

# **MARKETPLACE PLATFORM FOR SPORTS IN FINLAND**



Bachelor's thesis

Häme University of Applied Sciences, Bachelor of Business Administration

Autumn Semester 2021

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Bachelor of Business Administration

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Subject Marketplace platform for Sports in Finland

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Abstract

Year 2021

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In the world today, people are more focused on their healthy lifestyle and hence from time to time do exercise on an amateur level. In Finland, the most popular sports are Ice hockey and Football, other sports such Tennis and Padel are gaining in popularity.

To respond to this growing interest from this group of people it is necessary to create a simple to use platform which interacts between the customer and the Tennis clubs. The goal of this thesis is to find all the obstacles and analyse the customers behaviour to build a marketplace platform combining all the necessary tech solutions in the market.

The research shows that the current tools/websites in the market are lacking information and are built different from one another. It not only gives confusion but also it discourages the person in moving forward with the search. Marketplace Sports Platform is primarily an answer to the unsatisfied demands of amateur racket players in Finland which facilitate the access of all the information needed using the same portal.

The thesis analyses the players behaviour and the tools, websites and data used to play Tennis in Finland. It also describes to the reader the importance of a marketplace platform to connect between the buyers and sellers and providing all the necessary information to help ease their journey and therefore experience a user-friendly platform.

Keywords Online sports platform, marketplace for sports, Tennis world, tech solutions for sports, booking system platform, analytics driven for sports, sustainability, and sports.

Pages 34 pages

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the world of Tennis every Tennis player must improve his game. Some players find useful techniques in books and magazines, and those easy steps for most of the players to follow. However, the most difficult and challenging thing is to put all the ideas and technique in use during a Tennis match. Mental obstacles such as concentration, anxiety, fear, and lack of confidence are very important for a Tennis player to help achieve results in the match. (Gallwey, T. W., Kleiman, Z., & Carroll, P 11, 1997.)

In the Tennis world, the inner game is fundamental for every Tennis player who want to grow in the professional side of the game. Today every Tennis professional player has one coach who helps with the mental part of the game and a physical expert to help the Tennis player avoid injuries that can limit his tournament season significantly.

For instance, a professional Tennis match on tv consist of two or four players who would hit the ball with power and confidence. All players have been trained to win a Tennis match, however, only one of them or two in the doubles will make it to the next round. The winner of the match probably was well prepared mentally and physically, he managed to balance his game by focusing more on the match and ignoring all the negative vibes around him such bad comments from the public. The inner game skill is required to trust more in yourself and learn how to master the art of effortless concentration. (Gallwey, T. W., Kleiman, Z., & Carroll, P 17 ,1997.)

It is very difficult to have knowledge of when Tennis has been invented and discovered in the past. Some sources state that Tennis originally was invented thousands of years ago in ancient Egypt due to the resemblance with the town called Tinnis. Similarly, some predict that Tennis comes from Arabic word of the palm of the hand, which is rahat, close to racket (History of Tennis, 2018.)

On the other hand, it has been discovered that more evidence starting from the 12th-13th-century in France and the name of the game was called jeu de paume (game of the palm) in English. It was originally played without rackets in the beginning, therefore, the players had to use their hands to hit the ball. With the time they started to introduce gloves and rackets to develop the sport. In the United Kingdom, they call it lawn Tennis because originally it was played on grass courts by Victorian gentlemen and ladies. Today the tradition still exists and that is why every Tennis player

has the chance to play the Wimbledon tournament every year in London in the famous grass courts (Bruce, M. G. L. B. A, 1999.)

With the time Tennis has been developed with a strong format to be played internationally with the help of marketing and tv connections around the world. The evolution of Tennis helped many Tennis players develop their game by competing in national and international tournaments.

In Finland, Tennis is growing rapidly, and the reason is because of the achievement of many Finnish players ranked in the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) world ranking such as the former champion Jarkko Nieminen and the actual future stars Emil Ruusuvuori and Henri Kontinen. Regardless of age, gender or social class, Tennis today is played in Finland from the age of 3 until the age of 80 who are still competing in local tournaments. Credit to the successful collaboration with five different Tennis clubs in the beginning, the Finnish association was created in April 1911 to help organize competitions in the country and manage to invite different international players to attend the tournaments. Today the Finnish Tennis association has more than 170 member clubs around the country and their objective is to introduce Tennis to every person interested in practicing the sport and organize events and tournaments based on levels and skills to work together and the most important to enjoy the game of Tennis (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa, 2018.)

According to the Tennis association in Finland there is about 900.000 people who are interested in playing Tennis and 130.000 who are playing Tennis actively. Based on the statistics provided by the Finnish Tennis Association they have 770.000 people in Finland who are interested in Tennis but not able to practice it or even try to play it. What are the obstacles they face to get to play Tennis? Is it because of the long distance between their home and the Tennis clubs? Are they able to find the correct information about how and where to play Tennis? (Tennis.fi, 2021.)

These are the type of questions the researcher noticed when he moved to Finland back in 2014. The first struggle he faced was to find a website or Facebook group in English where it gives information about Tennis clubs in the area and the possible tournaments during the season. The second obstacle was the high tariffs when it comes to renting the court. The court prices were and still are extremely expensive if you are a student or an unemployed person.

This thesis will walk us through the world of Tennis by introducing the writer's business idea. The target of this thesis is to summarize all the valuable information and research to introduce a state-of-the-art marketplace website that connect all the Tennis enthusiasts in Finland. Currently there are 19 active Tennis clubs with 24,000 officially registered players and the writer believes that if the access is easy to Tennis players, the statistics can be doubled (Tennis.fi, 2021.)

The first part of the thesis consists of describing the potential of Tennis in Finland and analysing data to get a better idea about the sport and the growing interest in the country. In addition, the writer will send a questionnaire to all Tennis players in the country using mostly active social media Tennis groups to get a better idea about the current situation with Tennis and how we can improve the connection between the club and the players.

The marketplace platform is a marketplace that combines court bookings, event search engine, Tennis players and coaches matching in Finland. It provides access to all the clubs in Finland sorted by region using an interactive map to connect international and national Tennis lovers. It offers access to all the Tennis coaches in the country with feedback system to value the professionalism of the coach.

The aim as a sports platform is to promote and encourage Tennis for international and local Tennis players, providing Tennis group courses and tournaments to develop their playing abilities and progress in their Tennis level. The primary focus is to connect Tennis lovers to get easy and affordable Tennis courts around the country.

The marketplace platform is always poised to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability, both individually and as a firm, by actively participating in our communities and integrating sustainable business practices wherever possible.

The second part of the thesis drives the readers to have an overview covering all the main points and most important introducing a new tech solution to ease the access to courts, coaches, and group training.

The writer of the thesis has 23 years of experience in professional Tennis and has been coaching students in Finland for 4 years in 3 different languages (French, Spanish and English). He started

the business idea when he realized the Tennis players based in Finland are not motivated enough and not to mention the high cost for playing Tennis in the country.

Mainly, the client's best interest come first, and everything we do is guided by our values and professional ethics. It will ensure that we remain committed to professionalism, integrity, innovation, and excellent customer services. It will also ensure that we only hire employees who are well experienced to help us drive the business.

It will ensure that we hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards by meeting the client's needs precisely and completely. It cultivates a working environment that provides a human, sustainable approach to earning a living, and living in our world, for our partners, employees and for the clients.

Not to forget the inner games of a Tennis player that needs to be considered and studied. The confidence using all the abilities can surely drive the Tennis player to experience success and be the role model of his/her country. Contrary we have the example of the player who doubt about his abilities before and during the match. It builds not only a negative impact mentally but physically and therefore nothing works as it should be. That is why Tennis players invest in the early stage on hiring a coach who could detect all the negative parts of Tennis and help you find a way to avoid the mental blocking for your game.

## **2 BACKGROUND RESEARCH: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 History of Tennis**

When we talk about the history of Tennis and when it was invented, we go back to the 12th-13th-century in France and the name of the game was called jeu de paume (game of the palm) in English. It was originally played without rackets in the beginning, for instance the players had to use their hands to hit the ball. With time they started to introduce gloves and rackets to develop the sport. In the United Kingdom, they call it lawn Tennis because originally it was played on grass courts by Victorian gentlemen and ladies. Today the tradition still exists and that is why every Tennis player have the chance to play the Wimbledon tournament every year in London and only using grass courts (Lorges, B.S, 2021.)

There has been much controversy about the invention of Tennis in the past. However, according to the published book of rules by Major Walter Clopton Wingfield in 1873, historians confirmed that related games were played earlier, and the first club was settled in 1872 by the Englishman Harry Gem and associates in Leamington (Lorges, B.S., 2021.)

In the 1890s, Tennis was headed by the twin brothers William and Ernest Renshaw, their level of playing was much ahead compared to the rest of players at that time. During the Wimbledon singles championship, William managed to win seven times during the competition and his twin brother Ernest once. In addition, both players played doubles during the same tournament and won seven times (Lorges, B.S, 2021.)

Meanwhile, the Tennis game was interrupted in the beginning of the second world war in 1939 living with the hope that one day it would get back to normal and begin with the tournaments as before. The famous All England Club have used their parking facilities to makeshift farms and vegetable gardens. Several courts and Tennis clubs were used as offices, reserves, and red cross to help protect the country from the attacks. During the second world war, the All-England Club was one of the targets and suffered due to the 16 bombs dropped on October 11, 1940 (International Tennis Hall of Fame, 2020.)

The second world war was definitely a big impact for the English and French Tennis players. The game has been interrupted for six years involving players such as Simonne Mathieu, Vic Seixas, Helen Hull Jacobs, Bobby Riggs to join the front line and protect their countries. In 1946 the game of Tennis continued with the Wimbledon championship with a high dominance of the American players. Besides men tabloid, American women has been a clear dominant winning every Wimbledon and U.S singles championships from 1946 to 1958, the remarkable Althea Gibson who's the first black champion, the exceptional Connolly "little Mo" who won the three Wimbledon and three U.S championships and therefore became the first woman to win the Grand Slam (International Tennis Hall of Fame, 2020.)

## **2.2 Tennis in Finland**

The sport of Tennis was introduced to Finland in 1881 in which people, activities, businesses, and organizations are involved in producing, facilitating, promoting, or organizing any competitions, experience and events focused on Tennis. Hanko was the first city in Finland to organize a national



competition and the success of the event is still being organized these days. Moreover, the rules of Tennis were published in the city of Pori in 1884 and among the first competitions it is recognized that it was at least the Tennis competition held in Turku on October 1st, 1884 (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa, 2018.)

This was followed a few years later by The Abo Tennis club based in the city of Turku founded in 1903 and which is still operating today. In cooperation with five Tennis clubs in the country, the Finnish association was found in April 1911 with Tennis programs and tournaments to help gather all the Tennis players in the country to compete and play against international players who are invited in the country. The Finnish championship was first competed in 1912 when the Tennis player Boris Schildt won the competition in Hanko (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa ,2018.)

The Finnish association of Tennis organized a level class system for adult Tennis players to compete and represent their clubs. The level class categories are A, B, C, D and lower levels E, the players who compete in official competitions obtain ranking points and are ranked three times a year according to their match progress. The players have the possibility to represent their clubs not only in league Tennis but also in national clubs around the country. With this plan, players would build a solid Tennis game and get the necessary motivation and sponsors to play international tournaments.

Finnish Tennis professional players have many ways to reach the top of the sport. ITF Pro Circuit for instance is the lowest level of Tennis professionalism. From which players points are counted in the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) and WTA (Women's Tennis Association) rankings. There are competitions for junior Tennis pro players, the most important are the Tennis Europe Junior Tour and the ITF Junior circuit (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa, 2018.)

Tennis started to be very popular in Finland recently and that is because of the well ranked Finnish players in the world such as Jarkko Nieminen, Emil Ruusuvuori, Henri Kontinen and more. Regardless of age, gender or social class, Tennis today is played in Finland from the age of 3 until the age of 90 who are still competing in local tournaments. The Finnish Tennis association was established in 1911 gathering more than 170 member clubs around the country. Their objective is to introduce Tennis to every person interested in practicing the sport and organize events and tournaments based on levels and skills to work together and the most important to enjoy the game of Tennis (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa,2018.)

According to the Tennis association in Finland we find about 900.000 people who are interested in playing Tennis joining a Tennis club with a membership. In addition, the association has registered 150 clubs with a total of 25.000 members.

In addition, 130.000 people out from the initial 900.000 Tennis players are actively playing in all the country. It is importantly to ask what happened to the other 770.000 interested people. Are they having difficulties to access the sport? Are they living far away from the Tennis clubs or public Tennis courts? We will dig more into this numbers in our thesis to discover the obstacles in the Tennis sport in Finland (Tenniksen harrastaminen Suomessa, 2018.)

### **2.3 Market research: Finnish Population**

The Finnish population has seen several significant changes during the last 60 years. It is necessary to analyse and describe the population to understand the growth and decline during the time and study the diversities of the populations to observe where they are leading the future of the country. Moreover, governments use the population data to measure and collect information that are crucial when they make decisions, for example building more schools, hospitals, grocery stores and other resources.

For the writer to conduct the business idea in Finland, first he needs to search for data related to the Finnish population and compare between past, current, and forecast in 30 years. We have a total of 5,540,720 people living in Finland in 2020 (Finland Population – Worldometer, 2021) compared to the total of 4,996,222 that represents the population in the year 1990. We firstly see a clear increase within the Finnish population and the result is mainly because of the rise of life expectancy. Secondly, Finland has lowered the mortality rate for infants and underage of 5. In 2020 for every 1000 live births, It will reach 1.4 infant deaths compared to 4.93 in the year 1990. Some of the reasons why the number of deaths per child is decreasing is due to the new technological solutions in the medical industry. Not to mention the easy access to hospitals using commuting solutions mainly for urban areas but also some of the rural areas too (Finland Demographics Population, Age, Sex, Trends, 2020.)

Then we have a total fertility rate of 1.5 in the year 2020 compared to 1.35 in the year 2019. According to statistics Finland, the data shows a rebound in births after a decade decreasing. The data provided by the statistics Finland website shows that 344 more first born children in 2020

compared to 2019 which was the year when the number of births decreased significantly by 1964 compared to the previous year (Statistics Finland - Population – Births, 2021.)

Additionally, the population of Finland has seen an important change between the rural and urban populations. Back in the year 1955, the population of Finland was divided 51% in the rural areas and 49 % in the urban areas. The population during that time was 70% agrarian and only 10 % of the population was dependent on the industrial business (Statistics Finland - Population – Births, 2021.)

All the industry was based in forestry and food processing like paper industry, meat processing and dairies. A small part of the workers subsisted on services, trade, transport, and construction. As a job, it is reflected in tradesmen, teachers, maids, police officers, railway workers, sailors and builders of houses and road networks. In the early days of Finland's independence, many people were engaged in so-called unskilled mixed jobs, or their occupations were unknown. Some of the unskilled workers made their living in agricultural occupations. They were travellers who took on whatever job they could find in construction, forestry, or logging (Statistics Finland, 90 years of change in industrial structure, 2021.)

Currently the 85.9% Finnish population moved to the urban areas and that is because most of the jobs are in urban municipalities. On top of that we have the facilities and easy commuting between cities and areas, all the major universities are in big cities such Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku. The largest cities in Finland are Helsinki with 558,457, Espoo with 256,760 and Tampere with 202,687 inhabitants (Finland Demographics - Worldometer, 2021.)

Finally, it is important to learn about the population forecast in Finland and what are the reasons for the changes in the country. According to the Worldometer data, Finland had a total of 5,540,720 inhabitants in 2020 and it is forecast that the population will decrease in 2040 by 0.08% due to the birth rate in the country. Other major factors are the immigration politics that are changing from year to year in the government. Moreover, we need to understand that these numbers are estimates according to the previous years, it all depends on the economic forecast in the country and not to mention the number of migrants that has been changing from year to year. The forecast shown on the figure 3 uses the total of 14.000 migrants' forecasts to live out the country. The table also shows the increasing number of inhabitants moving to urban areas and it is estimated to reach 96.3% in the year 2050 (Finland Demographics - Worldometer, 2021.)

## 2.4 Challenges using online websites

One of the most concerning aspects in booking a Tennis court is the user experience. Many Tennis clubs, sports bodies, and schools are far behind technological times and not taking full advantage of technology's substantial communication advances. Currently, according to Suomen Tennisliito website, we have 28 clubs/associations in Helsinki, 15 clubs/associations in Espoo and 4 in Vantaa region. We will focus on the 3 cities as our main customers are reside in Helsinki and surrounding areas. According to Sport England club matters, most Tennis players prefer to use social media such to connect with other members and volunteers by sharing content like images, videos, and updates (Sport England club matters 2021.) Small Tennis organizations such Aalto university Tennis are using Facebook groups to search for new players to join their coaching groups.

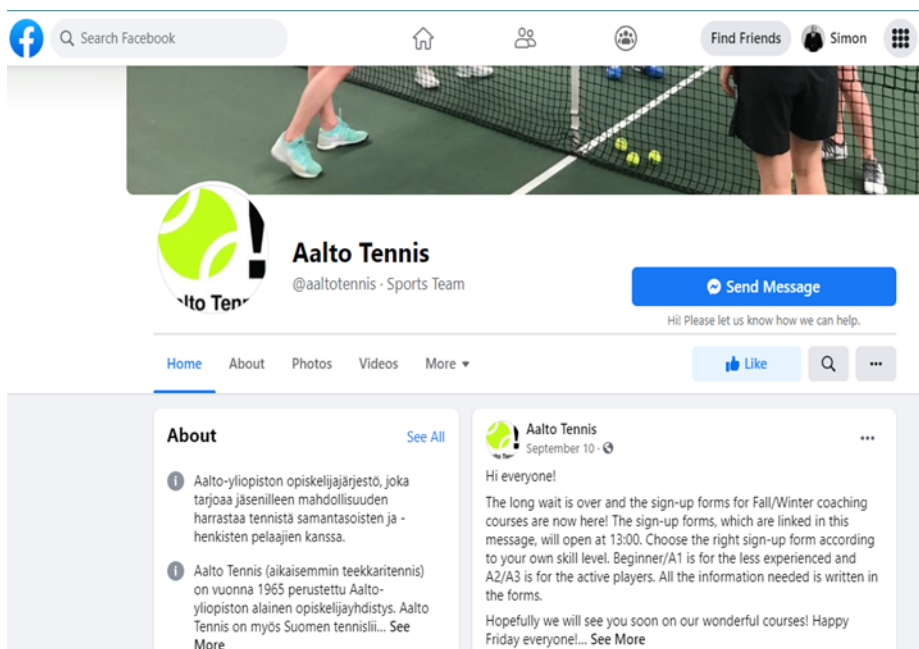


Figure 1: (Aalto Tennis, Facebook group, 2021.)

It is difficult to develop a new technological innovation as the grassroots level must fall with them, local authorities, associations, and universities who control most sports facilities in Finland. Most seem intent on maintaining the status quo rather than using technology to break down the current information barriers. The result is a lack of technological progress and stagnant sports participation numbers.

To show examples, the city of Helsinki who are introducing the outdoor city own Tennis courts for the price of 7euros per hour, compared to 21 euros per hour that is offered by clubs such Tapiola Tennis puisto in Espoo area Tennispuisto club or Smash Tennis club in Helsinki for the average of 25euros per hour in Smash Tennis-Helsinki club (smashtennis sporttisaitti, 2021.) The argument is that private organizations, are most likely to innovate, take risks, attract the best talent, and use resources efficiently. Furthermore, if you look closely, the best examples of increasing sports participation are when facilities are either placed in the hands of local community groups or private businesses rather than being in the hands of clubs and associations.

Another problem encountered during the online research for Tennis clubs in Finland is that there is not a single website on the internet that list all the Tennis clubs based in Finland. The only support received was a random list of Google listed mapping all the clubs that are registered on Google map. It is considered an obstacle to search and make tons of phone calls to figure us where to allocate young Tennis players who just arrived in Finland.

Not to mention the number of well-known Tennis clubs in Helsinki, the capital of the country who are not really putting the effort to translate their websites in English or even to the second official language in the country, the Swedish language.

These are the Tennis clubs in Helsinki and Espoo area to use as an example:

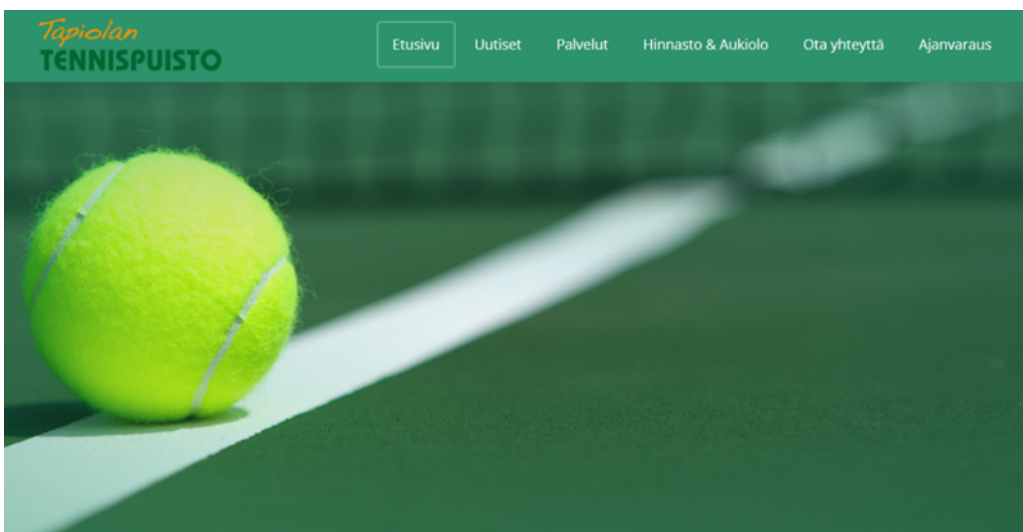


Figure 2: (Tapiolan Tennispuisto, 2021.)

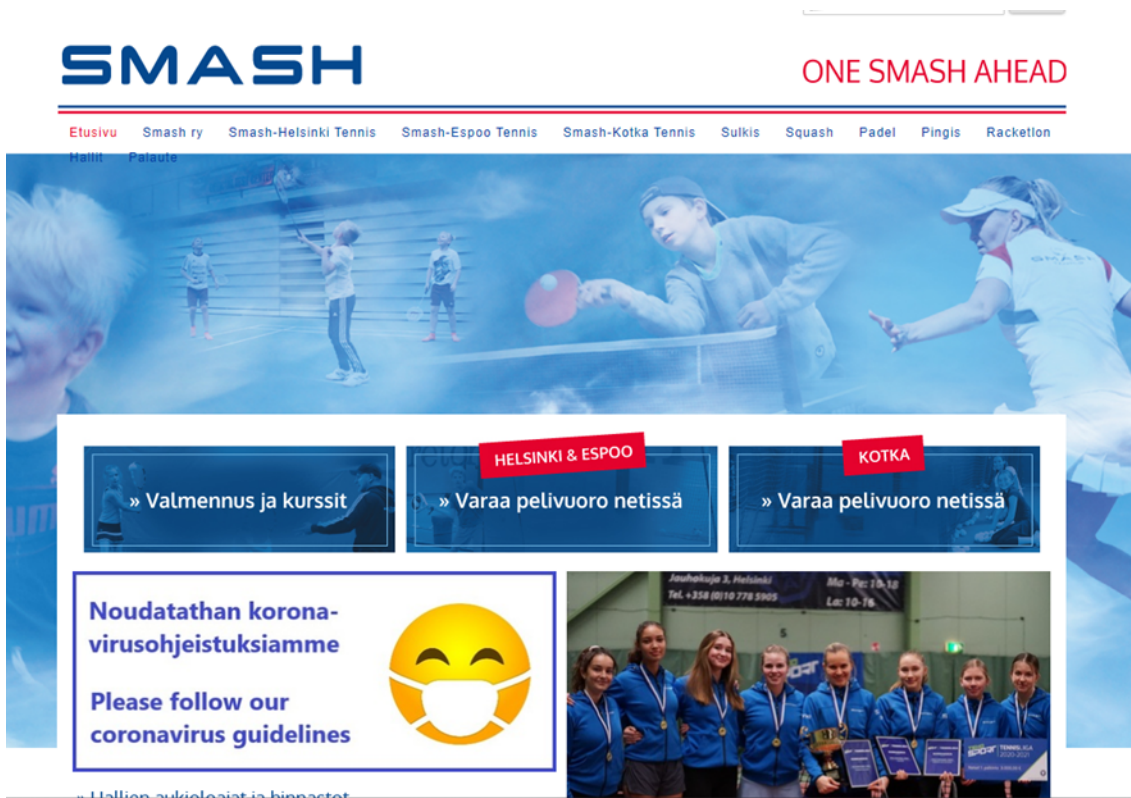


Figure 3: (Smash Tennis Helsinki, 2021.)



Figure 4: (HVS Tennis Club Helsinki, 2021.)

It is understandable that they are not obliged to translate every single website to different languages and that is because their main target are Finnish speaking Tennis players. However, we

are excluding people who are keen to try or join a club and they are facing difficulties to speak the Finnish language. We would like to encourage foreign players to play Tennis and have easy access to represent the country in the future.

## **2.5 Competitive Advantages**

While several web portals such Tennis.fi and Sportspartner.com that currently facilitate and connect amateur and professional Tennis players, none of them are as comprehensive as the marketplace sports platform. Compared to other available platforms, the platform combines a booking system that connects all the Tennis clubs, match Tennis players and connect Tennis coaches around the county in one single platform. Tennis players will be able to tailor the search to their individual needs compared to using different websites and therefore save time and energy to have direct access to their needs.

What the research that follows presented as opportunities is that content should be added continuously on social media and new updates regarding Tennis tournaments will be published regularly in the platform. In addition, the platform will build and gather data for Tennis clubs to measure and adjust their offering and better connect with the end customer. The marketplace platform will be the first platform which connects national and international Tennis players in different cities and towns, broken down by categories and needs.

Currently, there are a few online platforms who are focused in one single solution or service but not the combination of all into one single platform. Today, the users have the option to book the Tennis court using the club's official website and to make a booking we must do a google search to find the nearest Tennis club to our location. They have either poor functionality or low flexibility. The users are forced to use different websites themselves, which means that organizing joint Tennis training and reservation of courts remains a significant problem.

The marketplace platform offers the opportunity to enrol in Tennis classes with a coach using the same platform and therefore saving money and energy. The price depends on the number of classes purchased at one time and availability of the respective group levels. Although the clubs in Finland are more focused on their current customers, they still believe in mouth-to-mouth marketing, and they decide not to invest money and energy on their websites and social media channels. Their product offering is limited and only allow users to find people interested in playing

Tennis. So, users have trouble organizing their time, equipment, court booking and a coach due to the poor information provided on their website. The sports platform guarantees users comprehensive services using the same platform to book Tennis courts, purchase Tennis merchandize and keep track on their previous Tennis classes to save time and book the same in the future ensuring full flexibility and response to customer needs.

## **2.6 Research questions**

The research question is based in the authors experience when he moved to Finland in 2014. The Tennis clubs' websites were built to offer a short information about the establishment and the main events during the year. Another obstacle using Tennis clubs' websites is the language, during that time the targeted market for the Tennis clubs is the Finnish/Swedish speaking Tennis players. In 2017 onwards Tennis players start to build Facebook groups to chat and organize Tennis events without the involvement of the Tennis clubs.

After the experience provided by the author, the research question is "What are the challenges a Tennis player discovers when booking a Tennis court in the southern region of Finland? Followed with the second question: what are the possible solutions to those challenges?"

## **2.7 Action Plan**

Starting with the revenue planning, the strategy would begin with the action plan from the revenue board, putting the company's investment into play, combining efforts, dedication, commitment, and professionalism into business towards forecasting the revenue that the business would use to make it a worthwhile business. Secondly the gap mapping to categorically identify the position in the market, analyse where it should be in all aspects, financial, non-financial, brand recognition, community services and more.

Moreover, the plan should identify the customers/clients with the help of a sales strategy plan. The plan should help identify the customer that is attached to the marketplace sports platform. Also, documenting all information about the potential customers/clients, it will ensure the offering of a unique personalized service that every one of them requires.



To summarize, the immediate goal of the marketplace sports platform is to launch into the market, challenge the established competitors in and out of the business niche, and introduce the idea for a recognition into the market while putting every effort into action to dominate the maximum market.

## **2.8 Sustainable solutions**

From the beginning of the business plan, the author was convinced about the idea of combining multiple solutions into one single platform for sports in Finland will give the end users an easy and user-friendly solution approach. Combining search engine and a court booking system are user-friendly idea, however, it is important for the author to add a sustainable solution to the idea.

Sustainability in Finland is a model to follow for other countries. On a global scale, Finland is ranked third in transitioning from fossil fuels to enhance sustainable energy sources. It is planned in Finland to be carbon neutral by 2035 and one of the leading energy sectors of 115 countries comparing their results to meet climate goals in the index of the world economic forum (Sustainability report ,2020.)

Furthermore, the business companies in Finland are also working doing their part to fight the climate crisis by endorsing green thinking and available sustainable resource management practices. In 2020, six of the most well knows Finnish companies such KONE, Metso, Outotec, UPM-Kymmene, Kesko and Neste were placed in the Corporate Knights' Global 100 list of the world's most sustainable companies (Sustainability report, 2020). Tampere hall became Finland's first carbon neutral cultural and convention centre in November last year by switching to renewable energy. Currently, Tampere Hall is also trying to offset the emissions caused by the events using its own carbon sink (Sustainability report, 2020.)

Another successful sustainable idea is to measure and control the carbon dioxide emissions of buildings created by the Finnish Technical research centre and the University of Tampere. Building and construction industry is one of Finland's climate goals due to their high carbon dioxide emissions.

To incorporate the sustainable idea to the business plan, it most follow the idea of a football team in Spain called Real Betis. The club have decided to partnership with the media partner The

Sustainability Report and create what is called Forever Green project for his sport platform.

Forever Green is an open platform for partners to help introduce their products and services to contribute with the low carbon and sustainable future. It encourages football Enthusiasts and businesses to act for the climate (Sustainability report, 2020.)

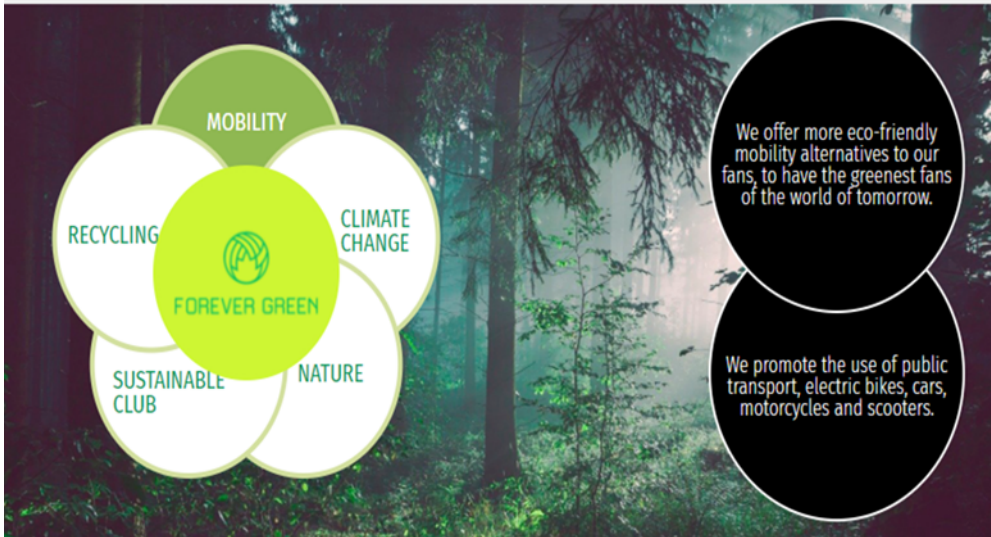


Figure 5: (Forever Green, 2021.)

The second-hand apparel and Tennis material Listing of used Tennis Racket for Tennis player who are beginning in the Tennis world and don't want to spend much money in new material. The second-hand category will connect buyers and sellers providing with all the necessary descriptions. It will encourage Tennis players to get involved in the environmentally friendly world and use the same platform without the need of using 3rd party platforms.

Secondly, partnership with green transport companies such VOI and Tier will beneficiate the users with a discounted price if they use the code promo from the Marketplace platform. It will encourage users to use scooters instead of using cars or other commuting solutions.

Voi is a technology to help shape cities for people and reducing air and noise pollution. It gives the users the possibility to share electric scooters and the full access in the city areas (Voi Technology, May 2021.)

Ideally, the best sponsors are the environmentally friendly. Wilson Trinita Tennis Balls has produced a solution that will cause far less unnecessary waste compared to the current Tennis balls can. The Trinita ball is a pressurized ball that is inside a fully paper box, compared to the metal

and plastic can with pressure inside that should be separated to recycle. The Wilson technology created a new core called the Engage core, made of new plastomer material. This solution will allow the users keep the quality of the balls four times longer than the traditional ball (Tennis Nerd, 2019.)



Figure 6 (Wilson Trinité ball, 2021.)

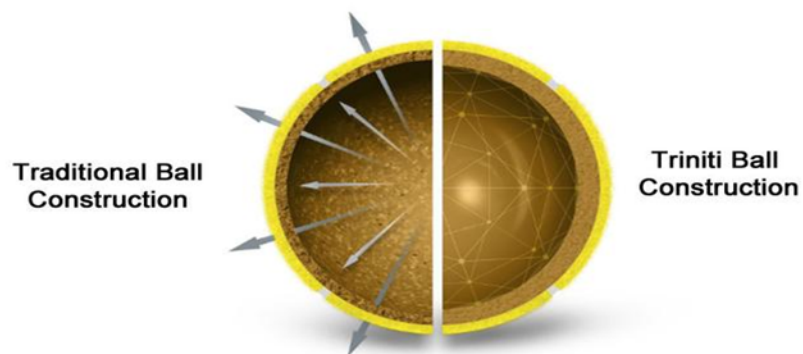


Figure 7: (Wilson Trinité ball, 2021.)

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The research method used is a mix of qualitative and quantitative research to help focus on generating meaning and understanding of the research. It focuses on the quality of the experience using a survey shared with Tennis players in Finland. The survey consisted of 13 multiple-choice questions and the aim is to conduct the survey with 22 users of Facebook Tennis active groups and collect data about the usage of Tennis platforms in Finland. The platform used for the research is called Paperform, it is an easy to use online platform that allows you to create a survey with a sharable link. The platform gives a graphic report option with a full analytics access to better understand the data collected.

#### **3.2 Research method – mixed methods**

The research is based mainly on a mix of qualitative and quantitative research based on an online questionnaire built specifically for Facebook Tennis group users. Moreover, the writer decided to mix the research with a SWOT analysis to identify and analyse internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that could help us develop the idea and build a strategic goal in the Finnish market. In addition, a competitive landscape to help the researcher identify the competitors in the market and help the readers understand the differences between the platforms listed.

The selection of these methods is to analyse and research about what is happening currently in the Tennis in Finland. The main reason is to get the most updated data about the Tennis players' behaviour and how they can improve to get a better service and therefore get more involved into Tennis.

To analyse the need of Tennis players in Finland, a survey was conducted using Facebook Finnish Tennis groups:

- Tennis Kirppis
- Tennis Coaches

- Aalto Tennis
- Suomen Seniori Tennis

The study was handled with a total of 22 users on Facebook. The users were asked, among others, reply to the following questions:

- What city are you from?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- Are you studying or working?
- How long have you been playing Tennis in Finland?
- Do you think it is expensive to play Tennis in Finland?
- Do you find it difficult to book a Tennis court in Finland?
- How do you book your Tennis courts?
- Do you easily find information in English about Tennis clubs in your area?
- What type of solutions do you access to find a Tennis friend in Finland?
- What would you suggest helping people join Tennis in Finland?
- Would you rather use one online platform that gives you access to all Tennis clubs in Finland, Tennis coaches listing and Tennis players listing by level?
- What website/social media do you use to find information about Tennis in Finland?

## **4 RESEARCH ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 SWOT Analysis**

The following SWOT analysis is based on the sports platforms business plan strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The approach will help the reader understand the strengths and the opportunities that the writer possesses, following with the weaknesses and Threats that will be faced during the process. By determining the four aspects, the aim is to use them as an advantage for the sports platform. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses will boost the idea and find out all the changes that must be considered during the writing of the business plan. Moreover, the threats are something that cannot be avoided during the journey and opportunities must help to achieve goals and find success for the sports platform.



### Strengths:

The following part describes all the strong points of the Marketplace sports platform. The diversified client base will help reduce the dependency on one market segment, local Tennis players from Espoo and Helsinki will receive discounts for renting Tennis courts when registering for free to the platform. Also, the experience is very important and can be used as a strength. The founder and his team are well experienced professionals and well knows in the industry of Tennis in the country (wordstream, 2020.)

Moreover, the combination of skills in employees will make the different with the competition. The founder will engage well-qualified and experienced employees to jointly develop business strategy and long-term plans, to reach the company goals. The strength here will prove the possibility of grouping a team of well-qualified marketing and Tennis professionals to take control of various jobs. An aggressive and focused marketing campaign with a clear goal should be the main strategy for marketing. Partnership with Tennis local stars and influencers will help get more social media followers and therefore more exposure in the community.

Finally, it is important to mention the importance of tailor-made options of the platform. the users will be able to tailor made the search of Tennis courts, Tennis coaches and next tournaments to be able to access the same information at any time.

**Weaknesses:**

Entering the market as a new business is one of the most difficult steps to make. Therefore, lack of reputation comparing to the well-known competitor will be one of the obstacles in the national market. Another challenge that might affect the grow of the company in the beginning is to form and instruct the new personnel who have not previously worked together. Not to mention the limitations in the financial base compared to the already running business competitors in the market. The reduced financial capital limits the plans to be knows in the market.

The Lack of clear strategic allies in the beginning of the journey might slow down the growth of the plan. The team must work actively to partnership with other Tennis providers.

**Opportunities:**

Plans for expansion and market share are an important strategic opportunity for the business idea. The opportunity part will help to improve the sales and grow the idea to have a good beginning within the market. Acquiring a capital in the form of grant fund which will be invested in the business is another opportunity to help the business idea growth. (wordstream, 2020.)

In addition, the marketplace platform needs to adapt the idea of green technology to match with the growing market, combined with supporting a healthy lifestyle of the younger generation.

**Threats:**

The threats part of the SWOT is everything that causes risks to the success and growth of the platform. The first and most important risk would be copycat services, other services might copy and try to mimic the success of the marketplace platform. Therefore, more confidence and professional team will limit the impact of copycat on the bottom line of the platform (wordstream, 2020.)

Changes in regulatory law is the next threats as it slows down the growth and plans. Keeping the team updated with all the new laws might save time and more ahead with the platform.

## 4.2 Competitive landscape

The main competitors the writer have discovered during the research are websites which focus on one service. Although they offer similar solutions, the positioning and marketing in the Finnish market are diverse. The graph below shows websites who are offering Tennis services in Finland, from courts bookings to platforms that gives access to the tournaments in the country.

One of the main competitors is Tennis.fi website, the official website of the Tennis association in Finland. The website has developed during the last years and focused more about the look and feel of their website. The website offers also updated newsletters about all the activities and official ATP games played in Finland. Tennis.fi managed to get sponsors to run the website and add all the services in one place. Moreover, they have the option to purchase directly from the website and book the official Davis cup games of the Finnish team (Tennis.fi. 2021.)

Another competitor is Play website (Play.fi. n.d), a website that gives you the option to book your Tennis courts online, find a play mate and download the app on your mobile device to keep track on your bookings.

Play.fi have recently signed a partnership with the Finnish Tennis Association and planning to manage other sports such as Padel, badminton and squash.

Sportspartner.com is a platform that gives you access to a database where you can meet partners who have the same interest as you. The platform gives you access to more than 250.000 registered people, and it gives you the option to search by sports type. The most popular sports listed are golf, running, walking, cycling, Tennis and dance (Sportspartner, n.d.)

Tennis Assa is a website that list all the Tennis players in the country who are official registerer in the Finnish association of Tennis. The platform gives you access to the current tournaments in your city and register all the games results. All the data gathered on the website will give you the right ranking in the Tennis league (Tennis Assa, n.d.)

The competition is fierce in Finland. However, the writer think it has its competitive advantage which could help to create a unique platform that combines all the necessary for Tennis users and therefore penetrate the Finnish market.



One of the competitive advantages of the writer's business idea lies in users' friendly solution. Various content such as court booking, friend matching, coach searching is all included in one single package, which help users from gathering information from multiple websites. This saves times and hassle for both users and clubs. Which improves court booking rate and end-user experience. Meanwhile, apart from the intuitive platform, users and club owners have access to data and analytics which will help them understand the customer behaviour and therefore make some adjustments to the current offers.

The writer wants to prove the importance of the data analysis functions and the benefits for everyone. Analytics helps track end customers' usage statistics, which will inform the clubs about the real needs of the end customer. Besides, the writer wants to solve the real needs and tailor the platform to facilitate useful product for national and international Tennis players.

### **4.3 Business highlights**

**Technology:** Unique solution to understand the requirements of the end users. Website and mobile application accessible to all English, Finnish, and Swedish speakers. Access to a unique website where users and prospective users can get our newsletters.

**Trademarks:** Registering the name Tennis Arena as a trademark in the respective location.

**Advertising:** Marketing and sales strategy by social media are the fundamental tools to guide a professional marketing. In addition, hiring the services of a renowned media and advertising strategist to help grow quickly in the beginning of the process.

**Seasoned management:** The experience is key when it comes to qualified personnel, a spontaneous person herself, passionate, and the focus is to help international students and expats connect and play tennis with locals.

**Strategic relationships:** Open for new relationships with other sports activities to grow the business idea. This will enhance professional growth. These alliances are valuable to the writer because they allow us to update trends and the latest demands in the industry.

#### 4.4 Questionnaire for Tennis players in Finland

The answer to these questions will enable us to develop the functionalities of the platform which will address the needs of the Tennis players in Finland. Moreover, the users were keen to answer the questions provided and could be potentially become future users of the platform. Nearly three third of the users were men (77.3%) compared to 18.2% total of women users. The age group 20 to 50 was strongly represented in this questionnaire as they were the most active users in the Facebook group. Therefore, we must analyse and find the way to contact the group from 8 to 18 using different platforms or directly with the Tennis clubs. Importantly, most answers came from major urban cities (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa), as Tennis Arena will focus mainly on such cities at the beginning of our operations.

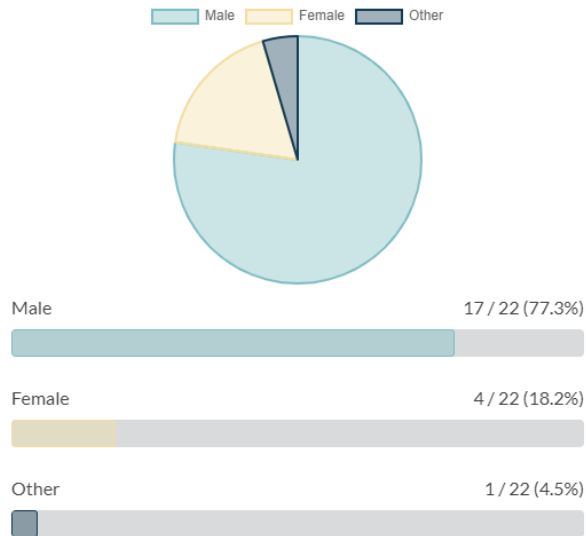
22 submissions of "Tennis in Finland survey" page 1 of 3

Search... Delete... Export

<input type="checkbox"/>	View	Submitted At <span>▲</span>	What city are you from? <span>▼</span>	What is your age? <span>▼</span>	What is your gender? <span>▼</span>	Are you studying or working?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (1)</a>	May 12th 21, 2:33pm	Helsinki	36	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (2)</a>	May 5th 21, 8:38am	helsinki	28	Female	Studying
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (3)</a>	May 5th 21, 5:24am	Tennis	33	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (4)</a>	May 3rd 21, 7:23pm	Turku	34	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (5)</a>	May 2nd 21, 2:51pm	Espoo	32	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (6)</a>	May 2nd 21, 10:49am	Tampere	37	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (7)</a>	May 2nd 21, 5:35am	Vantaa	45	Female	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (8)</a>	May 1st 21, 6:38pm	Oulu	40	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (9)</a>	May 1st 21, 6:21pm	Helsinki	53	Male	Working
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">View (10)</a>	May 1st 21, 6:07pm	Helsinki	43	Male	Working

### What is your gender?

22 out of 22 people answered this question.

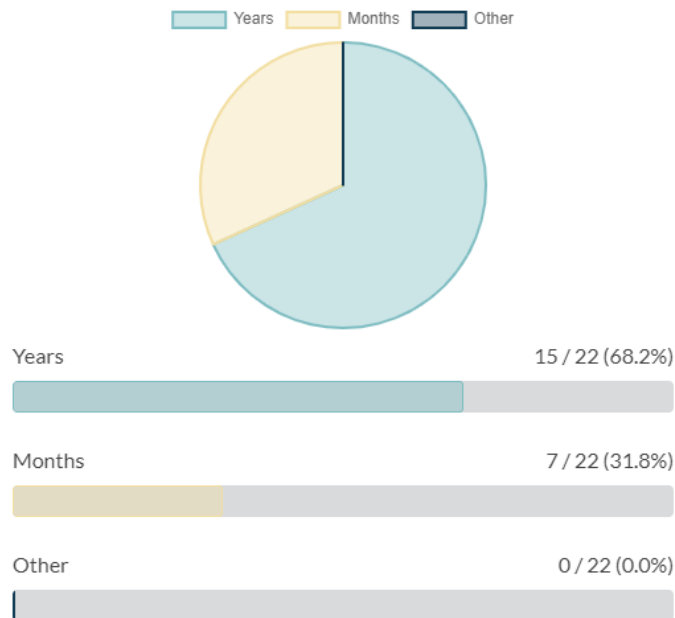


Submitted At	What city are you	What is your age?	What is yo
01/05/2021 12:52	Helsinki	20	Male
05/05/2021 08:38	helsinki	28	Female
01/05/2021 14:24	Helsinki	30	Male
02/05/2021 14:51	Espoo	32	Male
01/05/2021 17:49	Helsinki	32	Male
01/05/2021 14:34	Vantaa	32	Male
01/05/2021 14:19	Helsinki	32	Female
05/05/2021 05:24	Tennis	33	Male
01/05/2021 14:01	Espoo	33	Male
03/05/2021 19:23	Turku	34	Male
01/05/2021 13:09	Järvenpää	34	Male
02/05/2021 10:49	Tampere	37	Male
01/05/2021 13:19	Helsinki	37	Male
01/05/2021 14:44	Helsinki	38	Male
01/05/2021 18:38	Oulu	40	Male
01/05/2021 18:07	Helsinki	43	Male
01/05/2021 14:42	Kirkkonummi	43	Other
02/05/2021 05:35	Vantaa	45	Female
01/05/2021 15:12	Helsinki	45	Female
01/05/2021 14:12	Helsinki	48	Male
01/05/2021 18:21	Helsinki	53	Male

The users were asked about how long they have been playing Tennis in Finland. The 68.2% were playing for years compared to the 31.8% who are playing for months. The information is valuable for us to analyse and knowledge the fact that players have been playing for too long and without a proper platform where they could connect and manage their bookings accordingly. The study shows that people are playing Tennis actively but still using website such Facebook to find information and connections.

### How long have you been playing tennis in Finland?

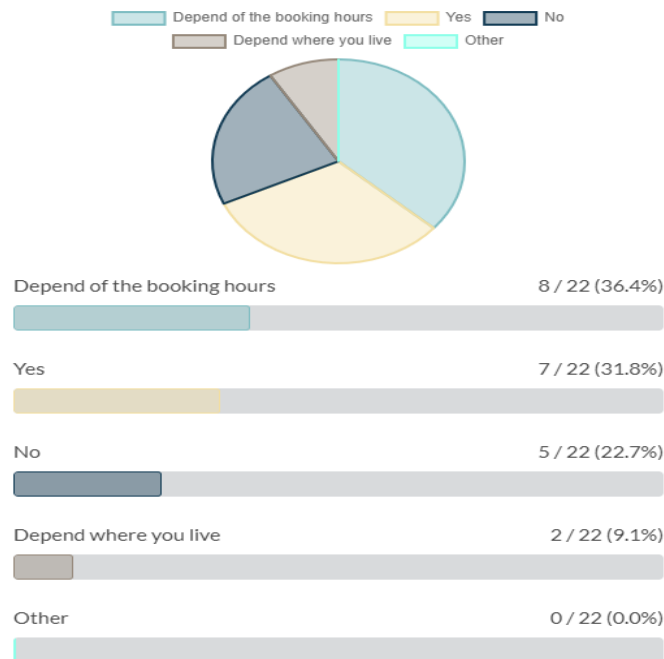
22 out of 22 people answered this question.



Furthermore, the writer asked them if the prices to book a Tennis court in Finland were affordable for everyone. 36.4% answered it depend on the booking hours, 31.8% think that the prices are high compared to the 22.7% who think that the prices are affordable. This information will enhance the business proposition to adjust and maybe offer discounts when they book more Tennis courts hours using our platform. However, one of the reasons could be that most players thinks that the prices are affordable in Finland is because the 90.9% were working and have a solid income, compared to the 4.5% who were still students.

### Do you think it is expensive to play tennis in Finland?

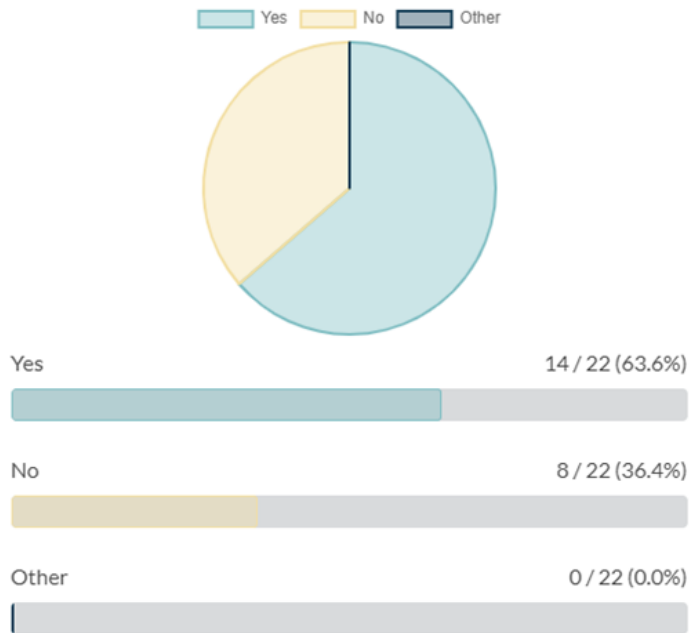
22 out of 22 people answered this question.



The 63.6% have difficulties to book a Tennis court in Finland compared to the 36.4% who think that booking Tennis courts is not difficult. The results shows that the current pricing model is pushing the interest of the Tennis players. They are forced to use other channels such Facebook groups to find updated information about the Tennis clubs. 86.4% of the users have answered that they book their Tennis courts using the online booking system provided by the clubs. However, they must get used to a different system every time they book a Tennis court in different club. The writer was surprised by the fact that 9.1% were still using the old method calling the club directly to ask for court availability and the 4.5% were directly visiting the club to ask for available courts.

Do you find it difficult to book a tennis court in Finland?

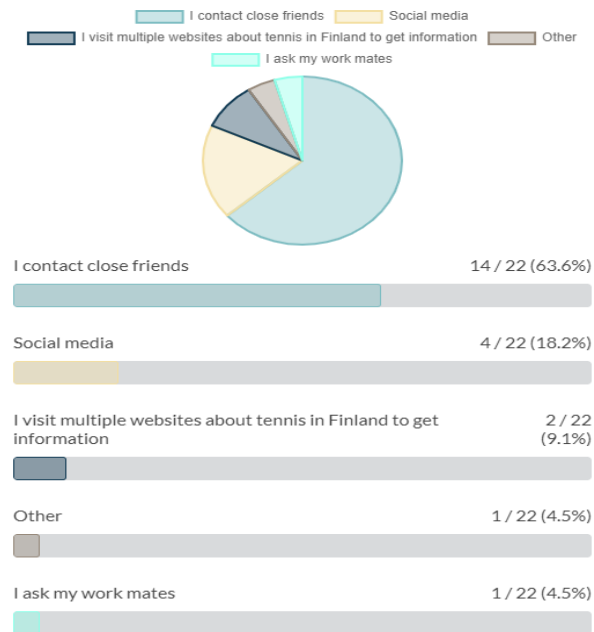
22 out of 22 people answered this question.



In addition, the thesis writer asked the question of what type of solutions they access to find a Tennis player in Finland and the answer was that 63.6% answered they contact first their entourage and friends to play Tennis, 18.2% uses social media groups to ask if they are people interested in playing with them and the 9.1% use google search to find websites who can connect and match Tennis players in Finland.

### What type of solutions do you access to find a tennis friend in Finland?

22 out of 22 people answered this question.

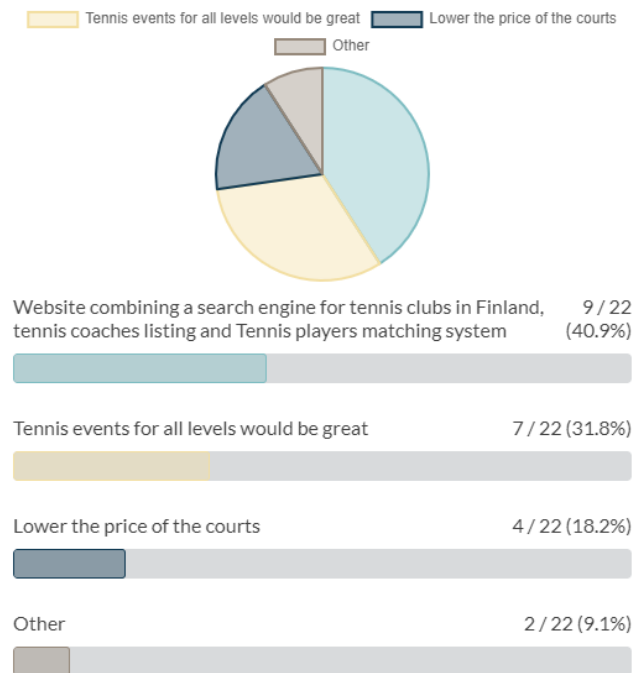


Finally, the users were asked for their feedback to help people join playing Tennis in Finland. The 40.9% answered that it would be great to have a website that combines a Tennis court search engine, Tennis coaches and Tennis players in one single platform. The 31.8% answered events for all levels would be great to have and the 18.2% think that maybe lowering the court prices will help them access and play more Tennis.

## What would you suggest to help people join tennis in Finland?

22 out of 22 people answered this question.

Combining a search engine for tennis clubs in Finland, tennis coaches listing and Tennis players



After performing the questionnaire, the thesis writer had identified the main information that are very useful to implement and develop a solution to introduce for the Tennis players in Finland. The questions are: would it be easier for Tennis players to use a user-friendly platform that helps get all the information about Tennis and more?

The first step will be building the solution based on the need of the users, the main features needed in the solution are a unique and simple booking engine provided in multiple languages and most importantly user friendly.

Secondly, building a system that gives the possibility to connect and with other Tennis players in your area, sharing your experience and feedback. Thirdly, it will connect Tennis coaches with players by providing them all the necessary tools inside the platform. The players will have the option to leave feedback about their experiences with the coach to motivate more people to book Tennis classes with the coach. The coach will be able to book the Tennis courts via the platform with the option of getting discounts for group bookings.



## 5 CONCLUSION

The findings used in this research shows the necessity of a user experience sports platform for the Finnish market. In order to facilitate the access to Tennis players, find and connect Tennis colleagues or coaches and integrate sustainable solutions, it is necessary to develop an online platform with a great user experience design.

The aim is to help users navigate and use a well-designed platform in order to avoid frustrations and poor quality information. Moreover, the important thing to know is that the Tennis experience exist already for the user and the online marketplace platform's job is to make that experience better. A well-organized information architecture for instance helps connect all the content needed with the functionality of the sports platform. In addition, the interaction oriented design gives the feel and sound of the platform and how it can be customized to the users experience. (Khindri D, 2021.)

The platform is committed to building its business on professionalism, courtesy, reliability, and demonstrates its dedication while building relationships with customers to ensure constant revenue from its services. With the intent to grow the idea and introduce it to the international market, the thesis writer will hire qualified employees, keep the business credit in green numbers and achieve goals by developing constantly the business idea.

The marketplace platform will at all-time demonstrates the commitment to sustainability, both individually and as a company, by actively participating in our communities and integrating sustainable business practices wherever possible. It is committed to growing the business through embracing technology, developing strong partnerships and by emphasizing on providing high levels of customer satisfaction and ensure that it provide the right resources at the right time to maximize the clients' business potential.

This is the first step of something ever bigger, in the future, the following steps are developing a customer journey and understand the customers steps to help identify the gaps in the customer experience and explore the opportunities. The next step is to create a branding to build a reputation within the market and connect with the users telling a story and making a product that helps them with their needs. And finally, build an analytics data base to share with Tennis clubs and users in order to measure and save time targeting the right audience and most importantly

help with their marketing campaigns providing a relevant information or service for their customers.

It will ensure to hold accountable to the highest standards by meeting the user's needs precisely and completely whenever they use the platform. Moreover, cultivating a working environment that provides a human, sustainable approach to earning a living for our partners, employees and for the end customers.

The research conducted is a way to understand the Tennis players' behaviour and what are the obstacle they are facing currently. The Tennis Marketplace platform provide a user friendly to get all the necessary services or products from the same website.

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