survey as it has not been relevant. When it comes to the appendixes, 1-3 include the online survey forms for each of the groups, 5-9 are the open comments, and 10-13 are the image and expressiveness results of the individual groups.

### 4.1 Background information

The next chapters wrap up the background information regarding the three groups – employees, customers and MNSU students. Also the company information will be examined.

The research was implemented by using a quantitative method. The data was collected through online software called Webropol where the respondents were able to fill in the survey online on a website. The online survey form for customers can be found from the appendix 2. The link to the survey was handed out to customers in receipts with every purchase, and the customers were able to access it from their home computers. There was also a banner on Game Central's web pages and by clicking it people could access the survey. The banner was located on the top of the front-page so it was very easy to access. Customers had time to take the survey between 18th of February and 8th of March. Everyone who completed the survey got a coupon, which offered 10% off any used or rare game or \$5 off the entire purchase whichever was greater. The total number of transactions during that time was 3232.

The personnel received the survey through Game Central's email and had time to answer it between 20th of February and 1st of March. The online survey form for employees can be found from the appendix 1.

The survey invitation for MNSU students was sent through multiple Facebook groups. All together the survey was sent to 2 207 students in MNSU Facebook groups and the form can be found from appendix 3. It was also sent through College of Business eNews, which is an email letter to circa 1 200 MNSU business students. This message can be found in the appendix 4. With leaving contact information the students had a chance to take part in a lottery for \$50 dollars worth of in-store credit for Game Central. The only liability problem with the Facebook is that some of the people might have been members in several groups at the same time. In addition some people in the groups might have got the eNews letter as well. People had time to participate between 18th of February and 9th of March, and the total number of invitations sent, was 3707 people.

When examining the survey response rates, employees had a 69% response rate, which is very good, while the customer response rate was only 3% and customer one was 4%, both of them being very low. Reasons for such a low response rate could be, for example, the target group's age. With my personal experience I have noticed that the older the target group, the more you get responses if you include a prize. As I can say for my experience, and myself it is very hard to lure younger people with prizes, as they are constantly being attacked by different kinds of flows of advertisement and other prizes. Also as the following chapters will examine more that most of the respondents weren't familiar with Game Central or were visiting the store for the first time, which might have put some people off.

#### 4.1.1 Game Central company information

Game Central was founded in 2005 by Peter Trihn. Their business idea is to provide customers with retro videogame solutions by selling or trading them. Consequently Game Central's main products are retro videogames mainly from Nintendo. At the moment they have five different locations situated in the state of Minnesota. The locations are Mankato, Southdale, Ridgedale, Eden Prairie and St Cloud. Also one store is soon to be opened in Rochester. Currently they employ 16 people and their CEO is Peter Trihn. Game Central's mission is to provide customers with quality vintage games that hold both collectible and play back value. When it comes to visibility, currently they advertise only in the cities area with radio ads on 96.3. Elsewhere they rely mostly on word-of-mouth. Every store uses in store credit called game cash. The coupons have also all the contact information so they can also be used as business cards as well. (DePew 2009.)

#### 4.1.2 Employees

Most of the employees at Game Central are men (90%), as seen from figure 7. Men are more interested in videogames because they generate more rewarding feelings than women when it comes to videogames, as a research made by the Stanford University School of Medicine has shown (Hoeft 2008). Only 9% were female which is understandable according to this research. The personnel age is nicely divided between the men. 45% of the males are 19-23 and other 45% are 24-29 –years old. All the 9% of the females are 24-29 –years old.

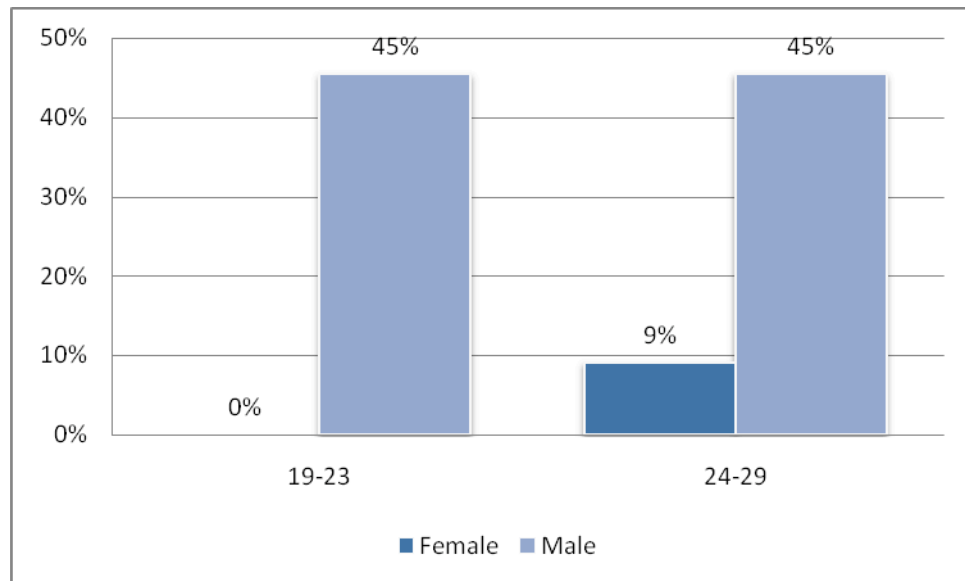


FIGURE 7. Employees' age by gender. (n=11)

Game Central was founded in the year 2005, so the employees have not been able to work there for too many years. As the figure 8 illustrates, 82% of the employees have worked in the company for under a year. Most of them (55%) work full-time compared to the 27% who work part-time. When it comes to working over a year, a total of 18% of employees have worked from one to two years. 9% of them work full-time and 9% part-time.

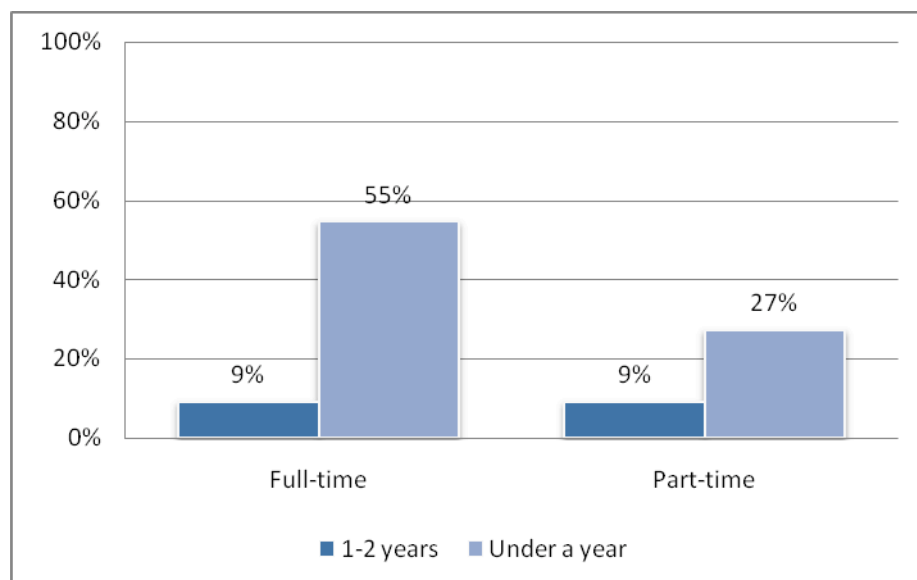


FIGURE 8. Position/duration of employment ratio. (n=11)

#### 4.1.3 Customers

As illustrated by figure 9, most of the respondents are men. This could be because they tend to play more videogames. As the research made by the Stanford University School of Medicine showed that men generate more rewarding feelings than women when playing videogames (Hoeft 2008). Also the customers' age reflects the groups that are commonly known to play more videogames. It is nice to notice that many respondents were also from older age groups.

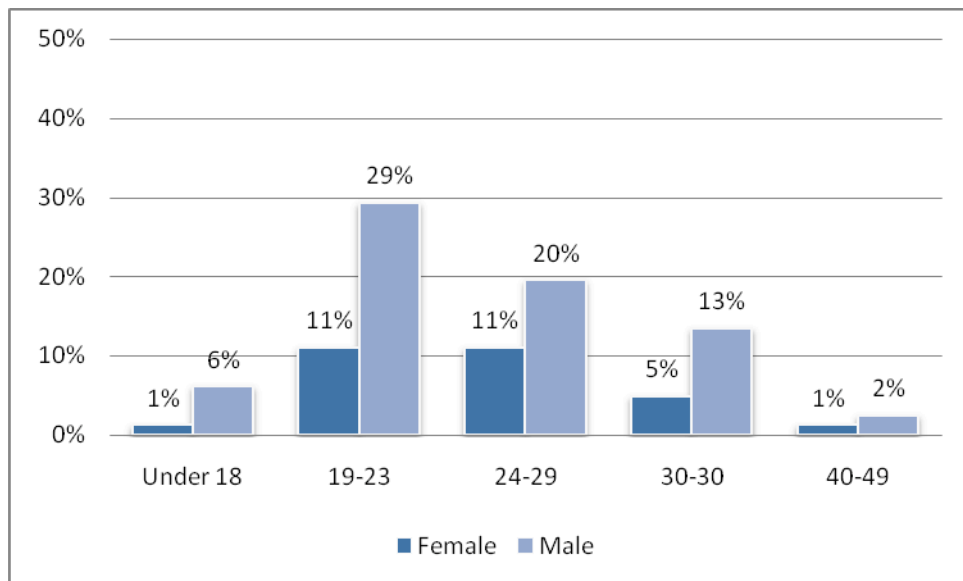


FIGURE 9. Customers' age by gender. (n=82)

As the figure 10 illustrates, most of the customers taking the survey (63%) were shopping at Game Central for the first time and 37% were regulars.

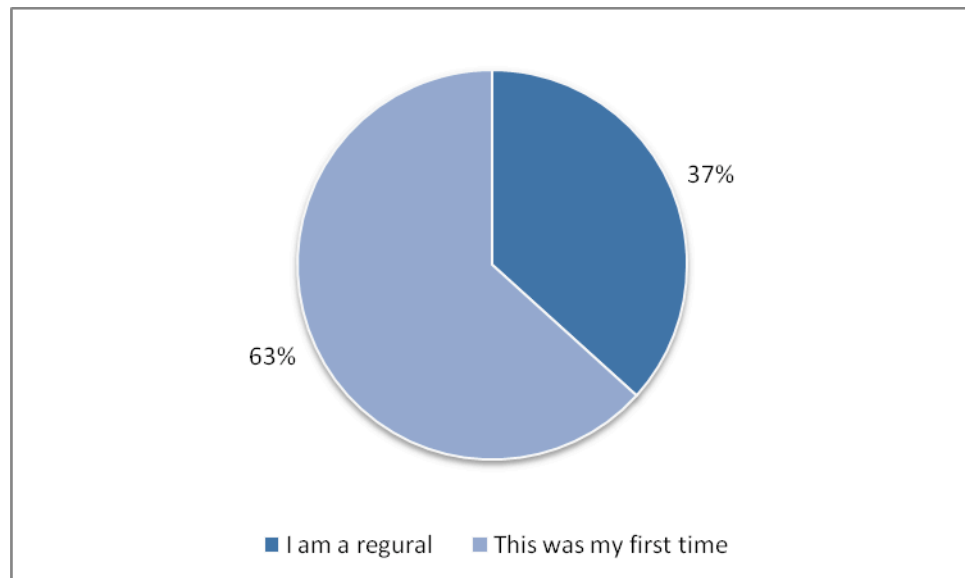


FIGURE 10. Customers shopping behavior at Game Central. (n=79)

When asking how often the respondents visit the store, 50% of the people stated 'Other'. It can be assumed that these people were unsure of the amount of time they would spend or have spent at Game Central. As seen from the figure 11, the second largest group visit Game Central 2-3 times a month, 12% visit Game Central 2-3 times a week, 10% once a week and 6% couple times a year.

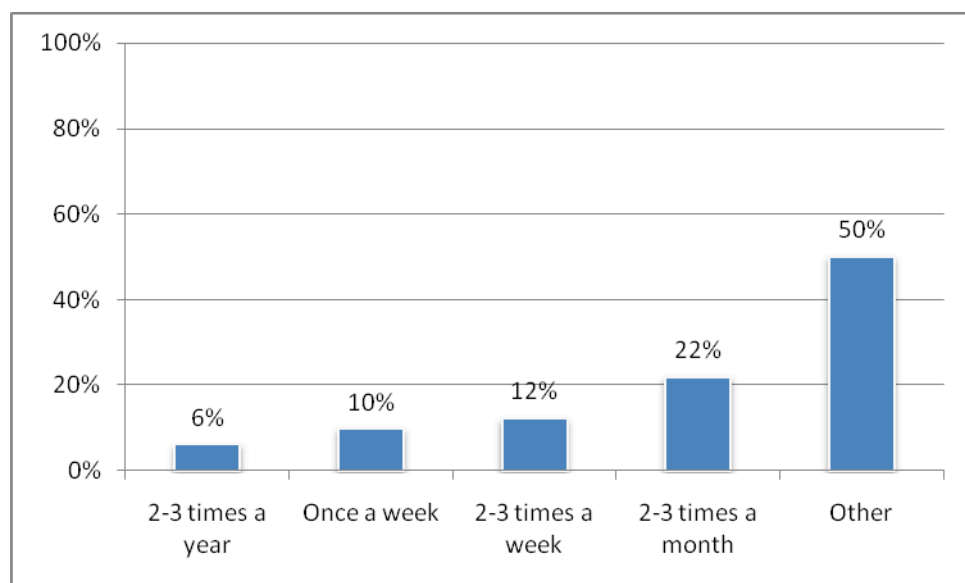


FIGURE 11. Times customers visit Game Central. (n=82)



#### 4.1.4 MNSU students

The gender distribution by age shows relatively small fluctuations, as the figure 12 illustrates. Also when it comes to enrollment at Minnesota postsecondary institutions, as seen from figure 13, the gender distribution is somewhat similar.

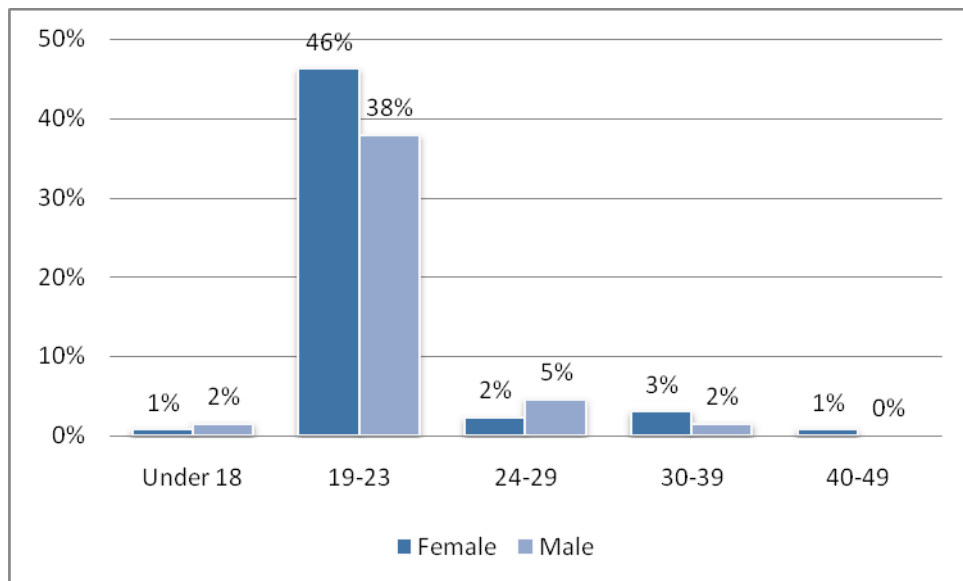


FIGURE 12. Students' age by gender. (n=130)

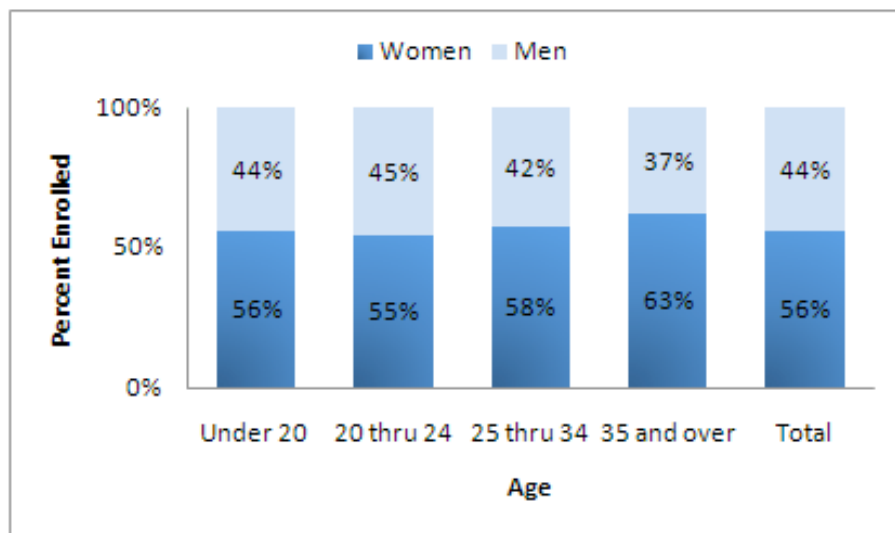


FIGURE 13. Undergraduate enrollment at Minnesota postsecondary institutions fall 2006. (Insight 2008.)

As seen from figure 14, most (89%) of the Minnesota State University students were not familiar with Game Central. Only 11% of the respondents had heard of the company before.

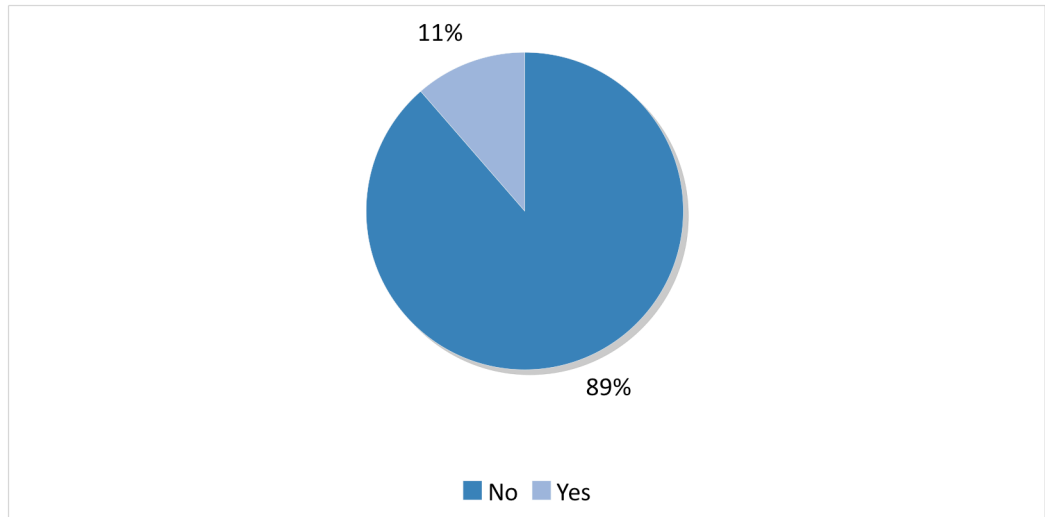


FIGURE 14. People familiar with Game Central. (n=132)

#### 4.1.4.1 MNSU students familiar with Game Central

As seen from figure 15, Game Central has not really done that much to make themselves more visible. Most of these respondents (40%) who are familiar with Game Central have just walked by the store or they are already customers (27%), as only 7% have come across to it on the Internet. Game Central relies mostly on word-of-mouth (DePew 2009) but only 20% of the students familiar with the company, have heard about it from friends or family.

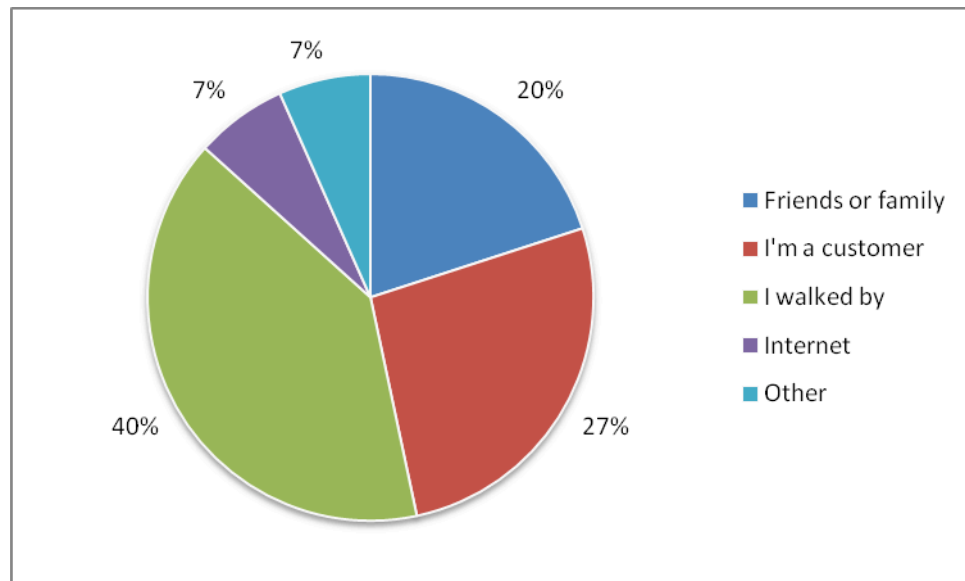


FIGURE 15. Students familiar with Game Central: Where people have heard about Game Central. (n=15)

#### 4.1.4.2 MNSU students unfamiliar with Game Central

Related to loyalty (examined more in chapter 4.5), the MNSU students unfamiliar with Game Central were asked questions to figure out if they could potentially be customers.

The number of respondents unfamiliar with Game Central that could be potential customers of the company was calculated by finding the percentage of those that had purchased games within the past year. When asking 'Have you purchased videogames within the past year?', 57% of the respondents replied 'Yes', as seen from figure 16. The people, who had purchased videogames within the past year, were directed straight to the question 'Are you a customer of game stores that buy, sell and trade games?'

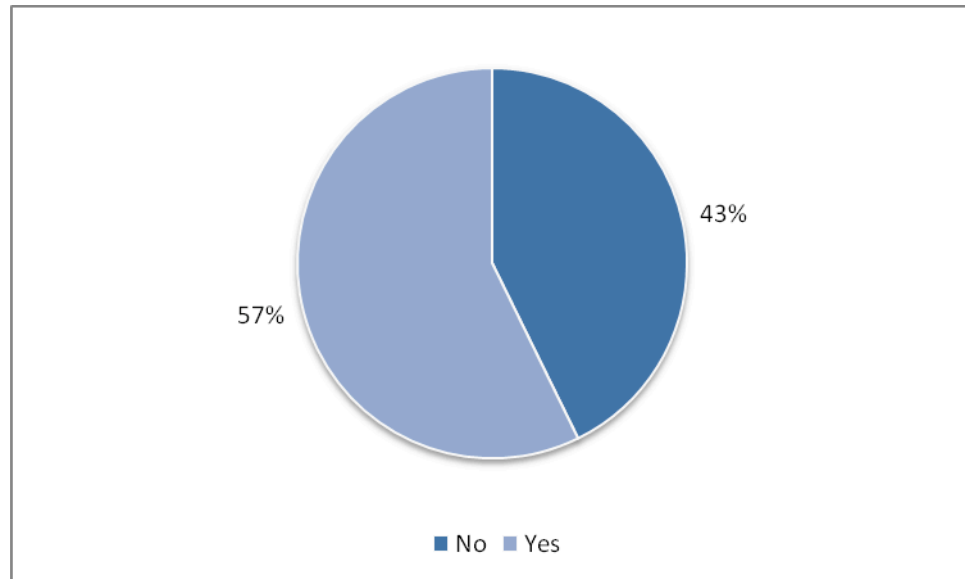


FIGURE 16. Students unfamiliar with Game Central who have purchased videogames within the past year. (n=117)

Asking if the respondents could buy videogames in the future, 82% answered that they could, as seen from figure 17. People who admitted that they wouldn't buy videogames in the future won't be potential customers for Game Central. They were also asked to continue the survey with the question 'Select the adjectives best describe a company that buys, sells and trades games'.

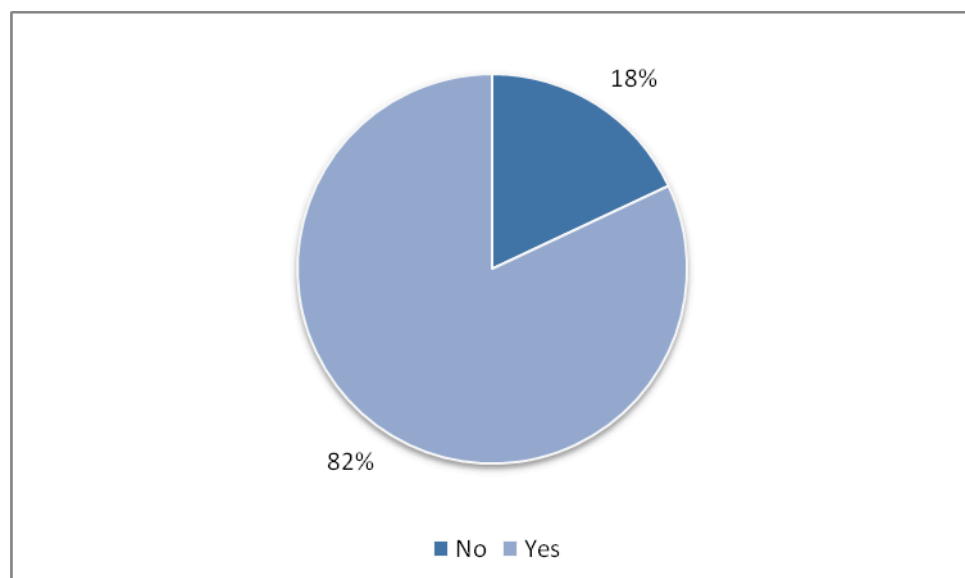


FIGURE 17. Students unfamiliar with Game Central who could buy videogames in the future. (n=50)

When asking 'Could you be a future customer of a game store that buys, sells and trades games?', 83% of the respondents replied that they could be a future customer of such a store, as figure 18 illustrates. People who answered 'Yes' are potential customers for Game Central. To the contrary the people who said 'No' won't be future customers for a store concept that buys, sells and trades games. Both of them were also asked to continue the survey from the question 'Select the adjectives best describe a company that buys, sells and trades games'.

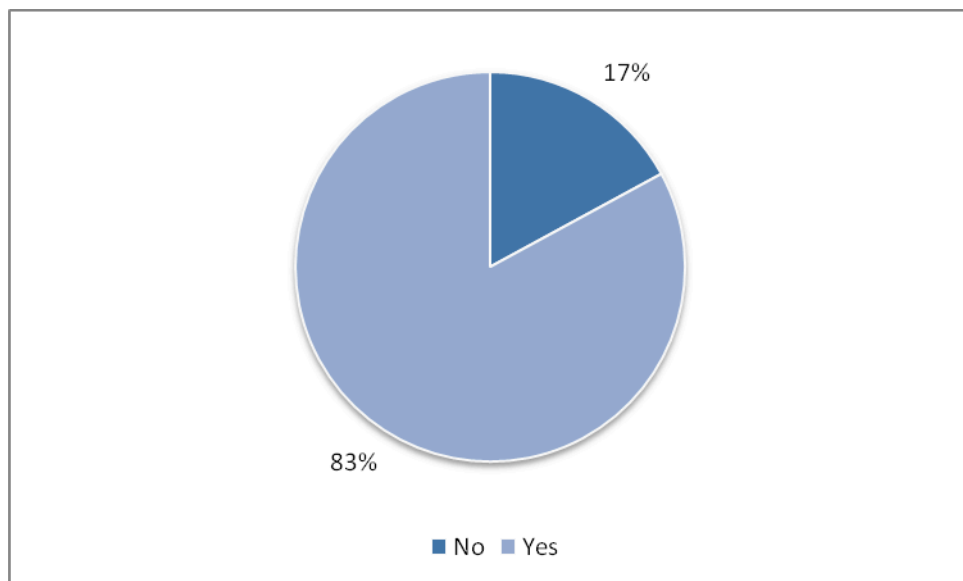


FIGURE 18. Students unfamiliar with Game Central who could be a future customer of a game store that buys, sells and trades games. (n=41)

Later on in chapter 4.5, the loyalty of this group will be examined contrasting with the other respondent group.

## 4.2 Game Central's working environment

A motivating working environment is important for improving company reputation through personnel. By supporting them you increase the loyalty of your workforce and in return employees can feel a strong allegiance and improve their performance. (Alsop 2004, 146.) When studying personnel motivation and loyalty level, we can find out if Game Central has succeeded in stroking its workforce. Also a good reputation forms a sense of pride and motivates personnel to maintain

it (Alsop 2004, 42). Therefore the study of work pride is related to finding if Game Central has a good image.

### Motivation

In fact 100% of the respondents said to be motivated by the working environment. There was an opportunity to leave comments why they are motivated or not, and many of them were praising the friendly atmosphere. There were comments how the love of videogames makes them love their work as well. Also happy customers and rapid expanding of the company were mentioned to increase motivation. All of the responses can be found from the appendix number 5.

### Loyalty

All of the respondents (100%) said that they feel committed and loyal as an employee to Game Central. Basically everyone commented how they give their everything for the success of the company. There were also additional comments how they believe in the company and even a million dollars wouldn't make them quit their job. All of the responses can be found from the appendix number 5.

### Pride

Every respondent (100%) said that they feel proud to work at Game Central. Most of them mentioned in the comments that working with videogames is a good enough reason to be proud. Also some said that people are envious of their jobs and beg them for one. There were also comments how ultimately everyone just wants to have fun and being paid for it is even better. All of the responses can be found from the appendix number 5.

## Conclusion

The figure 19 illustrates that, overall people are very pleased to work at Game Central. In fact 91% of the personnel stated it to be excellent and 9% thought it to be good.

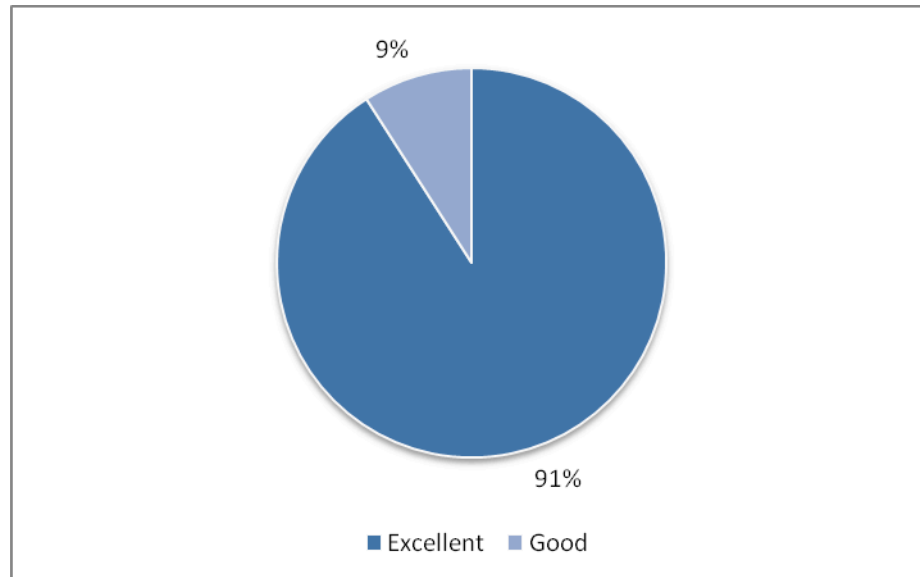


FIGURE 19. Employees' overall opinions about working at Game Central. (n=11)

The working environment is seen as motivating, making the personnel loyal and proud of their work. According to this study, Game Central is doing well and has a good working environment and it's supporting its workforce. Also based on this, it can be said that Game Central has a good reputation that the personnel are willing to uphold. Being proud of their work is one sign of a good reputation.

### 4.3 First impression

Asking about the first impressions of Game Central, the respondents were allowed to leave open comments. There were some consistently stated comments and some that appeared only once or couple times. The more repetitive comments the higher they are illustrated in the table 1.

Both customers and employees had the so called wow-feeling as they came across Game Central. Also both of the groups mentioned that some of the old games

brought back memories. Most of the Minnesota State University students did not have a clue what Game Central could be. This is a sign of lack of visibility. As Marconi states (1996, 12), it is important to have information available in order to raise awareness. Surprisingly many also thought that Game Central is an arcade, or other place to play videogames.

TABLE 1. First impression of Game Central.

| <b>Customers (n=78)</b>                              | <b>Employees (n=11)</b>                       |
|--|---|
| Wow-feeling  | Wow-feeling                                   |
| Great idea   | Memories                                      |
| Unique   | How can I work there?                         |
| Memories   | Secondhand store                              |
| How long has it been there?                          | Maybe not the most stable working environment |
| Pawn shop  |   |
| Rip-off  |   |
| <b>MNSU students (n=86)</b>                          |   |
| I have no idea                                       |   |
| Games  |   |
| Place to play games/ arcade                          |   |
| Retro/ used games                                    |   |
| Latest gaming information                            |   |
| Is it trust worthy because I have never heard of it? |   |
| Magazine   |   |

Asking what might have affected the respondents' perceptions of Game Central, the results vary between the two groups.

In most of the cases (45%) the customers were influenced by the Game Central employees. This emphasizes the importance of the company workforce being aware of the values of the organization. As stated in chapter 3.4, company image is built from the inside out, which makes employees the key stakeholder group (Alsop 2004, 42). Other variables that have influenced both of the groups', the customers' and the students', first impression were unknown factors. As Marconi



(1996, 67) states, images are reflections of personal opinions and emotions, it might be hard to acknowledge the factors impacting the change on the previously formed image.

The Minnesota State University students were the most influenced by friends of family (58%), as the table 2 illustrates. Game Central relies mostly on word-of-mouth (DePew 2009) so possibly not being a customer, hearing something about the company from a friend is the second most likely way of being affected.

TABLE 2. Perception change by variables.

|                        | <b>Customers<br/>(n=47)</b> | <b>MNSU familiar<br/>with GC (n=12)</b> |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Internet               | 2%                          | 0%                                      |
| Friends or family      | 6%                          | 58%                                     |
| I don't know           | 21%                         | 17%                                     |
| Other                  | 26%                         | 17%                                     |
| Game Central personnel | 45%                         | 8%                                      |

#### 4.4 Adjectives describing Game Central

Four groups, customers, MNSU students familiar and unfamiliar with Game Central and employees, were asked to rate how well certain adjectives describe Game Central. Every adjective had antonyms and options to choose from strongly agreeing, agreeing, having a neutral opinion, disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Based on the results of the question ‘Which adjectives describe Game Central the best’, the weighted values were calculated for each adjective. Because the aim of the results is to illustrate which adjectives are most agreed upon, the methodology was a semantic differential scale with strongly agreed percentages weighted twice as strong as agreed percentages which emphasize the value of the strongly agreed percentages. The adjectives agreed upon are more significant and therefore they have more weight. The adjectives strongly agreed were weighted times two, ‘agreed’ times one, ‘neutral’ times zero, ‘disagreed’ times minus one, ‘strongly disagreed’ times minus two, two being the highest value.

In the next chapters the overall results of the weighted values from all four groups, will be examined and compared. In the survey, the values were presented as one big group but here they are being examined in three different groups, which are company, product and operational characteristics. Responses from all individual groups are found by the following. Appendix 10, figures 29 and 30 illustrate the employees' responses, appendix 11, figures 38 and 39 displays the customers' responses, appendix 12, figures 47 and 48 shows the results by the MNSU students familiar with Game Central, and appendix 13, figures 56 and 57 illustrates the results by the students unfamiliar with the company.

#### 4.4.1 Company characteristics

Company characteristics describe how the company is in its actions. In the following tables the highest rated values are marked green and the lowest with red.

When comparing these four different groups in table 3, it can be seen how their opinions still go quite hand in hand when it comes to the highest values. MNSU students familiar and unfamiliar with Game Central and Game Central's employees think that the company is responsible. With the second highest support customers think that Game Central is responsible. Another adjective that rises from other values is 'sincerity'. This value was the most agreed upon by customers and employees.

When examining the lower values there is more fluctuation. Still the value 'quality-conscious' was the lowest in three groups. Another one that was agreed upon to be one of the lowest values was the adjective 'professional', which was agreed upon by MNSU students unfamiliar with Game Central and Game Central employees.

TABLE 3. Company characteristics.

|                   | Customers<br>(n=82) | MNSU familiar<br>with GC (n=15) | MNSU unfamiliar<br>with GC (n=117) | Employees<br>(n=11) |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Successful        | 1.4                 | 0.9                             | 0.9                                | 1.8                 |
| Sincere           | 1.7                 | 1.0                             | 0.8                                | 1.9                 |
| Responsible       | 1.5                 | 1.1                             | 1.0                                | 1.9                 |
| Reliable          | 1.5                 | 0.9                             | 0.9                                | 1.8                 |
| Quality-conscious | 1.1                 | 0.9                             | 0.8                                | 1.5                 |
| Professional      | 1.5                 | 0.9                             | 0.8                                | 1.5                 |
| Accountable       | 1.5                 | 0.8                             | 0.9                                | 1.8                 |

#### 4.4.2 Product characteristics

Product characteristics describe the product. All of the four groups saw Game Centrals products to be interesting, as seen from table 4. As all the adjectives were presented in one big group in the survey, this value can also be interpreted to consider company operational characteristics. Either way the value is interpreted, the result is the same – there is something interesting about Game Central.

When examining the lowest values, the adjectives ‘retro’ and ‘cheap’ are both the lowest. However when it comes to the adjective ‘retro’, the respondents might have been misled by the survey layout. All the positive adjectives were put on the left side as negative ones were on the right. The adjective ‘retro’ was put inadvertently on the right side and ‘modern’ was on the left. This is where the survey may have created a biased response. Retro could have been perceived as a negative adjective and modern could have been perceived as positive. Respondents were led to choose the values on the left as in the positive ones. Finally the value ‘cheap’ had the lowest value.

TABLE 4. Product characteristics.

|             | Customers<br>(n=82) | MNSU familiar<br>with GC (n=15) | MNSU unfamiliar<br>with GC (n=117) | Employees<br>(n=11) |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Retro       | 0.8                 | -0.5                            | -0.7                               | 1.7                 |
| Interesting | 1.6                 | 0.5                             | 0.8                                | 1.9                 |
| Cheap       | 0.5                 | 0.1                             | 0.5                                | 0.9                 |

#### 4.4.3 Operational characteristics

Operational characteristics describe how the company functions and how it is seen in its everyday actions.

As illustrated in table 5, there were two different adjectives that received the same amount of support from the four different groups. MNSU students familiar and unfamiliar with Game Central and Game Central's employees thought the company is 'friendly'. The other value that was the highest for customers, students unfamiliar with Game Central and employees was the 'easy to approach' value.

The value that had the lowest support in this category was 'local'. Only the students familiar with Game Central didn't agree on this, giving the lowest value to 'funny'.

TABLE 5. Operational characteristics.

|                       | Customers<br>(n=82) | MNSU familiar<br>with GC (n=15) | MNSU unfamiliar<br>with GC (n=117) | Employees<br>(n=11) |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Local                 | 1.3                 | 0.7                             | 0.6                                | 1.5                 |
| Funny                 | 1.5                 | 0.4                             | 0.6                                | 1.9                 |
| Friendly              | 1.7                 | 1.3                             | 1.1                                | 1.9                 |
| Easy to approach      | 1.8                 | 1.2                             | 1.1                                | 1.9                 |
| Convenient            | 1.3                 | 1.0                             | 1.1                                | 1.8                 |
| Appreciates customers | 1.7                 | 1.1                             | 1.0                                | 1.9                 |

#### 4.4.4 Best descriptive adjectives

The respondents had a list of all the adjectives from above and were asked to choose which one of them they felt the most strong about. The top five was taken from all of the groups and is illustrated in the table 6. The groups' individual responses are illustrated in appendixes 10-13 in figures 31, 40, 49 and 58. Only one adjective was identical in all of the four groups. This value is 'friendly' and pointed up green in the table. One identical adjective ('local') got support in three of the groups and two identical values were supported in two different groups ('easy to approach' and 'retro'). When it comes to the last group that had two identical values supported, the value 'retro' was the highest one in two groups. That gives 'retro' more value than 'easy to approach'.

Based on these results, the employees seem to have the same higher values as all the other groups. As seen from the table 2, employees do have an impact on people.

People see Game Central as very friendly and a local company that is retro and somewhat easy to approach.

TABLE 6. What two adjectives do the respondents feel the most strong about?

| Customers (n=161)            |     | Employees (n=22)                |     |
|------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-----|
| Retro                        | 24% | Retro                           | 45% |
| Friendly                     | 22% | Friendly                        | 14% |
| Interesting                  | 11% | Local                           | 9%  |
| Easy to approach             | 8%  | Sincere                         | 9%  |
| Local                        | 6%  | Successful                      | 9%  |
| MNSU familiar with GC (n=30) |     | MNSU unfamiliar with GC (n=204) |     |
| Friendly                     | 29% | Cheap                           | 16% |
| Easy to approach             | 21% | Reliable                        | 13% |
| Professional                 | 14% | Convenient                      | 10% |
| Accountable                  | 7%  | Quality-conscious               | 9%  |
| Local                        | 7%  | Friendly                        | 8%  |

#### 4.4.5 Least descriptive adjectives

Similar to the previous part, respondents were asked to choose the least descriptive adjectives. The respondents had the list of all adjectives stated before and the top five were taken from all the groups and illustrated in the table 7. The groups' individual responses are illustrated in appendixes 10-13 in figures 32, 41, 50 and 59.

As discovered in table 2, Game Central's staff has had 45% effect on the customers' opinions about the company. The majority of the customer's opinions about the least descriptive adjective are nearly equal with the employees' opinions. The students seem to have similar adjectives chosen, while being the most affected by friends or family (58%), as seen in table 2. Only one adjective that was similar was found in all of the four groups. This adjective was 'cheap'.

Based on these results, all of the respondents think that Game Central is not cheap. When it comes to customers, their opinions are similar to those of the employees'. They think Game Central is not dishonest, global or serious. Minnesota State University students have a comparable opinion of Game Central, which is not local or not funny.

TABLE 7. What two adjectives do the respondents feel least describe Game Central?

| Customers (n=161)            |       | Employees (n=20)                |     |
|------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-----|
| Cheap                        | 15.3% | Cheap                           | 24% |
| Boring                       | 14.6% | Global                          | 14% |
| Dishonest                    | 10%   | Dishonest                       | 10% |
| Global                       | 8.3%  | Serious                         | 10% |
| Serious                      | 7.6%  | Irresponsible                   | 10% |
| MNSU familiar with GC (n=27) |       | MNSU unfamiliar with GC (n=196) |     |
| Interesting                  | 11%   | Funny                           | 15% |
| Local                        | 7%    | Local                           | 8%  |
| Cheap                        | 7%    | Modern                          | 8%  |
| Funny                        | 7%    | Cheap                           | 7%  |
| Unaccountable                | 7%    | Professional                    | 7%  |

#### 4.5 Company expressiveness

As stated before, the five core dimensions of expressiveness are visible, distinctive, consistent, transparent and authentic. The better the expressiveness, the more possible it is to be appealing to stakeholders. (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 96.)

Based on the results, the values are calculated by weight. Because the aim of the results is to illustrate which values are most agreed upon, the methodology was a semantic differential scale with strongly agreed percentages weighted twice as strong as agreed percentages which emphasize the value of the strongly agreed percentages. The values agreed upon are more significant and therefore they have more weight. The values strongly agreed were weighted times two, 'agreed' times one, 'neutral' times zero, 'disagreed' times minus one, 'strongly disagreed' times minus two, two being the highest value. The table 8 represents all of the five parts of expressiveness quotient. Again the values marked green, are the highest values in the table, as the values marked red, are the lowest. The individual responses for each group are illustrated in appendixes 10-13 in figures 33-37 for employees, figures 42-46 for customers and figures 51-55 for MNSU students familiar with Game Central.

As table 8 illustrates, it is no doubt that the last one of the five dimensions, authenticity, is the highest recognized value of them all. Other than that, the groups did not agree on any other statement as strongly. The MNSU students familiar with the company had the highest values in this part. Even though customers' and employees' highest values were more scattered, the most of them can be found with authenticity. All of the three groups think that Game Central is very appealing to deal with and straightforward. Authenticity generates emotional appeal that is essential to reputation building as the public values authenticity (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 91). Fombrun & van Riel (2004, 165) stated in chapter 3.2 that authenticity needs to come from within, by everybody working together and having the same goals. Game Central has succeeded with that since the employees state how much they enjoy the working environment, they have acknowledged the company values and they have agreed to do everything in their power to help the company. Now it can be seen as a reflection in authenticity.

The dimensions of expressiveness that had the lowest values are distinctiveness and transparency. The statements that were agreed to be the most inappropriate describing Game Central were ‘the company makes clearly defined promises’, ‘it is sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders’ and ‘is punctual when disseminating information’. As the company doesn’t manage or control the information flow, it is clear why the respondents think the company isn’t transparent – how it is not punctual when publishing information and how the company isn’t considered to make clearly defined promises, as stated in distinctiveness. The reason for this is again the fact that Game Central relies mostly on word-of-mouth. Paragraph 4.7 examines fidelity more. Also Game Central is lacking transparency because they really don’t disseminate that much information. Game Central’s reputation could grow stronger by being more transparent in their interactions. The more transparent a company is, the more accurate information the public perceives. As for the accurate information, I believe that Game Central’s employees are doing a very good job. Taking a look at the results of this survey, the groups’ responses are quite alike. But by being more transparent, the public could rely on and have more faith in the company.

The statements that have more mixed results can also be explained because the company lacks information flow. Customers think that Game Central stands out as MNSU students think that the statement doesn’t describe the company at all. This is also explainable for the same reason as some of the other ones. It is clear that because the students aren’t very familiar with the company, they can’t agree that it stands out. But for the customers Game Central has created the small differences to make themselves stand out from their rivals. Also the statement that Game Central acts visibly on behalf of stakeholders is more of the employees’ opinion than the students’. It is obvious that the employees think the best of the company and the responses reflect that. But because most of the students’ haven’t even heard of the company, they also won’t think that it acts visibly on behalf of anyone. As stated before, visibility is required for having a real reputation. Visible communications enhance stakeholders’ perceptions of the company being genuine and credible, consequently attracting advocacy and support (Fombrun & van Riel 2004, 87.)



TABLE 8. Expressiveness quotient conclusion.

|                        |   | Customers<br>(n=82) | MNSU<br>familiar<br>with GC<br>(n=15) | Employees<br>(n=11) |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>VISIBILITY</b>      | GC visibly acts on behalf of stakeholders         | 1.27                | 0.40                                  | 1.82                |
|                        | GC has appropriate communicates with everyone     | 1.33                | 0.73                                  | 1.36                |
| <b>DISTINCTIVENESS</b> | GC makes clearly defined promises                 | 1.20                | 0.13                                  | 1.55                |
|                        | GC stands out                                     | 1.49                | 0.40                                  | 1.64                |
|                        | GC is recognizably different                      | 1.43                | 0.60                                  | 1.36                |
| <b>CONSISTENCY</b>     | Its messages maintain consistency                 | 1.33                | 0.60                                  | 1.82                |
|                        | GC is clearly identifiable through communications | 1.24                | 0.33                                  | 1.64                |
|                        | GC does what it says it is going to do            | 1.34                | 0.67                                  | 1.64                |
| <b>TRANSPARENCY</b>    | GC is sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders  | 0.99                | 0.60                                  | 1.46                |
|                        | GC is punctual when disseminating information     | 1.17                | 0.33                                  | 1.55                |
|                        | It's open about its beliefs                       | 1.44                | 0.53                                  | 1.82                |
| <b>AUTHENTICITY</b>    | GC is appealing to deal with                      | 1.53                | 0.80                                  | 1.91                |
|                        | GC is straightforward                             | 1.49                | 0.87                                  | 1.82                |
|                        | GC is credible and sincere in its communications  | 1.39                | 0.93                                  | 1.64                |

#### 4.6 Information flow

As explained in the theory, information flow to customers, detractors, stakeholders and employees is very important (Satterthwaite 2007, 16). A company's image is a reflection of people's perceptions and the perceptions are based upon what they know of the company, so it is essential that the flow of information is being managed and controlled. Yet the most important part is that there is information available, in order to raise awareness. (Marconi 1996, 12.)

It can be presumed that the students only familiar with Game Central would feel the lack of information higher than the customers. This is also shown in the results seen in the figure 20. 73% of the students feel they are getting enough information from Game Central and 94% of the customers are happy with the information received. Although when asking whether or not they would like to get more information from the company, the customers who felt they get enough information would like to receive more. The percentage point difference is higher between the customers who say they aren't getting enough information (6%) and the customers who would like to get more information (14%). When it comes to the students, the percentages are evenly divided. The same percentage of students felt they do not get enough information from Game Central as those who would like more information.

Based on the results, Game Central should improve its information flow since even the people who felt they were getting enough information wanted to get more.

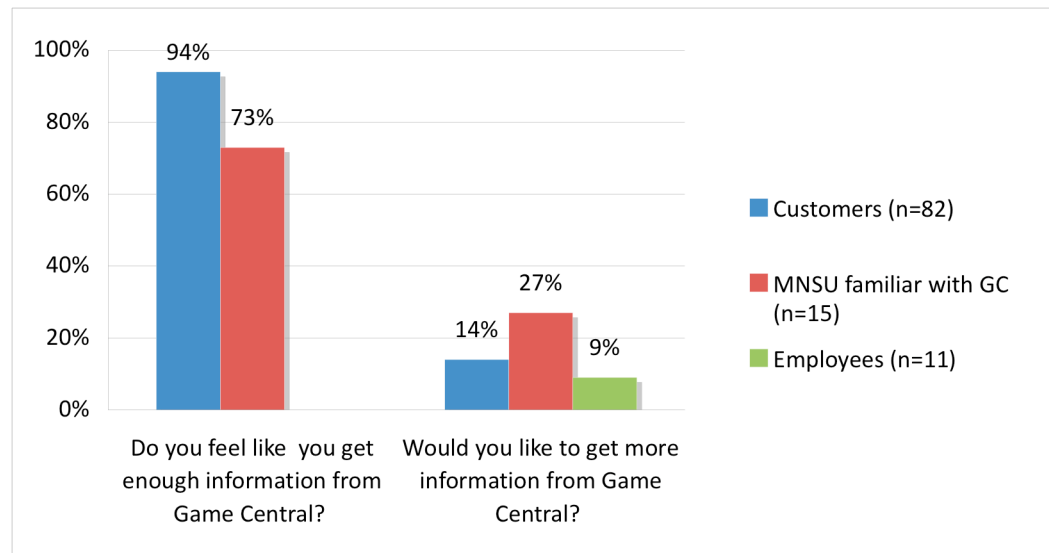


FIGURE 20. Information flow.

Asking what kind of information the respondents would like to get, the majority would like to know more about the games Game Central is selling, as seen from figure 21. Specifically the students are eager to know more of the product the company is selling since they haven't necessarily been to the store. Also many respondents would like to know more about the company itself. The customers, who are more knowledgeable of the products, would still like to know more about Game Central as a company.

Information flow was also examined among the employees. All of them (100%) were pleased with getting enough information from the company so it is not stated in the figures. Yet some of them (9%) would like to receive more information from the company. These people said they would like to know the net worth of Game Central.

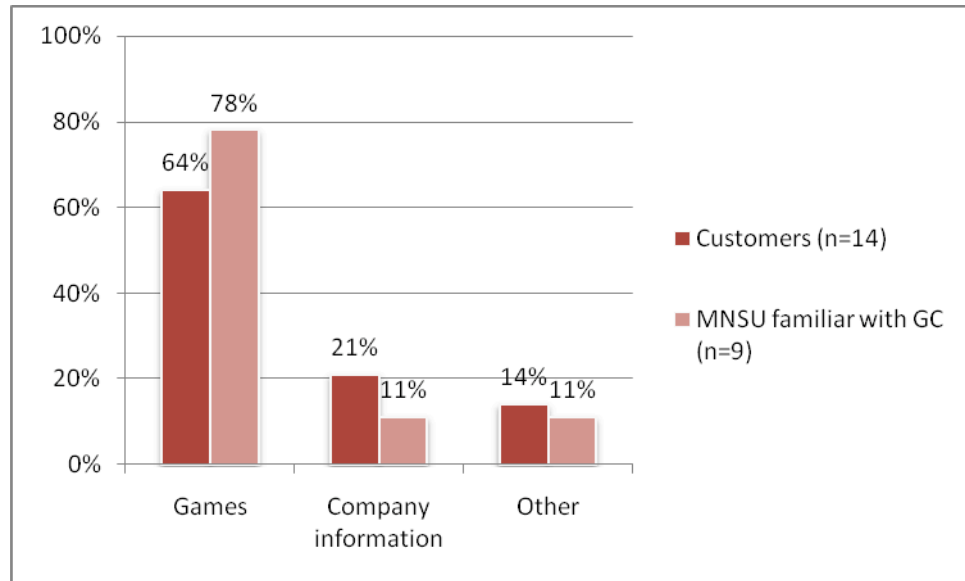


FIGURE 21. Information wanted from Game Central.

#### 4.7 Loyalty

Strong reputations make the customers more loyal (Eccles, Newquist & Schatz 2007, 104). So when asking if customers are loyal or not, we can use it as an indicator for a strong reputation.

As seen from figure 22, most of the respondents are customers also in other game stores. Also the highest percentage (85%) of being customers in other game stores belongs to the unfamiliar students which makes sense because they have either not shopped at Game Central or do not have enough information about Game Central. The more familiar these people are to Game Central, the more loyal they are also to other game stores. The figure 22 illustrates how customers are the group that is the most loyal (35%) to other game stores as students unfamiliar with Game Central are the least (24%). Strong reputations make the customers more loyal (Eccles, Newquist & Schatz 2007, 104), so based on these results Game Central's competitors don't have a very strong reputation and neither does Game Central considering how many people state they would like to be future customers.

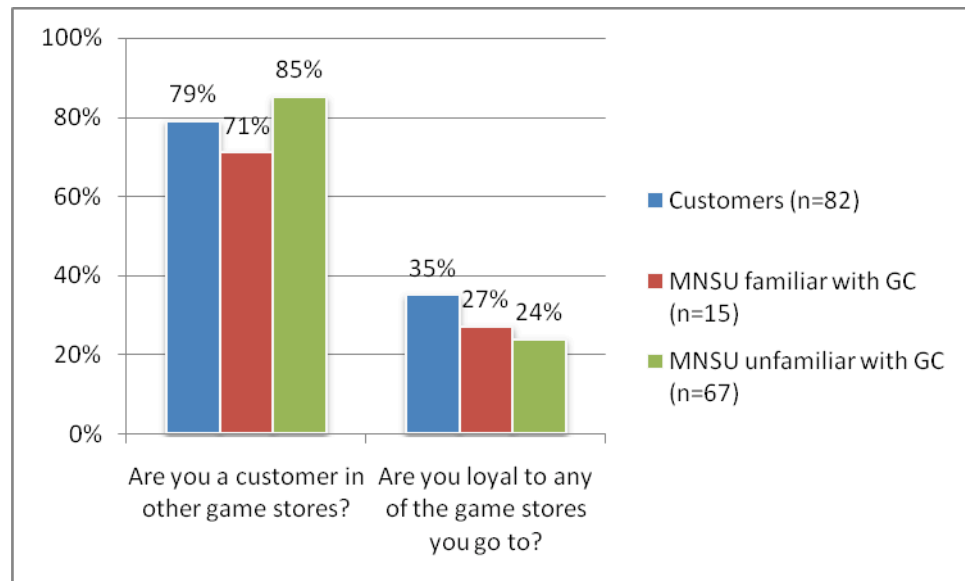


FIGURE 22. Loyalty.

When asking the reasons for being loyal to a game store, the results vary between all of the groups. One thing that was mentioned in two groups was price, as the table 9 illustrates. People tend to buy gaming products by price, since the product doesn't differ when changing a store. That only means that a store needs to gain other reasons to lure customers if they don't wish to compete with price. Also the staff was mentioned twice. This emphasizes the meaning of the employees affecting customer opinions. As stated before in paragraph 3.5 why reputations matter, increasing the loyalty of the workforce by stroking them and in return the employees feel a strong allegiance and will improve their performance (Alsop 2004, 146). When doing research on the loyalty of Game Central's employees, all of them (100%) said that they feel committed and loyal as an employee to Game Central. Basically everyone commented how he or she gives their everything for the success of the company. There were also additional comments on how they believe in the company and even a million dollars wouldn't make them quit their job. Based on these results, it can be said that the loyalty of the employees is good. If employees are doing everything they can, what else is missing since the loyalty for Game Central isn't very high among other groups? We will continue this examination throughout this thesis. Loyalty is also examined in the chapter 4.10.

TABLE 9. Reasons for being loyal to a game store.

| Customers (n=27)                        | MNSU students familiar with GC (n=3) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| New games                               | Better known                         |
| I like the staff                        | Convenient                           |
| Atmosphere                              | Reliable                             |
| Prices                                  |                                      |
| MNSU students unfamiliar with GC (n=35) |                                      |
| Great customer service                  |                                      |
| Good deals                              |                                      |
| Prices                                  |                                      |
| Quality                                 |                                      |
| Familiar with company policies          |                                      |

Also related to loyalty, the Minnesota State University students were asked if they could be future customers of Game Central. The students unfamiliar with Game Central were alternatively asked if they could be future customers of a company that buys, sells and trades games. Based on the figure 23, the more familiar the respondents are with Game Central, the less interested they are with the idea of being a customers at a store that buys, sells and trades games.

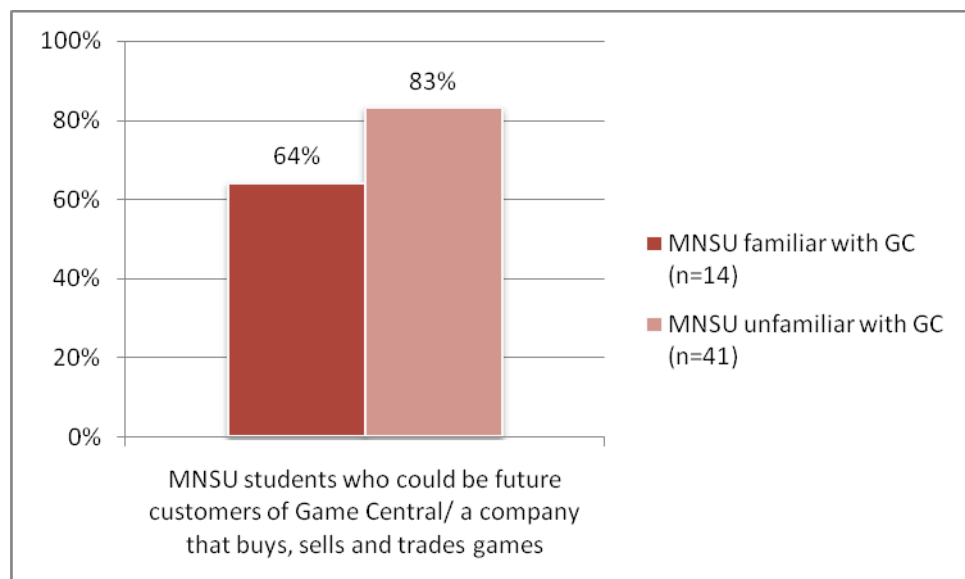


FIGURE 23. Future customers

#### 4.8 Fidelity

In the end, a good reputation depends on company reliability, and a good basis for that is to keep all your promises (Satterthwaite 2007, 16). Based on figure 24, Game Central doesn't have a big problem with fidelity since most of the respondents think that Game Central keeps its promises. Also when asking the employees about company fidelity, all of the respondents (100%) thought that Game Central keeps its promises. That can also have an effect on the other groups since employees have the greatest influence especially on customers, as seen before in table 2. Maybe that is why the percentage is higher in the customer group because the employees are having an influence on the customers.

Yet when asking why the respondents feel that Game Central doesn't keep its promises, response rate of this question from customers was significantly higher. The fact that customers took the survey more than students familiar with Game Central is one reason for higher response rate. Table 10 illustrates the results received when asking the reasons why Game Central can't keep its promises. Games might not always be available among others were opinions that customers had about Game Central not meeting its promises. Selling old and rare video games it is clear that availability is one of the issues. Related to this, customers were also worried about the time it takes to get a game the store has promised for a customer. Pricing also seemed to be an issue as there was a comment about how rare games might be sold with the price of a new game, because the game store is in for profit.

The only response received from the students was the fact that they haven't even been to the store, so it is hard to tell about their fidelity.

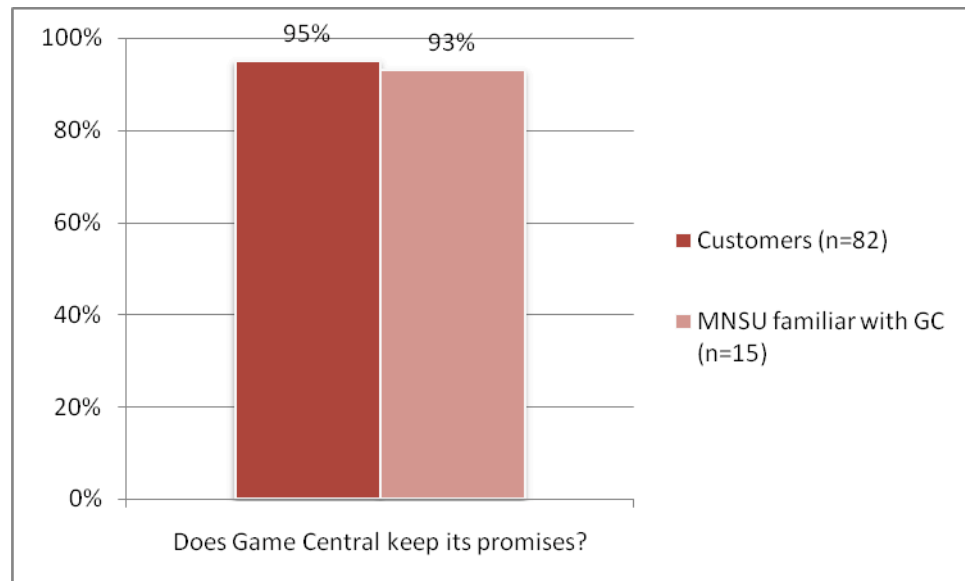


FIGURE 24. Does Game Central keep its promises?

TABLE 10. Reasons for thinking Game Central can't keep its promises.

| Customers (n=7)   | MNSU students familiar with GC (n=1) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| It takes a long time to get a game Game Central promised to get<br>Old rare games aren't always available<br>Rare games might be sold with the price of a new game, because the game store is in for profit | I have never been there              |

#### 4.9 Trust

Trust is the foundation of good reputations (Alsop 2004, 12-13). A strong reputation requires the positive stakeholder opinions about the company's ability to fulfill their expectations (Fombrun & Van Riel 2004, 4).

As seen from figure 25, the more familiar the respondents are with Game Central, the more they can trust the company. The employees trust Game Central 100% yet it wasn't included in the figure, because it was unnecessary. When it comes to the



other groups, there is a big leap from customers' 99% to 85% of MNSU students unfamiliar with Game Central trusting the company. Game Central could reduce these kinds of responses by improving their information flow. As Gregory (1991, 2) states in chapter 2.2 how to affect a company image, customers form the image of a company based on their perceptions and sometimes these prejudices aren't reflecting the company's actual profile. By Alsop (2004, 10), Game Central could affect this by actively managing the information flow and not letting others passively develop opinions about them.

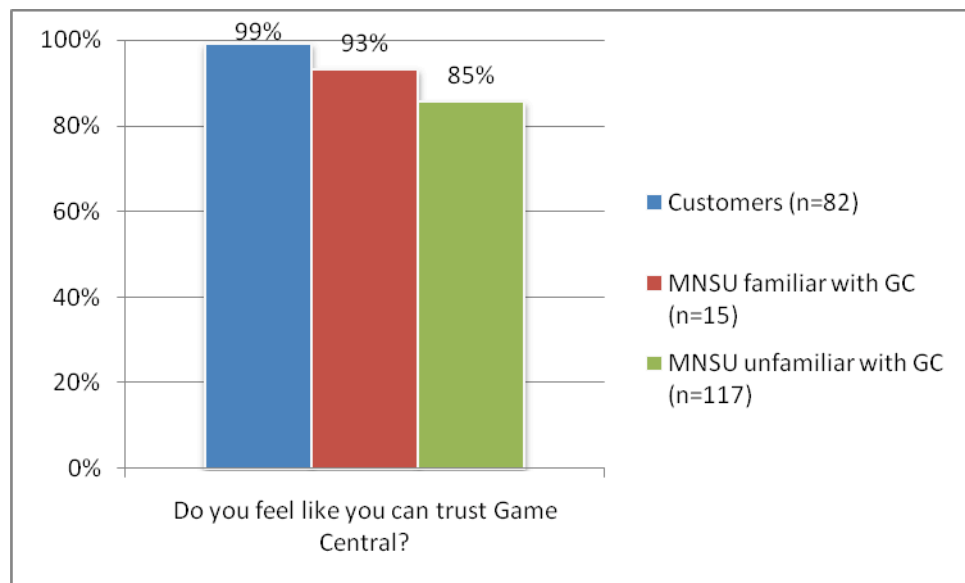


FIGURE 25. Do you feel like you can trust Game Central?

Table 11 illustrates the reasons why the respondents can't trust Game Central, both customers and MNSU students unfamiliar with the company think that such organizations just want all your money and will take advantage of you. They state that companies that buy, sell and trade video games are normally just scams. Another reason that was stated was the fact that the product quality can't be guaranteed, since they are old and most of the time traded. MNSU students familiar with Game Central said the only reason is the fact that they have not been to the store so it is hard to form an opinion about trusting the company.

TABLE 11. Why do you feel you can not trust Game Central?

| Customers (n=1)                         | MNSU students familiar with GC (n=1) |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| They take advantage of you              | I have never been there              |
| MNSU students unfamiliar with GC (n=15) |                                      |
| They just want your money               |                                      |
| Scams                                   |                                      |
| Quality can't be guaranteed             |                                      |

#### 4.10 Goodwill

Even though Marconi (2002, 7-8) states in chapter 3.4.1 that companies generating goodwill create a more positive image, every employee responding to the survey thought that Game Central doesn't need to do any kind of charity or sponsorship, maybe thinking that the company's image is good enough as it is. The figure 26 also illustrates how only 9% of the customers agreed that Game Central should be involved in charity or sponsorship. As seen in table 12, customers mostly think that the company should be involved in gaming tournaments where retro gamers could meet each other. Also some respondents from both of the MNSU groups thought that the company could sponsor some gaming tournaments for creating better interaction with customers and improving store awareness. Some people in the group unfamiliar with Game Central had good understanding how smaller companies don't need to do charity work but it helps to lure customers. That also might be the reason for the smaller agreement rate (67%) from that group with a small company like Game Central being involved in charity.

Most of the people in the groups that stated that Game Central should be involved with charity thought that any charity involving kids would be good. Also donations to schools were mentioned as comment in all of the groups.

Yet as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, because Game Central is still such a small company, it should be concentrating on gaining positive reputation and awareness. As suggested by all of the groups, sponsoring or organizing gaming events would be really good for that. Or like respondents unfamiliar with the com-

company said that a small company buying, selling and trading games should only be doing something little and local just to be visible to the public raising awareness.

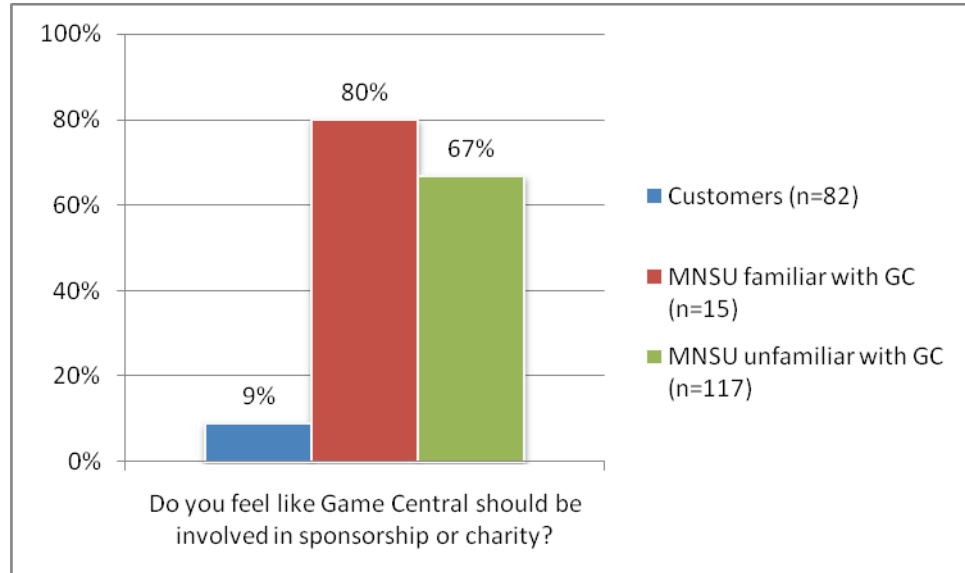


FIGURE 26. Do you feel like Game Central should be involved in sponsorship or charity?

TABLE 12. What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?

| Customers (n=4)  | MNSU students familiar with GC (n=12) |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Gaming tournaments                                     | Charity for kids                      |
| Schools  | Gaming tournaments                    |
| Gaming opportunities for poor kids                     | Schools                               |
| MNSU students unfamiliar with GC (n=70)                |                                       |
| Charity for kids                                       |                                       |
| Any charity  |                                       |
| Schools  |                                       |
| Gaming event sponsor                                   |                                       |
| Charity isn't necessary but it helps to lure customers |                                       |
| Nothing too big/ local                                 |                                       |
| Violence/ obesity/ orphanages/ cancer                  |                                       |

#### 4.11 Are there areas where Game Central is missing something?

Asking if Game Central is missing something, the agreement rate is rather similar in all of the three groups as seen in figure 27. It is interesting to note that 27% of the employees think that Game Central is missing something. In almost all of the previous chapters the employees have been very happy with the company.

It is also interesting how students familiar with the company agree more that Game Central is missing something than the customers. Even though this could be explained by the fact that the response rate within the customers was much higher than with the people at Minnesota State University who know Game Central.

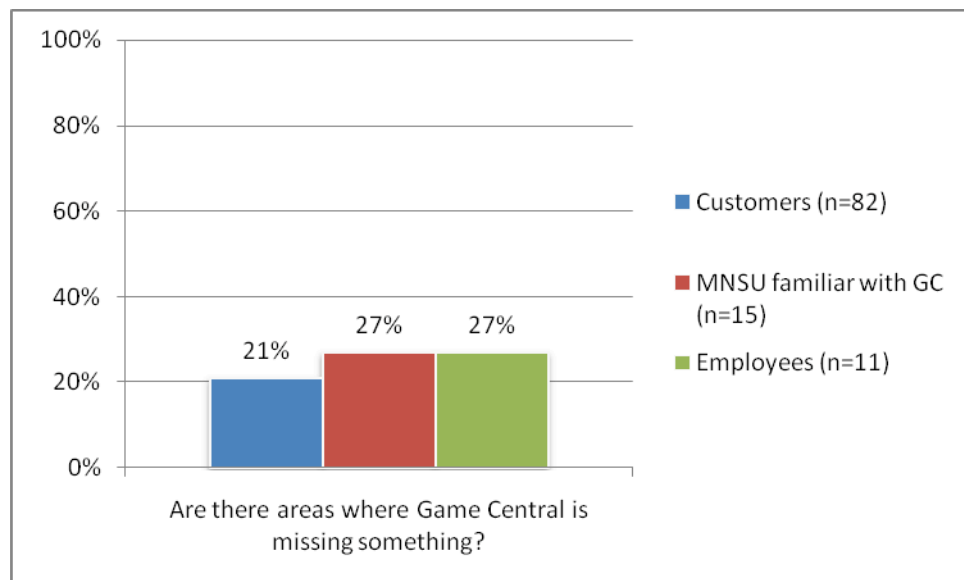


FIGURE 27. Are there areas where Game Central is missing something?

Asking in more detail what Game Central is missing most of the customers comment, as seen from table 13, the stores need more new games such as for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Wii. Also some would like more Game Cube games. Relatively more customers would also like to see Game Central operating an online store.

Two groups, customers and MNSU students familiar with Game Central agreed on two things. Game Central needs a better selection, and newer games as explained in the previous paragraph, and the company is lacking a strong business

presence and an attractive image. Therefore even if the respondents think Game Central is lacking a strong image, the company already has some issues with their reputation.

Asking what employees think Game Central is missing, most of the respondents think that the store needs a better inventory system. Also faster point-of-sale searching options for games is required by the employees. These responses explain why the agreement rate was so high among employees even though they were practically praising the company in the other chapters. In most of the cases company software relates mostly to information flow and working environment.

TABLE 13. What is Game Central missing?

| Customers (n=13)                                  | Employees (n=3)                            |
|---|--|
| New games/ Xbox 360/ Wii/ PS3                     | Better inventory system                    |
| Online store                                      | Faster POS for searching options for games |
| Comprehensive online list of game trade in values |  |
| Strong business presence                          |  |
| <b>MNSU students familiar with GC (n=4)</b>       |  |
| Better selection                                  |  |
| Attractive image                                  |  |

Asking what Game Central is missing explains the customer loyalty. According to figure 22 in chapter 4.7 all of the respondents had over 70% agreement rate when asking if they were loyal to other game stores. Now when asking what Game Central is missing, most of the respondents comment that the stores need more newer games. If Game Central wishes to have customers loyal to their stores, they need to expand their selection to newer games as well. Other reasons for loyalty are explained in chapter 4.7.

#### 4.12 The overall image

Again the more known Game Central is to the respondents, the better they think the overall image for the company is. Asking the opinion about Game Central's overall image, employees were the first ones to reach the 100% by undivided responses saying that the company's image is good. 93% of the customer respondents thought that it is good and 7% said it is neutral. Since most of the customers (63%) were at the store for the very first time some of them might have not formed a clear image of the company yet.

It is normal that the more unfamiliar Game Central is the more neutral opinions the respondents have about the company. As seen from the figure 28, most of the respondents unfamiliar with the company (59%) said their overall opinion is neutral.

It is also important to note that more of the students familiar (7%) with the company thought that Game Central's image is bad and 3% of the students unfamiliar with the company thought it was bad.

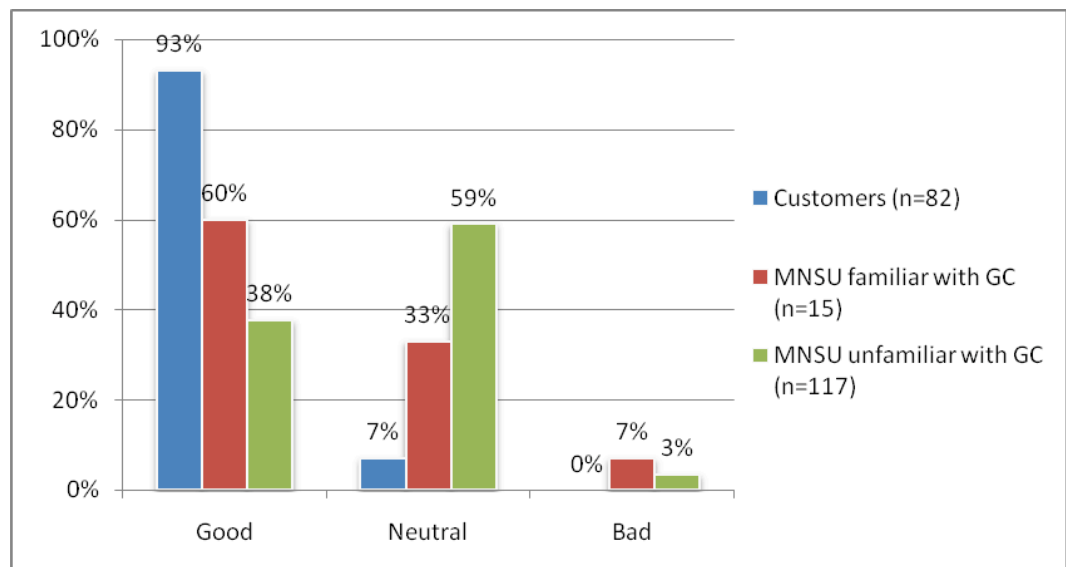


FIGURE 28. How is Game Central's image overall?

## 5 SURVEY CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The following chapters will conclude the survey results by giving some improvement suggestions and finally summarizing the whole paper.

### 5.1 Survey conclusion

This survey was taken by 11 members of Game Central staff (69% response rate), 82 customers (3% response rate) and 132 Minnesota State University students (4% response rate). Most of the above respondents were male which reflects the target group very well. The response rate with the customers and students can be considered very bad while the group of employees extremely good. As the response rate was relatively low, the reliability of this research is comparatively bad. However the survey layout was proven by the results to be very good, excluding slight disarrangement with one question.

The research showed that the working environment for Game Central employees is seen as motivating, making the employees loyal and proud of their work, which is very important for positive image creation. This examination is proof that Game Central has a good reputation that the staff is willing to uphold.

It should also be noted that 63% of the customers were shopping at Game Central for the first time and only 11% of the MNSU students were familiar with the company.

The first impression both the employees and customers mainly had was a so-called “wow-feeling” whereas most of the students had no clue what the company was. This is a sign of lacking visibility. The lack of visibility also explains why so many of the respondents were either there for the first time or were not familiar with the company. As the company relies mostly on word-of-mouth, it is also clear why the students’ first impression had been mostly (58%) affected by friends

or family. The customers had been influenced mostly (45%) by Game Central's employees, which emphasizes the importance of stroking the employees and making sure they know the company values.

When it comes to the adjectives describing Game Central, as a company it is being described as responsible and sincere in its actions. Game Central's products are seen as interesting, while the operations are described as friendly and easy to approach. If only one adjective is chosen to describe the company the best, all of the groups agreed that Game Central is very friendly. The same groups also agreed that Game Central is not cheap. People's perceptions are based on the information they receive and as Game Central relies mainly on word-of-mouth, it is clear that the employees' thoughts are reflected through all of the other groups. Yet when asking, 14% of the customers and 27% of the students would like to receive more information, mainly about games. The games are also the main reason why over 70% of all of the respondent groups are customers also in other game stores. When asking if Game Central is missing something, most of the respondents agree that the store needs newer games or a better selection.

As for the expressiveness quotient, authenticity was granted with the highest values. All of the three groups think that Game Central is appealing to deal with and straightforward. Authenticity comes from within, so this is a good sign of employee happiness and their knowledge of the company values. The lowest values came from the dimensions transparency and distinctiveness. Both of which can be explained by the lack of information flow.

When it comes to fidelity and trust, Game Central is on a good foundation, which is good as a strong reputation depends on company reliability. Yet the positive responses are descending depending on how familiar the company is. This is also a sign of lacking transparency.

Questions about goodwill had the most fluctuation between the groups. But as some of the responses stated, as a small company Game Central should be focusing on awareness and gaining positive reputation. Doing something small and local would be enough, like sponsoring a gaming event.



As to conclude the survey, the respondents were asked how they think of Game Central overall. Based on the results, they think of Game Central's reputation to be rather good. Yet again due to lack of visibility, the responses are descending depending on how familiar the company is.

## 5.2 Improvement suggestions

Wishing for more customers or just for more loyal customers, Game Central has many options to choose from. Game Central's reputation is relatively good so they could maintain the authenticity and word-of-mouth technique, work towards more information flow, or even get a wider product selection. As for getting more loyal customers, the study showed that the respondents think that Game Central is missing newer games, and that was also the main reason why some of them were also loyal to other gaming stores.

The research also showed that Game Central has some areas that are doing particularly well and for that they could keep on doing what they are doing now. It is an extremely good thing that the employees are familiar with the company values and are stroked enough to be proud of their work. As emphasized through this whole study, employees are the most important people affecting a company image and reputation. Also therefore the adjectives describing the company are quite similar between the groups. Keeping up the stroking and keeping the working environment motivating is an important factor maintaining this relatively good image Game Central is possessing at the current moment.

As for the information flow, throughout the study and as seen from the expressiveness quotient results responses dealing with the company visibility and transparency have been the main issue. Being more visible and transparent Game Central could even improve their overall image. A managed information flow would create much needed awareness and maintain or even enhance the people's perceptions of the company. As some of the respondents suggested, Game Central could for example sponsor or have their own gaming events to raise positive awareness

among the gamers. Since stakeholders form their opinions about a company based on the information they receive, information flow should be controlled and managed. The controlled information flow would also increase fidelity and trust, as the respondents who had issues with both of them said the reason is the fact that they don't know the company.

On the other hand, even though throughout this whole analysis Game Central's lack of information flow has been emphasized, they should keep in mind what this dimension of expressiveness holds. Game Central would need resources to invest in having more information flow since it is still growing and opening new kiosks in the Minnesota area. By growing, and being busier and maybe putting more resources in the information flow, would Game Central have enough resources to maintain the current authenticity that they have as a small company? Being a small company, the working environment might be more relaxed and the authenticity is easier to uphold. Furthermore because small companies are less visible they rely more on reputation to be successful, Really successful companies are those that excel in all of these dimensions and Game Central should strive for this.

### 5.3 Summary

This thesis dealt with reputation and company image, and its current state in the case company, Game Central. The first part of this study examined the theory of reputation and image – how images are formed, how to manage them and how to gain a strong image. The theory also reflected on why reputations matter and why they should be treated as assets. The second part, the so-called empirical study, finished the research by examining the results and making recommendation based on them.

When it comes to image creating, reputations are important as the consumers' buying decisions are based on them. Nowadays it is not enough to have just a good product and service, you need a strong reputation. People form images through all your actions and over time these images create a reputation. And because reputations are built from the inside out, employees have an important mis-

sion in maintaining the correct company image in everyday actions. Sometimes these perceptions don't reflect the actual company profiles; therefore the information flow should be managed and controlled, not letting stakeholders passively form their images. The perceptions are very personal since they are formed through individual experiences and affected by everything surrounding them, as reputation management is always indirect. That is why reputations take years to form but they can be destroyed in a flash.

The theory was the basis for the study, which was concluded with an image research for Game Central, a gaming company that buys, sells and trades retro videogames. The objective of this research was to define Game Central's current image – what kind of impressions customers, local students, and employees have of Game Central. The results from all of the three groups were examined and contrasted to get an idea of the company's present image. The results were interesting as the employees' opinions clearly reflected the customers' responses. The employees have a great influence and especially when not using any advertisement, the importance of the staff is even higher. As for if Game Central has a good image, the results varied based on how familiar the company was to the individual. The employees love Game Central, as they feel are satisfied with the working environment. The customers are happy with the company in general, though they would appreciate some changes. The MNSU students had naturally more neutral comments, as most of them were not familiar with the company. But as a company with a concept of buying, selling and trading games the image is somewhat good. All of the groups would describe Game Central as friendly and easy to approach. The company is seen as responsible and interesting but not cheap. Game Central is also seen as very authentic as it is appealing to deal with and straightforward. The company has some issues with transparency and distinctiveness, as Game Central lacks visibility and information flow.

The research can be considered useful, even though the response rates remained very low. This research gives Game Central an outline of their current image and if they wish, they can do minor changes to their strategy based on the recommendations of this paper.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Reputation Survey for Game Central

**1) Gender \***

☐ Female ☐ Male

**2) Age \***

**3) How long have you worked for Game Central? \***

**4) How many hours do you work?**

☐ Full-time

☐ Part-time

**5) Does Game Central's working environment motivate you to work? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**6) Why or why not?**

**7) Are you proud to work at Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**8) Why or why not?**

**9) Do you feel committed and loyal as an employee to Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**10) Why or why not?**

**11) Overall, how do you like working at Game Central? \***

**12) Your first impression of Game Central**

**13) Has that image changed?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**14) How has it changed?**

Answer only if said 'Yes to the question above (no. 13).

**15) Has something affected your image on Game Central?**



**16) Select the adjectives you think describe Game Central the best. \***

For example: 1 = friendly, 2 = rather friendly, 3 = neutral, 4 = rather unfriendly, 5 = unfriendly

|                         | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Easy to approach *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Hard to approach             |
| Modern *                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Retro                        |
| Quality-conscious *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Error-prone                  |
| Interesting *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Boring                       |
| Convenient *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconvenient                 |
| Successful *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unsuccessful                 |
| Friendly *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unfriendly                   |
| Professional *          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unprofessional               |
| Funny *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Serious                      |
| Cheap *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Expensive                    |
| Local *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Global                       |
| Appreciates customers * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Doesn't appreciate customers |
| Sincere *               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Dishonest                    |
| Reliable *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconsistent                 |
| Responsible *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Irresponsible                |
| Accountable *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unaccountable                |

**17) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 16) do you feel the most strong about?**

**18) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 16) do you feel least describe Game Central?**

**19) Do you feel like you get enough information from Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**20) Do you feel like you know Game Central's vision and values?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**21) Would you like to get more information from Game Central?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**22) What kind of information?**

**23) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central has appropriate communicates with everyone * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central visibly acts on behalf of stakeholders *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**24) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is recognizably different *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central stands out *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central makes clearly defined promises * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**25) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central does what it says it is going to do *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is clearly identifiable through communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Its messages maintain consistency *                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**26) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It's open about its beliefs *                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is punctual when disseminating information *    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**27) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is credible and sincere in its communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is straightforward *                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is appealing to deal with *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**28) Does Game Central keep their promises? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**29) Why do you think Game Central can not keep its promises?**

Answer only if you said 'No' in the question above (no. 28).

**30) Do you feel like you can trust Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**31) Why do you feel you can not trust Game Central?**

Answer only if you said 'No' in the question above (no. 30).

**32) Do you feel like Game Central should be involved in sponsorship or charity? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**33) What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?**

Answer only if said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 32)

**34) Are there areas where Game Central is missing something? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**35) What is Game Central missing?**

Answer if you said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 34).

**36) How is Game Central's image overall? \***

☐ Good  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Bad

**37) Open feedback for Game Central**

## APPENDIX 2

### Reputation Survey for Game Central

The average time to complete this survey is about 5-10 minutes. Your individual responses will remain anonymous and strictly confidential. You will have time to participate until the 8th of March.

Completing this survey **we offer you 10% off** any used/rare game **or \$5 off** the entire purchase, whichever is greater. After submitting the survey you will receive a coupon that you can take to any Game Central location.

Thank you!

**1) Gender \***

☐ Female ☐ Male

**2) Age \***

**3) Are you a regular customer at Game Central or was this your first time?**

☐ I am a regular ☐ This was my first time

**4) How often do you visit Game Central? \***

**5) Are you also a customer in other game stores?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**6) Are you loyal to any of the game stores you go to?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**7) If you are loyal to a game store, why do you think you prefer it there?**

Answer only if said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 6).

**8) Your first impression of Game Central**

**9) Has that image changed?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**10) If you feel like the image you have of Game Central has changed, how has it changed?**

Answer only if said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 9).

**11) Has something affected your image of Game Central?**

**12) Select the adjectives you think describe Game Central the best. \***

For example: 1 = friendly, 2 = rather friendly, 3 = neutral, 4 = rather unfriendly, 5 = unfriendly

|                         | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Easy to approach *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Hard to approach             |
| Modern *                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Retro                        |
| Quality-conscious *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Error-prone                  |
| Interesting *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Boring                       |
| Convenient *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconvenient                 |
| Successful *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unsuccessful                 |
| Friendly *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unfriendly                   |
| Professional *          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unprofessional               |
| Funny *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Serious                      |
| Cheap *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Expensive                    |
| Local *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Global                       |
| Appreciates customers * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Doesn't appreciate customers |
| Sincere *               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Dishonest                    |
| Reliable *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconsistent                 |
| Responsible *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Irresponsible                |
| Accountable *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unaccountable                |

**13) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 12) do you feel the most strong about?**

**14) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 12) do you feel least describe Game Central?**

**15) Do you feel like you get enough information from Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**16) Would you like to get more information from Game Central?**

Answering to this question does not mean you will be spammed.

☐ Yes ☐ No

**17) What kind of information?**

**18) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central has appropriate communicates with everyone * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central visibly acts on behalf of stakeholders *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**19) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is recognizably different *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central stands out *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central makes clearly defined promises * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**20) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central does what it says it is going to do *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is clearly identifiable through communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Its messages maintain consistency *                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**21) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It's open about its beliefs *                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is punctual when disseminating information *    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**22) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is credible and sincere in its communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is straightforward *                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is appealing to deal with *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**23) Does Game Central keep their promises? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**24) Why do you think Game Central can not keep its promises?**

Answer only if you said 'No' in the question above (no. 23).

**25) Do you feel like you can trust Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**26) Why do you feel you can not trust Game Central?**

Answer only if you said 'No' in the question above (no. 25).

**27) Do you feel like Game Central should be involved in sponsorship or charity? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**28) What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?**

Answer only if said 'Yes' to the question above (no.27)

**29) Are there areas where Game Central is missing something? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**30) What is Game Central missing?**

Answer if you said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 29).

**31) How is Game Central's image overall? \***

☐ Good  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Bad

**32) Open feedback for Game Central**

## APPENDIX 3

### Reputation Survey for Game Central

I am a marketing student from Finland and I am doing my thesis here in Mankato. I need your help in finding students' opinions about a company's image.

The average time to complete this survey is about 5-10 minutes. Your individual responses will remain anonymous and strictly confidential. Data from this survey will be reported only in comprehensive analysis. I am staying in the States only for a couple of months so you will have time to participate until the 9th of March.

After taking the survey you will get a chance to leave your contact information for a lottery. Filling in your contact information you can take part in the lottery and get a chance to **win a \$50 worth of in-store credit at Game Central**. It is totally optional and your personal information is only used for the purpose of contacting you in regards to the lottery. We will contact you personally in case you win.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey.

#### 1) Would you like to know more about the survey?

By clicking 'No', you will start the survey.

☐ Yes ☐ No

You are requested to participate in research on people's perceptions about a company's reputation. The thesis consists of a theory and practical part and your help is needed for completing the practical one.

There are minimal risks for your participation in this research study. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The information you provide will help me to understand company reputation.

Participation is voluntary and responses will be kept anonymous. However, whenever one works with the Internet there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity.

Despite this possibility, the risks to your physical, emotional, social, professional, or financial well-being are considered to be 'less than minimal'.

The data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By completing this survey you agree to take part in this research study. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact: Marita Klaavu at 507-304-3565, or [marita.klaavu@gmail.com](mailto:marita.klaavu@gmail.com)

By responding to this survey, you are providing your consent.

Sincerely,  
Marita Klaavu  
Marketing Student, Finland

#### 2) Gender \*

☐ Female ☐ Male

#### 3) Age \*

#### 4) What is the first thing that comes to your mind about Game Central?



5) Are you familiar with Game Central? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

6) Where have you heard about the company?

7) Select the adjectives best describe Game Central. \*

For example: 1 = friendly, 2 = rather friendly, 3 = neutral, 4 = rather unfriendly, 5 = unfriendly

|                         | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Easy to approach *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Hard to approach             |
| Modern *                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Retro                        |
| Quality-conscious *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Error-prone                  |
| Interesting *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Boring                       |
| Convenient *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconvenient                 |
| Successful *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unsuccessful                 |
| Friendly *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unfriendly                   |
| Professional *          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unprofessional               |
| Funny *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Serious                      |
| Cheap *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Expensive                    |
| Local *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Global                       |
| Appreciates customers * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Doesn't appreciate customers |
| Sincere *               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Dishonest                    |
| Reliable *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconsistent                 |
| Responsible *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Irresponsible                |
| Accountable *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unaccountable                |

8) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 6) do you feel the most strong about?

9) What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 6) do you feel least describe Game Central?

10) Has something affected your image of Game Central?

11) Do you feel like you get enough information from Game Central? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

12) Would you like to get more information from Game Central?

Answering to this question does not mean you will be spammed.

☐ Yes ☐ No

13) What kind of information?

**14) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central has appropriate communicates with everyone * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central visibly acts on behalf of stakeholders *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**15) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is recognizably different *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central stands out *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central makes clearly defined promises * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**16) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central does what it says it is going to do *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is clearly identifiable through communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Its messages maintain consistency *                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**17) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| It's open about its beliefs *                                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is punctual when disseminating information *    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is sensitive to the needs of all stakeholders * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**18) Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity? \***

1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Game Central is credible and sincere in its communications * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is straightforward *                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Game Central is appealing to deal with *                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**19) Are you going to be a future customer to Game Central?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**20) Are you a customer in other game stores?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**21) Are you loyal to any of the game stores you go to? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**22) If you are loyal to a game store, why do you think you prefer it there?**

Answer only if said 'Yes' to the question above (no. 20).

**23) Does Game Central keep their promises? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**24) Why do you think Game Central can not keep its promises?**

**25) Do you feel that you can trust Game Central? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**26) Why can't you trust Game Central?**

**27) Do you feel that Game Central should be involved in sponsorship or charity? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**28) What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?**

**29) Are there areas where Game Central is missing something? \***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**30) What is Game Central missing?**

**31) How is Game Central's image overall? \***

☐ Good  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Bad

The following questions pertain to a company that buys, sells and trades vintage videogames. They currently operate with kiosks and stores in malls across Minnesota. Please keep this company concept in mind when answering.

32) Have you purchased videogames within the past year? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

33) Could you buy videogames in the future? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

34) Could you be a future customer of a game store that buys, sells and trades games? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

35) Are you a customer of game stores that buy, sell and trade games? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

36) Are you loyal to any of these game stores?

☐ Yes ☐ No

37) Why are you loyal to a game store?

38) Select the adjectives best describe a company that buys, sells and trades games \*

For example: 1 = friendly, 2 = rather friendly, 3 = neutral, 4 = rather unfriendly, 5 = unfriendly

|                         | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |                              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Easy to approach *      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Hard to approach             |
| Modern *                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Retro                        |
| Quality-conscious *     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Error-prone                  |
| Interesting *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Boring                       |
| Convenient *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconvenient                 |
| Successful *            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unsuccessful                 |
| Friendly *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unfriendly                   |
| Professional *          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unprofessional               |
| Funny *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Serious                      |
| Cheap *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Expensive                    |
| Local *                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Global                       |
| Appreciates customers * | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Doesn't appreciate customers |
| Sincere *               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Dishonest                    |
| Reliable *              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Inconsistent                 |
| Responsible *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Irresponsible                |
| Accountable *           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unaccountable                |

39) What two (2) adjectives from above do you feel the most strong about?

40) What two (2) adjectives from above do you feel least describe a company that buys, sells and trades games?

41) Do you feel that you can trust a company that buys, sells and trades games? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

42) Why can't you trust such a company?

43) Do you feel like a company that buys, sells and trades games should be involved in sponsorship or charity? \*

☐ Yes ☐ No

44) What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see such a company doing?

45) How is the overall image of companies that buy, sell and trade games? \*

☐ Good  
☐ Neutral  
☐ Bad

46) Additional comments and feedback

## A Chance to Win \$50 In-Store Credit!

Filling in your contact information you can take part in the lottery and get a chance in winning a \$50 worth of in-store credit for Game Central. It is totally optional and your personal information is only used for the purpose of contacting you in regards to the lottery.

### Contact form

Name   
Lastname   
Phone   
Email   
Address   
ZIP code   
City

## APPENDIX 4



**eNews**

**February 27, 2009**

### **STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT – Your help needed**

Marita Klaavu, a student visiting from Finland is conducting a research project as part of studies. She would greatly appreciate your participation in a survey. The survey should take about 8-10 minutes. If you would like to participate in the survey, please click on the following link: <https://www.webropol.com/P.aspx?id=296167&cid=37656519>

The deadline for participation is March 9, 2009. Please note that there is an incentive for participation. One lucky respondent will be picked randomly and receive a \$50 store credit gift card. Thank you!

## APPENDIX 5

### OPEN COMMENTS FROM EMPLOYEES

#### **Does Game Central's working environment motivate you to work?**

1. It is a very laid back, friendly environment
2. I feel as though I am playing a role of paramount importance in a rapidly expanding company. It's very exciting.
3. This is the best place I could ask to work.
4. Game Central has an environment unlike any other retail environment. It would take hard work to be unhappy at work here.
5. If i can make video games my life, why not?
6. It is a very easy going environment.
7. It is a great environment for anyone with an interest in video games to thrive on
8. Everyone is happy when shopping at Game Central and I find that to be motivating
9. This is always a happy place to be
10. I love video games, so you could say I love to work.
11. I love my job so motivation comes naturally

#### **Are you proud to work at Game Central?**

1. I work with video games. Enough said.
2. Because in the end, everyone just wants to have fun and play video games. That's going to be a means instead of an end for me; that's awesome.
3. I work with video games. This is the best job ever.
4. There is nothing to not be proud about.
5. I get to work with video games on a day to day basis and get paid a healthy living. What is there not to love about that?
6. I get to work with video games and talk video games all day every day and make money while doing it.
7. This is the best most easy going job I have ever had
8. Everyone wants to work at a video game store
9. I have a job that a lot of people envy
10. People beg ME for a job. I have to take that with pride
11. I've always wanted to work with video games

#### **Do you feel committed and loyal as an employee to Game Central?**

1. I commit myself as an employee to make sure Game Central is run at its full potential each day of the week.
2. I believe in the company and where it is moving.
3. I give my all to Game Central.
4. Everyday I give everything I've got to make Game Central run at its full potential.
5. I give it my all and do everything in my power to make the company grow successfully.
6. I do my best to make every sale possible with game central.
7. I feel as if you couldnt pay me a million dollars to leave my job at this point in

time.

8. I give it my all for pete
9. I do my best to make sure the company succeeds
10. I commit myself every day to make sure the company is run at full potential
11. I put everything i have in action while at work

### **Your first impression of Game Central**

1. Kiosk that may not offer the most stable work environment.
2. Like an oldschool second hand record store.
3. This is the coolest place on earth.
4. I want to work here.
5. Retro video games?! I have to get a job here.
6. This has got to be the coolest store I have ever seen.
7. It was a trip down memory lane
8. OMG!
9. This is already my favorite store
10. Bringin retro back!
11. How do I apply?

### **How has it changed?**

1. Game Central made me realize that it is a solid company with more than enough room and potential to grow in even the worst of recessions while other companies are going out of business.
2. Slightly, we really don't feel like any business that's already out there. We really appeal to a lot of our customers in a great way, and I can't think of any business that generates as many "holy shit"(s) as GC does.
3. It has only gotten more extreme
4. I got a perfect job

### **What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 16) do you feel the most strong about?**

1. Retro, Friendly
2. Easy to approach and appreciates customers. Those are two things I strive to project when people approach the store.
3. Retro, Interesting
4. Local, Retro
5. Retro, Sincere
6. Retro, Successful
7. Retro, Local
8. Sincere, Retro
9. Successful, Retro
10. Friendly, Retro
11. friendly, retro



**What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 16) do you feel least describe Game Central?**

1. Dishonest, Unsuccessful
2. Cheap will never describe us but we try to price everything fairly.
3. Serious, Irresponsible
4. Expensive, Global
5. Global, Cheap
6. Cheap, Unfriendly
7. Inconsistent, Cheap
8. Cheap, Unaccountable
9. Global, Boring
10. Dishonest, Irresponsible
11. serious, doesn't appreciate customers

**Would you like to get more information from Game Central? What kind of information?**

1. Net worth

**What is Game Central missing?**

1. Better inventory system.
2. We really need a better inventory system, as well as a POS that doesn't take so long to bring up the search option for games.
3. integrated inventory

## APPENDIX 6

### OPEN COMMENTS FROM CUSTOMERS

#### **If you are loyal to a game store, why do you think you prefer it there?**

1. I know the people who work there (managers and employees) and I have been going there since I was young, so we have a 'thing'. Recently though, I have been wanting older games to go back and play, and Game Central is the only one who carries those gems.
2. Game Central for my old games. Game Stop for my new games.
3. GameStop has a better selection of "newer" games, but I like that GCentral will buy and sell just about any system. That allows people to trade in rare and unique items, but more importantly it allows me to buy them.
4. I buy new games at GameStop
5. I get my new stuff at GameStop.
6. Different gaming needs
7. I enjoy all game stores
8. Gamestop has new games
9. I will shop where I can find the games my kids want.
10. I like GameCentral because they have the best old games.
11. I go to other stores for newer games
12. I go to all of my game stores for different things
13. Game central and Game Stop provide solutions for my different needs
14. This is my first of many stops to Game Central. I usually go to Game Stop to buy games
15. I like you guys a lot but I will shop at gamestop or bestbuy or where ever if you don't have the game I want. I always stop in to see what's new though, seems like there's always something cool that just came in.
16. I am loyal to Game Stop but Game Central might get a little more attention now that I know you're here
17. I love gamestop regardless, but game central will be my second love
18. I am loyal to ebay stores for video games
19. GameStop and 3d Games
20. I'll always stop and your stores and check if the games I want are there before I shop at gamestop
21. I like the staff at more than 1 store
22. I go to GameStop for some of my new games
23. Because I enjoy getting some of my new games from the same store.
24. For newer games
25. i like the staff
26. I like the staff members and atmosphere
27. I like the atmosphere and prices

## **Your first impression of Game Central**

1. Wow... you have so many awesome games... you even have shak-fu.. this store rocks.
2. The staff is very welcoming
3. Good selection. Friendly staff. Knowledgeable staff. Kyle in Mankato is great.
4. Different
5. Cool store
6. Different
7. Retro
8. Very different and new idea.
9. Old School
10. This is the best store in the mall.
11. Interesting
12. Quite a small operation. One employee. The kiosk is well organized. For a kiosk it is done nicely.
13. Wow
14. OLD SCHOOL NINTENDO!!!!
15. Shocked to see these games for sale again.
16. This is cool
17. This is not Game Stop..
18. cool!!!
19. Very neat idea for a shop. Slightly worried about quality.
20. oldschool games!
21. I wanted an Fc3
22. best n64 selection
23. I thought it was a very unique game store
24. retro!!
25. Finally!
26. Its good to see nintendo again
27. It has way better deals than gamestop.
28. cool kiosk
29. I have never seen so many old games anywhere before.
30. I Was excited to see classic games. I love this stuff.
31. Old school
32. I loved every second of it
33. This is a brilliant idea
34. A little shabby, but an awesome store. The store is a little dark though.
35. REally cool kiosk. The guy working (Matt? maybe) seemed to know a lot about games. HE showerd me the duo system and its awesome
36. When did this get here
37. This is different
38. Its about damn time!!!!!!!!!!
39. I loved it.
40. what?
41. Super Nintendo!!!!
42. Wow this is so cool! I feel like a kid again
43. I cant believe my eyes
44. This is awesome
45. Woot nintendo!!!
46. My new love

47. This is different
48. This is a great idea
49. There goes my paycheck
50. I thought it was GameStop
51. This will complete my collection
52. I was excited to see a videogamestore in my mall finally. But they told me they'd been there for a couple years. I'm glad I know you're there now, I've been looking for mario Allstars.
53. pawn shop
54. The kiosk in Eden Prairie is the coolest thing the the mall.
55. Unique idea for a store. Lots of people still love the old games. My boyfriend was so excited I think he could have cried a little.
56. Very different
57. Speachless
58. Happy happy happy
59. Wow..
60. Ripoff
61. Mankato needed a new game store.
62. Nothing but good.
63. Wowee!!
64. Awesome!
65. this is awesome
66. Memories
67. Old school rocks
68. This place is great
69. I cant believe its back
70. Old games!
71. I love it
72. 80s!!!
73. Wow.
74. How long will this thing be here?
75. Great idea!
76. this place is great!
77. holy crap!
78. Super nintendo?!
79. oh my god im in love
80. Overwhelmed
81. Made my day!
82. Great ideas

**If you feel like the image you have of Game Central has changed, how has it changed?**

1. I feel like game central does not act as much as they perceive themselves to act.
2. Kyle and his staff have gone out of their way to find several games for my daughter that were at other stores or had to be special ordered. Anytime we need a game now, we buy it from them.
3. The games aren't as cheap as they should be. For example at target, Mirror's edge is \$50 new, and at your store, its \$49 used, and Mass Effect is now a plati-

num hit, and costs \$20 dollars new, but at your store it costs \$19 used. Also, I think you should be able to get a bit more store credit for trading in games.

4. I had my reservations about your store, but your staff always seems to know everything about whatever game I'm looking for. That's the coolest part about shopping with you. The guys at Gamestop won't have the old games I want, and if they do, they certainly aren't experts on them.

5. I realized it wasn't GameStop

6. expensive pawn shop. staff does know games though

7. Nick and the other guy who work for him at the kiosk are cool guys. They always seem to know a lot about the oldschool games

8. Your staff actually knows about the games they sell. I can see that you aren't just a sham like I assumed the business was when I saw it originally.

9. I have contained myself

10. Its still awesome

**What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 12) do you feel the most strong about?**

1. Funny and Interesting. every time I go I have a great time and normally walk away with a game or two.

2. Friendly, Sincere

3. Friendly. Appreciates customers.

4. local, friendly

5. professional, convenient

6. friendly, local

7. friendly, professional

8. Friendly, Successful

9. Local, Retro

10. Retro, Friendly

11. retro, interesting

12. Fun, Easy to approach, cheap

13. interesting, convenient

14. Retro, Friendly

15. easy to approach, friendly

16. Interesting, Friendly

17. funny, professional

18. Friendly and appreciates customers

19. "Friendly" and "Easy to approach". My 8 and 6 year old girls talk openly with the staff and they seem to care. They are always smiling.

20. Local, easy to approach

21. Interesting- I never saw old games for sale Convenient- I work in the mall so I always stop to see if they got new games in.

22. The guy who works the store is very smart and professional

23. retro, easy to approach

24. friendly, retro

25. retro, interesting

26. easy to approach, interesting

27. I think reliable and convenient do a good job of describing game central

28. The kid working seemed friendly and professional.

29. Derrick always smiles at the customers, I think he appreciates everyone, so does the other guy. They are very friendly too.
30. retro, friendly
31. Retro, Easy to approach
32. Retro, Friendly
33. The guys and the one girl that work the store all seem to be really sharp on the games, I never seem to bring something up that they haven't heard of. Their answers are always sincere and they are interesting to talk to.
34. easy approach friendly
35. retro, friendly
36. friendly, professional
37. retro, friendly
38. Retro, Reliable
39. Retro, Cheap
40. Friendly, Interesting
41. Friendly, Sincere
42. Retro, Friendly
43. Retro, Local
44. Sincere, Friendly
45. funny, local
46. Retro, Friendly
47. Retro, Sincere
48. Funny, Local
49. Retro, Professional
50. Friendly, Retro
51. Retro baby! The guys seemed to appreciate that we were there in the store.
52. Retro. Friendly
53. Sincere - the guys are always real about what they say (way cooler than the dudes who work at gamestop)
54. Retro (but that's a good thing) and Sincere (Kyle and Derrick are so nice)
55. Retro, Interesting
56. Friendly, Successful
57. Friendly, Convenient
58. Retro, Local
59. Very retro!! Seemed to sincerely know what he was talking about.
60. easy to approach, professional
61. retro, friendly
62. Reliable, Local
63. retro, reliable
64. Successful, Friendly
65. local, retro
66. interesting, expensive
67. Successful, Retro
68. Friendly, Retro
69. interesting, easy to approach
70. Successful, Friendly
71. Retro, successful
72. retro, appreciates customers
73. interesting, friendly
74. Retro, interesting

- 75. friendly, interesting
- 76. Retro, interesting
- 77. retro, reliable
- 78. easy to approach, retro
- 79. retro, convenient
- 80. easy to approach, retro
- 81. easy to approach, interesting

**What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 12) do you feel least describe Game Central?**

- 1. Reliable and Modern. Reliable: A game is there one week but alas, gone the next. Modern: it was my understanding that what makes game central so great is that it isn't modern, its more retro.
- 2. Modern, Accountable?
- 3. Global. Irresponsible.
- 4. Accountable? Cheap
- 5. accountable, cheap
- 6. convenient, quality-conscious
- 7. accountable, successful
- 8. Accountable, Modern
- 9. Convenient, Accountable
- 10. Local, Cheap
- 11. local, convenient
- 12. expensive, boring
- 13. acountable, sincere
- 14. Local, Cheap
- 15. local, cheap
- 16. accountable, cheap
- 17. successful, accountable
- 18. Cheao
- 19. expensive! professional
- 20. Modern- its a RETRO game store, duh
- 21. local, cheap
- 22. local, convenient
- 23. local, accountable
- 24. modern, local
- 25. Cheap and Sincere. The employees are fine, but they don't stand out. Except for Joe G. and the southdale store. For some reason I remember him. He was always so helpful. And Cheap doesn't quite fit game central because the prices are ok. Sometimes the deals are extremely bad, sometimes there pretty good.
- 26. Things don't exactly seem cheap, but I understand this stuff has value.
- 27. modern, unfriendly
- 28. Unaccountable, Unfriendly
- 29. Dishonest, serious
- 30. Obviously the store isn't cheap or modern.
- 31. boring doesn't appreciate customers
- 32. serious, unfriendly
- 33. dishonest, boring

34. local, serious
35. Irresponsible, Boring
36. Serious, Global
37. Cheap, Unfriendly
38. Dishonest, Cheap
39. Dishonest, Boring
40. Cheap, Boring
41. Global, Boring
42. Cheap, Serious
43. Dishonest, Global
44. Inconsistent, Unsuccessful
45. Unaccountable, Unfriendly
46. Cheap, Boring
47. Inconsistent, Unaccountable
48. Successful, global
49. Things arnt exactly cheap, but you guys have crazy stuff soemtimes.
50. Global and Serious- the guys are always laughing and smiling.
51. Unfriendly, Irresponsible
52. Boring, Error-prone
53. Dishonest, Boring
54. Cheap, Boring
55. dishonest, serious
56. Boring, inconvenient
57. dishonest, boring
58. Cheap, Local
59. boring, error-prone
60. global, boring
61. Dishonest, Serious
62. Global, Boring
63. global, unfriendly
64. Global, Boring
65. hard to approach, irresponsible
66. serious, boring
67. cheap, boring
68. global, boring
69. cheap, serious
70. Unprofessional, dishonest
71. boring, dishonest
72. dishonest, unfriendly
73. dishonest, unfriendly
74. dishonest, cheap
75. global, serious

**Why do you think Game Central can not keep its promises?**

1. They said they would order sonic 3 for me when I got my fc3 and it was there when I bought the system.
2. I said no because the point of a used game store is to get good deals on used games, but I know of a few games there which are only a dollar cheaper used then



the brand new version.

3. He said he would find donkey kong for me and I got it a week later.
4. I've waited a couple weeks for a game before, but he told me it might take that long.
5. They haven't promised me anything
6. The games aren't made anymore so they aren't always available
7. it took them 2 months to get one of my games.. but i got it.

### **Why do you feel you can not trust Game Central?**

1. They always seem to be hustling

### **What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?**

1. Maybe a swap meet for retro gamers to meet each other. That might cut into the business model, but it might build goodwill. Maybe an old school ( pong, joust, street fighter ) tournament. Maybe put N64s or PS2s into orphanages or bring GameBoys into hospitals for the kids.
2. Well considering the size, a little charity would be nice. Maybe donating to a student organization at MNSU, maybe the International Business Organization
3. tournaments
4. Black Colleges of America

### **What is Game Central missing?**

1. Comprehensive online list of game trade in values, that is ever changing and updating. I know that isn't really very possible, but if it had that, there would be no doubt in my mind i would check and visit more often.
2. Newer games
3. A way to access on hand inventories at other stores. An online store.
4. Wii, XB360, PS3
5. GC lacks the strong business presence that stores like game stop have. They need to get a store at the mall in order to achieve more presence.
6. new games
7. We love the store. We can't find sega games anywhere.
8. more gamecube games
9. wii games
10. I'd like to see more of the newer titles, I would do all my game shopping with Game Central if you always had what I wanted.
11. newer games
12. Wii games
13. Xbox 360
14. I'd like to see Wii games
15. Newer games

## **Open feedback for Game Central**

1. Keep on keeping on. Don't fall prey to the corporate conglomerates. Make Super Mario RPG cheaper.
2. I have shopped the Southdale, Mankato and Ridgedale locations. All were great experiences. Kyle in Mankato is super friendly and knowledgeable. Brindi is very friendly and was great at helping my 5yr old daughter pick out a game. It is kind of cool that the different stores have different inventory, but also, frustrating that there isn't a way for customers to be updated when cool / rare trades come in. It would be nice if the website (every day) posted a "this came in today blog". You could highlight a rarity or import that came in that day. It would alert customers to some cool stuff, but would also give customers a reason to check the website everyday. The more cool stuff I see on a regular basis...the more I will want to shop in the store on a regular basis.
3. I love you
4. GC logo does not coincide with what the game store is about.
5. a little on the spendy side
6. the guys who work there have always played the game im looking for, thats cool.
7. Don't close ever
8. love it!!
9. Anndars seemed very knowledgable
10. It's neat to see a store like this here in St. Cloud. I would only think this would work in a bigger metro area (maybe you guys should have a store in the cities?)
11. old school is the new school
12. You guys rock. Keep it up.
13. Much nicer than trying to find games at pawnshops!
14. Sometimes they don't have the games I want then.
15. Kyle and Derik. You make Game Central what it is.
16. Great store!! :)
17. It's the best place to find old rare games but I feel ripped off sometimes
18. Can I have a job? you guys work at the coolest job ever.
19. Great store!
20. Rock on!
21. i love you!!!

## APPENDIX 7

### OPEN COMMENTS FROM MNSU STUDENTS

#### **What is the first thing that comes to your mind about Game Central?**

1. Xbox
2. games
3. Good games and decent price
4. Has lots of games.
5. Video Games
6. I know nothing of it
7. Latest Gaming Information
8. that they have lots and lots of games
9. video games
10. video games
11. Super Nintendo
12. Video Games
13. Video Games?
14. games
15. Video Arcade
16. Video Games
17. I've never heard of it. I supposed it would be an arcade.
18. Video games, boys
19. Games
20. I don't know what it is.
21. A place to buy video games
22. video games
23. never heard of it before
24. Video games..mostly like for x-box or play station.
25. A main place for people to come together to play games.
26. I dont know anything about it because I havent been exposed to it yet.
27. Games, fun, shopping
28. I dont know what game central is... I wonder if it is an arcade type of place or.....
29. I have never heard of it.
30. what is game central.
31. I am curious as to what it is exactly. I have heard of it, but have never shopped there.
32. video games
33. I've never heard of it
34. A Gaming company or place that sells games.
35. I don't know what it is
36. I have never heard of it.
37. haven't been there
38. I have never shopped there but hopefully good games for good prices?

39. Video Games
40. Games
41. i have never heard of it
42. what is it?
43. Gaming supplies
44. Video games
45. What is Game Central? I have never heard of that company.
46. Nintendo!
47. I have no idea what or where it is
48. video games
49. Video Games.
50. Video games
51. Video Games
52. It is a store for video games.
53. I dont know what it is
54. wide selection
55. video games
56. Its probably a store that sells video games or board games.
57. Games
58. I think of video games, hence the name of the company
59. games, gaming supplies, game wear
60. games
61. Games
62. games
63. Video game store
64. sitting on the coach all day playing video games
65. games
66. Video Games.
67. Video games
68. "I want to get a gaming system, but I never heard of this store so is it trust worthy?"
69. new old and used games and gaming systems
70. It's probably a company that involves video games, probably sells them.
71. Video Games
72. It's a game store I've never heard of
73. Funny
74. Weekend fun
75. I don't know what it is
76. I don't know the company but I am thinking that it is a New & Used Video Game Console & Game retailer.
77. never heard of the store
78. What games do they have and what are the prices.
79. Video Games
80. games
81. I have never heard of it
82. Video games
83. Probably a store that is similar to Game Stop
84. None
85. Video Games
86. It must be affiliated with games.

87. PS3, xbox, PC-games
88. never heard of it
89. Fun
90. Honestly I have never heard of it, but what first comes to mind is dealings with video games
91. ive never heard of it
92. never heard of it
93. Video Games
94. Never heard of it, but it sounds like a place to but video games...
95. idk what it is
96. video games
97. Video games and Hollywood Video
98. i've never been there
99. Variety
100. What is game central?
101. Video Games
102. on line games for kids
103. I have never heard of it before
104. From the name, Game Central probably sells computer games
105. Video games
106. Never heard of it
107. It must be a company that rents or sells games, similar to Gamestop.
108. gaming
109. Store to purchase new and used video games. Like a Funcoland.
110. playing games
111. Video Games
112. I have only heard that they sell retro/old school games.
113. ...video games..
114. Games
115. Video Games.
116. Video Games
117. Gaming and Pokemon. Oh, and where is it located again.... I don't go there, but I've seen it around.
118. I have never been there. So the first thing that comes to mind is what it is.
119. Games
120. a place to play games
121. Gaming Systems/New Games
122. I have no idea what Game Central is.
123. A place to hangout and play games with friends.
124. Fun
125. About game competition
126. Video Games
127. Video Games
128. magazine
129. Video Games
130. Nothing

## APPENDIX 8

### OPEN COMMENTS FROM MNSU STUDENTS FAMILIAR WITH GC

**What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 6) do you feel the most strong about?**

1. Friendly, Easy to Approach
2. approachable and local
3. friendly and reliable
4. Easy to appoaach, Exspensive
5. Friendly Easy to Approach
6. Easy to approach & Appreciates customers
7. local, friendly
8. professional and accountable
9. Friendly, Professional.
10. Professional and friendly
11. cheap and professional
12. Approachable, Friendly
13. Friendly and Convenient
14. Sincere, Accountable

**What two (2) adjectives from above (question no. 6) do you feel least describe Game Central?**

1. Cheap and Accountable
2. interesting and funny
3. funny and cheap
4. Unaccountable, Unproffessional
5. Hard to approach Unaccountable
6. Irresponsible & Retro
7. professional, successful
8. intersting
9. Expensive, Error Prone
10. convenient and local
11. sincere and appreciates customers
12. Modern, inconvenient
13. Dishonest and Irresponsible
14. Interesting, Local

**If you are loyal to a game store, why do you think you prefer it there?**

1. reliable
2. More well known and more convenient
3. because game stop rocks!!

**Why do you think Game Central can not keep its promises?**

1. idk, i've never been there

**Why can't you trust Game Central?**

1. because I've never been there

**What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see Game Central doing?**

1. College scholarship
2. charities for children
3. mcdonalds children hospital, helping in a food drive
4. Action Sports Sponsorships and Pro Gamer sponsorships
5. Something for kids
6. Something along the lines of helping kids stay in school.
7. giving a percentage of their profit to charity
8. stuff with the college kids maybe at hockey game sponser different events during the game give away some prizes
9. A benefit. Maybe some 72 hour video game challenges to raise money for a cause.
10. tournaments could be created to better interact with customers and create store awareness
11. nghghg
12. Anything to give back

**What is Game Central missing?**

1. well it would help having a bigger selection
2. Not sure it's just a little more bang to make it stand out a bit more
3. A better computer game section
4. Attractive Image

## APPENDIX 9

### OPEN COMMENTS FROM MNSU STUDENTS UNFAMILIAR WITH GC

#### **Why are you loyal to a game store?**

1. I'm not. Game Stop employees seem to act like douches and Game Stop also rips you off when trading games in.
2. Because they have great customer service.
3. I'm not..
4. they have good products at good prices.
5. im familiar with the store and their policies
6. I am if they can provide me most bang for my buck. In other words if they can give me alot for trade in.
7. they give me good deals if i keep coming back
8. I'm not
9. I know the staff personally
10. its cheaper than best buy
11. gamestop
12. Game Stop
13. I appreciate the business they do
14. Because they always sell me quality products and the employees are always helpful
15. I just look for the cheapest price
16. Good service, friendly employees
17. they sell good quality games
18. not, just look for the best price
19. I am not a huge video game fan, so I don't go to many stores.
20. Good deals and knowledgeable staff
21. good prices and great games
22. if they have a good selection of games and have the new ones on time
23. N/A
24. I am not, I shop when I feel like it and where I feel like it. It has more to do with location more than anything. I do not make special trips to make gaming purchases.
25. go where the deals are
26. game stop
27. because they have good customer service and they stand behind there product
28. Good customer service, great supply of games my family likes, good deals (reward zone)
29. I am not
30. low price
31. If the offer the best prices
32. I'm not.
33. I have gone to a few game stores that buy/sell/trade games. The biggest part for it to me would be the selection, price, and quality of the games.
34. if they have good service and low prices
35. I am not. I price shop.
36. employee services



**What two (2) adjectives from above do you feel the most strong about?**

1. dishonest unfriendly
2. reliable and easy approach
3. Friendly and Reliable
4. cheap, friendly.
5. Professional, Local
6. professional, successful
7. Retro and Interesting
8. local and professional
9. Convenient and cheap.
10. cheap and funny
11. Friendly and appreciating customers
12. cheap and reliable
13. Quality-conscious Reliable
14. Appreciate customers Professional
15. Funny, cheap.
16. reliable, accountable
17. friendly, cheap
18. Convenient Cheap
19. friendly convenient
20. cheap, friendly
21. Convenient & Cheap
22. Convenient, and Appreciates Customers
23. convenient, appreciative
24. i feel like reliable because i can count on the info they are giving me and quality because i can trust buying used games from them
25. Quality-Conscious and Accountable
26. Quality Conscience, Cheap
27. Reliable and Responsible
28. modern, interesting
29. Friendly and interesting
30. easy to approach and convenient
31. cheap, honest
32. convenient, easy to approach
33. accountable, responsible
34. Cheap and Modern
35. Accountable and Professional
36. convenient and cheap
37. interesting and accountable
38. Convenient, Easy to approach
39. cheap/expensive & friendly/unfriendly
40. Cheap and approachable
41. easy to approach and convenient
42. convenient and local
43. Reliable and Accountable
44. Hard to Approach and Interesting
45. Responsible and Easy to approach
46. professional and responsible
47. accountable and cheap
48. convenient successful

49. Quality-conscious and Professional
50. friendly, quality conscious
51. friendly easy to approach
52. interesting and reliable
53. Cheap/Expensive Local/Global
54. Modern and Funny employees
55. Convenient Interesting
56. quality and cheap
57. Reliable, convenient
58. Cheap and Reliable
59. Reliable and quality conscious
60. Cheap & Quality-Conscious
61. Friendly and local
62. NONE NONE
63. easy to approach expensive
64. appreciates customers and reliable
65. cheap and quality-conscious
66. Quality-conscious and reliable
67. They are easy to approach and are convenient.
68. Friendly, Cheap
69. Modern Professional
70. professional Quality-conscious
71. reliable, quality conscious
72. quality conscious, cheap
73. responsible and professional
74. convenient, accountable
75. local, convenient
76. quality-conscious and cheap
77. Successful and Global
78. modern, expensive
79. Cheap, Reliable
80. Appreciates customers, Sincere
81. convenient & cheap
82. reliable, and cheap
83. Sincere and cheap
84. funny and friendly
85. Cheap & Quality
86. Convenient, Friendly
87. funny, appreciates customers
88. quality and reliable
89. Reliable, Accountable
90. reliable and professional
91. i would like reliable and cheap
92. Cheap, reliable
93. Convenient, Expensive.
94. Interesting and Funny
95. Convenient, Interesting
96. Cheap/Reliable
97. reliable, easy to approach
98. Quality-conscious and Friendly

- 99. Reliable, responsible
- 100. Successful and Professional
- 101. Expensive and unfriendly
- 102. Interesting, Reliable
- 103. Cheap and reliable. This page is a bit confusing FYI.
- 104. Local and Cheap
- 105. cheap friendly

**What two (2) adjectives from above do you feel least describe a company that buys, sells and trades games?**

- 1. dishonest unfriendly
- 2. funny and local
- 3. Boring and Expensive
- 4. interesting, modern.
- 5. Reliable, Cheap
- 6. funny, cheap
- 7. Inconvenient and Dishonest
- 8. none
- 9. Local and successful.
- 10. reliable and quality conscious
- 11. Professional and Quality-conscious
- 12. Unfriendly Boring
- 13. Modern Local
- 14. Cheap, Funny.
- 15. funny, interesting
- 16. sincere, professional
- 17. Professional Funny
- 18. global inconsistent
- 19. reliable, professional
- 20. Sincere & Friendly
- 21. Inconvenient, and expensive
- 22. modern, responsible
- 23. local because most places are chain stores and online now and cheap because the cost of everything is going up
- 24. Modern and Easy to Approach
- 25. Sincere, Appreciates customers
- 26. Funny/Serious, Modern/Retro
- 27. preprofessional, easy to approach
- 28. Successful and Cheap
- 29. hard to approach and inconvenient
- 30. retro, convenient
- 31. unfriendly, error-prone
- 32. dishonest, unfriendly
- 33. Quality-conscious and professional
- 34. Dishonest and Irresponsible
- 35. sincere and responsible
- 36. serious and boring
- 37. Reliable, Professional
- 38. expensive

39. professional and responsible
40. local and modern
41. funny? and i am not sure about sincerity
42. Easy to approach and local
43. inconsistent and reliable
44. Cheap and Modern
45. interesting modern
46. sincere and funny
47. serious expensive
48. Cheap and Local
49. funny and modern
50. unfriendly hard to approach
51. Expensive and boring
52. Convenient/Inconvenient Local/Global
53. Expensive and can be slightly unprofessional
54. Accountable Cheap
55. funny, sincere
56. cheap, local
57. Professional and Funny
58. Funny and professional
59. Serious & Expensive
60. Omcpmsostemt. Doesn't appreciate customers
61. NONE NONE
62. reliable quality-conscious
63. cheap and funny
64. interesting/boring and funny/serious
65. Local and accountable
66. Accountability, it's a hard unit to measure adequately. also, the sincerity.
67. Succesful, Reliable
68. Local Funny
69. local funny
70. funny, modern
71. funny, interesting
72. cheap- funny
73. modern, funny
74. inconsistent, dishonest
75. funny and successful
76. Reliable and Quality-conscious
77. sincere, cheap
78. Local, Funny
79. Unfriendly, Boring
80. funny & modern
81. accountable, professional
82. Funny and modern
83. modern and professional
84. Local & Funny
85. Error-prone, Doesn't appreciate customers
86. interesting, modern
87. successful and funny
88. Inconsistent, Serious

- 89. successful and cheap
- 90. accountable, professional
- 91. funny, local
- 92. Funny, Successful.
- 93. Convenient (it's neither convenient nor inconvenient; it just IS) and Global (it's definitely a local thing)
- 94. Accountable, Funny
- 95. Local/successful
- 96. ?
- 97. Dishonest and Inconvenient
- 98. Modern, interesting
- 99. Inconsistent and Expensive
- 100. funny and responsible
- 101. Cheap, Quality-conscious
- 102. Funny, and Successful
- 103. Funny and Interesting
- 104. reliable sincere

#### **Why can't you trust such a company?**

- 1. As stated before Game Stop rips you off when trading games in. Plus you only get "Game Stop" bucks which blow. Ive always found it better buying from stores like Target or Walmart.
- 2. because they just rip you off
- 3. They can't gurantee that thier products are top quality
- 4. They seem sketchy..
- 5. Scams.
- 6. If the games missing something or broken will you be able to return it? Do they screen the games before resale?
- 7. sell it for more than what costumer recieves
- 8. Prices differ all the time and they don't carry all the games that I want
- 9. Well, I generally do not like to trust a company with anything because I am not running it. I would have picked not sure if it would have been an option however it was not. I do not feel like a game store such as the one described has earned my trust or loyalty, and that is the sole reason. It has nothing to do with experiences.
- 10. Because the concept is new to me.
- 11. I'm not sure that I'm getting the best deal.
- 12. I feel as if they are to "get one by" the customer. that they only look out for themselves
- 13. Can't trust many people these days, especially a big company that is out to get rich.
- 14. Because they just want your money.
- 15. Most of them are fraud so .

#### **What kind of sponsorship or charity would you see such a company doing?**

- 1. scholarships for students of any kind
- 2. Make a Wish
- 3. Research for cancer.
- 4. Any i believe all businesses should be involved in something.

5. something about donating to the poor
6. Unknown
7. sponser a video game contest
8. youth recreation, skate boarding things, things with kids becasue that is thier main consumer age group
9. Just supporting some local charity, nothing too big
10. A charity for kids
11. Childhood Obesity
12. community work.
13. Any charity
14. no idea?
15. Video Games for the needy
16. Childrens charity or helping teenagers and schools
17. I dont feel that it is necessarily expected of companies to do any charity but participating in such events could help lure customers. Sponsorship definately is something that gets the name out there to the public as well. A game store may want to sponsor events in schools to target 10-25 year olds so middle schools up through college campuses... as for charity, bigger companies in my opinion give to charity for the tax breaks more than anything. But if "Game Central" is or becomes large enough, it's always a good thing to give to the community. I can understand why small businesses may not though especially with the econ-omy..everyones pockets are tight..
18. I would see them donating games that they have an abundance of to some local charity in order to allow people struggling financially to be able to enjoy video games.
19. They could donate games to the terminally ill or mentally handicapped foundations or charities so that the kids could play with them.
20. anything, it doesn't matter.
21. Breast cancer research.
22. Charity for needy children.
23. MLG events, Gaming tournaments for kids
24. something for kids or introducing games to people that wouldnt have them
25. sponsoring sporting events
26. Giving repaired systems to charity events to sell
27. college
28. A charity tat donates videogames to poor community centers that way kids can have something to take their mind off of their own life problems for a little bit. After all everyone needs to escape for awhile every now and then.
29. sponsoring a toy drive or something similar
30. A charity for school aged kids.
31. sponsoring active kids
32. Game donations
33. sponsoring gaming events (GH3, halo comps.)
34. game donations for underpriveleged children
35. I would see them sponsoring gaming events or donating money towards students or programs geared towards video game design and development
36. anything that is beneficial on all levels, whether its a local, state or national level
37. Something involving kids
38. Something foreign and something that gets a lot of publicity.

39. Do something that relates to video games, like sponsor an event for young kids (maybe like the ones in big brothers big sisters program) where they can play games and eat pizza etc. or have ppl donate their old games and send them with a console to underprivileged kids (like to shelters)
40. Helping Hands, Bridging, child sponsorship
41. They could do charities for people that do not have access to games for entertainment. Raise money or gaming items that could be distributed to those less fortunate
42. A children's learning/education/athletic sponsorship or charity. Something that enforces the importance of education to children as well the importance of physical activity.
43. Boys and Girls Club
44. Anything I promote.
45. Game competitions
46. Sportsevents
47. something with kids
48. helping kids with violence or giving to somethings that sometimes video games promotes MADD guns
49. providing games to places that have children who need an extra something special. (ie, hospital, half-way houses). Or to children that don't have much.
50. sponsor local sports teams
51. College events
52. local charities in the community they are located in, i.e. United Way, March of Dimes, & schools
53. breast cancer
54. Any charity that will help the community.
55. I think any kind of charity, especially with helping kids, would benefit their image
56. Anything... there are many. St. Judes, Susan Komen, Make a Wish, etc.
57. Youth sports sponsorships, city volleyball or sports leagues, children's hospital charities, any charity involving children in need, or children in general.
58. anything I just think everyone should be involved in charity
59. Childhood Obesity
60. something with sciences and math, education.
61. One for the youth
62. something that has to do with children
63. donating used games that the company has extra copies of to people namely kids that need them
64. anything...wouldn't matter to me
65. Something on a local scale
66. Can't say at the moment.
67. May be the charity for orphan children. Or can do the charity for international organization for poor and underdeveloped country.
68. Exhibition about Video Games
69. Which ever they choose. They do not NEED to do this but charity is the way to success.
70. Any thing that will help the local community where the store is located.
71. aids

### **Additional comments and feedback**

1. none
2. I think it is beneficial to the company to hire people that are knowledgeable about the games that are being sold, and have some history knowledge in gaming systems and the games themselves. I also enjoy that I can still buy/sell super nintendo games from this store.
3. none.
4. :P>
5. none
6. I think that people feel like they get ripped of when they sell video games. A lot of times they will only give two dollars for something that cost 50 six months ago.
7. none
8. None
9. As long as a company who buys back doesnt discount on cash back for trade in, they will always be my favorite store. I dont like being charged extra just to get cash back instead of in store credit.
10. i havent bought anything from game central but i have always wanted to just didnt have money
11. <3
12. none
13. Great questions. I hope this helps you alot.
14. none
15. no
16. none
17. None!
18. NONE
19. I feel these stores usually don't have the right mix of amount of products, quality sales people, and competitive prices. They may have hard to find things, but at prices that no one would purchase
20. N/A
21. No comments
22. Interesting topic, I wish you the best.
23. Tsemppiä opariin.. :) t. RantasVille from Finland
24. This sounds interesting, good luck with your research!
25. Companies like that are a good idea, but have too much overhead and therefore past the costs onto consumers, making their prices still slightly too high for even older, used games.
26. -
27. Good luck on your thesis!
28. Having posted prices, organized stock, a clean store/storefront, and friendly employees would take away from buying/selling/trading business.
29. NA
30. Nth
31. I'm a bit confussed whether this survey was talking about Game Central or any place that sells games. Second, how dis half those questions pertain to credibility or reputation?



## APPENDIX 10

### IMAGE BY EMPLOYEES

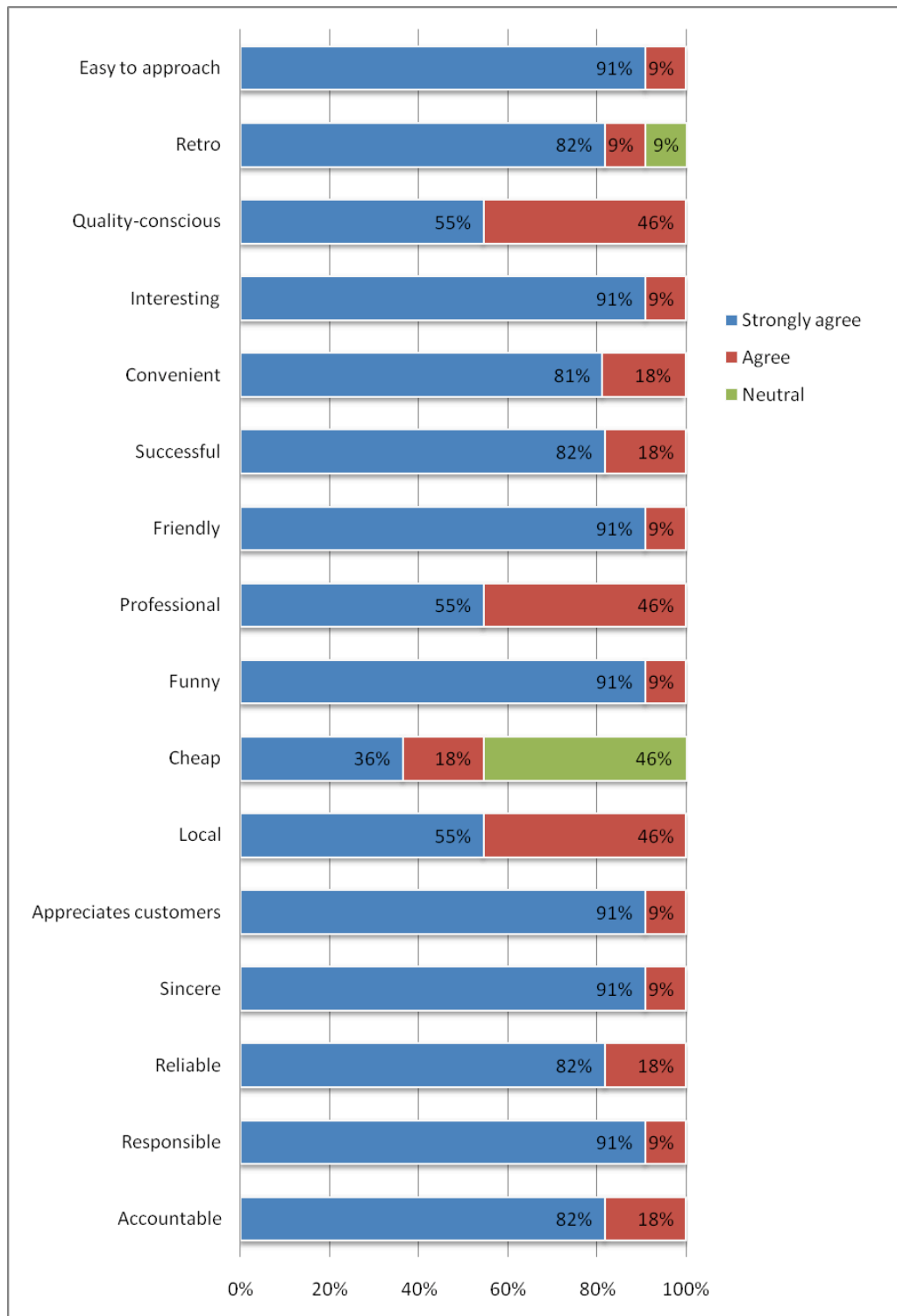


FIGURE 29. Adjectives that employees thought describe Game Central the best.  
(n=11)

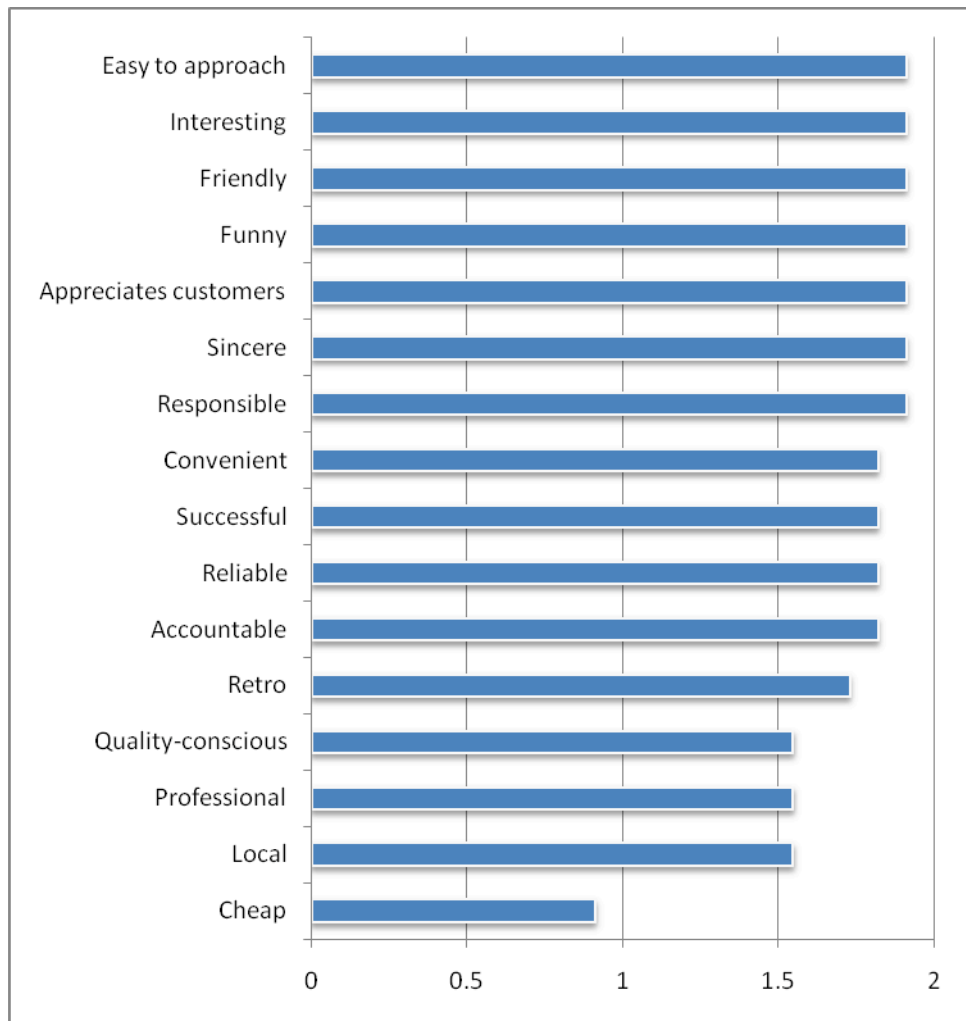


FIGURE 30. Employees: Best descriptive adjectives by weight.

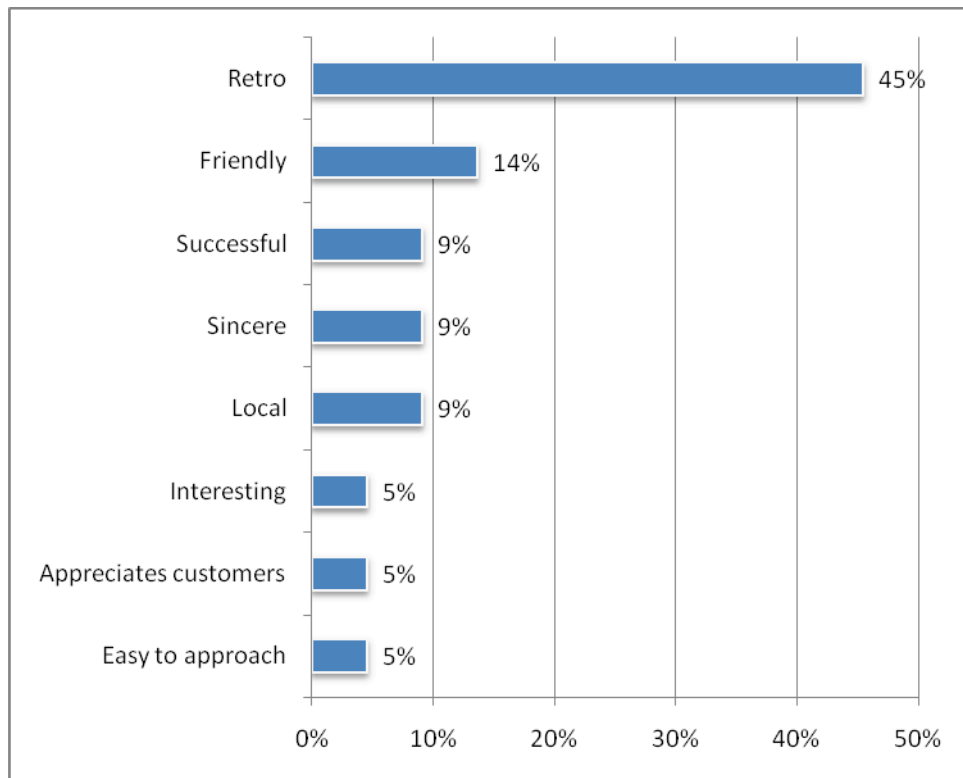


FIGURE 31. What two adjectives employees feel the most strong about. (n=22)

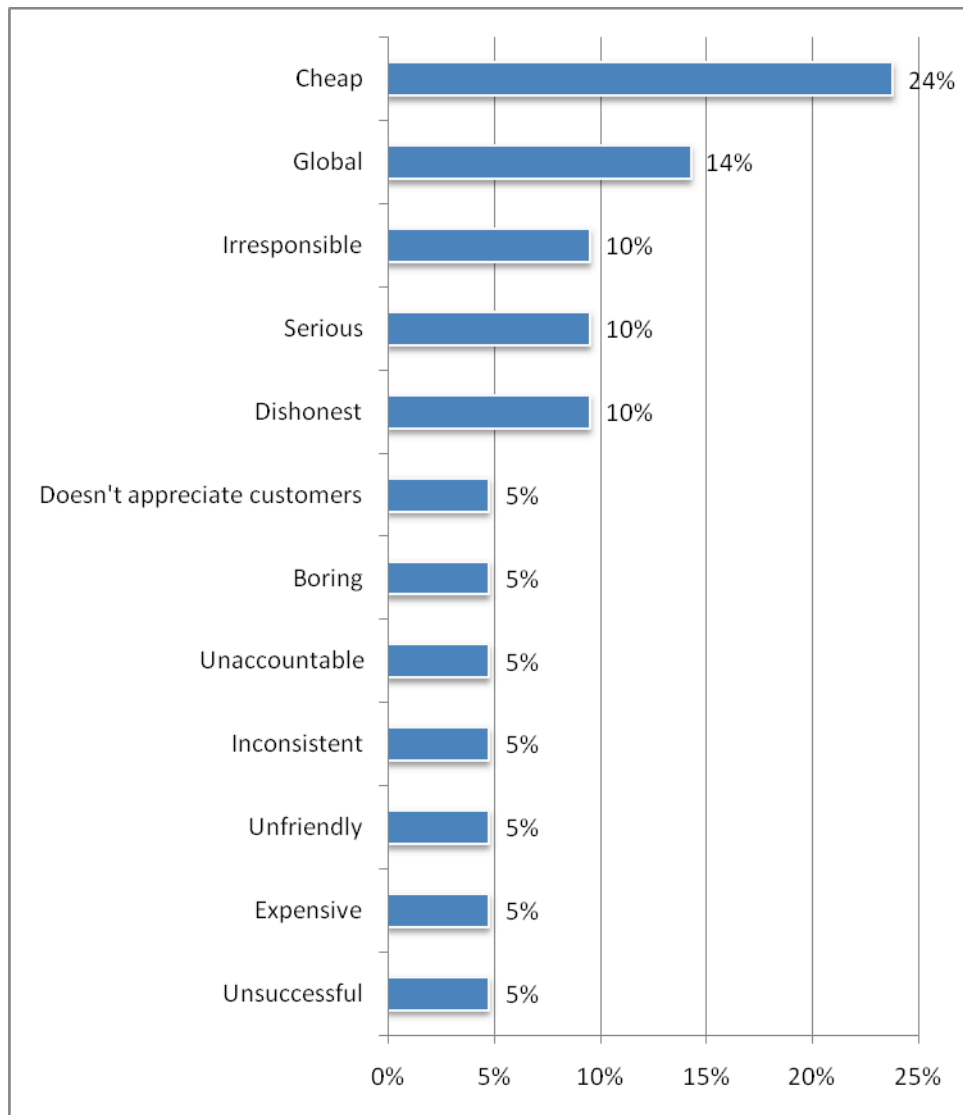


FIGURE 32. What two adjectives employees feel least describe Game Central.  
(n=22)

## COMPANY EXPRESSIVENESS BY EMPLOYEES

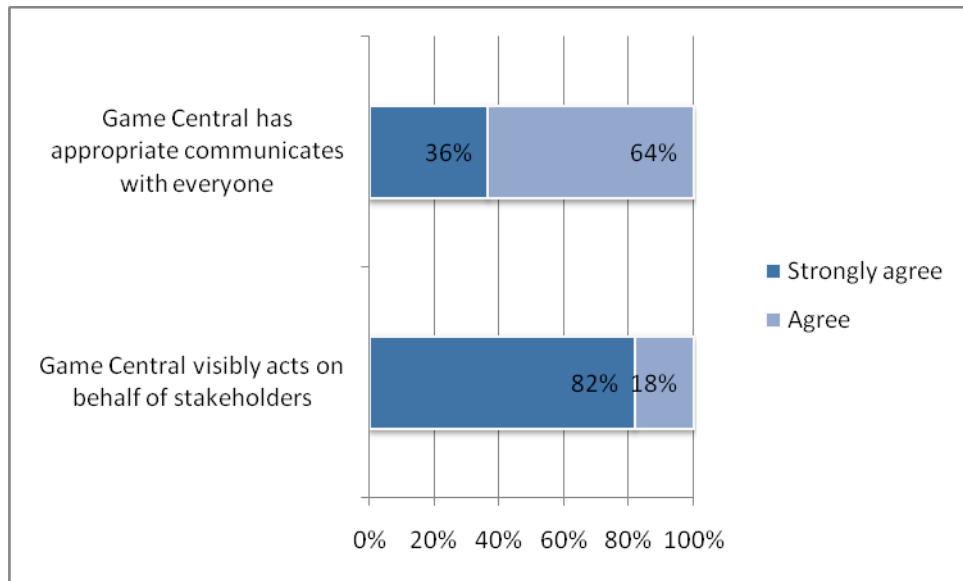


FIGURE 33. Employees: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? (n=11)

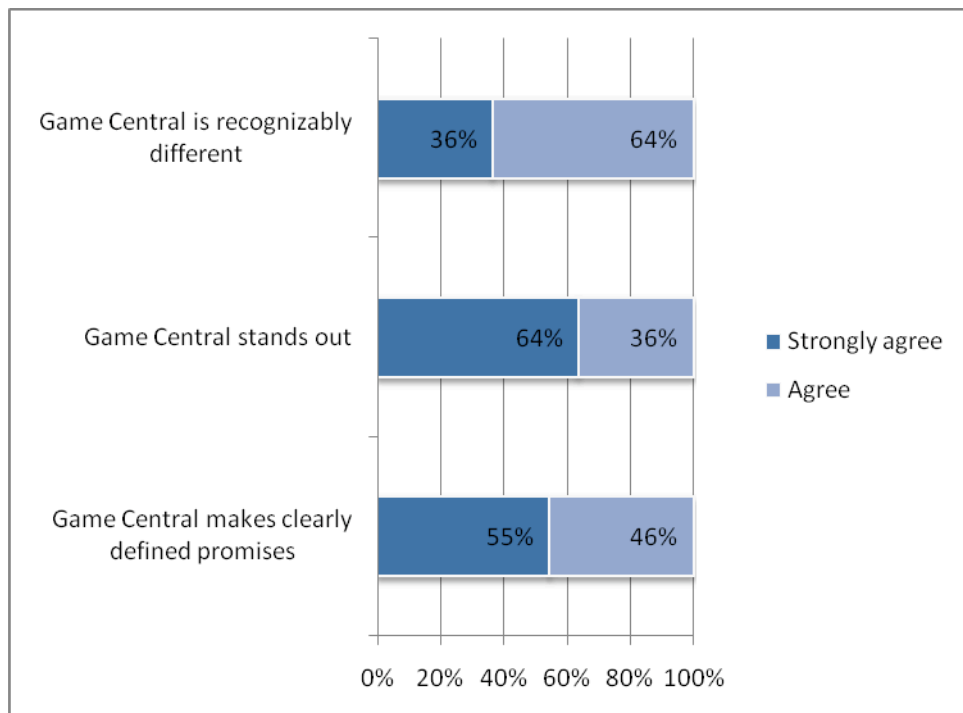


FIGURE 34. Employees: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? (n=11)

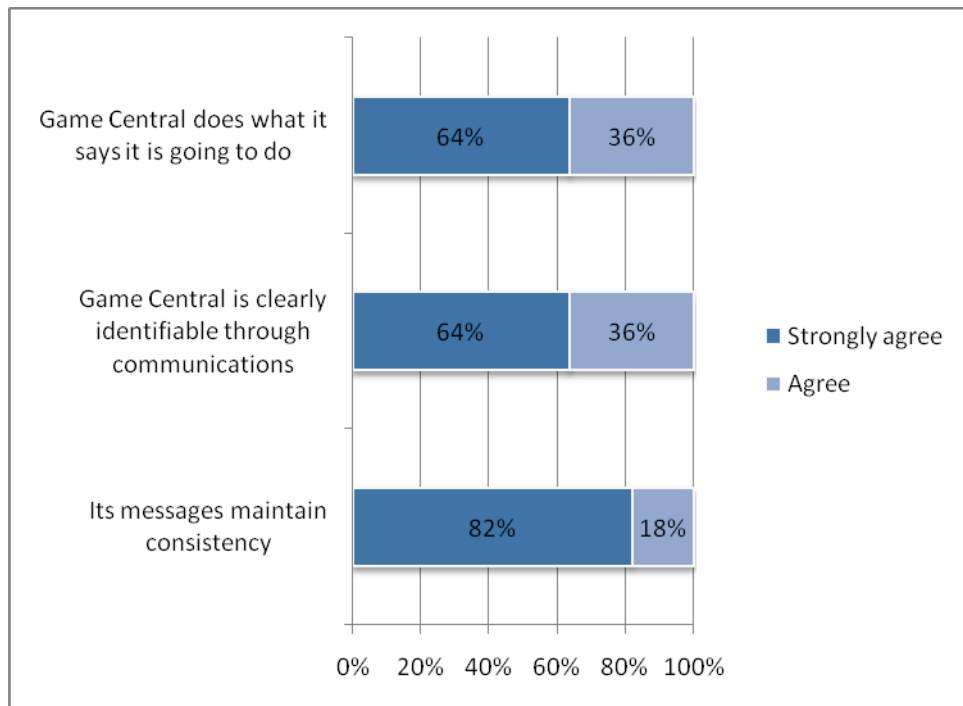


FIGURE 35. Employees: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency? (n=11)

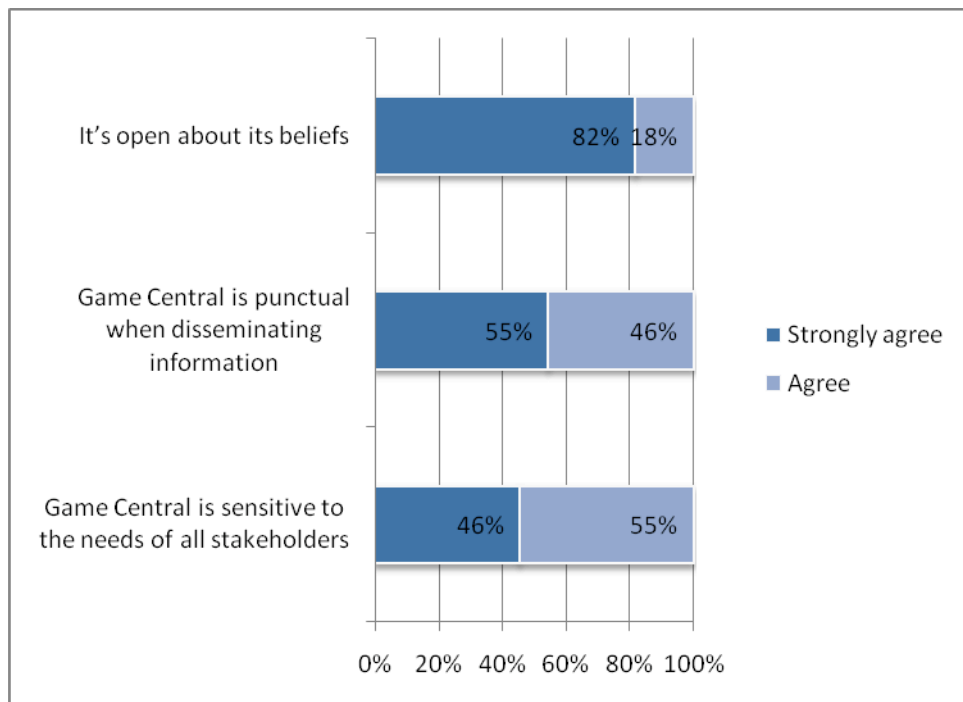


FIGURE 36. Employees: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency? (n=11)

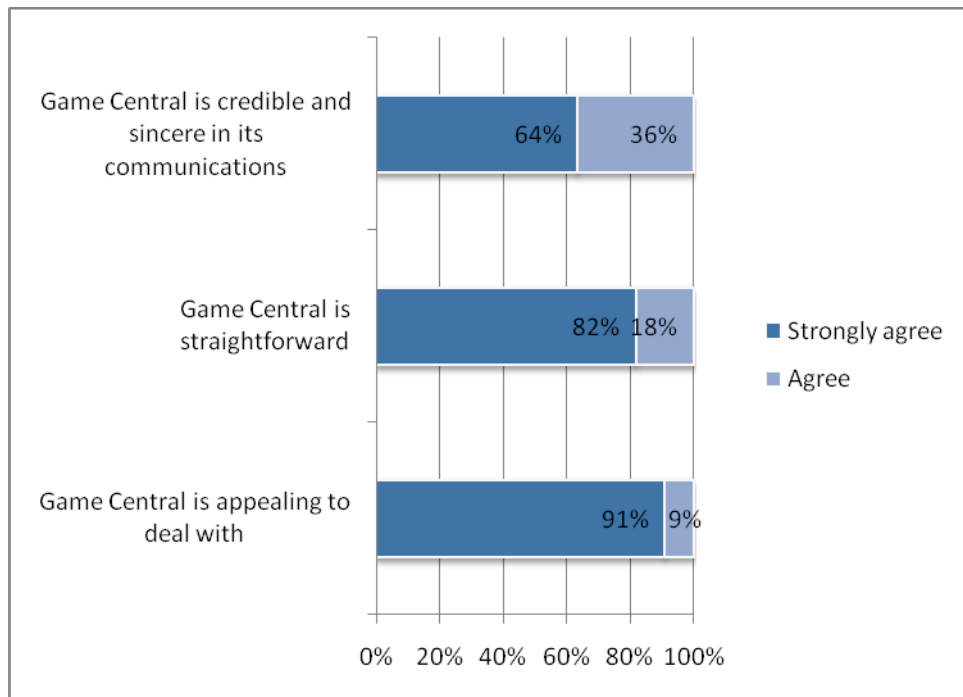


FIGURE 37. Employees: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity? (n=11)

## APPENDIX 11

### IMAGE BY CUSTOMERS

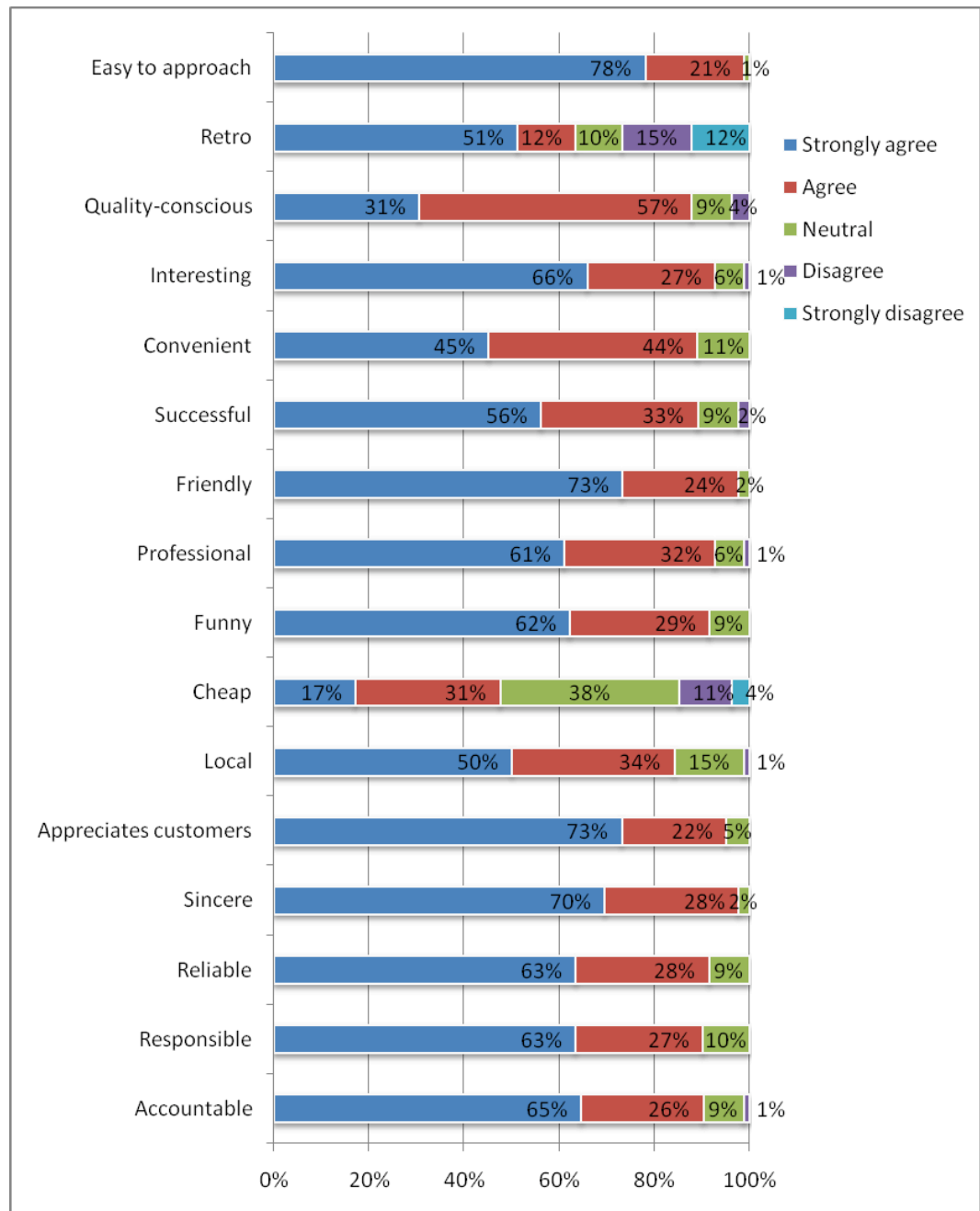


FIGURE 38. Adjectives that customers thought describe Game Central the best.  
(n=82)



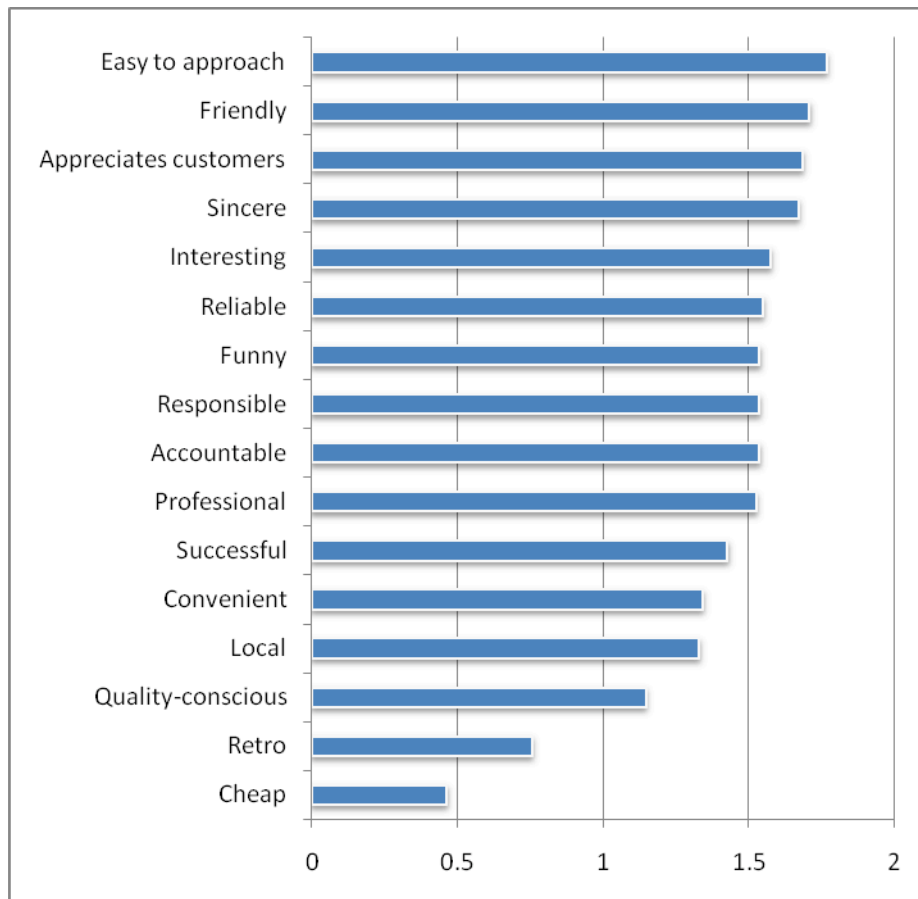


FIGURE 39. Customers: Best descriptive adjectives by weight.

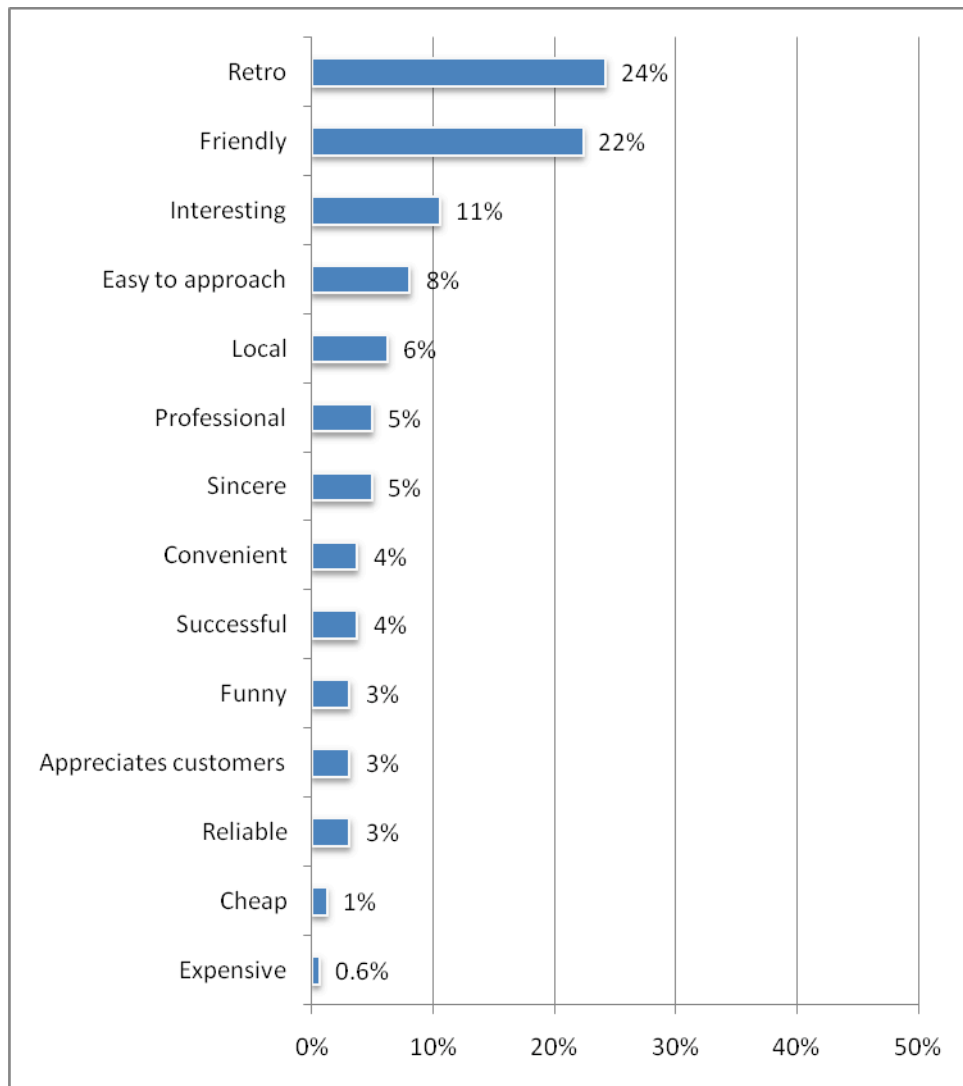


FIGURE 40. What two adjectives do customers feel the most strong about.  
(n=161)

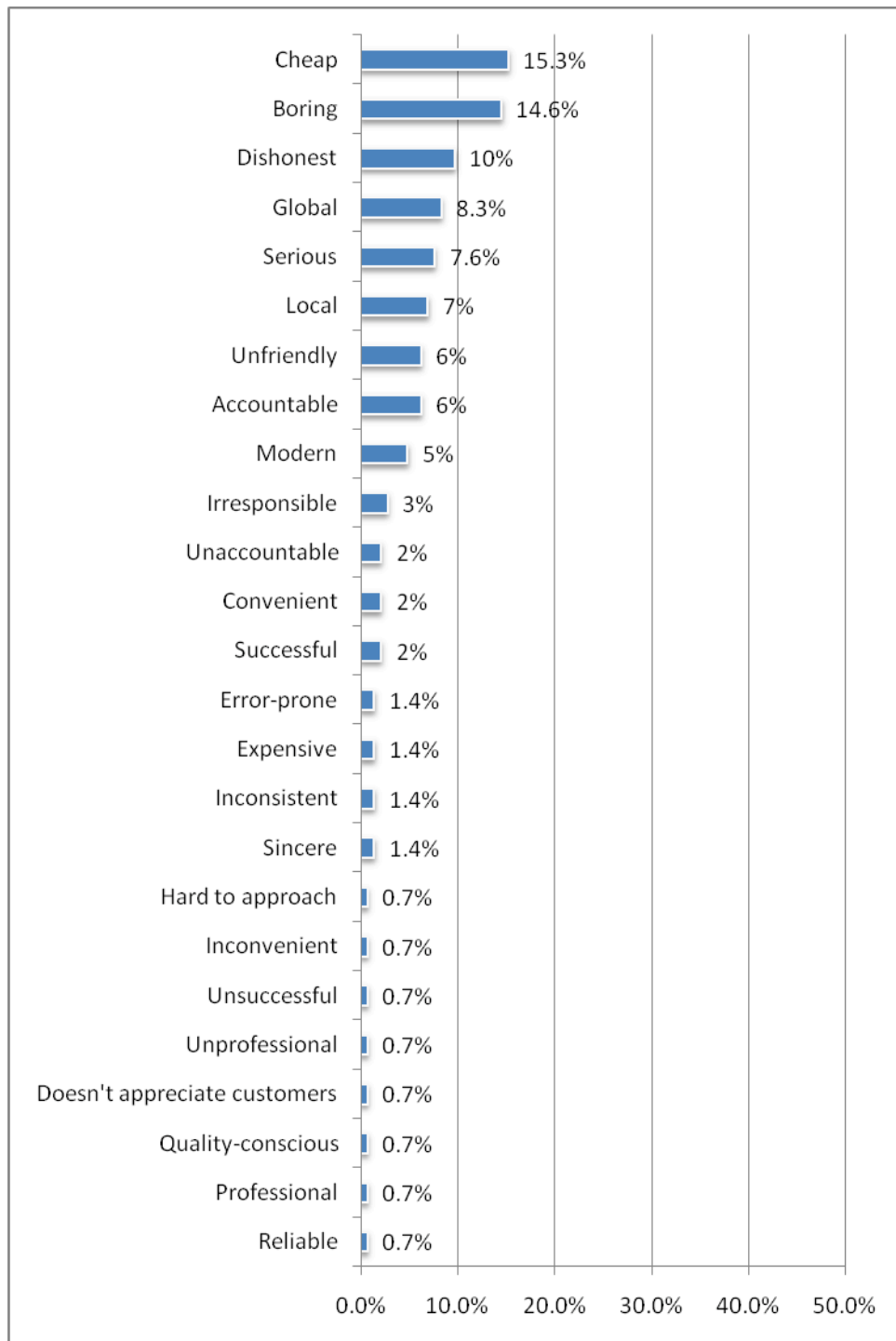


FIGURE 41. What two adjectives do customers feel least describe Game Central.  
(n=144)

## COMPANY EXPRESSIVENESS

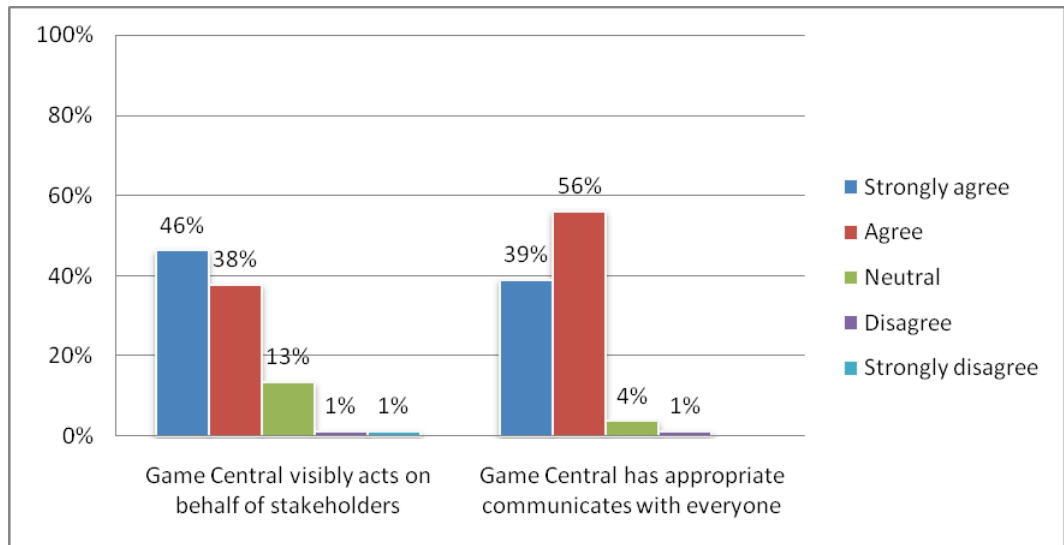


FIGURE 42. Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? (n=82).

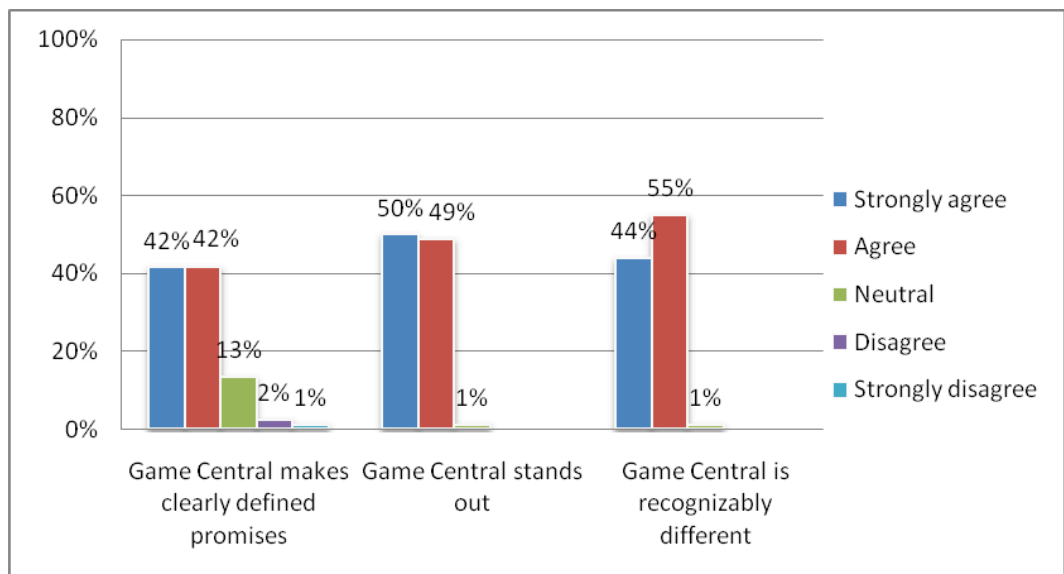


FIGURE 43. Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? (n=82)

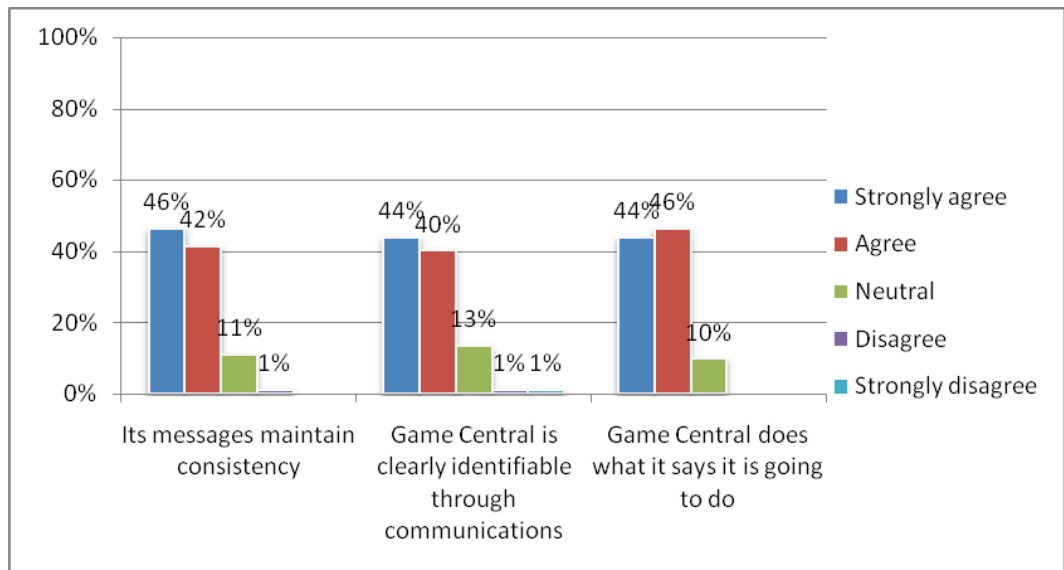


FIGURE 44. Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency?  
(n=82)

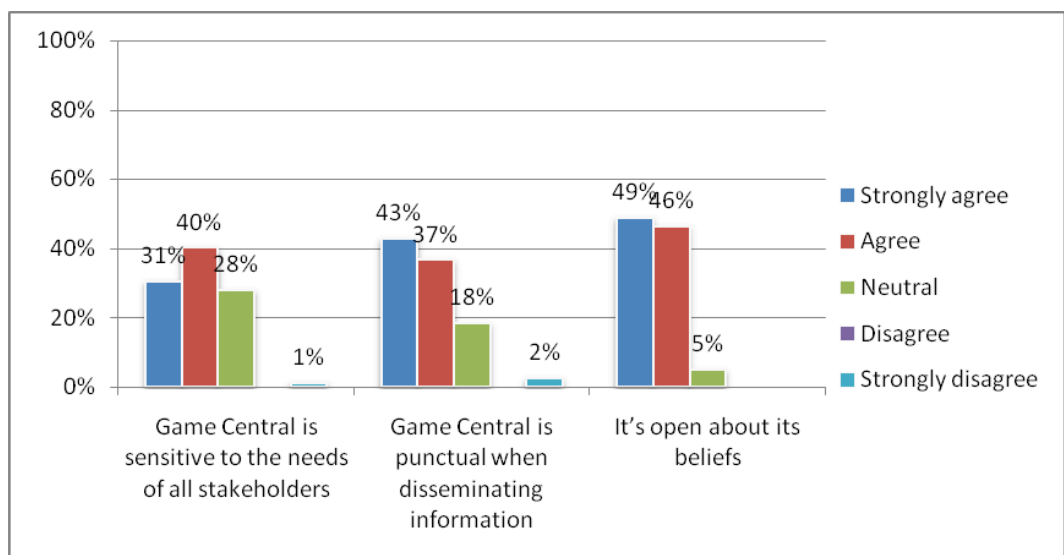


FIGURE 45. Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency?  
(n=82)

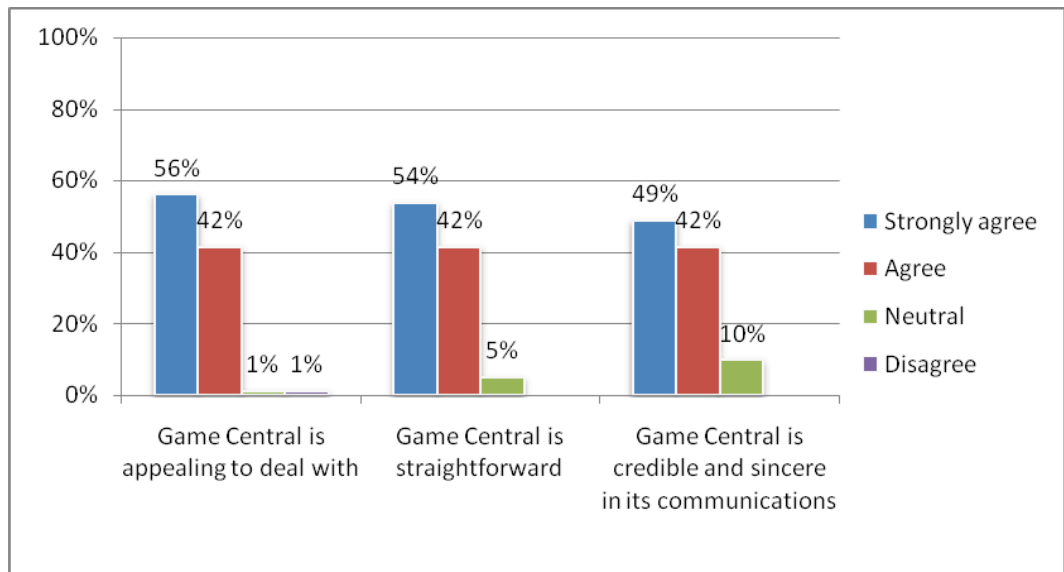


FIGURE 46. Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity?  
(n=82)

## APPENDIX 12

### IMAGE BY MNSU STUDENTS FAMILIAR WITH GAME CENTRAL

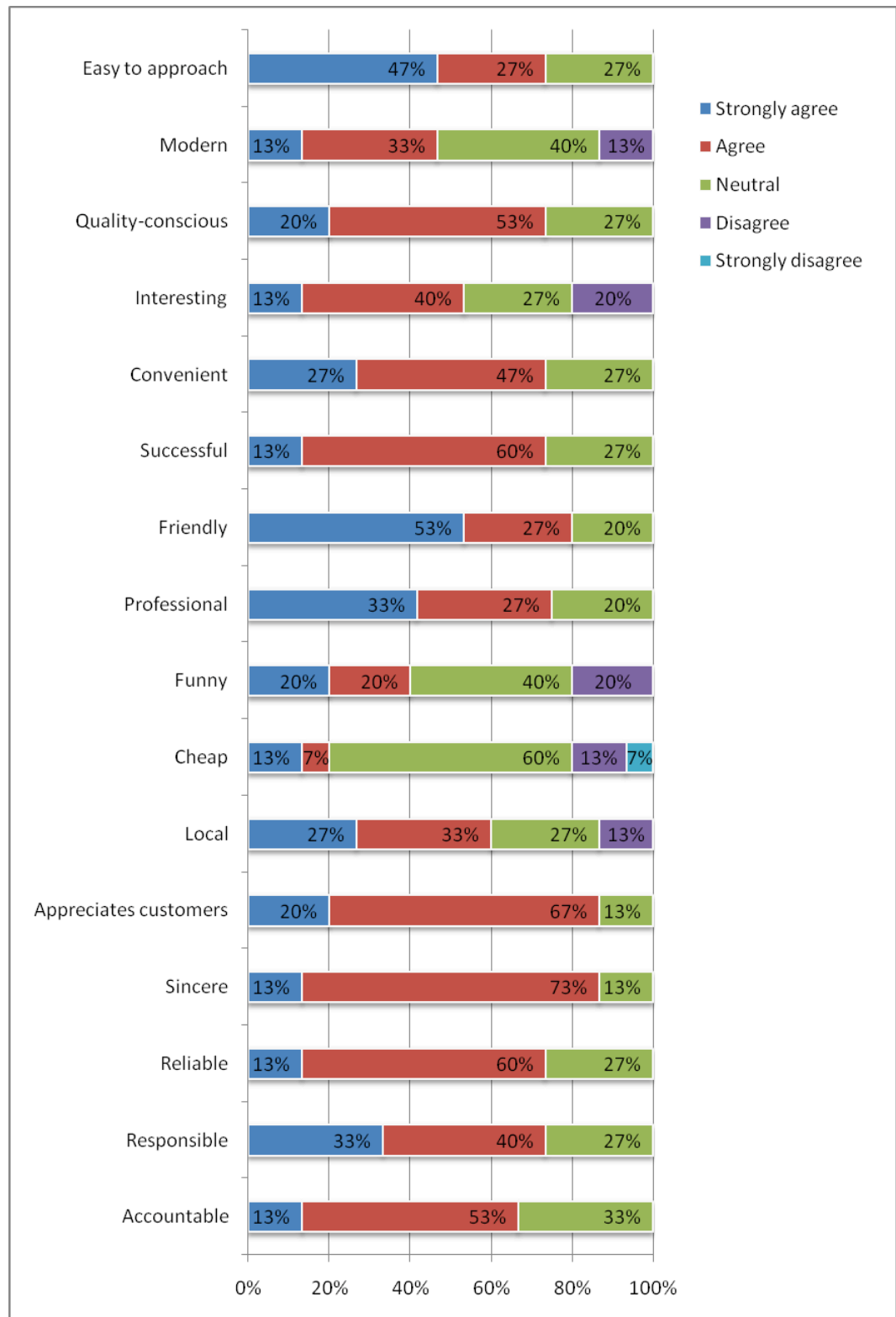


FIGURE 47. Students familiar with Game Central: Adjectives that students thought describe Game Central the best. (n=15)

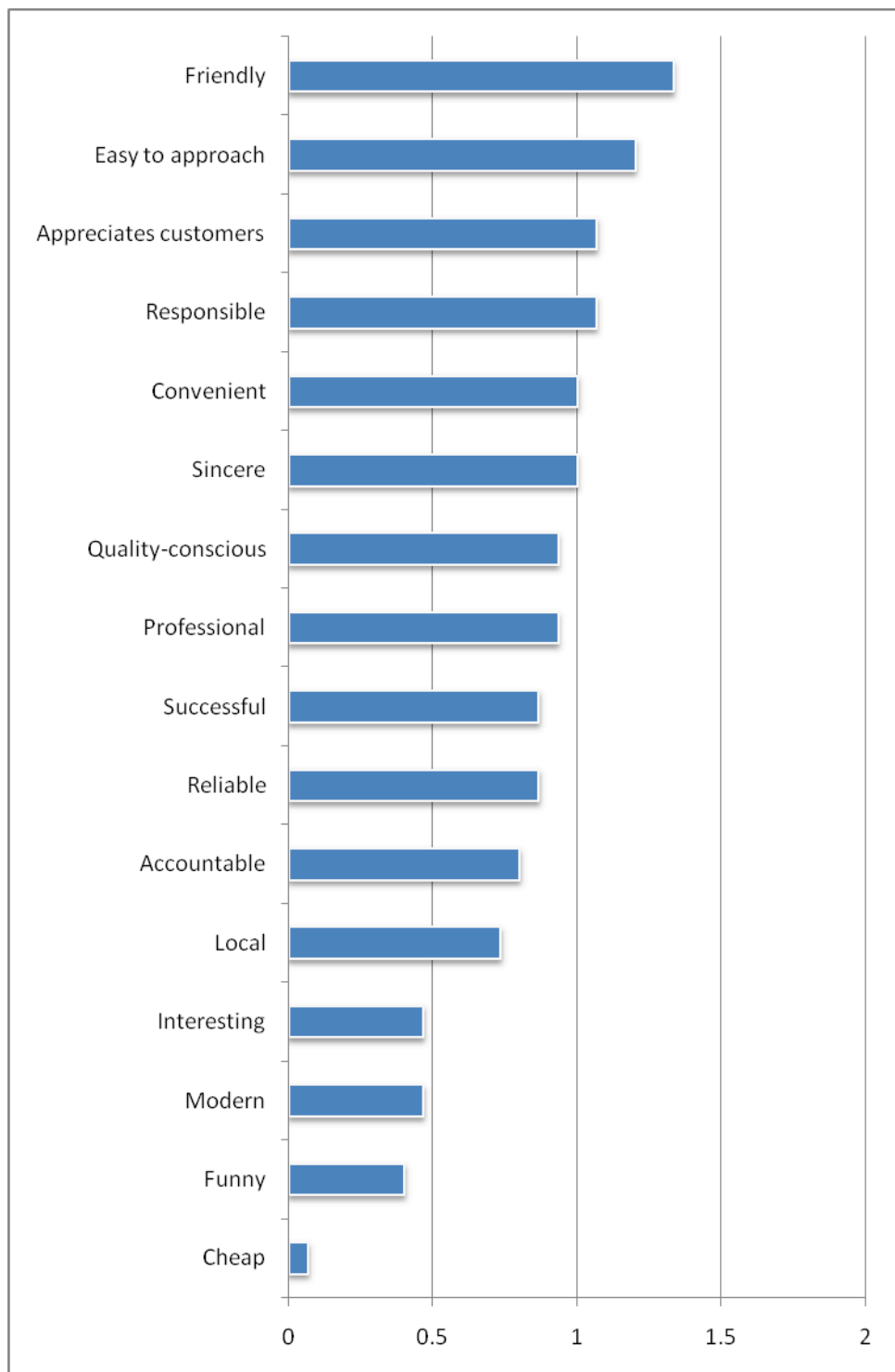


FIGURE 48. Students familiar with Game Central: Best descriptive adjectives by weight.



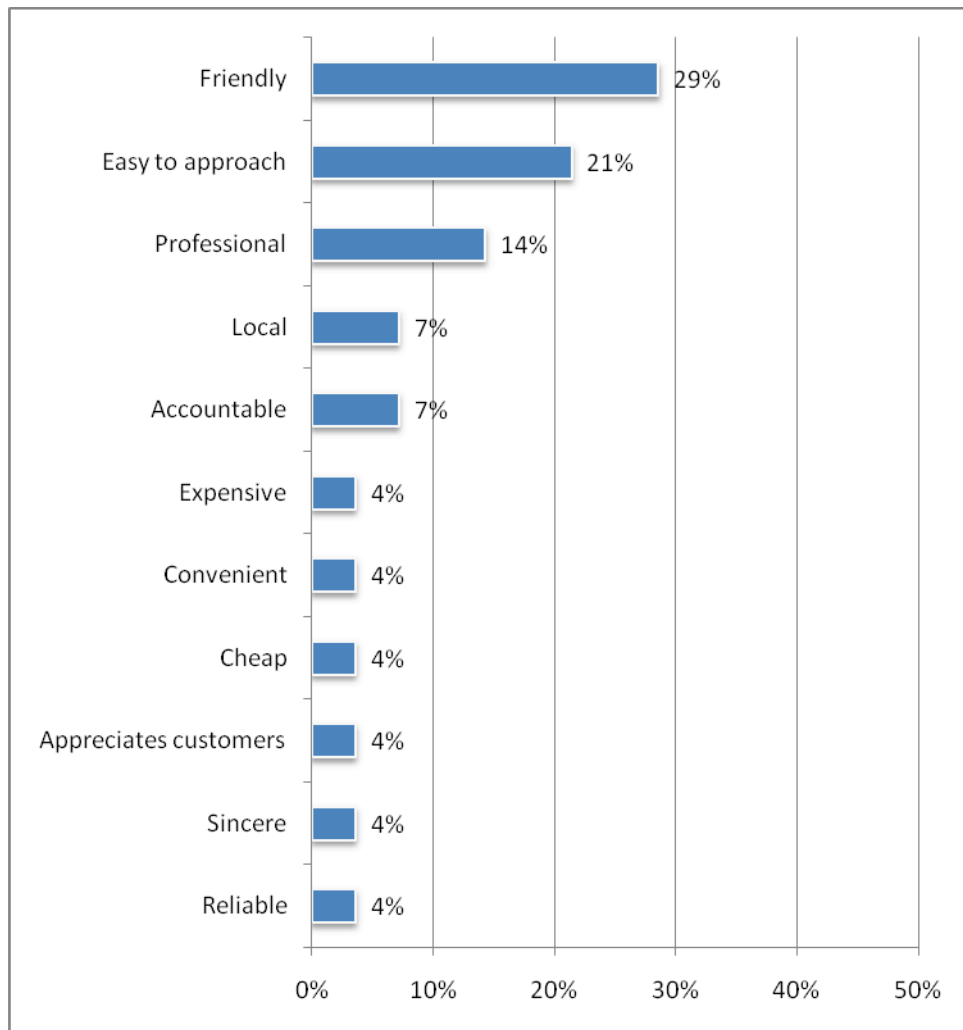


FIGURE 49. Students familiar with Game Central: What two adjectives do you feel the most strong about? (n=28)

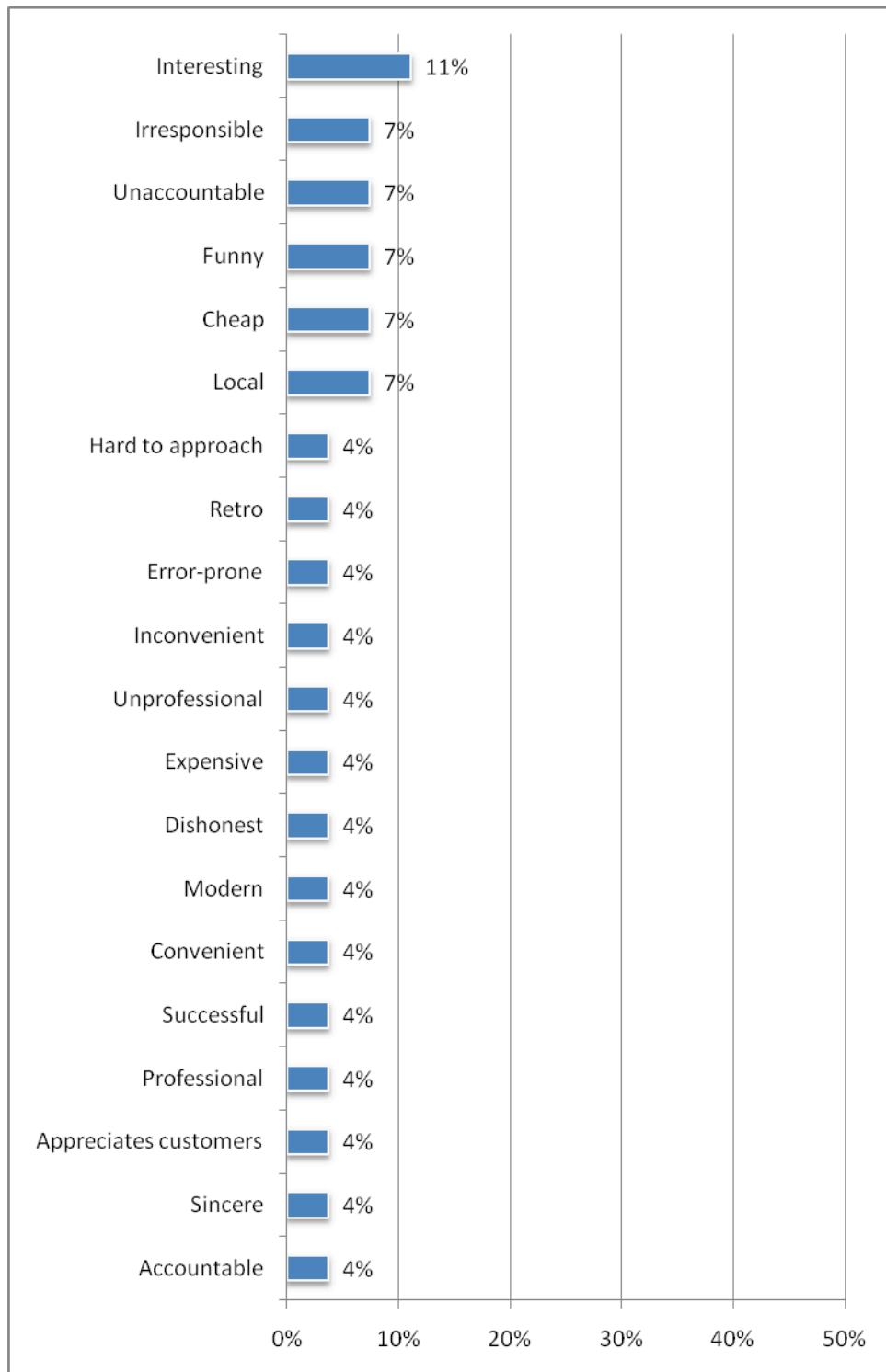


FIGURE 50. Students familiar with Game Central: What two adjectives do you feel least describe Game Central? (n=27)

## COMPANY EXPRESSIVENESS

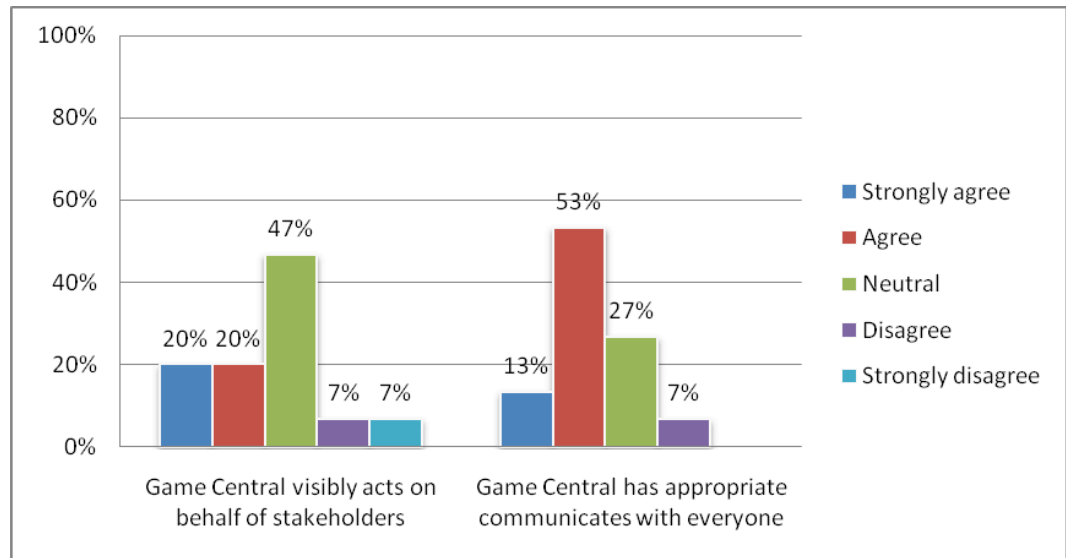


FIGURE 51. Students familiar with Game Central: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on visibility? (n=15)

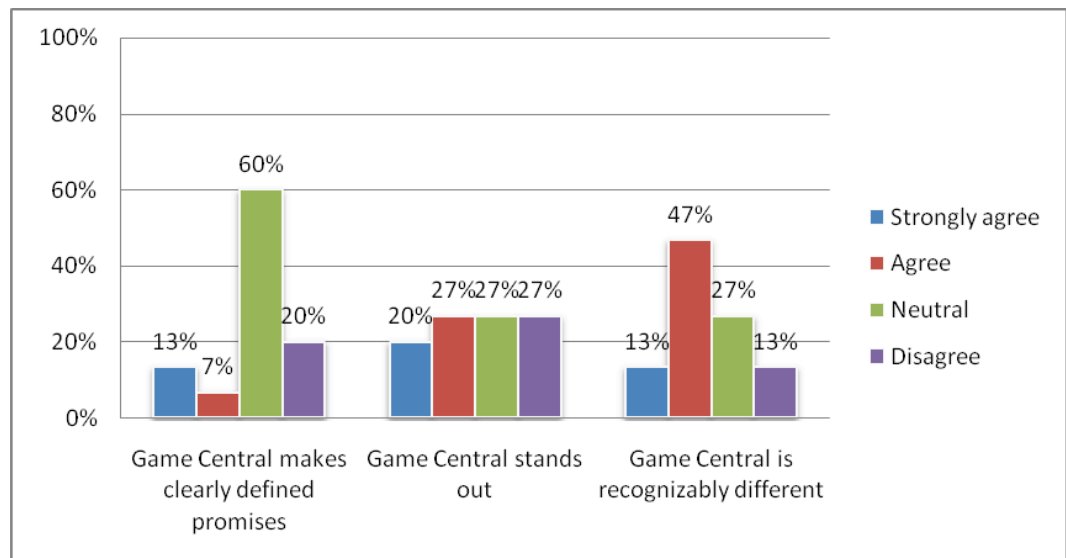


Figure 52. Students familiar with Game Central: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on distinctiveness? (n=15)

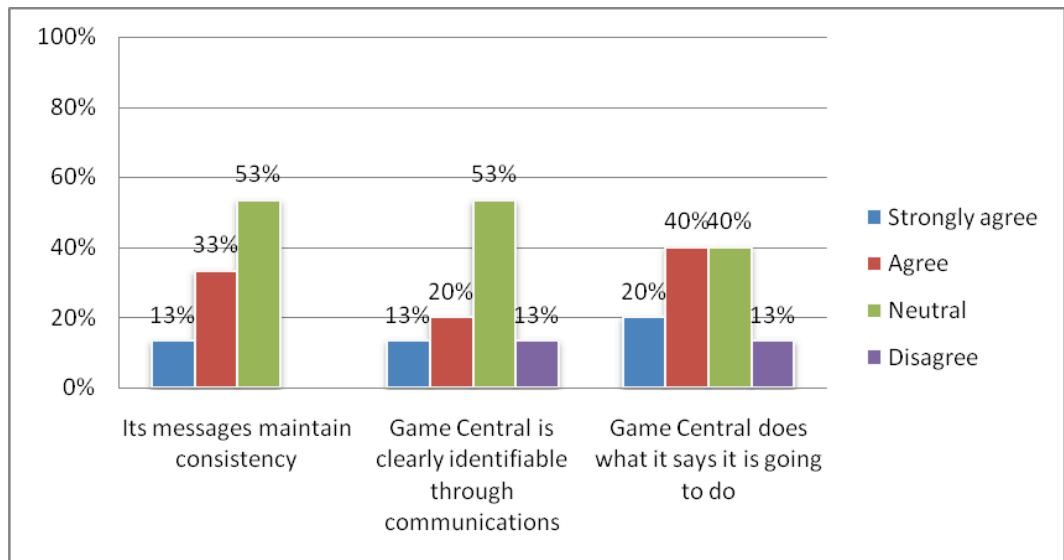


FIGURE 53. Students familiar with Game Central: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on consistency? (n=15)

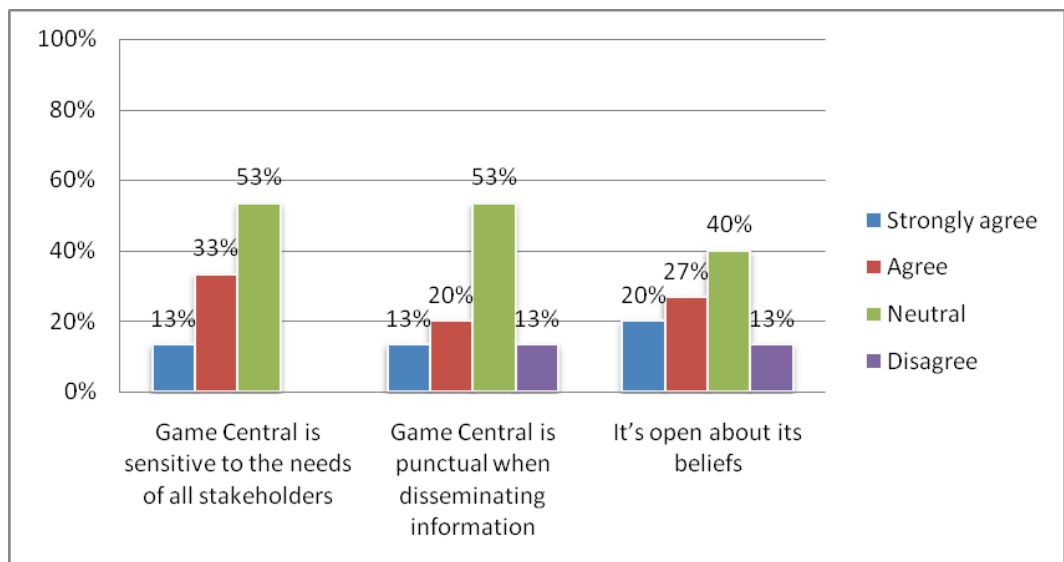


FIGURE 54. Students familiar with Game Central: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on transparency? (n=15)

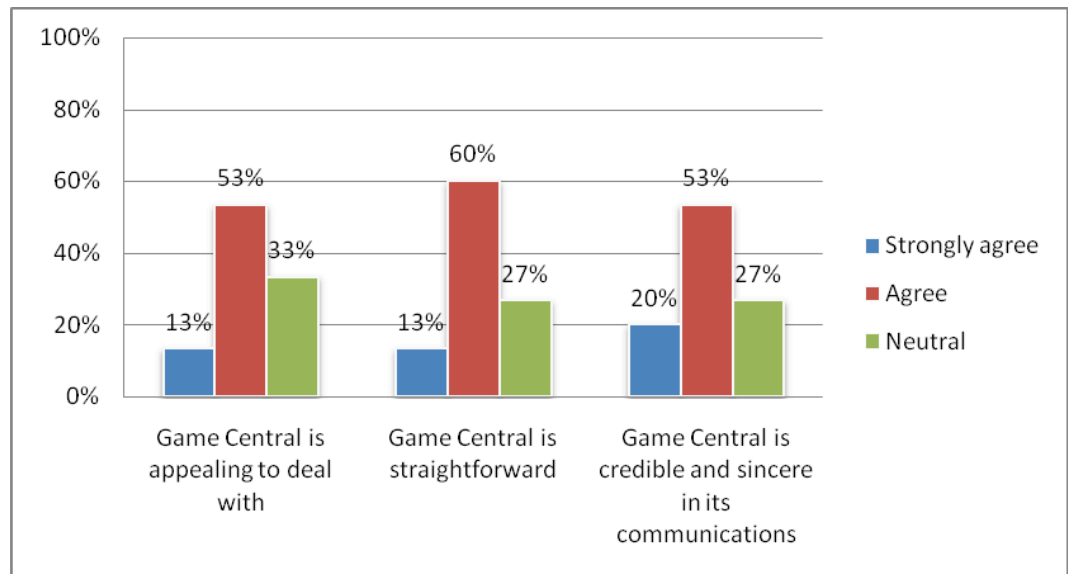


FIGURE 55. Students familiar with Game Central: Do you agree or disagree with these statements on authenticity? (n=15)

## APPENDIX 13

### IMAGE BY MNSU STUDENTS UNFAMILIAR WITH GAME CENTRAL

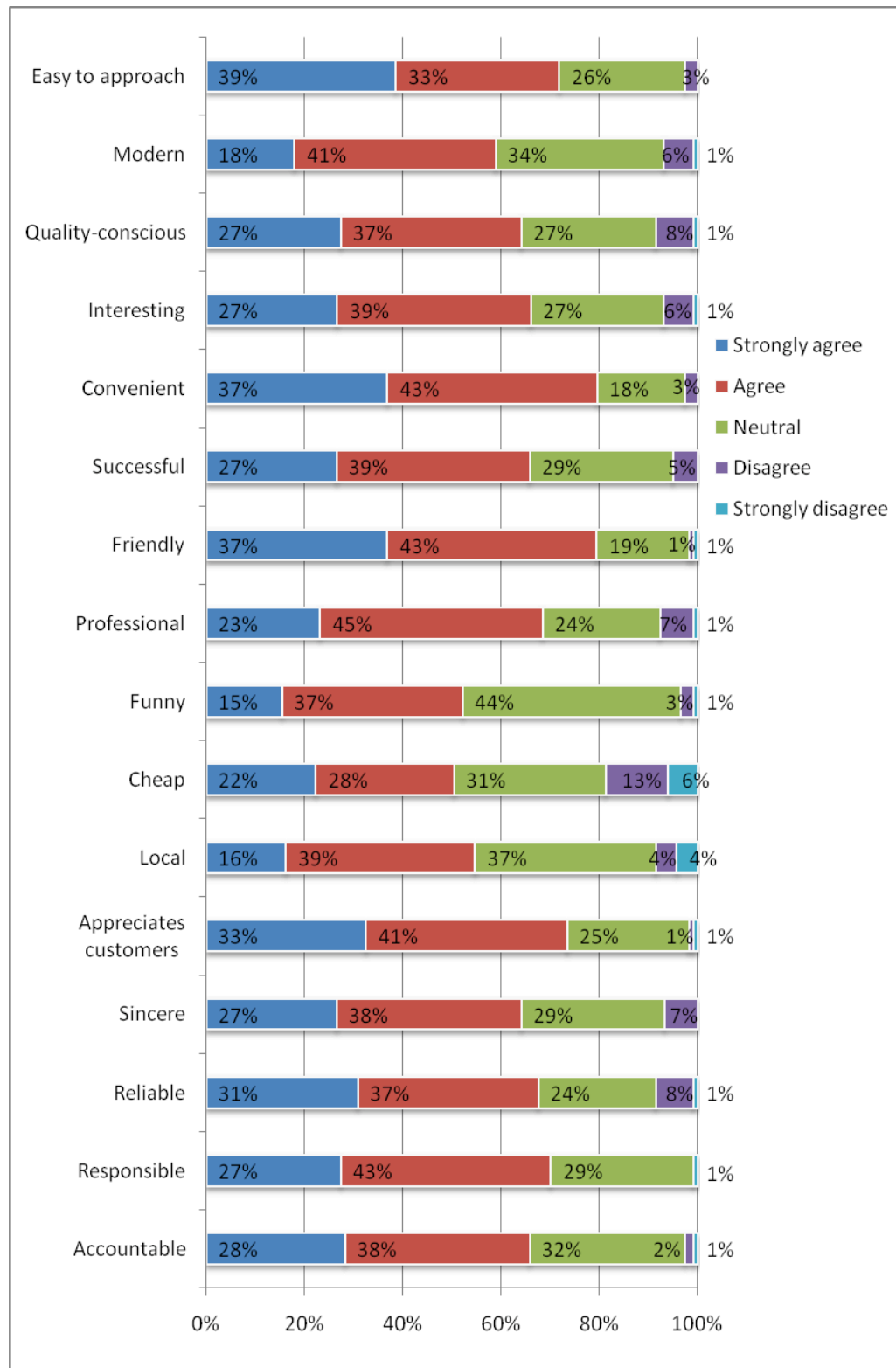


FIGURE 56. Adjectives that students unfamiliar with Game Central thought describe concept that buys, sells and trades games the best. (n=117)

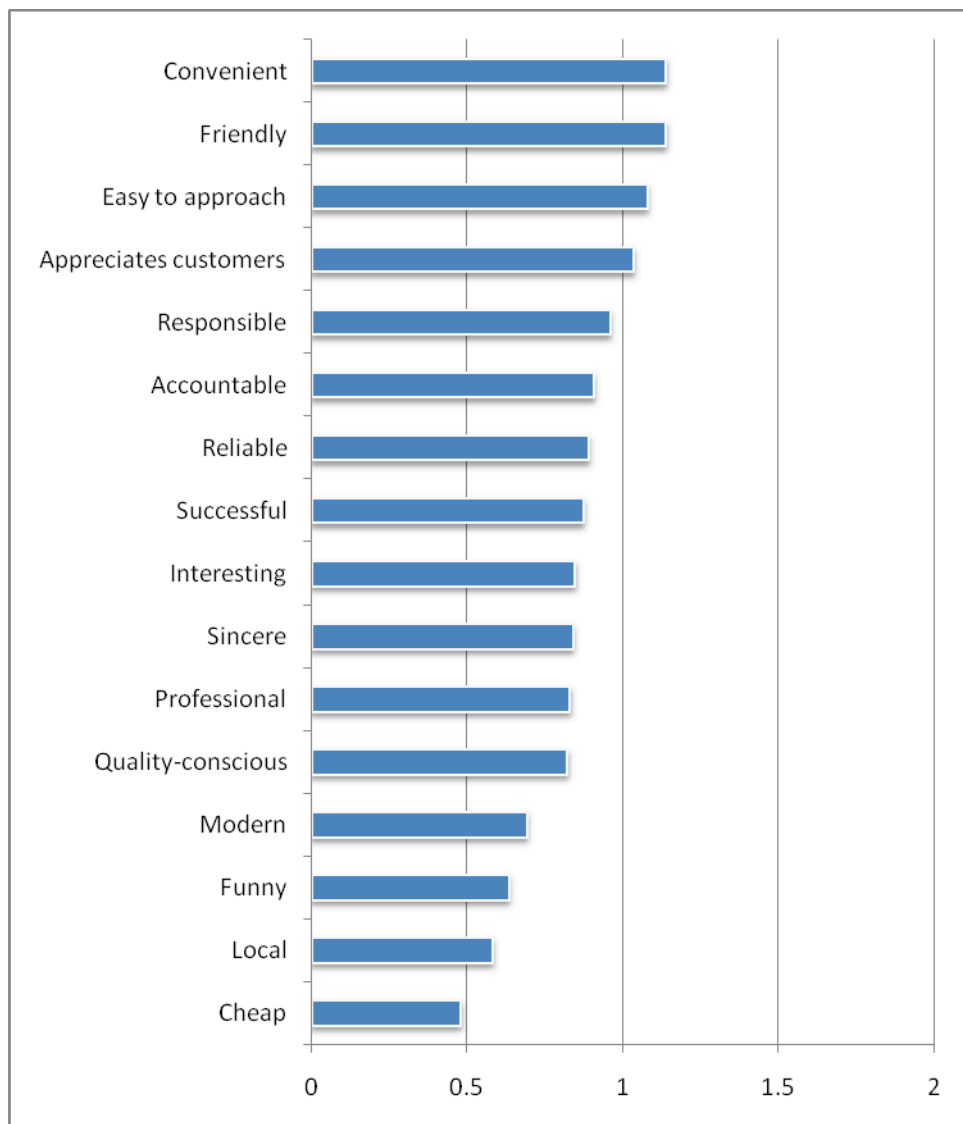


FIGURE 57. Students unfamiliar with Game Central: Best descriptive adjectives by weight.

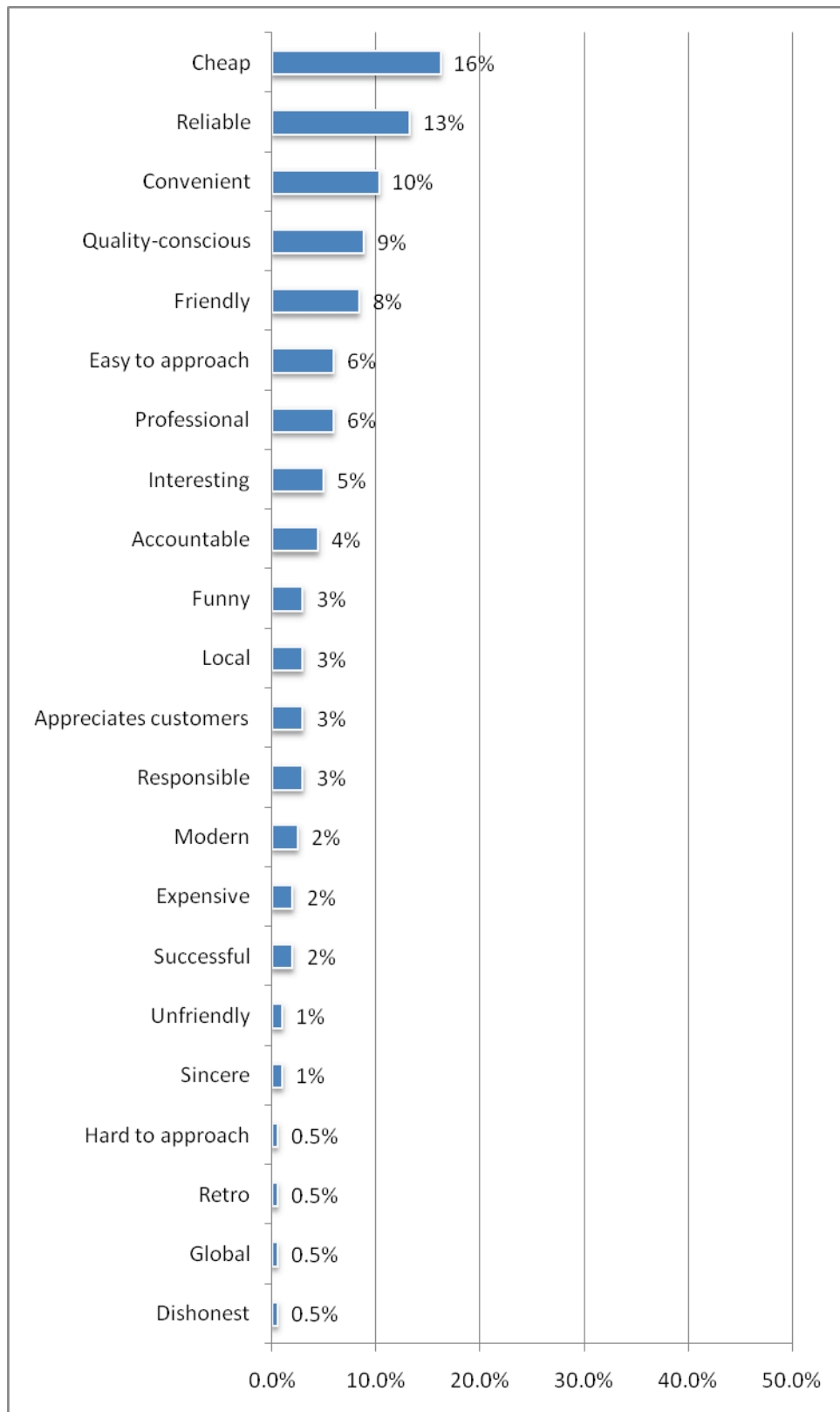


FIGURE 58. Students unfamiliar with Game Central: What two adjectives do you feel the most strong about? (n=204)



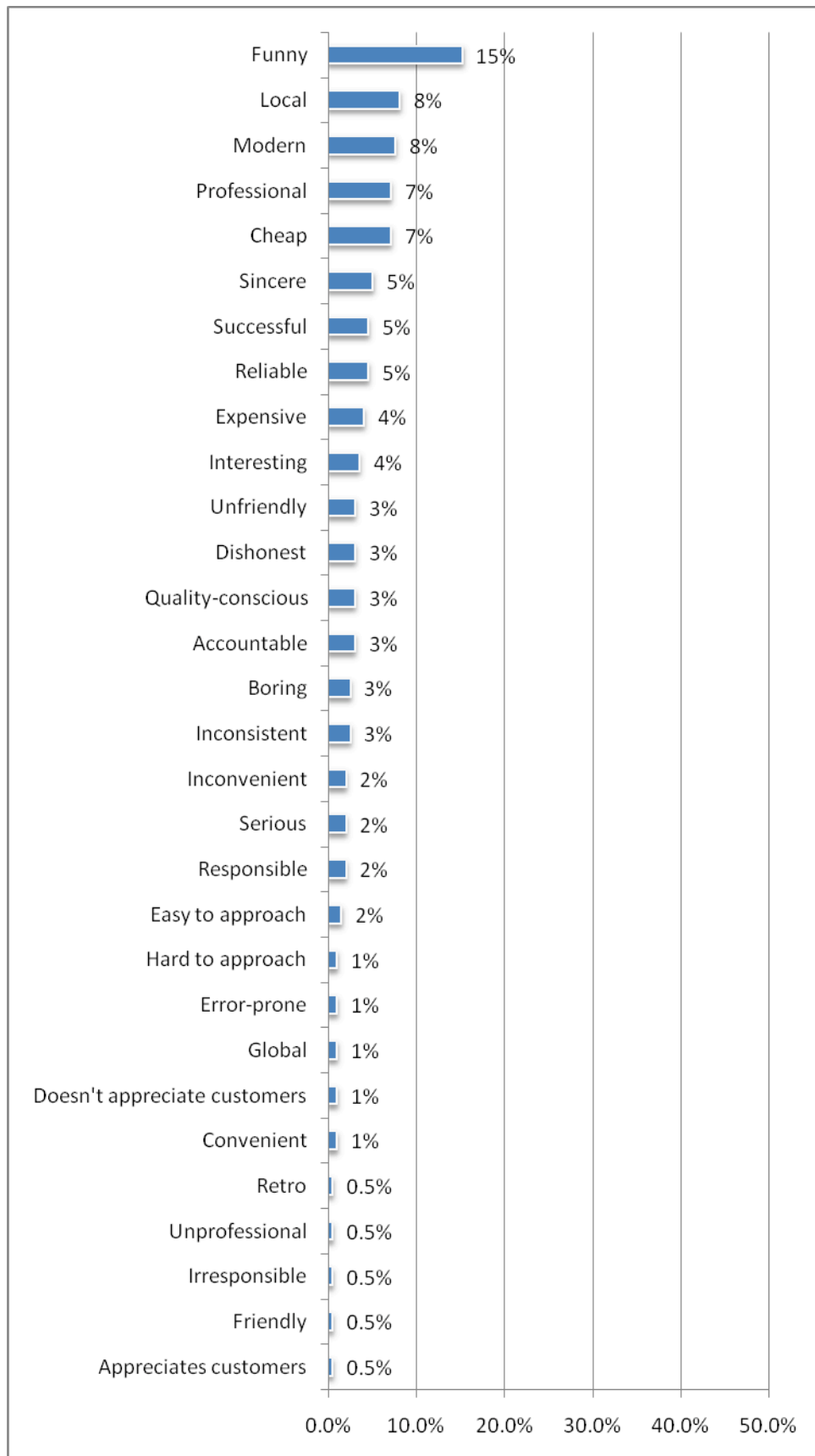


FIGURE 59. Students unfamiliar with Game Central: What two adjectives do you feel least describe a company that buys, sells and trades games? (n=196)