

Julius Koskinen (1900495) & Ville Salonen (1900494)

COOPERATION PROPOSALS AND IDEAS FOR ACTIVE LIFE LAB

Improving cooperation between the competitive
sports clubs in the Mikkeli region and Active Life
Lab

Bachelor of Business Administration

Wellbeing Management

2022



South-Eastern Finland
University of Applied Sciences

Author (authors)	Degree title	Time
Julius Koskinen & Ville Salonen	Bachelor of Business Administration	April 2022
Thesis title Cooperation proposals and ideas for Active Life Lab. 94 pages Improving cooperation between the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region and Active Life Lab. 4 pages of appendices		
Commissioned by Active Life Lab		
Supervisor Marja-Leena Koskinen		
Abstract <p>The topic of this bachelor's thesis was the development of cooperation between Active Life Lab and competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region. This thesis was assigned by Active Life Lab, which is a non-profit research and development unit of the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, founded in 2018 in Mikkeli. The objective of the thesis was to develop cooperation between the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region and Active Life Lab.</p> <p>The research questions aimed to find out what Active Life Lab could offer to competitive sports clubs in terms of athletes' testing environments and wellbeing services. Research questions also aimed to map the wants and needs of the sports clubs using Active Life Lab's services and products. All research questions are aimed at improving cooperation between the parties and developing the current model.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of this thesis consisted of three main chapters. The first chapter covered the functions of sports clubs in general. The second chapter discussed wellbeing services. The third chapter discussed the cooperation in non-profit organisations. Qualitative methods were used as a thematic / semi-structured interview as well as using the benchmarking method, which examined the operations of a non-profit organisation of Department of Physical Activity and Health Centre in the region of South-Western Finland.</p> <p>The conclusions of the research were made at the end of the study; the research questions were answered, and recommendations for actions and ideas for the case company were made and the ideas were proposed. Furthermore, additional ideas for future research were given.</p>		
Keywords sports clubs, wellbeing, cooperation, research and development		

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	SPORTS CLUBS	6
2.1	Operating models	6
2.2	Operating environment and target groups	8
2.3	Sports clubs' financing	9
2.4	Marketing in sports clubs	13
3	WELLBEING SERVICES	14
3.1	Core concepts of wellbeing services	15
3.2	Marketing of wellbeing services	16
3.3	Importance of wellbeing and its services	17
3.4	Sports clubs as a promoter of wellbeing	18
3.5	The wellbeing of athletes	21
4	COOPERATION IN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS	22
4.1	Benefits and challenges of cooperation	23
4.2	Sports clubs cooperation	24
4.3	Sport sponsorship	26
4.4	Cooperation in Research & Development organisations	27
5	COMMISSIONING PARTY	29
6	RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION	31
6.1	Qualitative research	32
6.2	Data collection	33
6.3	Analysing data	36
6.4	Implementation of research methods and data collection	38
7	RESULTS	42
7.1	Results of thematic interviews	42

7.2	Results of benchmarking	52
8	CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS	62
8.1	Answers to research questions.....	63
8.2	Development proposals	73
8.3	Research trustworthiness and ethics	80
9	CONCLUSION.....	83
	REFERENCES	86

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Thematic interview with sport club in cooperation

Appendix 2. Thematic interview with sports clubs not in cooperation

Appendix 3. Athletes path in Mikkeli

Appendix 4. Thematic interview questions for benchmark organisation and Active
Life Lab

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is to provide Active Life Lab with development ideas and recommendations for actions to develop the cooperation between competitive sports clubs in the region of Mikkeli. This thesis is a case study that is suitable as an approach, especially when the purpose is to produce development suggestions and ideas. This thesis aims to have an impact on how the case company can expand their cooperation with competitive sports clubs in the future. This empirical research is conducted with the help of qualitative research and benchmarking methods. The needs and wants of competitive sports clubs are discovered with the use of semi-structured interviews. Both the thematic interview and benchmarking questions are derived from the theoretical background and selected to provide as much information as possible about the topic being studied. The research is worth doing in order to find out whether Active Life Lab's cooperation operations could be expanded to promote wellbeing in new target groups in competitive sports clubs in Mikkeli region. In addition, the objective is to figure out whether competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region see added value from Active Life Lab's services and products.

This case study has three research questions: the first research question is to map what Active Life Lab can offer to the competitive sports clubs in terms of athletes' testing environment and wellbeing services. The second research question is to map the wishes of competitive sports clubs from Active Life Lab's services and products. The third research question is to map how cooperation between the parties can be developed. With the help of these research questions, the objective is to create concrete ideas and recommendations for actions to develop cooperation between competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region and Active Life Lab.

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of three main chapters. The first chapter covers the functions, finances, and operations of Finnish sports clubs in general. The second chapter discusses wellbeing services and its core concepts, as well as their importance, marketing, and the wellbeing of athletes. The third chapter discusses the cooperation in non-profit organisations, and the benefits

and challenges of cooperation in general. This case study uses qualitative research and benchmarking methods to support the theories. Development ideas are based on qualitative research, gathered information by thematic interviews, and are derived from the background theory to answer the research questions. In addition, the benchmarking method is used to compare the operations of Active Life Lab with the wellbeing promoting non-profit organisation Department of Physical Activity and Health in the region of South-West Finland. At the end of this study case, the results of the findings are revealed and analysed with the conclusions based on them, as well as the evaluation of the credibility of this study and propositions/suggestions for further research.

2 SPORTS CLUBS

Sports club activities have a long tradition in Finland, and through citizens' own initiatives and cooperation-based activities, they continue to play a significant role. Since 1990, almost one in four associations founded in Finland has been in the field of sports. Throughout history, about 30 000 sports clubs have been established in Finland. (Koski & Mäenpää 2018b; Olympiakomitea 2018.) According to Torkildsen (2010, 14), for an activity to be identified as sports typically requires one or more of a few characteristics, including physical activity, skills, competition, and/or regulations, with officials, for example, referees to enforce them.

Sports club activities data collected from a public database in the fall of 2020 showed that there were 7 571 sports clubs in Finland. Of these, 978 were multisport clubs. There were 231 sports clubs in the entire Southern Savonia region. In the city of Mikkeli (population 53 134), 79 clubs were registered in 2020, which means 14,90 sports clubs per 100 000 inhabitants in the region. (Seuratietokanta, 2021.)

2.1 Operating models

Finnish sports clubs are based on civic activities. Civic activities refer to organized units such as sports clubs, and regional and national sports

organisations. In Finland, civic engagement in sports does not constitute the same sports movement based on shared governance and representative democracy as in the other Nordic countries. Therefore, parties in Finland are independent and cooperation between each other is voluntary. (Ala-Vähälä, et al. 2018, 19.) The activities of sports clubs in Finland are basically non-profit activities based on certain values and attitudes. The most established ideas are respect for the rules and fair play, education, good manners, and a healthy and sober lifestyle. Multiculturalism, internationality, tolerance, equality, and professionalism have emerged as new and current values. Changes in the ideological emphasis are reflected in the current world events and the situation in Finland. The basis of the activities of sports clubs is the promotion of physical activity and sports. (Koski & Mäenpää 2018a, 34–35.) Although Koski et al. (2017, 6) state that sports clubs tend to focus more on competing; they are emphasizing physical development and athletic performance. Therefore, they place less emphasis on recreational exercises or increasing physical activities through sport.

Today, most sports clubs in Finland are organized as registered associations. As a registered association, a sports association is a non-profit, common-good, and legal entity. The affairs of the sports club are decided by the association's meetings and its activities are the responsibility of the association's board. (Hossain, et al. 2013, 35.) According to Koski & Mäenpää (2018a, 38), Finnish sports clubs can be divided into four categories: competitive clubs, fitness clubs, multi-sport clubs, and youth education clubs. A survey that was conducted in 2016, and answered by 833 sports clubs in Finland, stated that their sports clubs' main purposes were the following: competition club (30,7 %), fitness club (37%), multi-sports club (29,2 %), and youth education club (2,5%).

Generally, as mentioned, both non-professional and professional sports clubs are organized as non-profit associations. Hence, unpaid voluntary work is crucial for the organisation of sports in Finland. In Finland, only a few leagues, and teams participating in leagues at the highest national level, such as the ice hockey league (Liiga), are organized as limited liability companies. Nevertheless, the

leagues' articles of association require that the companies are tied to non-profit associations, and it is the associations (sports clubs) that hold the participating licenses. (Ek & Markkanen 2021.)

2.2 Operating environment and target groups

The key concepts in understanding the sports operating environment from the perspective of sports clubs are the public, private and third sectors. The public sector refers to the actors of public authority, meaning the state and the municipality. Public funding thus refers to either state or municipal funding. The private sector refers to privately owned economic operators, companies, and corporations. Throughout history, the third sector has been the most significant sector in the Finnish sports system. Definitions of non-profit civic activities and volunteering have been used to describe the specific nature of the third sector. On an annual basis, Finns volunteer for sports organisations for about 74 hours and the economic value of this work is between 0.9 and 1.5 billion euros. The third sector includes most sports clubs and sports organisations, among other social organisations. The term third sector can be seen as an umbrella of formal and informal non-profit organisations and groups that distinguish them from the government and private sectors. (Ahmed 2012, 4; Konttinen, 2015; Mäkinen 2018, 43; Stenbacka et al. 2018, 11.)

Traditionally, each of the three sectors has maintained the distinct roles and approaches described above—with the private sector focusing on profitable markets, the public sector solving market failures, and the non-profit sector engaging citizens in meeting societal needs (Wolk 2007, 163). Socially sustainable sports should also be financially sound. However, this is often not the case, as sport is too often played on an economically unsustainable basis. In Finnish team sports, the sustainability of the economy is a constant threat, and club bankruptcies and payment difficulties are a worryingly familiar phenomenon. (Itkonen 2014, 4.)

According to the Sports Act (390/2015), the creation of general conditions for sports is a statutory task of the state and municipalities. Most of the club activities

are still carried out in municipal sports facilities, where 20% of the clubs have their own facilities and 44% of clubs rent private premises (Koski & Mäenpää 2018b). The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture is also responsible for competitive and elite sports, and for creating the conditions for their success. However, the state does not financially support for professional sports, such as the cost of organizing national professional series. For the purposes of this thesis, top sport refers to a determined, ethically sustainable individuals and team sport aimed at international or national success. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018:41, 84.)

One of the core activities of sports clubs is to provide coaching, guidance, and exercises to the members. Various events, such as competitions and matches, are naturally the core activities of clubs. In addition, clubs organize or collaborate on a wide variety of occasions and events. By target group, clubs most often organize activities for young people 15 years of age, but changes in the age structure of the Finnish population have also begun to show in the offer of club activities. The opportunities for elderly people to exercise have increased exponentially in recent years. (Koski & Mäenpää 2018a, 39–40.) For some individuals, sport is a serious competition where the goal is professionalism, but for others it can be a hobby. Sports are also an entertaining commodity, and for this reason it is desired to be developed like any other commercial product. (Alaja 2000, 16.)

2.3 Sports clubs' financing

Overall, when inspecting all three sectors (public, private, and third), the economy of physical activity and sports can be viewed from two perspectives: from the perspective of the producers of goods and services on one hand, and the financiers of these goods and services on the other. When the economy of sports is treated from the perspective of producers of goods or services, part of the cash flow is calculated twice or more. The calculation sums up the turnover of companies, organisations, and clubs in the sports sector, which includes transactions within the sports sector: for example, a household can pay the club for the child's training expenses, and the club pays some of this to the sports hall.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the difference in estimates, in turn, reflects the volume of intra-sports financial transactions in the sports sector, considering various errors and inaccuracies. (Ala-Vähälä et al. 2018, 7.)

The main providers of sports and competitive sports-related services are municipalities, sports clubs, and commercial service providers. Sports services are funded by private consumers, sports sponsorship companies, the state, and municipalities. The role of municipalities is thus twofold: they both fund sports services and produce them themselves (see Figure 1). (Ala-Vähälä et al. 2018, 7.) Sports clubs get some of their funding from sports federations, and most of the sports clubs are members of a national sports federation, while the national sports federations are members of the international sports federation for their respective sports. Virtually all Finnish national sports federations are members of the Finnish Olympic Committee. (Ek & Markkanen 2021.)

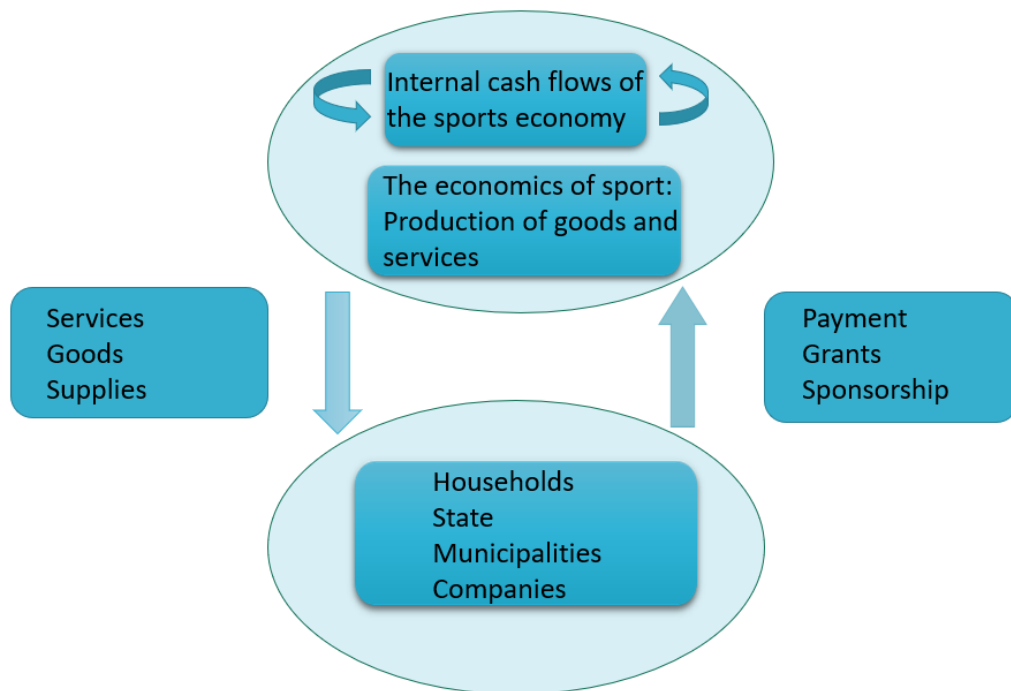


Figure 1. A model for examining the economics of sport (Ala-Vähälä et al. 2018, 8)

The financial income from sports club activities varies greatly due to the sport, the club's goals, and level of operations, as well as the operating environment. In

general, it is conceivable that the sports club receives its funding from the following sources: the membership fee, which is decided by the general meeting; the fees charged based on activities brokerage of equipment and supplies. Income comes from business cooperation, which includes sponsorship income as well as advertising sales, municipal grants, which may include an actual operating grant, targeted grants for instructors' fees and training, as well as rental subsidies for sports venues, government project grants, and volunteering. (Hossain et al. 2013, 36-37.) According to Mäkinen (2018, 62), without volunteering, the cost burden is likely to be passed on to households, raising their sport costs from the current € 2.9 billion to around € 4 billion euros.

Revenues for sports clubs are affected by whether they are multi-sport clubs or specialized sports clubs, whether they carry out competitive activities, and, if so, at what level. Typically, the lower the level at which a club or team operates competitively, the greater the weight given to the hobbyist in the financing of the activity through the operating fees charged to the hobbyist himself. In many cases, sports clubs maintain a net budget that does not directly reflect all operating expenses. To understand the economic aspects of an operation, it is important that all expenditures and all revenues are presented. This increases the transparency of the activities, which is important both for the internal relations of the club and for the image given to external actors. (Hossain et al. 2013, 37.)

As the competitive level gets higher, many parties are aiming for a greater piece of the pie—media companies and brands, sports leagues, and sports clubs. In the sports ecosystem (see Figure 2), money flows in many directions: from fans to pay TV providers; from leagues to clubs; from brands to clubs. (Collignon & Sultan 2014, 6.)

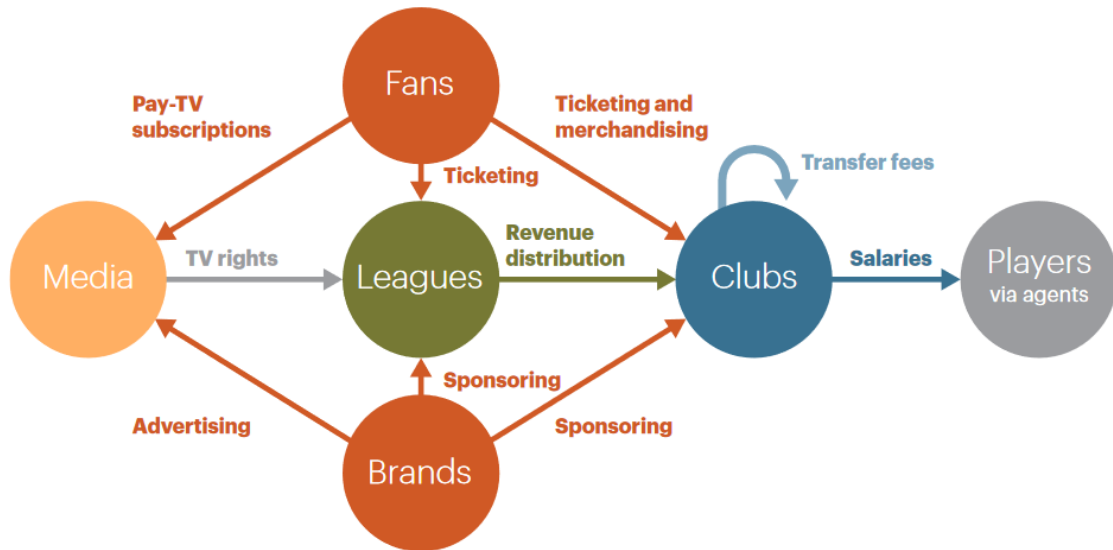


Figure 2. The sports ecosystem: the flow of money (Collignon & Sultan 2014, 6)

Households finance sports directly by participating in a club's activity and buying sports equipment and supplies from companies. They also buy services provided by municipalities and companies. Households also buy viewing time on pay-per-view sports channels and bet through Veikkaus Oy's gambling services. Veikkaus is the Finnish government-owned betting agency which holds a monopoly in the country. (Ala-Vähälä et al. 2018, 8.)

Depending on the sport in the sports club's activities, the relationship between the cost items will vary. In general, it can be assumed that the operating costs of a sports club are divided into the following items of expenditure: venue costs (hall rental fees, ice time, field costs, etc.), coaches/instructor salaries and fees, equipment costs, travel costs, and competitive participation fees. Administrative costs and federation membership fees incur costs for competing clubs. Part of the cost is the so-called overhead cost, and part is the cost of running a sports division or even an individual team. All income from the activities of the club, including membership fees, can be treated in a comprehensive manner. (Hossain et al. 2013, 36.)

2.4 Marketing in sports clubs

Sport can be seen as a value-creation platform, in which there are constantly two opposite processes going on. For example, sports clubs compete on the field, but they co-operate with each other to increase the attractiveness of the league or sport. (Jalonen et al. 2018, 125.) The marketing of a sports club can be divided into amateur marketing and audience marketing. With the help of amateur marketing, sports clubs aim to attract new members to their activities, whereas audience marketing aims to attract people to the events organised by the club as spectators. (Alaja 2001, 15.)

The marketing of a sports club can be further divided into five sections, which are product, price, availability, marketing communications, and sponsorship cooperation. Products are the core of everything, and that is what the sports club offers to potential customers. In terms of pricing, the sports club prepares the products and services it offers in the way it sees fit. To improve accessibility, the sports club strives to remove all possible obstacles and make the purchase of the event as easy as possible. Through marketing communications, the sports club informs customers about the products and services they offer. These include advertising, outreach, engagement, personal sales, sales promotion, and public relations. (Alaja 2001, 17–18.) Social media is a powerful tool in marketing communication because customers are more entertained by free marketing content and will produce social network activity. The uniqueness of social media marketing allows generating direct interactions between users that can lead to word-to-mouth effects, including the willingness of customers to pass along information seen on the marketer's social media page. (Wibowo et al. 2021, 3.)

Consequently, the basis of marketing in sports clubs is based on the customers' needs. A customer of the sports club can be a member of the club, a spectator, or a partner. To be successful, a sports club must invest in customer satisfaction. As also in other industries, marketing identifies customers' needs, desires, and motives and seeks to find ways to satisfy them. For a sports club, marketing is also the club's way of thinking and acting. Everything a sports club does has an impact, and every member representing a sports club acts as a marketer.

Successful marketing creates a competitive advantage for the sports club as well as the conditions for operating and developing its operations. Competitive advantage in this context means economic, operational, or imaginary benefit. (Alaja 2001, 16–17.)

Certain traditional sports, such as ice hockey and football, are of interest to Finns from year to year because of their long traditions and long-term major investments. Furthermore, they also have a strong position in the media, which leads to more visibility for sponsors. (Suomen Olympiakomitea 2020, 172.) A sports organisation such as a professional ice hockey team faces many challenges today in relation to a competitive market. To keep sports clubs' financial situations balanced in the long run and at the same time be a successful team, they need to attract customers and people to buy their merchandise through marketing. One important aspect is to get spectators into different events instead of watching games on televised broadcasts. As mentioned, it helps when a team is successful; people might visit the arena more often, and sports clubs might get more media attention. Usually, in Finland, local people support their local club, which makes all the people in the region an important marketing target group for sports clubs. (Rundh & Gottfridsson 2015, 785.)

3 WELLBEING SERVICES

Health is fundamental for everyone, but especially for athletes. As mentioned earlier, sports clubs, even though many clubs claim it to be important, usually do not focus on health promotion but rather solely on competitions. However, good health undoubtedly brings benefits to all members of sports clubs, which include different age groups, from children to seniors, and whose skill levels range from amateurs to top athletes. For top athletes, it is important to be healthy and injury-free when aiming to reach their best performance level. (Koski et al. 2017, 6.) Furthermore, wellbeing services in the sports industry are traditionally examined from the perspective of attaining strategic and operational goals, including increased profitability, better sporting performance, and customer and employee retention (Li et al. 2018). According to Smolianov et al. (2020, 1851-1852), now

more than ever, elite sport methods can contribute to public health and mass sport participation.

Using mobile apps that create data about health and fitness has gradually become common practice in nearly all aspects of people's daily lives and healthcare sectors. These services can be used from the comfort of people's homes with the help of smartphones and computers to lower the threshold, to get in contact with wellbeing and health experts, for example, a doctor's appointment. Furthermore, these technological advancements have benefited wellness services in different industries, such as sports and healthcare, considerably because the measurements are broader, more accurate, and more consistent. (Aboelmaged et al. 2021, 1.)

3.1 Core concepts of wellbeing services

Wellbeing services are fundamentally there to support our everyday lives and our wellbeing as individuals, employees, families, and communities alike. Wellbeing services are offered from all perspectives of wellbeing, such as physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Therefore, their pricing and products are different depending on what part of the wellbeing services one is focusing on. Wellbeing services are available to all people and are offered by the public, private, and third sectors. There is a growing societal need to focus and pay greater attention to the wellbeing of people because it is highly relevant to the economy. Therefore, institutions, governments, and organisations worldwide are starting to pay more attention to wellbeing services. (Petermans & Cain 2019, 2-3.)

A core concept for a wellbeing service is to measure something, or at least raise the perceived standard of a person's state of wellbeing to a better level. Higher levels of wellbeing are and have been associated with decreased risk of disease, illness, and injury; a better functioning immune system; enhanced recovery; and increased longevity. Furthermore, higher levels of wellbeing have been linked to greater individual productivity, affecting society and communities positively. (Isham et al. 2021, 3.)

In the connection with the new Sports Act (390/2015, 3 §), the concepts of physical activity, top-level (elite sport) sports, and wellbeing were opened. According to the law, the terms mean the following: (1) physical activity means spontaneous and structured physical exercise excluding top-level sports; (2) top-level sports mean extensive, goal-oriented sports activities aimed at international success; (3) physical activity promoting health and wellbeing means all types of physical activity during human life designed to maintain and improve the state of health and functional ability of the population.

Core concepts of wellbeing services in the sports industry revolve naturally around the wellbeing of athletes. Wellbeing services measure objective (for example, sleep, strength, endurance, nutrition) and subjective (for example, positive and negative emotions) parameters to ensure the athletes (and other team members) are progressing, performing well, and staying healthy. Detailed or specific wellbeing measures targeting certain domains may provide more detailed and precise information on an athlete's wellbeing. Sports is associated with optimal levels of wellbeing and other positive effects. However, negative experiences in sports may have a detrimental influence on athletes' physical and mental health, thus diminishing their wellbeing. Therefore, it is important that sports clubs keep a network of wellbeing services at hand in order to combat the negative effects and experiences of competitive sports on athletes, such as injuries and mental health problems. (Kouali et al. 2020, 94-95.)

3.2 Marketing of wellbeing services

Marketing as a term, in short, means "all activities a company does to promote and sell products or services to consumers." Marketing is made up of core concepts and the "circle of life" of marketing, where all concepts are connected to each other. If there is no need, want, or demand for a product, the business won't survive, applying for the other concepts as well. Outstanding marketing companies see marketing as intrinsically involved in value creation. Marketers are present when the product idea first arises, and they work with the other managers to develop, refine, and test the idea until they are convinced that they have a winning offer. (Kotler 2020, 10-11.)

Arguably, one of the most important steps in the marketing process of wellbeing services involves building valuable and profitable relationships with target customers. Throughout this process, marketers should practice customer relationship management to create customer satisfaction. However, the company might have difficulties creating customer value and relationships on its own. It's recommended that they work closely with marketing partners both inside the company and throughout the marketing system. Furthermore, practicing good customer relationship management is a staple, but firms must also be ready to practice good partner relationship management. (Armstrong et al. 2014, 29.)

Branding is another great tool for marketing wellbeing services. Branding is needed to stand out from the rest of the crowd and create a strong, positive perception of your company, and its products or services in the customer's mind. Brands serve the same general purpose in B2B (business to business) markets as they do in B2C (business to customer) markets: their goal is to facilitate the identification of different products, services, and businesses as well as differentiate them from other competitors. It's an effective and compelling way to communicate the benefits and value of a product or service that they can provide. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 358.)

3.3 Importance of wellbeing and its services

Wellbeing services bring value by increasing and promoting the overall health of an individual, which in turn makes them perform better and produce more results. Therefore, as more and more people achieve better levels of wellbeing and performance, society is positively impacted by its healthier and better citizens. There is a direct and positive correlation between wellbeing and performance. Fundamentally, wellbeing is needed to be the best version of ourselves. Attending everyday places such as hobbies, work, school, or day-care, influences the wellness of an individual with social interactions, meaning, and accomplishments. They also promote exercise and healthy dietary options in people's free time, and during lunch and break hours. Therefore, wellbeing services are needed to take care of individuals' wellbeing in their everyday lives

and are highly important in keeping people healthy and happy. (Zakaria et al. 2014, 359.)

Cost management can become an issue that wellbeing services can tackle by increasing the wellbeing of people. Healthier people are less expensive to manage in the short and long term than those who are sick on a regular basis. Expenses are higher for people who are not well; they might visit the hospital on several occasions for health reasons, take sick leave, or even need an early retirement. Wellbeing services are needed to help people feel better, make them aware of their current situation; help them make healthier lifestyle choices, and optimize their health and performance. An international study conducted in 2018 concluded that increasing physical activity, quitting smoking, having good dietary habits, reducing alcohol consumption, and keeping your body mass index in the normal reference ranges (18.5-24.9) will prolong life expectancy at age 50 by 14.0 and 12.2 years for females and males, in adults. (Li et al. 2018, 355.)

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, remote work has become the norm in society. (Social) isolation has had an enormous impact on the wellbeing of people. The shutdowns of businesses, schools, public events, and activities have had a tremendous impact on psychological health and socio-economic health. The pandemic has negatively influenced almost everyone on the globe regarding their mental, social, and physical wellbeing. Unfortunately, the wellbeing of people has been decreasing since the pandemic, but luckily, wellbeing services are needed, and are at an all-time high in demand due to the pandemic. (Warren & Bordoloi 2020, 1.)

3.4 Sports clubs as a promoter of wellbeing

Sports clubs usually do not focus on health promotion but rather on competition. However, good health undoubtedly brings benefits to all members of sports clubs, which include different age groups from children to seniors and whose skill levels range from amateurs to top athletes. Organized activity in sports clubs still has a key role to play in moving Finns and producing wellbeing, and a large proportion of children and young people participate in guided social activities at some point

in their lives. For this reason, the state has an interest in supporting Finnish sport, but the goals, social responsibilities, structures, and culture of sports clubs in Finland have been discussed multiple times, and in recent years, concerns about individuals' wellbeing only reinforce these discussions. (Koski et al. 2017, 6; Tiirikainen & Konu 2013, 42.) Kokko (2010, 53) notes that since almost all Finnish sports clubs are based on non-profit voluntary associations, obligations are more moral and ethical by nature than those based on strict obligations, such as laws and regulations. One of the obligations is due to the financial support provided by the government to sports federations and by the municipalities to clubs.

Still, sports clubs are expected to have a stronger share of responsibility in Finland by recognizing their role and opportunities in health and wellbeing promotion. The obligation arises from the fact that the state financially subsidizes national sports associations, with money going to municipalities which similarly subsidize local clubs. From this perspective, sports associations and clubs have semi-official status and the public administration can expect reciprocity, which in this case would be for clubs to pay attention to publicly important issues like the promotion of health. The topic has also attracted attention within the research community, and some research has shown an interest in youth sports clubs as sites for health promotion, because of the societal potential of youth sports clubs to work for more health promotion and the large number of adolescents they engage. (Kokko 2014, 61.)

The argument in this matter arises between sports clubs and officials from the fact that many clubs, especially those that compete at high levels, feel that obligations on health education and/or promotion are the responsibility of parents, or a parent, in the household. This raises the fundamental question of whether club actors can operate with children and adolescents without any responsibility beyond sport. Because of that, there is a paradox in the operational principles of youth sports clubs and the health promotion activities of the clubs and coaches. Most sports clubs proclaim to have other features beyond sports on their agenda; for example, increasing healthy lifestyles among youth. (Kokko 2014, 61.)

Sports clubs' educational nature is currently informal. Children and adolescents participate in the activities voluntarily, displaying their particular interest in a given sport and tailoring health messages to relate to a particular sport and sports performance/athlete development. Sports club activities (Figure 3) may form a highly motivating health promotion context for youth. Increasing scientific evidence suggests that strenuous exercise, including sports, may provide more health benefits than light exercise. This is an encouraging and important finding for the sports community, as several sports are classified as strenuous in performance. (Geidne et al. 2013, 269; Koski et al. 2017, 19.)

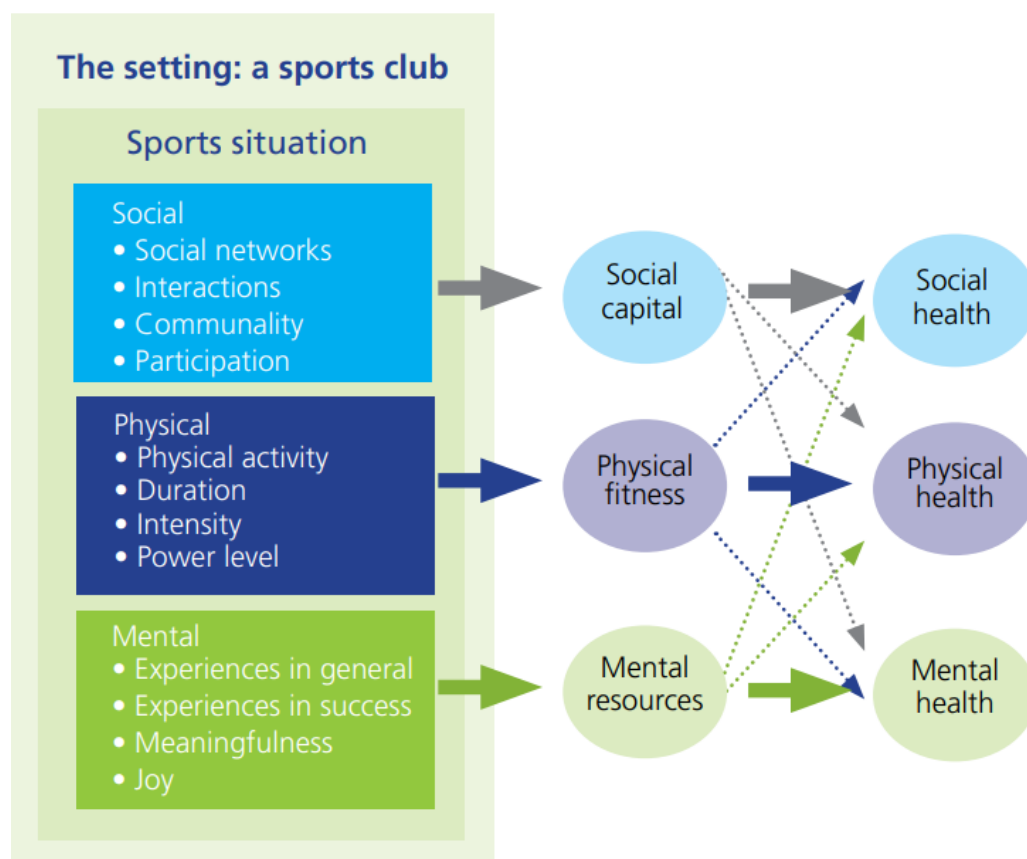


Figure 3. Aspects of sports club activities and their health dimensions (Koski et al. 2017, 21)

A more recent study conducted by Kokko et al. (2015, 9) found many challenges in their cross-sectional multilevel research where answers from sports clubs' participants' were compared to the answers of school's participants simultaneously. First, although being positive about the research, many sports

clubs were unable to deliver the information needed; thus, either clubs or the participants in the study could not participate. This illustrates well the challenges faced when studying voluntary activity-based settings. People participate in their free time and of their own free will, and the same is true in the case of the coaches' participation in the study, as about half failed to answer the questionnaire. The survey among schools succeeded better than among sports clubs and suspected that the key factor was that the school-based survey was executed during a class and under the supervision of a teacher.

Sport today is a contemporary and diversified phenomenon in constant transformation and valued at different social levels. It has multiple social meanings, such as those related to profession, representation, leisure, health, socialization, and education. In this new environment, sports clubs have been struggling to adapt. (Galatti et al. 2017, 28.) Health promotion in youth sports is not just about increasing the amount of participation in sports, but also improving its quality. Quality in this matter is discussed in terms of schools and organized sports cooperating, young people being involved in deliberate choices; sports being adapted to the youth, and club staff being trained in a sound way. (De Knop & De Martelaer 2001 cited in Geidne 2013, 277.)

Sports-related settings have their strengths, limitations, and challenges from a health promotion perspective but by investing in health promotion, a club could respond to the societal claim for the third sector (clubs) to share its responsibility for public health. Still, at the same time, a club first and foremost enhances its core aims of optimising sports performance and athlete development. (Kokko 2014, 64.) One of the challenges, according to Fraser-Thomas et al. (2005, 30), for policymakers, sport organisations, coaches, and parents is to ensure that youths' experiences and outcomes are positive rather than negative.

3.5 The wellbeing of athletes

To optimise athletes' performance and development, sports clubs aim to test their athletes systematically. Physical tests ensure that an athlete's body can withstand even a hard workout safely. Fitness testing can provide relevant

information about specific parts of a sport. Before selecting a test, clear objectives should be defined. Testing athletes helps study the effect of a training program and motivates the athletes to train more by giving objective feedback. Physical testing helps evaluate whether an athlete is ready to compete, for example after an injury or to determine the performance level of an athlete during a rehabilitation period. (Bangsbo et al. 2006, 3; Thorpe et al. 2017, 28). The data generated as a result of measurement is not the purpose itself, but monitoring can be used to better identify factors that affect an individual's wellbeing, to develop solutions that promote better wellbeing, and to target measures correctly. Knowledge provides support for making the right solutions and enabling customer-specific, or in this case, athlete-specific, customization of services and training programs. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2017a, 19.)

At the heart of athletes' wellbeing in expert activities, especially in mental coaching, is the operating culture of sports environments, and sports, as well as the daily coaching interaction. Internal motivation, passion, and ownership form the basis for developing into a top athlete, fuelled by an operating culture. As sport is part of society and global phenomena, its potential effects must be considered in the operating environments and coaching of sport, such as during the corona pandemic. (Vesterinen et al. 2021, 30.)

4 COOPERATION IN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The world is an arena of interaction among people, so relationships in all its forms are naturally a key factor. Collaboration and cooperation are two words which are often used interchangeably. Cooperation is not only a way to achieve goals or to adapt to changes in the environment. It is the knowledge in which cognition of a cooperative environment is necessary for the proper steps leading to cooperation by several enterprises. Most non-profit organisations, especially smaller organisations, and sports clubs, strive to have a bigger impact on their communities, both economically and socially. (Ahmed 2012, 2; Pope et al. 2009, 5.)

Collaboration or cooperation may occur among parties (for example, private or public firms; the public sector, local organisations) within the entity or region, or across regional, national, or even international boundaries. Secondly, interaction may occur among firms in the private sector, between a private firm and the public sector, and/or among other types of agents, such as trade associations and unions. (Polenske 2004, 1031.) Public and private boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, and governments of all ideological bents are partnering with private companies and non-profit organisations to do more and more of the government's work (Goldsmith 2004 cited in Wolk 2007, 165).

4.1 Benefits and challenges of cooperation

In cooperation, both sides must see some gain. Partners are usually investing scarce resources to generate value, and this investment should be assessed to ascertain its productivity and to provide guidance for further enhancing the cooperation value generation. One of the main difficulties is the distribution of possible gains among the different members of the partnership. Cooperation should guarantee enough benefit appropriation not only when the agreement is passed, but also from start to finish; otherwise, one of the partners could end up disadvantaged. And because value is in the eyes of the beholder, some outcomes may not be perceived in the same way by both partners. (Austin & Seitanidi 2014, 182; Daidj 2017, Chapter 1.)

Regional cooperation can lead to the provision of public goods. The benefits and spill overs of national public goods remain primarily within national borders, while in the case of global goods, the benefits and spill overs extend to all other nations. Of course, the latter one can be beneficial on its own, but the importance of creating working cooperation in its own region allows for better cooperation across national borders. (Devlin & Estevadeordal 2003, 155.) According to Radicchi (2014, 62), cooperative transactions seem to be more diffused to strengthen relations between firms and sports organisations in a specific local context. Observation of the sports industry reveals that companies invest in local sports organisations by creating pools of sponsors or formal consortia as a

meaningful tool to boost the visibility and popularity of their products and brands and to strengthen the local supply chain both within and outside the local context. Conflict is both inevitable and desirable in collaborations. Conflict avoidance can be counterproductive. Disagreements represent potential opportunities for collaborative learning and advancement. (Austin & Seitanidi 2014, 213.) But for the challenges in cooperation, Silipo (2008, 102) states that very often in the formation of cooperative agreements there are problems of knowledge disclosure, moral hazard, and transaction costs. Member firms may not have sufficient incentive to disclose all their information, and they may be unable to monitor the effort levels of their research partners, which could lead to problems or inconveniences.

Furthermore, the resources supplied to a joint venture are not easily measurable or observable. It is frequently difficult to define the precise nature of the innovation being developed in advance. As a result, it becomes impossible to conclude a contract for the delivery of a specific innovation. And the non-verifiability of inputs and outputs may lead to enforceability problems. (Silipo 2008, 106.)

4.2 Sports clubs cooperation

Sports clubs, like any organisation, have strategic and institutional reasons for cooperation. Yet, cooperation might be costly, and not all clubs have the same opportunities or financial capacity to establish relations with other parties. (Seippel & Belbo 2021, 6.) When it comes to operational cooperation, the most common partners in sports clubs are sports federations, households, schools, municipal sports offices, and regional organisations. Sports clubs also cooperate with other clubs in the league and/or in the region, sports organisations, and public and market actors to organise sports. In cooperation related to the premises, the municipality's sports department, the municipality's technical service and the school system stand out. In terms of financial matters, the most important are companies and the municipal sports department. (Koski & Mäenpää 2018a, 91; Seippel & Belbo 2021, 1.)

According to Radicchi (2014, 57), sponsors (companies) and sports organisations can do multiple transactions, and different interfirm agreements are identified based on four variables: The first variable is the nature of the transaction (unilateral or bilateral transactions, or cooperative transactions). The second is the purpose of the transaction, meaning R & D, manufacturing, and marketing. The third comes from the intensity of asset specialization, which means general assets or co-specialized assets. Lastly, what kind of financial involvement do parties have in cooperation, which means equity or nonequity.

A sports club is always part of a community, through its participants, premises, and funding. To strengthen community action, it is important for sports clubs to cooperate with schools or other parties. This way, other actors in the community see sports clubs as possible partners to develop and strengthen the community's health-promotion work. Creating supportive environments involves organizing youth sports clubs to be safe, stimulating, satisfying, and enjoyable, as well as not separating health from the other goals of the club. It also involves the quality of youth sports, how youth sports are practiced, and how young people are socialized within and into sports. (Geidne 2013, 277- 278.) As for the conditions of social activities, the situation has changed in recent decades. Municipal resources are no longer sufficient to meet the conditions required by a diversified range of sports and the scale of operations. Today, the largest clubs are more partners for the municipality than just passive users of the conditions. (Mäenpää et al. 2017, 19.)

Businesses and sports clubs co-operate mainly to create new value for themselves or others. Cooperation between these two sectors is now widespread and growing. The strategic question no longer is whether to collaborate, but rather how to co-create more value for organisations, individuals, and society. Still, the main common goal of sponsors and sports entities is to have a good and possibly winning sports result that attracts media attention and helps with future sponsorship negotiations. (Austin & Seitanidi 2014, 1; Radicchi 2014, 59.)

4.3 Sport sponsorship

Sport sponsorship is a form of advertising through sport, and it is therefore different from traditional advertising. Therefore, the visibility of a sports event, team, or athlete can ensure greater brand exposure compared with other sponsorship content. (Radicchi 2014, 54-55.) Sport is widely used as an engine for promoting business. Companies invest lots of money in high-performance athletes, top teams, and popular sporting events to promote business. (Jalonen et al. 2018, 103.)

Sports events are extraordinary opportunities for corporations to introduce their brands and products (see Figure 4) through advertising—advertising that seeks to establish a deeper association with and integration between an advertiser and a sports organisation. Currently, it is extremely rare to see a sporting event, even small ones, without sponsorship. (Keshkar et al. 2019, 58.) Even though it is still a significant communication tool for companies, sponsorship is no longer just a matter of exposing a logo on a jersey or purchasing an in-stadium sign. Furthermore, sponsors and sports entities might engage in the future in an activity that enables them to exchange value. (Radicchi 2014, 51.)

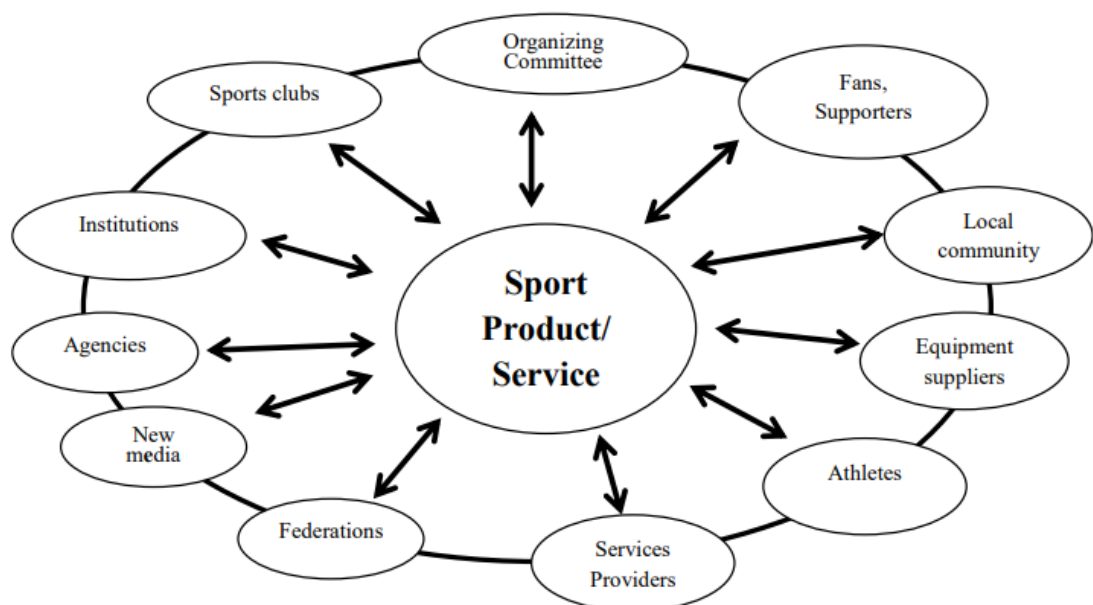


Figure 4. Stakeholders in sponsorships (Radicchi 2014, 56)

From a company's perspective, sponsorship can have several goals and should be defined in the company's sponsorship strategy. Goals should be realistic but challenging. From a company perspective, sponsorship elements include setting goals, planning implementation, monitoring, measuring the results achieved, and achieving the set goals. (Valanko 2009, 133.)

Sports sponsorship management is often started, especially in the non-profit sector, due to the sponsor's passion or to the sports club's financial needs. Generally, the decision to sponsor an event, a team, or an athlete is made to accomplish specific business goals. (Mastermann 2007 cited in Radicchi 2014, 54.) If sports sponsorship were developed according to a strategic communication plan, both partners might achieve high levels of effectiveness. On the one hand, the sponsor increases the visibility of its brand, and the sports entity can gain economic support as well as enhance its visibility in the sponsor's market. When the sports organisation succeeds in sports competitions, the result is a virtuous circle that enhances the brand value, image, and popularity of both partners, the sponsor, and the sponsored entity. (Radicchi 2014, 56.)

In recent years, sponsors and sports organisations have been trying to develop new combinations of transactions for the future. The outcome may even overcome the mere monetary income when the sponsorship becomes a long-lasting relationship able to involve multiple functions, for example, research and development (R&D) and marketing. (Radicchi 2014, 56.)

4.4 Cooperation in Research & Development organisations

Cooperation in research and development (R&D) may range from mere coordination of activities to joint ventures in which firms fully share information and costs. Cooperation may come at the R&D and/or production stage. The weakest form of cooperation is the coordination of R&D activity. Under such an agreement, the firms decide on the level of the investments by maximizing the expected joint profit function, but they conduct their activities independently and remain product market competitors. More advanced is a research joint venture, in

which firms form a common lab, which not only allows information sharing but also avoids duplication of effort and saves on costs. (Silipo 2008, 102.)

An important goal of R&D from a sports perspective is that the developed measurement methods could be applied to training guidance, especially in sports that require strenuous endurance and speed endurance training. Another goal of the exercise and recovery program is to increase knowledge and understanding of overtraining or underdevelopment in high-performance sports and to develop a useful method for monitoring training based on them. (Nummela et al. 2016, 9.) Knowledge is most useful when wellbeing-promoting solutions and services that are based on knowledge guide the behaviour of the individual, in this case, the athletes and coaches. The development of new solutions can be facilitated by a suitable environment, bringing together active parties, and creating clear processes for development work. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2017b, 98.)

Sports clubs may play a major role in the development of products and services. These days, sport is not merely an entertainment business but rather a serious global industry that could provide a model for business firms. In striving for ever greater economic value, organisations are looking for fresh ideas from radically different industries, such as sport. Respectively, research that uses sport as a means for developing organisations internally would have potential value within academic management research. (Jalonen et al. 2018, 121-123.)

A good example of cooperation between a company, research centre, and sports clubs is the Finnish-based company Firstbeat, which is the leading provider of physiological analytics for sports and wellbeing. Firstbeat transforms heartbeat data into personalized information on exercise, stress, and recovery. This information is highly valued in elite sport and, according to the Firstbeat website, there are already over 23 000 athletes representing over 1 000 sports clubs around the world who rely on Firstbeat for their advanced physiological metrics. Athletes and sports clubs pay for the services and products but also give important feedback, thus helping Firstbeat to improve their products. The Department of Physical Activity and Health in South-Western Finland cooperates

with Firstbeat by offering Firstbeat wellbeing analysis to athletes and, more importantly, citizens as a consumer product whose heart rate analysis helps to improve wellbeing. (Firstbeat 2022.)

Approximately 25–30 new research project applications are received by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture every year. Universities, research institutes, and individual researchers can apply for grants for sports science research projects. Most grant applications for research projects come through universities. In 2017, a total of 42 research projects applied for funding. Of these, the Ministry of Education and Culture granted state support for 27 projects, totalling 2,475,000 euros. The Ministry of Education and Culture also finances the activities of six sports medicine centres in Finland. The socially acceptable basis for the state subsidy received by the sports medicine centres has been the research in sports science, training activities, and information dissemination carried out by the centres, as well as the training of specialists in sports medicine. Over the last ten years, the total amount of appropriations for general grants has grown. (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2018:41, 74-75.)

5 COMMISSIONING PARTY

The case company in this thesis was Active Life Lab, which is the research and development unit of the University of Applied Sciences of South-Eastern Finland. The laboratory operates in connection with the Saimaa Stadiumi's multipurpose arena in Kalevankangas Mikkeli, which was opened in the spring of 2018. The laboratory and its activities are built around research and development projects that promote wellbeing. The laboratory contains a smart gym utilizing the latest wellness technology, a testing laboratory, and a virtual reality facility. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2019, 11.) Kalevankangas is an area for exercises and leisure in Mikkeli, surrounded by extensive outdoor routes in nature. The area defined as the city's development platform will be used to develop a concentration of wellbeing and experience services with businesses, research and development, and innovation activities. The area is a multi-purpose arena with a concentration of Saimaa Stadiumi's, ice rinks, racecourse, football hall,

and naturally case company research laboratory Xamk Active Life Lab. (Kuuluvainen et al. 2020, 3.)

The objective of the Active Life Lab is to create solutions for research and development of the effectiveness of preventive welfare services (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2019, 8). In general, effectiveness refers to a long-term change in the actual goal of an activity as a result of the activity (Heliskoski et al. 2018, 6). Active Life Lab aims to meet the demand for the verification and development of the effectiveness of services with an operating model that combines multidisciplinary collaboration, practical health promotion and high-quality research. In the future, the design of Active Life Lab is to consolidate its role as a nationally demonstrated concentration of data-based well-being expertise that produces strategically significant information for the development of provincial and national health promotion activities and wellbeing service companies. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2019, 10-12.)

At Active Life Lab, for customer organisations, the goal is that organisations pay a project-specific fee for development projects implemented on the platform, for example, once the co-development operating model has become established. The platform is not intended to operate on market terms, but the fee will commit customer organisations to operations and increase the level of requirements for development work. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2017b, 101.)

This thesis is useful for Active Life Lab, as they are interested in exploring opportunities for cooperation with sports clubs in the Mikkeli region. The foundation for the activities built in previous years allows for a more detailed explanation of this possibility to expand their cooperation network to sports clubs in the region. Discussions with Active Life Lab and individuals in the sport showed mutual interest from the outset. The current partnership model makes it possible to start cooperation with sports club's straightaway, but the problem is that this current model has not been working properly, and this is due to the early stages of this model. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to find out the needs, wishes, and goals of both parties for possible cooperation and give development

ideas for the current model. In addition, this work includes a benchmarking study of the Department of Physical Activity and Health in the region of South-Western Finland, so the authors and Active Life Lab can learn how they built a partnership with sports clubs in their region. Benchmarking can potentially give in-depth information on how their collaboration has changed over the years and what subjects they see as essential when working together with sports clubs. Furthermore, benchmarking can help Active Life Lab to avoid any problems or issues that may have arisen in benchmark organisation's own models at the beginning of the collaboration. Active Life Lab expects in-depth information in the thesis about cooperation and how things work in practice in an example company. This thesis can create a knowledge base where Active Life Lab can build a functional cooperation model for sports clubs in the Mikkeli region.

6 RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

Whatever standpoint the researcher is taking and whatever the data collection method is, the process will involve large amounts of data. Qualitative research is about putting oneself in another person's shoes and seeing the world from that person's perspective. This helps to give a more in-depth understanding of the subject. The most important part of data analysis and management is to always be true to the participants. (Sutton & Austin 2015, 227.) In the literature, qualitative elements are most often the means that authors use strategically to achieve a particular impact (Saldana 2011, 21).

A case study focuses on a single unit for analysis—one person, one group, one event, or one organisation. The primary purpose of case studies is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic. (Saldana 2011, 8; Simons 2009, 21.) The objective of this thesis is to understand the region's sports clubs' needs and then generate development ideas for the cooperation model. The strength of the case study is that it is flexible, neither time-dependent nor constrained by any method. It can be conducted in a few days, months, or even several years, and be written up in different forms and lengths appropriate to the chosen timescale. (Simmons 2009, 23.) Taylor et al. (2015, 39) advises not to hold too tightly to any

specific interest but to explore the whole phenomena as they emerge during the studies.

6.1 Qualitative research

According to Simons (2009, 33), people often wonder if they should start with a theoretical framework or theory to guide the collection of data and its analysis or whether it is more appropriate to generate a theory from the data. She points out that there are many advantages and disadvantages to each approach chosen. Having a theoretical framework at the beginning provides security, focus, and makes the analysis comparatively straightforward; the danger in this is that it can lead easily to a false consensus – making the data fit the framework – or failing to see the unexpected phenomena.

Qualitative research methods are designed to help reveal the behaviour and perception of a certain target group with reference to a particular topic. The phrase "qualitative methodology" refers, in the broadest sense, to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written and/or spoken words, and observable behaviour. (Taylor et al. 2015, 17.) Qualitative data is the result of a measurement process that focuses on words or even, in some cases, on images to document the social world we are living in. Qualitative data methods can include participant observation, unstructured (thematic) interviews, focus-group discussions, and content analysis. (Ruane 2016, 28-29.)

The eight criteria for getting high-quality qualitative research can be seen if research is having a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. (Tracy 2010, 839.) This thesis is a qualitative case study as it helps in the exploration of a small target group, which are the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region, and to acquire a deeper understanding of the subject. Thematic interviews and benchmarking were used to collect data for this study, which was also done by thematic interview for a benchmarking organisation, and these answers were compared to Active Life Lab answers.

6.2 Data collection

During the initial period, collecting data is secondary to getting to know the setting and people. Questions are designed to help break the ice and build trust between people. Since some people may ask you what you want to know, it might be a good idea to jot down some general questions before you enter the field. (Taylor et al. 2015, 60.) Leavy (2011, 45-46) states that the heart of data collection is the interview process itself, which may include anywhere from one or more interview sessions. Leavy emphasizes that the researcher's primary role is to be a listener. This means full, active listening, which includes the display of appropriate visual and verbal signs of listening.

Thematic interview

Thematic interviewing is the process of identifying patterns and themes within the data. This begins at the stage of data collection and continues throughout the whole process of transcription, reading, and re-reading multiple times, then analysing, and interpreting the data. A theme can be in relation to a theoretical framework or research questions. (Evans & Lewis 2018, 3.) Interview formats can range from highly structured, consisting of a set of prepared and specific questions to be asked in a particular order by each participant, to unstructured, which consists more of a general list of topics for possible exploration. (Saldana 2011, 32.)

The semi-structured interview format is used a lot as it provides participants with some guidance on what to talk about, which many find helpful and helps to gather specific data for the researchers. The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the researchers. (Gill et al. 2008, 291.) Once researchers determine what they are studying, they need to figure out who they will be interviewing to collect the data (Leavy 2011, 32).

Furthermore, it is encouraged to let the participant know the whole operation of interview mechanics, and the purpose of the study. Interviews should give participants the opportunity to express themselves without forcing them to choose from predetermined answers. They should also make the participants more conscious of the meaning of events in which they have been involved. (Eliasson & Johansson 2021; Saldana 2011, 41.) Researchers should prepare a list of questions and try them out on friends or colleagues to see whether they are likely to give you useful data for the research (Simons 2009, 51). Contact or connect with participant to negotiate an interview date, start, and end time, and specific location—all at the participant's convenience. Researchers should avoid offering alternatives in questions. Such tactic tends to lead to yes or no answers and little in-depth understanding unless the prompt is the basis of previous analysis and is seeking confirmation. (Saldana 2011, 34; Simons 2009, 50.)

Saldana (2011, 39) advocated that the researcher always enters the interview with an attitude of courtesy and respect, which allows the foundation for open conversation. The goal of the interview is to establish an atmosphere and working relationship of comfort and security. It's important to remember that the participant is doing the researchers a great favour by giving of his or her time and experience. According to Leavy (2011, 39), when the researcher and participant build a relationship via nonverbal gestures (meaning eye contact, head nodding), and develop trust, then the participant is likely to speak more freely and at greater depth about the topics.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a process that can bridge the gap between great ideas and great performance. Benchmarking is not just about discovering best practices; it also includes comparative measurement, active goal setting, and implementation. Benchmarking finds appropriate best practices and hopefully puts them into action. Businesses have started using benchmarking when they realised that they might not be asking the right questions themselves. (Letts et al. 1999, 1.)

The benchmarking process in an organisation begins with first identifying its own development target. Next, a suitable company should be sought for the organisation as a reference, and then there should be an attempt to reach an agreement on the process and possibly an agreement. A current description of the organization's operations is needed before starting to gather benchmarking data. As mentioned, benchmarking is not copying or espionage, but a voluntary exchange of information and experience through cooperation and trust. The challenge to successful benchmarking arises from the organisation's willingness to share information. (Vuorinen 2013, 158-159.)

Benchmarking is nowadays recognised as an essential tool for the continuous improvement of quality. Over the years, benchmarking practices have continuously evolved in different ways, and they are now qualified as an important business practice. The purpose of benchmarking is to identify the processes and performance outcomes of a great performing company or organisation compared with its competitors, as well as to compare the processes and outcomes within the company or organisation itself. (Hong et al. 2012, 445.) Decision makers are constantly on the lookout for techniques to enable quality improvement. Benchmarking requires an honest self-assessment of an organisation's own strengths and weaknesses. Benchmarking, as previously stated, is not coping, but learning. It is adapting, not adopting (Saul 2004, 9; Tuominen 2021, 34-37.)

For most non-profit professionals, a process like benchmarking enables them to increase the organisation's problem-solving capacity. It allows for corrections and improvements in services that can increase effectiveness and impact.

Organisational learning can also help in reducing the cost of existing services, freeing up resources to produce even more quality services, which again serves the interests of both funders and clients. Even though it might not seem like it, non-profit organisations are in fact constantly engaged in various forms of competition. They compete for funding, but also for quality staff members, volunteers, and sometimes even clients. Benchmarking could allow them to improve their performance and outcomes, which will end up giving them a

competitive advantage in their field. Even as they compete for resources, many non-profits simultaneously value cooperation in their work. Commitment to cooperation can improve their ability to use benchmarking effectively. Non-profit organisations strengths in cooperation come often from the fact that they freely share ideas and collaborate to advance their shared agendas. This makes benchmarking much more feasible for non-profits than for many other businesses that might compete in the same markets and, for this reason, refuse to cooperate. (Letts et al. 1999, 9-10.)

6.3 Analysing data

The purpose of data analysis is to search for important and different meanings, patterns, and themes in what the researcher has heard, written down, and seen. Fundamentally, qualitative data analysis is the process of making sense of the gathered data. (Swanson & Holton 2005, 236-237.) The most common form of qualitative data used in analysis is text, which can either be a transcription from interviews or researchers' own notes or other kinds of documents. Usually, most audio and video recordings are transformed into text to be analysed and this method reduces misunderstandings and errors. (Gibbs 2007, 3.)

Thematic interview

When focused on interviews, thematic analysis presumes that the participant's recollections have some value. Thematic interviews also presume that the researcher sees the data reported by the participants as convincing and trustworthy. Therefore, thematic analysis is thus predicated upon a high degree of confidence about the reliability and trustworthiness of the information reported and gathered. The aim of thematic analysis is to consider how the reported information addresses a specific research question that researchers aim to find answers to. The analyst's orientation to thematic analysis inherently depends on the specific research questions they use to guide their specific study. As an explanatory tool, thematic analysis can be used to understand the meaning of experiences, perspectives, or in some cases, belief systems through the lens of a particular theoretical framework. (Lochmiller 2021, 2030-2031.)

When researchers transcribe their interviews, they will need to decide whether to include absolutely everything said in the interview. For example, when people speak, they often have informal, grammatically incorrect manners of speaking, which tells researchers that they are comfortable, but it might be challenging for the researchers when they start to write down the interviews. At this point, researchers must decide whether to include these in the transcription or edit them grammatically correct. (Leavy 2011, 49.) Thematic analyses necessitate a greater level of involvement and interpretation from the researcher(s). Thematic analyses go beyond counting words and phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data themes. Typically, codes are then developed to represent the identified themes and are applied to the data as summary markers for later analysis. (Guest et al. 2011, 10.)

Benchmarking

Benchmarking, on the other hand, is a systematic and continuous process of measuring and comparing an organisation's own methods to those of other organisations to gain insight that could help to improve its performance. The main issue with competitive benchmarking is that traditional methods of collecting benchmarking data aren't particularly accurate or easy to get hold of. Competitors in the same business will most likely want to hold their cards close to their chest and not openly reveal their strategies or ideas. Benchmarking was not created just for businesses; therefore, it can also be defined simply as a process for measuring and improving performance for non-profit organizations. However, difficulties arise when attempting to quantify or measure what the compared organisation does. (Saul 2004, 1-3.)

Definitions of benchmarking vary. Key themes when analysing data include measurement, comparison, identification of best practices, implementation, and improvement. Benchmarking can be seen as the search for the best industry practices that will lead to exceptional performance through the implementation of these best practices. (Anand & Kodali 2008, 258.) This study benchmarking was done on a non-profit organisation and the subject of the benchmarking is also

operating as a non-profit organisation. Therefore, researchers believe benchmarking data can be collected through thematic semi-structured interviews since benchmarked organisations don't have to worry about giving information and thus losing any business advantages. Benchmarking was done with thematic interviews, which means that data analysis follows the same patterns as thematic interview analysis theory. At the same time, researchers need to review and, more importantly, trust that the given data is correct and trustworthy.

6.4 Implementation of research methods and data collection

The process (see Figure 5) of this case study (in this thesis) was started by discussing the current situation of Active Life Lab and cooperation between Mikkeli areas competitive sports clubs and sports organisations with the supervisor and coordinator of Active Life Lab during our practical training in October 2021 (before starting this thesis). Following the discussion of the current situation, and the needs and wants of different parties, a possibility was identified to develop cooperation between the case company and the region's sports clubs. The native language of Finnish was used in all interviews and discussions. This thesis aimed to have an impact on how the case company could expand their cooperation with competitive sports clubs in the future.

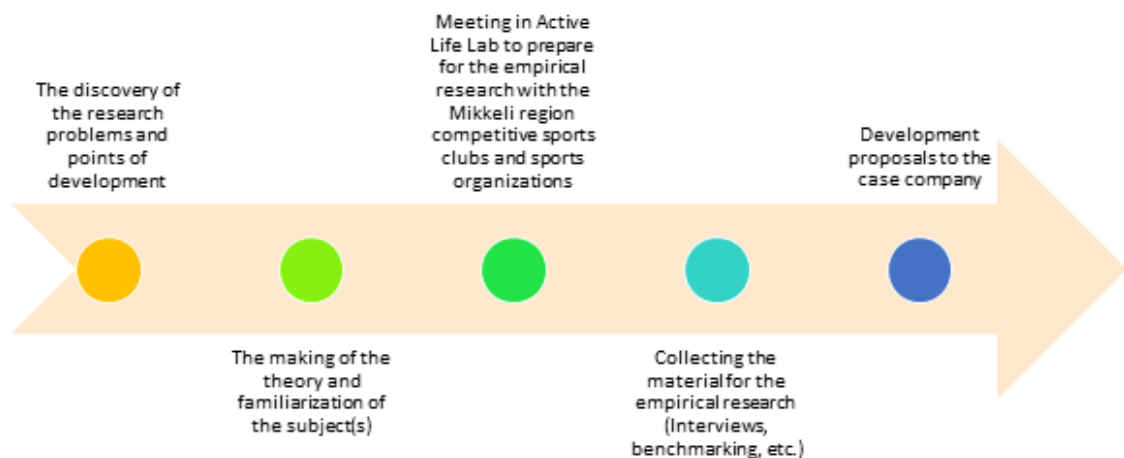


Figure 5. The process of this case study

A marketing meeting was held on November 2021 in the facilities of Active Life Lab in conjunction with the authors' practical training, which was a part of a newly polished line of study named "Wellbeing Management". The personnel of Active Life Lab demonstrated the facilities and services where the area's sports clubs and sports organisation coaches were gathered through the help of the regional Sport Academy, whose coaches are sports clubs' own coaches too. After the meeting, contact information was changed regarding the interest of cooperation between Active Life Lab and the Mikkeli region's competitive sports clubs. One sports club informed the authors clearly at this same event that they didn't have any need for Active Life Lab services or products. For this reason, they were not interviewed for this study. Furthermore, a competitive ice hockey club in the Mikkeli region, on the other hand, got interested in the possibility of cooperating with Active Life Lab on this meeting. In November, a separate meeting was held between Active Life Lab and the competitive ice hockey club, and a deal was made. Therefore, an interview was to be held with the competitive ice hockey club because it was deemed interesting and necessary for answering the thesis research questions, but as they had made the deal, it wasn't necessary any longer. Also, the hockey club has outsourced their individual physical coaching, which is quite a unique solution, and they have an individual in the club who is capable of doing testing. This means that they are perfect for this current partnership model with Active Life Lab.

Researching the theory of the semi-structured interviews and benchmarking started in December 2021. The interview and benchmarking questions were finalized in February of 2022. The interview questions were discussed and pondered together with the thesis supervisor and case company. The interviews took place between the beginning of March and to the middle of March 2022. The final questions used in the interviews can be found in the appendix section.

Two different thematic interview questions were made for the competitive sports clubs and one for the benchmarking organisation. The first questionnaire for the sports clubs already in cooperation with Active Life Lab and consisted of 12 questions (Appendix 1). Between the interviews of sports clubs in cooperation;

benchmarking; and ones who are not in cooperation, the interview questions were edited with the help of learned information after each interview. The second questionnaire was for the competitive sports clubs who are not in cooperation with Active Life Lab, and it consisted of 14 questions (Appendix 2), where one of the questions was directed to the athletes' path in Mikkeli (Appendix 3). One of the interviews was conducted with a physical coach that represented both competitive football and bandy clubs. The interviewee was chosen for the interview because the respondent has a significant role in taking care of players physical wellbeing in both sports clubs. Therefore, Active Life Lab's products and services would amplify the interviewees quality and efficiency of work, and cooperation with Active Life Lab would build a foundation for more extensive cooperation with regional sports clubs. The second interview was held with the track & field and gymnastics sports club. All interviewed sports clubs operate in South-Savo.

The questions for the benchmarking were the same for the case company and the benchmarking organisation (Appendix 4). The themes for the benchmarking questions were to find out the background information and previous experiences of different cooperation of both parties; find out the key concepts in building cooperation between sports clubs and sports organisations, and their experiences about them; find out how funding works in their operations with sports clubs and how it affects in their operations; to seek out what factors limit cooperation; and lastly to seek how they perceive their future cooperation with their partners.

Prior to the interviews, the authors conducted careful background work examining the organisations, ownership bases, as well as their operations, and key actors in their field. Before the actual interview, the interviewee received an introduction from the authors to create a friendly and an open atmosphere, the objective of the interviewers' thesis, and questions to familiarise themselves with the subject.

All of the predetermined questions were open-ended but still following specific theme of the study, and their goal was to find answers to the research questions.

During the interview, follow-up questions were asked from the predetermined questions to get more in-detail answers. The intention was to give the interviewees an opportunity to talk about their operations freely without the interviewers intervening too much with inflexible questions. Therefore, if it was necessary, the interview was directed towards subjects by the predetermined questions that gave us answers to the research questions. At the end of each interview, it was allowed for the interviewee to speak freely and give comments about the subject overall to seek more possible answers to the research.

The interview with the orienteering sports club was held in an office space in the campus area, and all the rest interviews were conducted in a meeting room in Saimaa Stadiumi. All interviews were recorded with the help and permission of the interviewee in order to increase the credibility of the interview. The audio from the interviews were then transcribed to text form and analysed. The analysis of the material began by listening to recorded interviews, transcribed audio, and then reading through the written down text on several occasions. This was followed by a review of the material to assess the current situation, possibilities, and challenges in cooperation of each of the interviewees, as well as observations of recurring themes and similarities.

The criteria for the benchmarking were to find a non-profit organisation that focuses, offers, or produces physical tests, physical education, and wellbeing services. A non-profit organisation Department of Physical Activity and Health in the region of South-West Finland, was found to fit this profile. The non-profit organisation was chosen because they do extensive cooperation with the areas (sports) organisations and sports clubs. They produce common-good value for the region and have other wellbeing services to fund their operations (such as testing) that are seen to be of use for Active Life Lab services in the future.

The benchmarking was initiated by contacting the head of the organisation. When the organisation gave their agreement to participate in the interview, the questions (Appendix 4) about the benchmarking were sent before-hand to the interviewee to familiarise themselves with the material. The questions were

formulated in a way to answer the research questions, and with their help get a deeper understanding about the organisation's operations. The interview was held at a Microsoft Teams meeting.

7 RESULTS

This chapter focuses on the results found in the conducted thematic interviews and benchmarking. All in all, five semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather enough data for development proposals and improvement ideas to represent the case company. One interviewee represented two different competitive sports clubs in one interview situation. Two additional discussions were had based on extra information found from the conducted interviews. The first discussion was held with an exercise regional organisation in South-Savo and the second one was held with the Sport Academy in the Kymenlaakso region.

The results of the thematic interviews were combined, and common themes were sought. The authors looked at emerging phenomena and issues that were common to the interviews. Deviations from the interviews were also sought to ensure a diverse perspective on the study. Based on the semi-structured interviews and benchmarking, development proposals and ideas were created for Active Life Lab. The results are presented in the following order: (1) In cooperation with Active Life Lab; (2) Not in cooperation with Active Life Lab; (3) Benchmarking.

7.1 Results of thematic interviews

The purpose of the thematic interviews was to find answers to the authors' research questions and seek answers to improve Active Life Lab's partnership model with recommendations for actions and ideas. The objective was to get high-quality and specific data from the competitive sports clubs' needs and wants in the Mikkeli region to present development ideas for the case company. All in all, three thematic interviews were conducted with different competitive sports

clubs that were chosen due to their significance in the Mikkeli region sports scene.

Sports clubs in cooperation with Active Life Lab

The interviewee who answered the interview questions has worked for the competitive orienteering sports club since it was founded and has extensive knowledge about their operations. It was found from the answers to the background questions that their sports club had an interest in cooperating with Active Life Lab straight away, but they were informed at the time that cooperation was not possible because Active Life Lab operations were based and founded for research and development projects. Luckily, through personal contacts, the research and development expert of Active Life Lab and the orienteering sports clubs vice president were connected again. After a conversation about the possibility of cooperation, a deal was made between the two parties shortly thereafter.

Since the start of the cooperation between the parties, it was discovered by the orienteering sports club's representative that Active Life Lab's equipment have functioned properly, were made of high-quality, and were calibrated for accurate testing. The equipment has met the needs, wants, and standards of the competitive orienteering sports club and quality of testing data has been found to be sufficient. Calendar reservations to see the availability of the testing facility were said to be an excellent addition. Working together with the research and development expert was said to be open, flexible, and well implemented.

Before the cooperation with Active Life Lab, the wants and needs of the orienteering sports club were to get access to high-quality testing facilities and equipment to test their athletes. More specifically, the most sought-after equipment was the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test), treadmills, and the body composition analyser due to the nature of orienteering. The cooperation with Active Life Lab was seen perfect because the location and services were more accessible due to both parties operating in the Mikkeli region.

Also, it was noted that they have interest in getting an Electromyography (EMG), which is for evaluating and recording the electrical activity produced by skeletal muscles, as a non-essential extra service if this type of equipment is found in Active Life Lab. It was eventually discovered that Active Life Lab had a similar EMG equipment in their facility.

The competitive orienteering sports club compared the cost of Active Life Lab's services to a testing facility in Central Finland which offered similar physical tests, especially the cost of the maximal oxygen consumption test. The affordability and utility rate of Active Life Lab's services was found to be financially reasonable if the yearly number of tests were in the 10-15 range. Unfortunately, they were unable to reach these kinds of quantities because knowledgeable testers weren't available to conduct 10-15 tests a year. Currently, the number of tests done in a year was making them wonder if the money spent on Active Life Lab's services was worth the investment, and to combat that they wish to commercialize their know-how with the help of Active Life Lab. It was discovered that the orienteering club would like to deepen the cooperation with Active Life Lab by selling their know-how of the performance tests with the help of Active Life Lab. This would be possible to achieve by selling testing services that would include tests in the facilities of Active Life Lab and in the surrounding nature areas of Kalevankangas with professional and knowledgeable testers from both parties. The authors proposed an idea that they could sell their knowledge to other sports clubs since, for example, runners and skiers use similar analysis, and can be cross referenced.

Challenges related to the testers were found as there were no extra personnel specialized in the area (excluding their own team) conducting tests and analysing them for orienteering with extensive knowledge. Due to minimal resources, they are not able to attract new capable personnel or hire a full-time tester. This is also the reason why they haven't been able to test their athletes 10-15 times per year. At the time of the interview (March 2022), they had a knowledgeable and capable tester on their team but was not a resident of the Mikkeli region which led to logistical and timetable issues. They wished to have a person responsible for the

tests who is knowledgeable enough to the maximal amount of the data and tests. If their capable tester could be attracted to move to the region of Mikkeli, their testing personnel problems could be solved. According to the interviewee, they were also aiming to get more familiar with how tests are conducted and how to manage their time more efficiently in the testing environment. Furthermore, they wished for more in-depth training/education from Active Life Lab for the equipment used for the tests because currently they have been more or less self-taught to use the equipment in the facilities.

According to the interviewee, the orienteering sports club is “ready to see this cooperation all the way through” and is ready to work closely with Active Life Lab. It was stated that they are ready to put their (human) resources to use and help Active Life Lab to the best of their abilities.

Sports club not in cooperation with Active Life Lab

The interviewee who answered the interview questions worked for the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club in South-Savo region and has a master’s degree in sports science. Furthermore, this individual works as a project employee for said sports club where, through pilot groups including the regional exercise organisation and the competitive cross-country and biathlon sports club in the Mikkeli region, they are trying to create an operation model to sports clubs who act enhancers of wellbeing. The objective of their sports club is to create continuous, profitable, and lucrative operations on their own accord without them needing to rely on project funding and to create an operation model that could be expanded to the whole South-Savo region. Therefore, working together with Active Life Lab was said to be an interesting topic because of the project mentioned before lasts for two years in total (already 6 months into the project when having done the interview) and they are interested how Active Life Lab’s own projects and know-how could be utilized to help the success of their own main project.

The interview started by mapping the current situation of the sports club's cooperation with the Mikkeli region organisations and sports clubs, and background information about the current operations of their sports club. The information gathered from the answers was relevant to see if Active Life Lab's operations could be combined or used together with them. Furthermore, Active Life Lab and the sports club were already in talks to seek extra value from their own different projects to be used as leverage for their main project. It was found that working together with other sports clubs was said to be of great importance.

During the interview, the current operation environment of the sports club was mapped to see if Active Life Lab could supply a solution for their challenges. It was found that Active Life Lab could answer the challenges of their sports club by offering their facilities and services for testing their athletes through the regional Sport Academy. They could also give additional services for adults who are seeking lifestyle advice, for example through their main project. The needs and wants of the sports club was said to be the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test), lactate tests, monitoring recovery (for example monitoring heart rate variability), and an in-door track where the athletes could for example measure their speed, reaction time, and running form. Because of the lack of resources and personnel, sports clubs cannot hire full-time testers or conduct physical tests systematically for their athletes.

It was also found that working with the Mikkeli region Sport Academy would be beneficial because many sports club athletes are also a part of the Mikkeli region Sport Academy which works under the regional exercise organisation. They could possibly offer one to two tests per year or if possible, pay part of the test cost for the athlete through the cooperation between Active Life Lab and the regional exercise organisation. It was said that the routinization of testing was important because it would become more professional, as well as being (time) efficient and budget friendly. Furthermore, proper training and familiarization from Active Life Lab's experts would be needed to get to know the equipment in Active Life Lab's facilities to conduct efficient testing and analyzation of the test data.

The challenges for their own sports club were said to be the lack of resources and personnel. Their sports clubs, as well as sports in Finland in general, rely on volunteer work, but the interviewee noted that there is a decreasing trend in volunteering. Combining the decrease in volunteering with the lack of resources could possibly cause difficulties in their future operations, making it more difficult for them to operate. Therefore, the project that they are working on is highly important for their operations and the development of the Mikkeli region because they could find different operation models for sports clubs. It was also noted, that because Mikkeli doesn't have a university together with the University of Applied Sciences, it is difficult to keep young promising athletes in the region because they leave to bigger cities with better environmental and study opportunities. Therefore, working together with the regional Sport Academy and Active Life Lab would create good training environment(s) with high-quality testing and coaching, they could keep athletes in Mikkeli or even possibly attract athletes from areas outside of Mikkeli. Overall, the interviewee stated that the cooperation with Active Life Lab evoked good thoughts.

Second interview with sports clubs not in cooperation

The second interview was conducted with a respondent who represented both the competitive bandy and football sports clubs in the Mikkeli region. The interviewee showed an extensive skillset and knowledge through the regional Sport Academy operations which then led to the sports clubs contacting the interviewee to work with them as a part-time physical therapist and -coach. The respondent noted that with the competitive football club there have been conversations about adding more work hours, especially with their youth teams.

At the time of the interview, the interviewee offered physiotherapy, physical coaching, and supported the physical wellbeing of athletes for the two competitive sports clubs and the regional Sport Academy. The interviewee attended the sports clubs training on specific days of the week and helped with athletes' physical matters, gave them rehabilitation guidance, and highlighted problematic areas in the athletes' physicality to prevent injuries. The sports

club(s) didn't have the resources to hire the interviewee full-time, therefore they had to book specific dates for these types of sessions. The interviewee is an entrepreneur; therefore, has a flexible work schedule that can be contacted 24/7 and is mostly needed by athletes who need help with their physical wellbeing. This flexible work schedule could be utilized by Active Life Lab if testers are needed in different projects or cooperation with other sports clubs.

It was noted that the gyms in the Mikkeli region, especially the gym in Saimaa Stadiumi, were lacking in the equipment and quality regarding the needs and wants of athletes. Most essential gym equipment needed to train specific muscle groups were missing from the gyms for example, the leg extension, adductor, and abductor machines. But if they were to be available, free weights would become an issue when strength training, because the weighted plates cannot fit into the barbell due to their big size. For commercial gyms, the problem arises from the lack of space going into training with a full team. Active Life Lab's own gym wasn't seen as a good option for strength training for healthy athletes as it was said to be too small and lacked the possibility to resistance train on a competitive level. But the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test), heart rate variability tests, and lactate tests were said to be highly interesting options and could be utilized for testing and monitoring effectiveness of training programs. However, challenges were found to be the use of time as it would take far too long for a whole sports club to take tests for all of their athletes. For individual players (especially in the youth teams), the respondent felt that it would be easier to conduct more demanding physical tests through the regional Sport Academy since most of the youth players are part of the regional Sport Academy.

The authors asked extra questions regarding injured athletes or athletes that might need more extensive rehabilitation. The interviewee noted that Active Life Lab's treadmills could be utilized when an athlete has had an injury that needs supervision to see how they walk. Normally the physiotherapist needs to follow them for prolonged periods of time behind the injured athlete to analyse if the injury still affects their walking form.

The interviewee wished for a common guideline to be followed together with the competitive sports clubs, schools, teachers, and the city of Mikkeli when considering the wellbeing and overall efficiency of all parties. According to the interviewee, this could mean that schools could try to modify more of the athletes' curriculum with their training sessions taken into consideration or build a foundation for the young in the early stages of starting a new hobby and then build the information upward the further they go. It was also suggested that Active Life Lab could consider building their expertise to be more extensive in a manner that doctors, physiotherapists, and other wellbeing and health professionals would work together under the same roof or at least be more accessible for individuals. Active Life Lab has already made plans and concepts to make this idea work. This would lower the threshold for contacting wellbeing professionals by athletes and other customers. The interviewee stated that if Active Life Lab could train or educate personnel in more detail for their equipment and test analysis, the interviewee could utilize the owned skillset and knowledge better. It was also stated that if there would not be a problem with lack of financial recourse, the interviewee could take a higher responsibility in testing and help in the analysis process for the athlete.

Additional discussions

Both interviews gave the authors leads to assist with the operations of the sports clubs and Active Life Lab. The regional Sport Academy was said to be the leading and connecting factor in helping the region's sports clubs in cooperating with Active Life Lab. Therefore, a discussion was held with the coordinator of the regional Sport Academy regarding the issues that the competitive sports clubs and Active Life Lab are having and how they could be solved. It was discovered through the discussion that the regional Sport Academy is working under the regional exercise organisation in Mikkeli, which has agreed on a partnership model with Active Life Lab because they could also utilize the case company's services and facilities with their own target groups. Therefore, at the time of the interview, the testing facilities of Active Life Lab can also be utilized by the regional Sport academy.

Although a deal has been made between the two parties, current cooperation hasn't been used to its maximum potential. This was found to be the case since Active Life Lab can only offer the facilities, training, and equipment, but the Sport Academy would need to find their own qualified testers to conduct these tests, especially more demanding physical tests such as the maximal oxygen consumption test (O2Max test) which they haven't been able to find because of the lack of resources and personnel.

Furthermore, specifically the maximal oxygen consumption test (O2Max test) raised a lot of interest for (endurance) athletes. The regional Sport Academy noted that the current cooperation model would be affordable and valuable if it would work in its full potential. Therefore, they have a lot of interest in improving the cooperation with Active Life Lab and finding solutions to the current issues regarding the lack of testers. Furthermore, additionally to the topic the authors discussed the importance of volunteering and its importance in the Mikkeli region sports scene. The respondent stated that the volunteering has decreased massively in recent years and nowadays it is difficult to find volunteers. The same statement was also said by the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club interviewee. According to the Sport Academy respondent, the students at Xamk could be utilized to support the testing environment. This same wish was said by the competitive ice hockey sports club (which started cooperation during this thesis process).

When discussing further possible solutions, it was discovered that the South-Kymenlaakso Sport Academy together with the city in Kymenlaakso found a unique solution by building a testing facility together with the city in Kymenlaakso where they had hired a full-time tester in this facility. They offer physical tests to customers of the Kymenlaakso Health and Social sector and services to competitive athletes, fitness enthusiasts, and people needing rehabilitation. The respondent mentioned that there was one Xamk employee working on that project but didn't know how Xamk was a part of that operation. Therefore, the authors found an interest to learn about their solutions and reasons how they had managed to make their operations work, especially how they were financing the

full-time tester for their testing services, and what is the current situation in their facility.

A Microsoft teams meeting was held with the South-Kymenlaakso Sport Academy respondent to discuss the subject. It was confirmed that to conduct these testing services, a professional had been hired to take responsibility for the testing in their facilities. For the first two years, the tester's salary was paid with a purchase agreement to get the operations going. At the beginning of the third year, the tester's salary was moved fully to the budget of the city in Kymenlaakso. For a unique solution to work like this where the city owns the testing facility that cost about 100 000 euros per year, one of the reasons to justify such an investment was that if the facility managed to help and keep at least 2-3 elderly people in their homes for an extra year they would have savings approximately 50 000-60 000 euros (per elderly). They also wanted to increase residents' wellbeing through this facility. New equipment for the facility was bought by the city or alternatively by the Sport Academy. The respondent highlighted the opportunity to get loaned equipment through personal contacts, therefore could save money on acquiring new equipment. It was also discovered that the earlier mentioned Xamk employee worked in a group for the procurement of equipment at this new facility.

When the authors asked about their current operations, it was discovered that the changes in the in the Kymenlaakso Social and Health sector had caused unexpected issues to their original plan. Rehabilitation patients from Social and Health sectors hadn't utilized this new facility almost at all because they use mostly their own equipment for their patients. At the time of the discussion, most users of this new facility are competitive athletes and fitness enthusiasts, which was quite problematic because the city's main objective was to find financial savings through this facility; for example, helping rehabilitation patients. However, this new environment has created unexpected cooperation with the regional rescue service who must have statutory fitness tests for their personnel. The respondent noted that there was still room for an increased number of tests in

Sport Academy athletes because the regional Sport Academy's testing budget was not fully spent.

For future objectives, the respondent pointed out five significant subjects that would be needed to improve so that the new testing facility and the regional Sport Academy would make progress. The first point of improvement was said to be the cooperation with the Kymenlaakso Social and Health sector. The second point was to arrange more seminars by using the testing environment; this has been impacted by global pandemic. The third point was to educate coaches more, and the fourth was to achieve higher numbers of tests in the facility which would lead to more systematic testing. Lastly, the testing environment could be used more in the research work by the city's Xamk projects, for example students' thesis.

7.2 Results of benchmarking

The purpose for the benchmarking was to find ways to improve the operations of the case company in the Mikkeli region by conducting an interview with a non-profit organisation of Department of Physical Activity and Health in the region of South-West Finland and Active Life Lab. 12 questions were asked from both of the respondents to inquire how their organisation operate and how their operation model could be implemented to the case company's operations. In addition, the authors wanted to understand and compare how both of the companies work in order to create concrete ideas and recommendations for action that are achievable in the case company's current state. The answers were then compared to each other.

The first theme was to find out the background information and previous experiences of different cooperation of both parties.

The first question for this theme was to describe their current operation model. The core activities of Active Life Lab were said to be research and development projects to promote wellbeing and health for which funding is sought from external sources. In addition, they collaborate with local stakeholders and act as a learning environment. They launched a new partnership model a few years ago

which made it possible for companies, sports clubs, and organisations to use their facilities against an annual fee.

The benchmarked organisation has clearly separated non-profit, common good, and service activities. Common goods include for example, sports medicine research, sports medicine training, academic teaching and further training, and various types of activities that promote the health of special groups which are not charged at all or on a very marginal line. Service activities which are commercial activities, involve performance testing for professional athletes, active physicians, health-promoting, and work communities. They have developed test packages and services for individuals at different levels to help the customer group take better care of themselves. The main goal of these services was also to use benchmark organisations special expertise for different target groups: to promote the health of individuals and communities through exercise and healthy lifestyles. They aim to promote holistic health using a variety of competencies and skills as well as reliable researched information.

The final question for this theme was to search for the current cooperations of both companies and how such cooperations have benefitted or added value to their operations. Active Life Lab has many partners: for example, research and development projects can involve research institutes and universities as well as companies from Finland and abroad. Local cooperations are with companies, organisations, and the public sector in the province and in the Mikkeli region. The partnership model mainly involves local companies and organisations in the field of wellbeing and sports.

The benchmark organisation cooperates with the university in its area, the city, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, organisations in Southwest Finland, the regional Sport Academy and competitive sports clubs, and the University of Applied Science in their region (among others). These organisations also provide services of common good to different target groups, and they work extensively with them in appropriate situations. The benchmark organisation trains physicians, sports medicine specialists, health education teachers, and

healthcare professionals. For example, they organize a one-week period for graduating students each year where they do fitness tests, have lectures, and the opportunity to discuss health-promoting lifestyle issues. The course has received a lot of praise from students and, according to interviewee, has been considered by many as the best course. The interviewee wanted to emphasize that the specialty of sport and health science and/or sports medicine is quite comprehensive as it does not only include exercise or sport, although the name may refer to it. Furthermore, they bring their special expertise to various communities, and with the help of its networks they can develop many different health-promoting projects. They work closely with the regional Sport Academy to promote the health of athletes.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and culture will provide some of the common good activities, such as funding for research and specialist training for the benchmark organisation. The regional Sport Academy also receives support from them. In addition to Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, to support the benchmark organisation, special funding is obtained for research projects and project activities as needed. Cooperation with the background organisation enables them to increase efficiency and find different target groups. Hence, together with their partner organisations they can identify, target, and do things in the direction that the organisation and the target group need. Collaborations also enable new channels of communication. Through communities, collaborators, and training, the message of benchmark organisations expertise multiplies and reaches a wider audience than they could reach alone.

The second theme was to find out the key concepts in building cooperation between sports clubs and sports organisations, and their experiences about them.

The first three questions for this theme were to learn about their current cooperations and how they built them. Active Life Lab's research and development activities are built on the promotion of wellbeing and health which means that the sports clubs and organisations haven't been their main target

group. Nowadays, the collaboration has been piloted with a few of the region's sports clubs and organisation with varying degrees of success. The new partnership model hasn't been greatly communicated or marketed, but as the message has spread in the regional sports circles, the sports clubs have been interested in opportunities for collaboration. Sports clubs cooperation is deemed important for Active Life Lab from the perspective of them wanting to support local organisational activities and stand out from the local sports community. The interviewee pointed out that the sports clubs have their own challenges which are largely related to them operating with limited resources. On the other hand, Active Life Lab does not have any personnel or extra resources dedicated to sports club cooperation. In other words, the current cooperation must be based on "the artist-pays" principle where Active Life Lab offers the facilities and sports clubs' personnel for the tests.

During the representative's time at benchmark organisation, the cooperation with the regional Sport Academy, sports parties, and sports clubs has been deepened. There has been a lot of cooperation with local teams and national sports federations. They also collaborate on different events and with different sports clubs. The network of contacts facilitates the beginning and continuation of communities. The importance of personal contacts is emphasized by the interviewee in all cooperation, including the initiation and development of cooperation between different sport parties. The dialogues have taken operations in the direction that organisations (e.g., the Sport Academy) want and what the benchmark organisation could bring to this collaboration. They've also had conversations with athletes about what do they think about the services provided (reception, laboratory services, health monitoring, health check-up, lectures, etc.) and what would they like to have more. This has made it possible to find out what works and what doesn't. Based on these feedbacks, the benchmark organisation has modified the collaboration toward a better and a more personal level.

Together with the Sport Academy, over the years multidisciplinary specialist activities have developed to new levels including physicians, physiotherapists, nutrition therapists, physical coaching and testing services, and sports

psychologists, to name a few. Close cooperation develops expert activities within the Sport Academy and the benchmark organisation. This has been the key in building such expert activities. A psychologist, nutritionist, and physiotherapist also visit the benchmark organisation facilities to provide reception for athletes, but also for others as needed. This cooperation with the Sport Academy, which is a non-profit organisation, enables the provision of affordable services. In cooperation with the Sport Academy, expert activities have already been taken to high schools; for example, the interviewee mentioned parental training, so that parents understand and think of the best for their children. Thus, when entering the Sport Academy stage, there should already be a good foundation learned in high school, therefore the Sport Academy would only need to supplement information. They aim to involve the clubs in this process for example, by giving lectures on the health promotion and coaching of the athlete and thus create a connection between the clubs and the Sport Academy coaches and the benchmark organisation.

According to the benchmark organisation, personal contacts, history, as well as building understanding and trust are important to start a collaboration. The city supports the Sport Academy activities and provides (among others) infrastructure and financial support for sports clubs. The interviewee noted, that when everyone has the same interest, mutual understanding, and trust there is a desire to further deepen the cooperation. It's also beneficial that everyone has their own, complementary expertise. The interviewee stated that unfortunately the same expertise and disregard for synergies can sometimes lead to unnecessary competition, which in turn may slow down the development of cooperation. The interviewee underlines the importance of creating a good environment. This allows for better packages that the benchmark organisation alone could not provide. Because a small company/organisation might not have large marketing resources or expertise, services and operations can be marketed cost-effectively with and through partners.

The next main question for this theme was to find out if and how their cooperations with competitive sports clubs and sports organisations have changed in the recent years.

In the beginning, as mentioned by the Active Life Lab interviewee, they didn't have many sports club cooperation because they didn't have a model for it. With the partnership model, sports club cooperation has progressed slowly forward, but Active Life Lab felt that there is still room for development. Through their experiences, they will have a better understanding of the needs and wants of the competitive sports clubs, on which the flow of cooperation depends. It is important for Active Life Lab to find enthusiasts in charge of the sports clubs to carry out testing activities. The cooperation either develops or collapses largely depending on whether there are motivated personnel in the company. Active Life Lab supports and manages its own responsibilities, but the underlying coaching and testing skills of the sports clubs' staff are an important part of effective cooperation in the current operating model.

Before the benchmark organisation's cooperation with sports clubs, the cooperation started through personal contacts. There were requests from the sports clubs to the benchmark organisation's personnel to give lectures about the importance of athlete's nutrition, rest, recovery, and a good athlete's lifestyle. The coaches of the Sport Academy, who were hired and cooperate with sports clubs, were also the responsible coaches of the national Olympic training centres in primary sports. In addition, sports clubs are partly funding the work of the coaches in the Sport Academy. This creates a common interest for all of them, and by maintaining better contact with the sports club coaches, the benchmark organisation wants and strives to further develop this collaboration. Through forums, discussions are held at the city level as well as with the Sport Academy. In addition, they have cooperation with university research and local companies/start-ups. Through these cooperations, there are common needs and different parties can find compatible organisations for cooperation according to their goals and needs.

The third theme was to find out how funding works in their operations with sports clubs and how it affects in their operations.

In principle, Active Life Lab's partnership operates in a "free market", meaning that it's not funded by any public party. The services must therefore be funded by someone else, in this case (likely) on behalf of the sports club or athletes, or alternatively on the behalf of some other party. Active Life Lab contributes to the effectiveness of cooperation by subsidizing the collaboration in the sense that the annual fee charged for the partnership model is not enough to cover all the costs involved, such as facilities, salaries, technology, and other potential costs.

The basic activities of the benchmark organisation, meaning scientific research, teaching, and education activities, are funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, but does not fund cooperation with sports clubs. There are separate prices for sports clubs that are cheaper than private prices. According to the interviewee, these services are partly paid for by sports clubs; partly by the athletes themselves, e.g., depending on the athlete's level of success.

The last question for this theme was to find out how they arrange their tests and who is responsible for them. The interviewee noted that the goal of Active Life Lab is to provide training/education in the implementation of tests and measurements, but the partner provides the actual services (e.g., fitness tests). Active Life Lab is responsible for the maintenance of the equipment, but the partner is responsible for its customers and their health. The interviewee returned to the fact that when it comes to quality testing services, the staff of the sports club should ideally have a degree in the field of coaching / testing, and hopefully also have some practical experience.

For the benchmark organisation, the most demanding performance tests are performed by clinical physiology professionals and physiotherapists who have done a lot of testing. Depending on the sport, the Sport Academy or the sports club may contribute to the cost of testing. Athletes will cover all or part of the

costs of the services they use if they do not belong to any actual coaching team or team that would pay for the services. The Sport Academy has its own different arrangements, and they offer designated benchmark organisational services that promote health and support coaching, e.g., for all high school 1st graders, enhanced coaching groups, or top athletes starting their studies at the Sport Academy. Free testing is only possible on their individual projects. Sports clubs, athletes, and parents pay for most of the testing. The interviewee highlighted, that the benchmark organisation strives to decrease their pricing as much as possible.

The next question was aimed towards how the companies could increase their cooperation with the region's sports clubs and sports organisations. According to Active Life Lab, increased cooperation is now possible within the framework of the partnership model. Active Life Lab sees that when the current operating model can be further developed with their existing partners and when cooperation starts to work more effectively, the word will start circulating in sports circles and sports clubs may become interested in participating in the cooperation.

Therefore, Active Life Lab noted that marketing is probably not needed, because in a city as small as Mikkeli, the word circulates quickly among sports club members. Also, the content of the cooperation between the partners can be extended to, for example, joint research and development projects. In addition, cooperation is planned to increase the direction of Xamk's degree programs, and this could make better use of students in Active Life Lab environment.

According to the interviewee, the benchmark organisation will continue to build cooperation networks, especially with the Sport Academy, sports clubs, the city of the region, in order to find new ways to develop the current operating model for example, through various cooperation forums and projects. The interviewee also raised an interesting point mentioning that the possibility in future operating models could recruit sports clubs for health promotion work. They could benefit financially as an incentive, thus bear their own responsibility in the Finnish wellbeing system.

Further and step-by-step development of the athlete's path (Appendix 3), coach training is a big part of an athlete's path. The sports clubs could possibly think by putting their own clubs on the athlete's path (early-stage grassroots, youth, top-level) and other organisations to think about how these athletes could be supported at different stages. It is good for each party to be aware of their own role in the athlete's path. The interviewee noted that it is a good idea to start implementation as early as possible which will maximize the benefits in the long run. Sport-specific understanding and dialogue makes it easier to identify potential issues and targets that could be developed to a better level through collaboration.

The interviewee reminded, that in order to be able to sell something, the expectations of the customers must be met. This can be done when you understand customers' expectations as well as understand your own strengths. Furthermore, it's a good starting point for trying to pinpoint the customers wants and needs. The interviewee noted, that when trying something new or different, the workload in the beginning may be multiplied for others to try the idea or understand its benefits. Furthermore, if you do something targeted for one (even smaller) target group and plan it well, much more can be achieved, according to the interviewee. This way you may eventually reach more individuals and target groups than trying to influence "everyone". When the collaboration is successful, many other organisations may come in the future to ask for the opportunity to collaborate or come up to you with their own ideas.

The fourth theme was to seek out what factors limit cooperation.

The question was to map and see the limiting factors that may limit the effectiveness of their cooperation with their partners. From the perspective of Active Life Lab, the two most important factors are the sports clubs' small personnel resources, which usually leads to the lack of necessary core competencies, such as degree for coaching/testing, and financial resources, which means they are unable to purchase services.

The benchmark organisation raised a few factors that may limit cooperation currently and in the future. If the party who wants to cooperate does not see or understand the benefits or the overall picture, starting cooperation will become greatly difficult. Also, the interviewee noted that it might be difficult to make people understand why things are done and for what purpose. Even though the benchmark organisation has a great role in health promotion at the national level, they also mentioned the lack of human and financial resources as one of the main difficulties when trying to start cooperation(s). Furthermore, poor prioritization can mean that limited resources are insufficient.

The fifth and last theme was to seek how they perceive their future cooperation with their partners.

The question was to simply see how they saw their future prospects in cooperating with the region's sports clubs and sports organisations, and what matters should they focus on specifically. Active Life Lab noted that recently their understanding from the perspective of the sports clubs has grown. They hope that the sports clubs feel that they are being listened to and that a positive change in their cooperation has already taken place. In the future, the interviewee believes that a few new sports clubs can be included in the cooperation network. According to the interviewee, it is important to finally find a working operating model for practical cooperation with the regional Sport Academy.

For the future, the benchmark organisation wishes wider cooperation and a good state of mind, with a common desire and an existing good spirit which will contribute to success. The interviewee noted that it is important to identify and seek special skills, use them accordingly, and learn from them. A constant desire to develop oneself and the ability to keep up with development is needed so that the understanding and appreciation between different professionals and experts as well as partners is strengthened. Furthermore, the need to constantly evaluate what is being done, having a plan of actions, and changing it if necessary, and "focusing on the big picture" was said to be significant in developing all operations. Lastly, the interviewee reminded that it is worth giving a chance for

bold experiments and seeking opportunities from them. For these to work properly, personal conversations, listening and understanding others, and dialog are important. Good and effective (health) communication is particularly important in all cooperation, but especially for the purpose of promoting and influencing the health of individuals, whatever the target group.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The objective of this thesis was to create recommendations of action and ideas for Active Life Lab in order to create more prominent cooperation with the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region and sports organisations. The objective of this thesis from the very beginning was not to attract as many sports clubs as possible to start cooperation with Active Life Lab, but the aim was to map the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region, of which five in total were identified, and how they could start cooperation with Active Life Lab. Competitive sport(s) refers to a determined, ethically sustainable individual and team sport aimed at international or national success. To find ways to create these ideas, three research questions were created to seek answers to bring concrete development proposals to the case company. The questions were to see what Active Life Lab can offer to the sports clubs, and what are the needs of the sports club in terms of their athletes' testing environment and wellness services; what sports club and sports organisations want from Active Life Lab's services and products; and how can the cooperation between the competitive sports club and Active Life Lab be developed. This chapter focuses on the conclusions and development proposals given by the thematic interviews and benchmarking methods.

Active Life Lab and the chosen benchmark organisation, located in South-West Finland, the core of their operating model aims to promote wellbeing and health in diverse target groups. Both highlighted the importance of high-quality research work as a key part of their operations. The goals are also in line with each other, for example the promotion of holistic health by utilizing various knowledge and skills as well as gathering and sharing reliable researched information.

8.1 Answers to research questions

During the research, it was found that many sports clubs and sports organisations had an interest in cooperating with Active Life Lab immediately, but they were informed at the time that cooperation was not possible because Active Life Lab operations were based and founded on research and development projects. Through personal contacts, Active Life Lab was able to start one cooperation with the competitive orienteering sports club, and during this thesis, a competitive ice hockey club started cooperation with Active Life Lab. The dialogue between Active Life Lab and sports clubs/organisations has increased notably during the thesis process. This chapter opens the answers to all of the three research questions that this thesis had when starting the implementation.

What does Active Life Lab have to offer for the sports clubs, and what are the needs of sports clubs in terms of their athletes 'testing environment and wellness services?

According to Koski & Mäenpää (2018a, 34–35), the basis of the activities of sports clubs is the promotion of physical activity and sports. Although Koski et al. (2017, 6) state that sports clubs tend to focus more on competing; they are mostly emphasizing physical development and athletic performance. This was found in practice, since the most sought-after equipment was the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test). In addition, heart rate variability tests, lactate tests, treadmills, and the body composition analyser were said to be highly interesting equipment and could be utilized for testing and monitoring the effectiveness of training programs. In conclusion (to the research question about sports club's needs), laboratory environment overall raised interest through all the interviewees because the facilities offer wide test possibilities and room for rehabilitation, but as a singular piece of equipment, the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test) was most sought because there were no similar pieces of equipment in the region.

Physical tests ensure that an athlete's body can withstand a hard workout safely. Testing athletes helps to observe the effects of training programs and motivate

the athletes to train more by giving constructive and objective feedback. Physical testing helps to evaluate whether an athlete is ready to compete, for example after injury or to determine how the rehabilitation is progressing. (Bangsbo et al. 2006, 3; Thorpe et al. 2017, 28.) Active Life Lab's gym was seen as a good option for rehabilitation purposes for injured athletes. But the gym was said to be too small and lacks the possibility to train effectively with resistance training, which is understandable since Active Life Lab wasn't built for resistance training purposes.

For top athletes it is indubitably important to be healthy and injury-free when aiming to reach their best performance level (Koski et al. 2017, 6). Furthermore, the authors asked extra questions from the representative of the competitive football and bandy clubs, who is also the Sport Academy's physiotherapist, regarding injured athletes or athletes that might need more extensive rehabilitation, when the interviewee noted that Active Life Lab's facilities could be utilized for that purpose if needed. The competitive track & field, and gymnastics sports club had an interest in conducting additional services in Active Life Lab facilities for the citizens in the Mikkeli region who are seeking lifestyle advice, together with hobbyists and (competitive) athletes, for example, through their main project. In conclusion, the needs of the sports clubs for wellness services were found from the representatives that the facilities of Active Life Lab could be utilized for rehabilitation and testing purposes but not for effective resistance training for healthy athletes.

The core concepts of wellbeing services from the sports clubs' perspective revolve around wellbeing of athletes, and especially the performance of athletes. Wellbeing services measure objective parameters (for example recovery, strength, endurance, sleep) to ensure athletes are progressing, performing well, and staying healthy. (Kouali et al. 2020, 94-95.) The equipment has met the needs, wants, and standards of the competitive orienteering sports club, which is already in cooperation, and the quality of testing data has been found to be sufficient. Calendar reservations to see the availability of the testing facility were said to be an excellent addition. Working together with the research and

development expert was said to be open-minded, flexible, and well implemented. It can be concluded that the quality of the equipment and data has met the needs of the orienteering club, and the dialogue between the parties was said to be satisfactory. One of the hopes from the orienteering club was to receive additional training for the equipment from Active Life Lab to make their testing environment more effective.

**What do sports clubs want from Active Life Lab's services and products?
(For example, pricing, usability, collaboration model?)**

As said by the Active Life Lab's respondent, their partnership model operates in a "free market", meaning that it's not funded by any public party. The services must therefore be funded by someone else, in this case it's very likely to be funded by the sports club or athletes, or alternatively by some other party. Active Life Lab contributes to the effectiveness of cooperation by subsidizing the collaboration in the sense that the annual fee charged for the partnership model is not enough to cover all the costs involved, such as facilities, salaries, technology, and other potential costs.

When two parties start cooperation, both sides must see some type of gain. Sports clubs usually are investing scarce resources to generate value, and these investments should be assessed to see its productivity and to provide guidance for further enhancing the cooperation or collaborations value generation. Different parties might see different values, and some outcomes may not be perceived in the same way by both partners. (Austin & Seitanidi 2014, 182; Daidj 2017, Chapter 1.) The cost of Active Life Lab's services was compared by the orienteering club to other testing facilities in Finland which offer similar physical tests. The affordability and utility rates of Active Life Lab's services were found to be financially reasonable if the yearly number of tests were in the 10-15 range, which was calculated based on the cost per of the maximal oxygen consumption test (O2Max). Unfortunately, they were unable to reach these kinds of quantities because knowledgeable testers weren't available to conduct 10-15 tests per year. Currently, the amount of tests done in a year was making them wonder if the

money spent on Active Life Lab's services was worth the investment. Challenges related to the testers were found to be significant as there are no extra personnel specialized in the area conducting more demanding tests; in this case the maximal oxygen consumption test (O2Max test). Due to minimal resources, sports clubs and organisations are not able to attract new capable personnel to test their athletes. Currently, the orienteering club has a knowledgeable and capable tester in their team, but at the time of the interview (March 2022) this individual was not located in the region, which has led to logistical and timetable issues. If their capable tester could be attracted to the region of Mikkeli, their testing personnel problems could be solved. In conclusion, a working cooperation would be financially affordable for the orienteering sports club, but it cannot be met because there are no knowledgeable testers in the Mikkeli region.

It was found that Active Life Lab could meet the challenges of competitive track & field, and gymnastics, bandy, and football sports clubs by offering their facilities and services through the regional Sport Academy. They all saw the regional Sport Academy as being a major factor in this current partnership model and this was found to be the case since most of the young athletes are in Sport Academy through schools. In conclusion, the sports clubs want a routinized and frequent testing from Active Life Lab with working equipment and testers conducting them. The pricing was said to be reasonable if the testing would work systematically. Results indicate that the tests conducted through the regional Sport Academy was said to be the optimal option because individual athletes and other sports clubs' members can utilize the tests through them.

It was found that the benchmarked organisation has clearly separated non-profit, or as the interviewee referred to it as a common good, and service activities. Furthermore, they have developed test packages and services for individuals at different levels to help the customer group take better care of themselves. Working closely with their regional Sport Academy allows them to promote health for youth athletes. As well as cooperating with sports clubs allows them to promote health for professional athletes. Furthermore, they bring their special expertise to various communities and, with the help of its networks, can develop

many different health-promoting projects. In conclusion, it was found that promoting health and wellbeing creates a common interest between Active Life Lab and competitive sports clubs. Also, the cooperation between the region's Sport Academy and Active Life Lab could play a major role in the Mikkeli region's wellbeing promotion.

How can cooperation between sports clubs be developed?

Active Life Lab's research and development activities were built around research and development projects that promote wellbeing. The Active Life Lab facility contains a smart gym that utilizes wellness technology, a testing laboratory, and a virtual reality facility. (Kuuluvainen & Pesola 2019, 11.) This means that the facilities weren't built specifically for the needs of sports clubs and athletes. But the authors saw before this thesis a possible value for the sports clubs since they have a great interest in increasing their own athletes' wellbeing and performance. According to Active Life Lab, increasing cooperation is now possible within the framework of the partnership model. Active Life Lab sees that when the current operating model can be further developed with already existing partners and when cooperation starts to work more effectively, word of mouth starts to circulate in sports circles and clubs may become interested in participating in the cooperation. Cooperation with sports clubs is deemed important for Active Life Lab from the perspective of wanting to support their local organisations and the local sports community and being seen as a possible cooperation partner. In conclusion, the new partnership model allows for the development of cooperation with their existing partners and enables Active Life Lab to participate in and support local events and activities, creating more positive word-of-mouth and opportunities.

A core concept for a wellbeing service is always to measure something, or at least make the perceived standard of a person's state of wellbeing better (Isham et al. 2021, 3). The most recurring theme across all the interviews was that there was a lack of professionals and experts in conducting tests. Many interviewees stated that leading with data will play a larger role in future operations, but it is

difficult to find personnel who can identify problems with the right cause and understand who or what influenced events to occur and what the repercussions of those events were. This lack of experts is due to a lack of financial resources since sports clubs cannot hire professionals to conduct these tests.

Sports clubs are expected in the future to have a stronger share of responsibility in Finland by recognizing their role and opportunities in health and wellbeing promotion. This obligation arises from the fact that the state financially subsidizes national sports associations, from where the money goes to municipalities, which similarly subsidize local clubs. (Kokko 2014, 61.) The competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club was found to have an interesting project in the works. Through pilot groups including the regional exercise organisation and the competitive cross-country and biathlon sports club in the Mikkeli region, their aim is to create an operating model how sports clubs can implement lifestyle guidance through pilot clubs which are committed to lifestyle guidance. Lately, the largest clubs are seen more as partners with the municipality than just passive users of the conditions (Mäenpää et al. 2017, 19).

Higher levels of wellbeing have been linked to greater individual productivity, which affects the whole society and communities positively (Isham et al. 2021, 3). The benchmark interviewee also noted interestingly that the possibility in the future models could be recruiting sports clubs for health promotion work, from which they could also benefit financially as an incentive and thus bear their own responsibility in the Finnish wellbeing system. For example, a sports club could be certified to move certain types of people and, in this way, carry out their responsibility for wellbeing promotion. This idea from the benchmark interviewee fits well with the project the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club is doing. The objective of the sports clubs in this said project is to create continuous, profitable, and lucrative operations of their own accord without their needing to rely on project funding. If successful they could create a model which could be expanded, if successful, to the whole South-Savo region.

Cooperation in research and development areas may range from different coordination activities to joint ventures in which firms fully share information and costs (Silipo 2008, 102). Cooperation with Active Life Lab from the perspective of the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club was said to be interesting because their project lasts for two years in total. They are interested in how Active Life Lab's own projects and know-how could be utilized to help the success of their own main project. In conclusion, it would be beneficial for Active Life Lab to map the possibility of cooperation with the competitive track & field sports club in their main project to promote wellbeing and health in the Mikkeli region. Their main project's aim is to increase the responsibility of sports clubs in promoting wellbeing, and the Active Life Lab could help with the success of their project. At the same time, Active Life Lab could enable them to increase efficiency and find different target groups. Together they could identify, target, and do things for the target group's needs and wants.

The health promotion in youth sports is not just about increasing the amount of participation in specific sports, but also improving the quality. Quality is discussed in terms of schools and organised sports cooperating, young people being involved in deliberate choices; sports being adapted to the youth, and club personnel being trained properly. (De Knop & De Martelaer 2001 cited in Geidne 2013, 277.) The benchmark interviewee raised an interesting thought, saying that sports clubs could possibly think of putting their own club on the athlete's path (Appendix 3). On the same topic, the interviewee continued by saying that it is a good idea for each party to be aware of their own role in the athlete's path. This idea fits well with the project that the track & field, and gymnastics sports club is currently implementing. Lastly, both the competitive football and bandy sports club representative with the benchmark interviewee noted that it was a good idea to start implementation of the athlete's path as early as possible, which will maximize the benefits of the athletes in the long run.

Through its participants, premises, and funding a sports club is always part of a community. To strengthen this community action, it is important for sports clubs to cooperate with schools or other parties in their region. Creating a supportive

environment for youth involves organising a safe, stimulating, satisfying, and enjoyable environment. Furthermore, it also involves the quality of these youth sports, how the practices are designed, and how young people are socialized within and into sports. (Geidne 2013, 277- 278.) The representative of the competitive football and bandy sports clubs stated that there should be a communal way of thinking between all sports clubs and organisations in the region to push the same sledge forward and not against it. The benchmark interviewee stated that based on the feedback and conversations, it's easier to modify the collaboration toward a better and more personal level. Good and effective (health) communication is particularly important in all cooperation, but especially for the purpose of promoting and influencing the health of individuals, whatever the target group. Therefore, Active Life Lab should focus on creating networks through personal contacts to start new cooperation and improve dialogue with their current partners to create a friendly environment for growth.

According to Itkonen (2014, 4), socially sustainable sports should also be financially sound. Especially in the Finnish team sports, the financial sustainability is a constant threat, and club bankruptcies and payment difficulties are a worryingly familiar phenomenon in the Finnish sport scene. It was discovered that the orienteering club would like to deepen the cooperation with Active Life Lab by selling their know-how of the performance tests with the help of Active Life Lab therefore creating a new source of income. This would be attainable by selling testing services that would include tests in the facilities of Active Life Lab and in the surrounding nature area in Kalevankangas. The authors proposed the idea that they could also sell their knowledge to other sports clubs in the region if needed, which was said to be possible. According to the interviewee, the orienteering sports club is "ready to see this cooperation all the way through" and is ready to work extremely closely with Active Life Lab to achieve this. It was stated that they were ready to put their (human) resources to use and help Active Life Lab to the best of their abilities. In conclusion, it was found that both the competitive orienteering and track & field sports clubs were looking for new income sources through cooperation, and Active Life Lab should make full use of this opportunity with both of the competitive sports clubs.

Additional findings in the qualitative research

Branding is globally seen as a great tool for marketing. Branding is usually needed to create a strong, positive perception of the organisation with its products or services in the customer's mind. (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2007, 358.) According to the Active Life Lab interviewee, the newly formed partnership model hasn't been communicated or marketed a lot, and club contacts have thus been made through personal contacts or from the Wellbeing management marketing event which was held in November 2021 in Active Life Lab's facilities. Active Life Lab noted that marketing is not seen as the most significant necessity when starting cooperation with sports clubs, because in a city as small as Mikkeli, word-of-mouth spreads quickly among sports club members. In conclusion regarding marketing, the authors suggest the marketing should happen through sports clubs' websites, where there would be a logo for Active Life Lab and maybe a short overview about cooperation, which would increase Active Life Lab visibility in Mikkeli's sports circles.

Generally, both non-professional and professional sports clubs in Finland are organised as non-profit associations. Therefore, voluntary work is crucial for the organisation of sports in Finland. On an annual basis, Finns volunteer for sports organisations for about 74 hours, and the economic value of this work is between 0.9 and 1.5 billion euros. (Ek & Markkanen 2021; Mäkinen 2018, 43.) According to Mäkinen (2018, 62), without volunteering in Finland, the cost is likely to be passed on to households, raising their total sport costs from the current 2.9 billion euros to around 4 billion euros. The authors asked competitive track and field and gymnastics sports clubs, as well as Sport Academy respondents, how they saw the volunteering trend in the Mikkeli regions. Respondents stated that volunteering has decreased massively in recent years and that nowadays it is difficult to find volunteers. From this, it can be seen that there have been changes in volunteering in recent years in the Mikkeli area, and this may in the future increase responsibility for individual workers in the sports club and eventually the cost burden.

Additional information was found that the competitive ice hockey sports club, which started cooperation during this thesis, and the regional Sport Academy wished that the students at Xamk could help and be utilized in the testing environment. Thus, testing could be done more efficiently and help them create a professional testing environment. It was also noted by the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports clubs and the regional Sport Academy that because Mikkeli doesn't have a university together with the University of Applied Sciences, it is difficult to keep promising athletes in the region because they leave for bigger cities with better environmental and study opportunities. The benchmark interviewee noted a few aspects that Active Life Lab's current situation could be compared. Firstly, to be able to sell something, customer expectations must be met. It was found that when Active Life Lab was built, all the sports clubs' respondents didn't quite know or understand that Active Life Lab could only offer facilities and equipment, but the sports clubs needed to acquire the testers themselves to conduct these tests. Also, in the beginning, the sports clubs didn't understand why cooperation couldn't be started with Active Life Lab. Therefore, in an effort to untangle this confusion that was created from the early stages of dialogue in the hope of building cooperation between the parties, this thesis aimed to clarify the possibilities of cooperation.

Secondly, the benchmark interviewee noted that if you do something targeted for one (even smaller) target group and plan it well, much more can be achieved. This may eventually reach more individuals and target groups than trying to influence "everyone". For Active Life Lab, this could mean that if cooperation with the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region starts functioning properly, they could find unpredictable cooperation and/or projects in the future. Active Life Lab stated that the content of the cooperation between the partners can be extended to, for example joint research and development projects. In other words, when the cooperation is successful, many other organisations may come to Active Life Lab in the future to ask for the opportunity to collaborate or come up to Active Life Lab with their own ideas.

8.2 Development proposals

The biggest factor that seemed to slow these partnership operations was a lack of testers. The authors saw that it would be beneficial to all parties to first build a functional testing environment as their foundation. Once a strong foundation for cooperation has been built, it will allow for the possibility of deeper cooperation in the future. According to sports clubs, their greatest interest was in testing and rehabilitation possibilities. In particular, the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test) raised a lot of interest, but the people who would conduct this test would preferably need to have a degree in testing. To solve this problem, Active Life Lab could focus more on training individuals to conduct these tests, so cooperation between the parties could be developed in this way. For this lack of testers' reason, all five development proposals (down below) are meant for the tester problem, and they are broken down one by one by the authors' own views on a possible arrangement regarding the problems with the testers. They are followed by the overall development proposals for Active Life Lab regarding the whole cooperation model between sports clubs.

The first development proposal for the testers problems is to utilize the skills of the physiotherapist who represented both the competitive football and bandy sports clubs in the interviews and works with the regional Sport Academy. During the interview, it was found that the representative was highly interested in taking responsibility for the test environment through the regional Sport Academy. In practice, this could work since the wanted tester is already a part of Sport Academy operations which means that there is no need to hire someone new to conduct testing for them. Even if the representative lacks a specific degree in physical testing, it is extremely beneficial to have this individual take greater responsibility for testing environment operations. Furthermore, the Sport Academy could utilize Active Life Lab's facilities through an exercise organization in Mikkeli because they have already taken the partnership model with Active Life Lab and the Sport Academy works under their authority. This means that there is no need to even purchase a different partnership model but to move some pieces to make this cooperation function. Active Life Lab could create a solution by training this selected tester on the equipment and supporting the testers by

keeping an open communication channel. The Sport Academy has been hoping for better cooperation since they adopted the current partnership model, and this could finally allow cooperation to work more systematically.

The authors consider effective cooperation with the Sport Academy to be extremely important as this cooperation could build a strong foundation for the athletes' testing environment in the Mikkeli area. The results of the benchmark interview also supported the authors' claim that working cooperation with the Sport Academy is extremely important and beneficial, since the Sport Academy works closely with all the sports clubs and schools in the Mikkeli region. Furthermore, many other sports clubs would benefit from this arrangement because their talented athletes from the Sport Academy would be able to utilize this opportunity. This means that Active Life Lab will be able to reach more sports clubs through this cooperation, and this will allow them to take a more prominent role in the city of Mikkeli's sports circles as a promoter of physical activity and overall wellbeing. Also, Sport Academy themselves have a great interest in developing their current cooperation with Active Life Lab.

A second development proposal would be to utilize the willingness of the orienteering sports club in selling their knowledge and know-how. The authors suggested that they take responsibility for the tests conducted for those who want them for example, customers or athletes that don't belong in the Sport Academy or other sports clubs that have a partnership model in the facilities of Active Life Lab. These tests could be done by selling services for a fixed price for example, through an online store on Active Life Lab websites. Their knowledge, know-how, and skills could be used not only in orienteering specialized testing but also to test other endurance athletes. They also have some experience working with the equipment in the Active Life Lab and have a desire to make the tests more time efficient.

Currently the challenges are that the competitive orienteering sports club can't test their own athletes effectively and systematically. They do already have capable personnel to conduct professional tests and analyse the data, as well as

the skills to improvise through difficult situations during tests. But the problem is that at the time of the interview (March 2022), the previously mentioned individual was not located in the region, which led to logistical and timetable issues. If their capable tester could be attracted to the region of Mikkeli, their testing personnel problems could be solved, and with the help of the Active Life Lab training their testers, they could improve their quality in this said testing environment. If the orienteering club could start to conduct the tests effectively, they would have a new income source by selling their know-how and testing services not only to other orienteering clubs but also to Mikkeli region athletes with the help of Active Life Lab.

The third choice of the development proposal regarding the testers would be that, with the help of Active Life Lab, the competitive sports clubs and the regional Sport Academy would build a group of testers together, and with proper communication with the parties involved, they would build a working testing environment. The group of testers would include all the competitive sports clubs' capable and willing personnel for conducting and analysing the tests. It would be ideal to have four to five testers gathered so that the workload is spread even if one of the testers has personal on-goings. The testers would need, ideally, a proper education related to sports studies to be able to conduct tests and analyse them. For example, the interviewee of the competitive track & field and gymnastics sports club has a master's degree in sports science. Furthermore, this individual has already done a few of these demanding physical tests, and when the authors asked about the possibility of helping in the testing, the interviewee considered the idea possible.

However, Active Life Lab would need to train all testers to use and manage their equipment in a professional manner. Of course, with practice and experience, the testers' understanding would increase greatly. This would lead to a working testing environment without sacrificing the quality of tests. The challenge is that if none of the testers takes main responsibility for the testing environment, the structure might not be sustainable to work efficiently in the long run if testers have personal on-goings in their own lives. Also, these testers still have their own

responsibilities to their own sports clubs or organisations which may arise as a problem in the long run.

The fourth development proposal would be to hire a tester from another facility or city to conduct the tests; in other words, outsource testing services. The tester would guarantee quality knowledge, although the tester would still need to get familiar with the equipment that Active Life Lab has. This would resolve the issue with the limited number of testers in the Mikkeli region and would provide professional expertise on the tests overall. The downside would have to be the resources invested into hiring such testers and possibly the distance needed to travel to the facilities of Active Life Lab would become a handful. Also, the extra payment for this solution in the testing would fall more likely into the customer's hand. Therefore, in the long term, it wouldn't be feasible to conduct tests with a third-party tester because it would cost a lot to operate with already low resources to spend. The authors do not see this as a solution in the long run unless there is a clear plan to hire full-time testers in the future.

The fifth development proposal is a cooperation model with the South-Savo Social and Health sector. In this model, there should be some concrete facts to justify the salary of the tester, and it should probably save money for the city. In the interviews, it appeared that an arrangement had been made in a different city whereby the city hired a tester on its payroll and this tester would serve athletes, fitness enthusiasts, rehabilitation patients, and other users of test services. The authors discussed this with the Kymenlaakso Sports Academy which together with the city runs a testing station in its own city about how they made this arrangement work. The interviewee said that they justified this investment on the grounds that if 2-3 elderly people can stay at home for one extra year with the help of this testing facility, then this arrangement will pay for itself and possibly even save money. Unfortunately, they haven't been able to cooperate with their Social and Health sector since there haven't been almost any patients using their facility. This is because the Social and Health sector have their own equipment for their patients. The interviewee hoped for closer cooperation in the future, but the interviewee said that the starting phase has had its own difficulties.

Even if it were possible to invest in a similar way in the Mikkeli region, the same problem could be found here since the Social and Health sector already have equipment to test their patients if necessary. In addition, they are focusing more on patient rehabilitation than on promoting the health of athletes. This solution, at least for the time being, is not thought to be very likely due to a lack of resources.

Development proposals for Active Life Lab's operations

In conclusion, Active Life Lab has modern, high-quality, and functioning equipment to utilize in different kinds of testing and rehabilitation, and their services and facilities are wanted by the competitive sports clubs in the Mikkeli region. Even though facilities weren't built completely for athletes' needs, all interviewees were interested in cooperating with Active Life Lab on some level for multiple reasons. These reasons ranged from one to three options: conducting and analysing tests; rehabilitation usage; or cooperating in different wellbeing projects. Testing possibilities were found to be interesting by sports clubs and the most sought-after equipment was the maximal oxygen consumption test (O₂Max test). This was found to be the case because there is no similar equipment in the region. The affordability and utility rate of Active Life Lab's partnership model were found to be financially reasonable by the calculation by the competitive orienteering sports club if the yearly number of tests for the cooperation party were in the 10-15 range, which was calculated based on the cost per O₂Max test. Also, when it comes to the other equipment, heart rate variability tests, lactate tests, treadmills, and the body composition analyser were said to be highly interesting equipment and could be utilized for testing and monitoring the effectiveness of training programs. It was found essential that cooperation between Active Life Lab and the regional Sport Academy needs to be developed because they could build a foundation for developing the testing environment in the future.

It is understandable that it is not possible to provide a single development proposal for the cooperation that meets the needs of all sports clubs. Active Life Lab offers a partnership model that allows the sports clubs to utilize the facilities

according to their own needs. But still, Active Life Lab needs to support different sports clubs in different ways because they may have different goals. For example, the Sport Academy wants to get tests running systemically and possibly use facilities to rehabilitate injured athletes if needed. The Orienteering club wants to make testing environments more professional, and when they succeed in that, they will also want to commercialize their own expertise by offering testing to others who want it. According to the physiotherapist who works in the competitive football and bandy clubs, they were more interested in rehabilitation aspects and possibilities because highly demanding resistance training is not possible in these facilities. The competitive ice hockey club, which has outsourced its individual physical coaching and has individuals in the club who are able to do testing, has already adopted the partnership model during this thesis process and has hoped for Xamk students to help run the testing environment. The Sport Academy has been thinking about the same possibility when they get their cooperation functioning more fluently. Track & field and gymnastic club saw Active Life Lab as a possible cooperation partner through their own project where they could provide additional services for adults who are seeking lifestyle advice.

In the humble opinions of the authors, they suggest that the few previously mentioned development proposals are contemplated by Active Life Lab. The regional Sport Academy can start conducting the tests among their athletes with the help of the respondent of the competitive football and bandy sports clubs, who is also the physiotherapist in the Sport Academy. At the same time, the competitive orienteering sports club could start selling their know-how and testing services to customers and to other sports clubs (if needed) for a fixed price for example, through website. When working testing environment is achieved, Active Life Lab could consider some level of cooperation with regional Track & Field, and gymnastic club for their main project. With this, the Active Life Lab could start taking on a greater role in advancing the wellbeing of the residents in the Mikkeli region.

From the results of the thematic interviews, the benchmarking, and the findings based on them, the authors suggest that Active Life Lab first clarify its own role in the partnership model with the sports clubs. According to the authors, the role of the Active Life Lab is to provide the facilities for physical tests and support sports clubs' coaching with quality equipment training, wellbeing education, and expert activities. During this thesis process, sports clubs understood that Active Life Lab can provide facilities for use and training for the equipment, but in the end, users are responsible for their own customers, or, in this case, their athletes.

To achieve this clarified role, the authors are proposing a greater focus on equipment and wellness training for sports clubs' coaches/testers. This could be done by a training course led by Active Life Lab for all those interested. At first, the emphasis would certainly be more on the use of equipment, and after that the training could also focus on the overall wellbeing of the athlete, therefore keeping the communication channels open with the sports clubs. The training events organised by Active Life Lab could provide an environment for learning and development and extend Active Life Lab's message of wellbeing to a wider group of people. Sports clubs can also be involved in development work for Active Life Lab at these events by stating their own views and ideas. A few sports clubs have already asked students to support their testing environment. Integrating Xamk students into a collaborative effort between Active Life Lab and sports clubs would bring benefits to all parties since this allows students to work on collaborative projects and potentially earn credits for their studies, while sports clubs would get the needed help for running their testing environment.

From the current model, the calendar reservations to see the availability of the testing facility were said to be an excellent addition by the orienteering club and working together with the research and development expert was said to be open, flexible, and well implemented. Calendar reservations are an easy way for sports clubs to see availability and control their own schedules. On this matter, the authors don't see any significant ideas to propose since the current cooperation parties are pleased with the system. If the number of sports clubs increases, it would be a good idea to have a conversation with all the sports clubs and find a

possible agreement for certain days or hours when different sports clubs have facilities for their operations.

Naturally, sports clubs are most interested in training and improving the performance of an athlete in a testing environment, but the authors see Active Life Lab as having an opportunity to organise even more events around wellbeing, or other themes, with sports clubs. This would allow Active Life Lab to get to know people better, network, and exchange ideas, further enhancing the dialogue. This also gives an opportunity to appear in the cityscape of Mikkeli together with sports clubs, including through various events and/or in the media. In terms of marketing, as the partnership develops, the Active Life Lab logo and activities could be highlighted through partner clubs, including websites or maybe even at a match event. In the same way, Active Life Lab could highlight its cooperation with sports clubs on their own websites, therefore attracting new individuals, sports clubs, and/or companies that may become interested in Active Life Lab's services and operations.

8.3 Research trustworthiness and ethics

A case study frequently entails the collection of unstructured data as well as the qualitative analysis of that data. Additionally, it is often argued that the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalization or theoretical inference of some kind. Hence, it often raises a fundamental issue about the aspect of trustworthiness. (Ang et al. 2016, 1856.) There are moral and legal codes in place regarding the ethical treatment and care of people involved in research studies. The classic principle, "But first, do no harm," is the primary objective when working with human participants. (Saldana 2011, 24.) When assessing the trustworthiness of research conducted using a qualitative method, it is essential for the authors to keep in mind both the subject of the research and the purpose of the research, meaning what is being researched and why. The methods and techniques used to collect the data, as well as the conclusions from the analysis of the study, also affect the assessment of the trustworthiness of the study. Time

spent on the research and the ethics of the research should also be considered when assessing trustworthiness. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 122–123.)

The trustworthiness of content analysis results depends on the availability of rich, appropriate, and well-saturated data. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and result reporting go hand in hand. The trustworthiness of data collection can be verified by providing precise details of the sampling method and participants' descriptions. (Kyngäs et al. 2020, 8.) According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2018, 120–123), the criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative research are: credibility, equivalence, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. When examining credibility, it is necessary to assess whether the material collected is true and whether the participants in the study have been described in sufficient detail. Equivalence refers to the equivalence of the results of a study to the original data. Portability assesses the transferability of results to another, external, similar context. The trustworthiness of the research is enhanced by the fact that an external person has checked the implementation of the research process. Confirmability means that the results of the study have been evaluated by an outsider or outsiders.

Trustworthiness in this thesis

The criteria for the trustworthiness of this qualitative research were credibility, equivalence, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. Independence of the authors was needed to make the research good, meaning that no one tried to influence the results of the research. The reliability and confirmability could have been supported by the evaluations of another person's research results and/or findings, but this wasn't possible in this thesis since this was the first study regarding this subject for the case company.

When this thesis was started, the research questions and the objectives of this thesis, and the theoretical frameworks were created in order to create a frame of reference. The frame of reference supported the subject, research problems, and the objective positively. With the thematic interview and benchmarking methods,

the empirical research could be fitted properly, and with their help, the research problems could be answered, and concrete development proposals could be made based on the objectives of this thesis. All interview questions were made based on the theoretical framework. The respondents represented their competitive sports clubs well enough to have validity behind their answers, had extensive knowledge about their organisations, and had general insight into the matter. Therefore, the validity of the research can be considered good. Although the target group was quite small but well defined, the limited number of competitive sports clubs in the region affected the number of interviews conducted. Therefore, it affects the validity of the research. There could have been more clubs to improve the amount and quality of findings. The study was a case study, and the data was quite limited. The study is therefore not generalizable, meaning its external validity is low.

The interviews and discussions were held in Finnish, the mother tongue of the authors and interviewees. Therefore, during the translation from Finnish to English, the terminology may have changed or lost some of the original meaning due to the lack of equivalent terms and words. The research focused on keeping the information intact even though the terminology could change from language to language. Furthermore, all interviews were recorded, thus making it possible to repeat the recorded conversations, thus making the information gathered consistent and coherent. In the authors' opinion, the guidelines concerning anonymization and confidentiality affect the trustworthiness of the research because the authors, supervisors, and the interviewees are the only ones who are aware of the specific organisations involved, excluding the reader. During the interviews, the authors pointed out this new guideline, and it puzzled the interviewees in terms of trustworthiness. However, the interviewees wanted to represent their sports clubs with their own names. The authors understood the purpose of the new guidelines but still felt the trustworthiness could have been improved by giving the names of the sports clubs and interviewees. The authors' willingness to spend extra time on researching the subjects, theories, and leads given by the interviewees, and conducting extra discussions increases the trustworthiness of the research.

For credibility, the authors are confident in the research study findings since the material was collected truthfully and without changing the results. The number of internet sources used affects the credibility of the sources. Although gathered from a secure database, the sources themselves might have been outdated or misleading. The triangulation method was used to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings by combining the thematic interview and benchmarking methods in this study. Furthermore, no attempt was made in the interview situations to lead the respondents. Although the thesis was done for the company in which the authors did their practical training, the authors did their best to not affect the objectivity or results of the study.

9 CONCLUSION

The idea for this thesis was conceptualized during the writers' studies before the actual writing process of the thesis began. The thesis process took around six months, and the schedule was set by the writers themselves. The longer schedule allowed the writer to thoroughly research the topic and subject(s), and the writers had enough time to invest in accurately writing the thesis. At the beginning of the course, a lot of changes had to be made to the theoretical framework. The reporting focused more on the marketing perspective, and the authors would have liked to have written more in terms of wellbeing and business. The writers also wanted to include the regional Sport Academy into the theoretical framework, but the writers were advised to focus mainly on the Mikkeli region's competitive sports clubs. This became a major problem during the thematic interviews because, as the authors suspected, the Sport Academy emerged from several interviews and eventually played a major part in the effectiveness of the cooperation between the Active Life Lab and regional sports clubs.

Before the thesis process, the writers' hypothesis was that the current cooperation model wasn't working due to a lack of testers, so it was important for the writers to find possible solutions to the issue. The hypothesis was based on the observations of the writers during studies since Active Life Lab had been a big part of the writers' degree program.

Researching the literature and theory parts of the work opened the writers' eyes to how sports clubs operate, how wellbeing services are a part of everyday lives, and the extent to which they affect people's lives, and how cooperation works both theoretically and in practice. The writers were supported by the case company and the thesis supervisor. Also, the interviewees' attitude towards the authors was helpful, and they were eager to help with the project. This thesis wishes to have an impact on Active Life Lab's cooperation model between competitive sports clubs. At least, Active Life Lab's understanding of the wants and needs of Mikkeli's competitive sports clubs was wanted to be strengthened with the help of this work.

This case study had three main research questions, which were all aimed at developing Active Life Lab's cooperation with sports clubs further. Firstly, writers examined Active Life Lab's current facilities and equipment and recognized the potential for sports clubs. Secondly, writers wanted to identify the wants and needs of sports clubs regarding wellbeing services and testing environments. Finally, the writers tried to combine the found information from the first two research questions to propose development ideas to improve future cooperation between Active Life Lab and competitive sports clubs.

The most notable challenge in the current partnership model was found to be that it relies heavily on competitive sports clubs having their own knowledgeable testers since the Active Life lab doesn't have personnel attached to conduct and analyse tests. Furthermore, the most recurring themes across all interviews were that there was a lack of professionalism and expertise in concluding tests, and scarce resources in club personnel and finance. Given the decline in volunteering and the problems caused by the pandemic, it is understandable that sports clubs will carefully examine all possible investments. Therefore, the competitive football, bandy, track & field, and gymnastics sports clubs found it sensible to conduct the most demanding tests through the region's Sport Academy and their cooperation with Active Life Lab, since most of their youth are part of the Sport Academy. Because of this, it is important for Active Life Lab and Sport Academy to find a working model for practical cooperation. This allows individual young

athletes to receive support for their wellbeing and see the impact of their training programs without the need for sports clubs to invest money in the Active Life Lab partnership model.

Active Life Lab stated that the content of the cooperation between the partners can be extended to, for example, joint R&D projects. If cooperation with regional sports clubs starts functioning properly, Active Life Lab could find unpredictable cooperation and/or projects in the future. It would be advisable for the Active Life Lab to examine an opportunity to be included in the competitive track & field sports club's main project that promotes wellbeing and health for the common good. The project's aim is to increase the responsibility of sports clubs in promoting wellbeing, and Active Life Lab could play its own part in the success of their project and with their services and products. Together, they could identify, target, and do things in the direction that target groups need and want.

For future research proposals, the authors propose research regarding volunteering, which was found to be degreasing, but this should be studied more specifically. Another authors' proposal for the future would be to study sports clubs as a wellbeing promoter. Lastly, future research proposals regarding different cooperation models in Mikkeli regions are highly advisable.

REFERENCES

Aboelmaged, M., Ali, I., & Hashem, G. 2021. Mobile apps use for wellness and fitness and university students' subjective wellbeing. *Information Development*, 1-16. PDF document. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/02666669211020498> [Accessed 15 January 2022].

Act on the promotion of sports and physical activity 390/2015. Helsinki. WWW document. Available at: <https://www.finlex.fi> [Accessed 4 December 2021].

Ahmed, S. 2012. *Effective Non-Profit Management: Context, Concepts, and Competencies*. Baton Rouge: Taylor & Francis Group. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 15 January 2022].

Alaja, E. 2000. *Arpapelii? Urheilumarkkinoinnin käsikirja*. Jyväskylä: Suomen Urheilusäätiö.

Alaja, E. 2001. *Summapelii! Sponsoriyhteistyön käsikirja*. Jyväskylä: Suomen Urheilusäätiö.

Ala-Vähälä, T., Lämsä, J., Mäkinen, J. & Pusa, S. 2018. Liikunnan talous Suomessa vuonna 2018. Liikuntatieteellisen Seuran tutkimuksia ja selvityksiä nro 19. PDF document. Available at: https://www.lts.fi/media/lts_julkaisut/lts_selvityksia/liikunnan-talous-suomessa-vuonna-2018-raportti.pdf [Accessed 4 December 2021].

Anand, G. & Kodali, R. 2008. Benchmarking the benchmarking models. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*. 15(3), 257-291. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 7 February 2022].

Ang, C., Embi, M., & Yunus, M. 2016. Enhancing the Quality of the Findings of a Longitudinal Case Study: Reviewing Trustworthiness via ATLAS.ti. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(10), 1855-1867. PDF document. Available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol21/iss10/7> [Accessed 27 January 2022].

Armstrong, G., Adam, S., Denize, S. & Kotler, P. 2014. *Principles of marketing*. Australia: Pearson. [Accessed 5 January 2022].

Austin, J. & Seitanidi, M.M. 2014. *Creating Value in Nonprofit-Business Collaborations: New Thinking & Practice*. PDF document. Available at: https://iranngonetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/James_E__Austin_M__May_Seitanid.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2022].

Bangsbo, J., Mohr, M., Poulsen, A., Perez-Gomez, J. & Krstrup, P. 2006. Training and testing the elite athlete. *Journal of Exercise Science & Fitness*, 4(1), 1-14. PDF document. Available at: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.578.5352&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

Collignon, H. & Sultan, N. 2014. Winning in Business Sports. ATKeaney Report. PDF document. Available at: <https://cache.pressmailing.net/content/443f58fc-6bad-499f-9e9a-f5f66890778b/WinningintheBusinessofSports.pdf> [Accessed 5 March 2022].

Daidj, N. 2017. Cooperation, coepetition, and Innovation. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 12 January 2022].

Devlin, R. & Estevadeordal, A. 2003. Trade and cooperation: A regional public goods approach. In Estevadeordal, A., Frantz, B. & Nguyen, T.M. (eds.) *Regional Public Goods from Theory to Practice*. PDF document. Available at: <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Regional-Public-Goods-From-Theory-to-Practice.pdf> [Accessed 7 January 2022].

Eliasson, I. & Johansson, A. 2021. The disengagement process among young athletes when withdrawing from sport: A new research approach. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. 56(4), 537-557. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 20 January 2022].

EK, P. & Markkanen, H-K. 2021. The Sports Law Review: Finland. WWW document. Available at: <https://thelawreviews.co.uk/title/the-sports-law-review/finland> [Accessed 18 December 2021].

Evans, C. & Lewis, J. 2018. Analysing semi-structured interviews using thematic analysis: exploring voluntary civic participation among adults. PDF document. Available at <https://5y1.org/download/c109cae800991dcd400eb3ffc7a12ec0.pdf> [Accessed 12 February 2022].

Firstbeat 2022. About us. WWW page. Available at: <https://shop.firstbeatsports.global/> [Accessed 10 February 2022].

Fraser-Thomas, J., Côté, J. & Deakin, J. 2005. Youth sport programs: An avenue to foster positive youth development. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1740898042000334890> [Accessed 23 January 2022].

Galatti, L.R., Côté, J., Reverdito, R.S., Allan, V., Seoane, A.M. & Paes, R.R. 2017. Fostering Elite Athlete Development and Recreational Sport Participation: A Successful Club Environment. PDF document. Available at: <https://revistas.rcaap.pt/motricidade/article/view/6099/8960> [Accessed 1 January 2022].

Geidne, S., Quennerstedt, M. & Eriksson, C. 2013. The youth sports club as a health-promoting setting: an integrative review of research. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 22 January 2022].

Gibbs, G.R. 2007. Analyzing qualitative data. London: Sage Publications. [Accessed 7 February 2022].

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. 2008. Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *Br Dent J* 204, 291–295. Available at: <https://kakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 27 January 2022].

Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M. & Namey, E.E. 2011. Applied thematic analysis. Thousand Oaks: Sage publications.

Heliskoski, J., Humala, H., Kopola, R., Tonteri, A. & Tykkyläinen, S. 2018. Vaikuttavuuden askelmerkit. Työkaluja ja esimerkkejä palveluntuottajille. Sitran selvityksiä 130. Sitra. PDF document. Available at: <https://media.sitra.fi/2018/03/27105443/vaikuttavuuden-askelmerkit.pdf> [Accessed 18 December 2021].

Hong, P., Hong, S.W., Roh, J.J. & Park, K. 2012. Evolving benchmarking practices: a review for research perspectives. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 440-462. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 7 February 2022].

Hossain, T., Suortti, K. & Kallio, M. 2013. Urheiluseurat kunniaan. Liikunnan ja urheilun rahoituksen painopisteeksi perustaso – lapset ja nuoret. *Valtion liikuntaneuvoston julkaisuja 2013:3*. PDF document. Available at: https://www.liikuntaneuvosto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Urheiluseurat_kunniaan_www.pdf [Accessed 7 December 2021].

Inoue, Y. Sato, M. & Filo, K. 2020. Transformative sport service research: Linking sport services with well-being. *Journal of Sport Management*, 34(4), 285–290. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 29 December 2021].

Isham, A., Mair, S. & Jackson, T. 2021. Worker wellbeing and productivity in advanced economies: Re-examining the link. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 15 February 2022].

Itkonen, H. 2014. Urheilun normimyllerrys on pysyvä ilmiö. *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 32(3), 3–6. PDF document. Available at: <https://journal.fi/tt/article/view/41557> [Accessed 29 December 2022].

Jalonen, H., Tuominen, S., Ryömä, A., Haltia, J., Nenonen, J. & Kuikka, A. 2018. How Does Value Creation Manifest Itself in the Nexus of Sport and Business? A Systematic Literature Review. *Open Journal of Business and Management* 6, 103-138. PDF document. Available: <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=81942> [Accessed 9 February 2022].

Keshkar, S., Lawrence, I., Dodds, M., Morris, E., Mahoney, T., Heisey, K., Adessa, F., Hedlund, D., Dickson, G., Ghasemi, H., Faruq, A., Naylor, M. & Santomier, J. 2019. The Role of Culture in Sports Sponsorship: An Update. PDF document. Available at: <https://aassjournal.com/article-1-704-en.pdf> [Accessed 9 January 2022].

Kokko, S., Selänne, H., Alanko, L. et al. 2015. Health promotion activities of sports clubs and coaches, and health and health behaviours in youth participating in sports clubs: The Health Promoting Sports Club study. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 14 January 2022].

Kokko, S. 2010. Health Promoting Sports Club – Youth sports clubs' health promotion profiles, guidance, and associated coaching practice, in Finland. *Studies in Sport, Physical Education and Health* 144. University of Jyväskylä. PDF document. Available at: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/22710> [Accessed 18 December 2021].

Kokko, S. 2014. Sports clubs as settings for health promotion: Fundamentals and an overview to research. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 2014:42, 60-65. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 22 January 2022].

Kokko, S. Kannas, L. & Villberg, J. 2006. The health promoting sports club in Finland--a challenge for the settings-based approach. *Health promotion international* 10(1), 93-106. PDF document. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16684782/> [Accessed 22 January 2022].

Konttinen, E. 2015. Kolmas sektori. WWW document. Available at: <http://kans.jyu.fi/sanasto/sanat-kansio/kolmas-sektori> [Accessed 15 January 2022].

Kouali, D., Hall, C. & Pope, P., 2020. Measuring eudaimonic wellbeing in sport: Validation of the Eudaimonic Wellbeing in Sport Scale. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 10(1), 93-106. PDF document. Available at: <https://internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/776/849> [Accessed 11 February 2022].

Koski, P., Matarma, T., Pediši, Z., Kokko, S., Lane, A., Hartmann, H., Geidne, S., Hämäläinen, T., Nykänen, U., Rakovac, M., Livson, M. & Savola, J. 2017. Sports Club for Health (SCforH) – Ohjeistusta urheiluseuroille terveystieteiden hyödyntämiseen. Helsinki: Suomen Olympiakomitea. PDF document, Available at: https://www.scforh.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Sports-Club-for-Health-Guidelines_fi.pdf [Accessed 20 December 2021].

Koski, P & Mäenpää, P. 2018a. Suomalaiset liikunta- ja urheiluseurat muutoksessa 1986–2016. *Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja* 2018:25. Helsinki: Opetus ja kulttuuriministeriö. PDF document. Available at: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/160926> [Accessed 3 December 2021].

Kotler, P. & Pfoertsch, W. 2007. Being known or being one of many: the need for brand management for business-to-business (B2B) companies. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 22(6), 357-362. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 30 December 2021].

Kotler, P. 2020. Marketing and value creation. *Journal of Creating Value* 6(1), 10-11. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 30 December 2021].

Kuuluvainen, V. & Pesola, A. 2019. Active Life Labin tavoitteena ovat vaikuttavammat hyvinvointipalvelut jokaiselle. In Kuuluvainen V. (eds.) *Onko hyvinvointipalveluilla vaikutusta? Terveyttä ja euroja vaikuttavuutta kehittämällä*. Xamk Kehittää 73. Mikkeli: South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, 8-13. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/165943> [Accessed 18 December 2021].

Kuuluvainen, V., Rinne, T. & Heikkinen, M. 2020. Kalevankangas nyt ja tulevaisuudessa. Paikkatietoperustainen katsaus ja käyttäjäkysely. Kaakkois-Suomen ammattikorkeakoulu. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/346450> [Accessed 18 December].

Kuuluvainen, V. & Pesola, A. 2017a. Xamk Active Life Lab - Dataperustaisia hyvinvointipalveluja kehittämässä. In Haapala, A. (eds.) *Kestävää hyvinvointia kehittämässä 2017*. Anu Haapala (toim.) Xamk kehittää 30. Mikkeli: South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, 19–23. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/140311> [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Kuuluvainen, V. & Pesola, A. 2017b. Xamk Active Life Lab hyvinvoinnin edistämisen innovaatioalustana. In Haapala, A. (eds.) *Kestävää hyvinvointia kehittämässä 2017*. Xamk kehittää 30. Mikkeli: South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences, 98–105. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/140311> [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Kyngäs, H., Kääriäinen, M. & Elo, S. 2020. The Trustworthiness of Content Analysis. *SAGE Open* January-March 2014: 1–10. PDF document. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336965902_The_Trustworthiness_of_Content_Analysis [Accessed 27 January 2022].

Leavy, Patricia. 2011. *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research*. Ebook. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 12 December 2021].

Letts, C.W., Ryan, W.P., & Grossman, A. 1999. Benchmarking: How nonprofits are adapting a business planning tool for enhanced performance. PDF document. Available at: https://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Benchmarking_0.pdf [Accessed 11 February 2022].

Li, Y., Pan, A., Wang, D.D., Liu, X., Dhana, K., Franco, O.H., Kaptoge, S., Di Angelantonio, E., Stampfer, M., Willett, W.C. & Hu, F.B. 2018. Impact of healthy lifestyle factors on life expectancies in the US population. *Circulation* 138(4), 345-355. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/275861> [Accessed 5 January 2022].

Lochmiller, C. R. 2021. Conducting Thematic Analysis with Qualitative Data. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(6), 2029-2044. PDF document. Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol26/iss6/19/> [Accessed 8 February 2022].

Mäenpää, P., Norra, J., Nieminen, M. & Lämsä, J. 2017. Liikunta- ja urheiluseurojen olosuhdetilanne. Kysely maakuntien keskuskaupunkien seuroille. Jyväskylä. Kihu. PDF document. Available at: https://kihuenergia.kihu.fi/tuotostiedostot/julkinen/2017_men_liikunta-j_sel22_27395.pdf [Accessed 2 January 2022].

Mäkinen, J. 2018. Aikuisväestön liikunnan harrastaminen, vapaaehtoistyö ja osallistuminen 2018. KIHUn julkaisusarja, nro 67. Jyväskylä: Kilpa- ja huippu-urheilun tutkimuskeskus (KIHU). PDF document. Available at: https://kihuenergia.kihu.fi/tuotostiedostot/julkinen/2019_jar_aikuisvest_sel71_85829.pdf [Accessed 7 December 2021].

Nummela A., Aaresola O., Mononen K. & Paavolainen L. 2016. Urheilijan polun huippuvaihe: menestykseen vaikuttavat tekijät sekä tutkimus-, kehittämis- ja asiantuntijatoiminnan painopisteet 2013–2018. Jyväskylä: Kilpa- ja huippu-urheilun tutkimuskeskus. KIHUn julkaisusarja nro 51. PDF document. Available at: https://kihuenergia.kihu.fi/tuotostiedostot/julkinen/2016_num_urheilulaj_sel61_33936.pdf [Accessed 16 January 2022].

Olympiakomitea. 2018. Urheiluseurojen tunnuslukuja 2018. WWW page. Available at: <https://www.olympiakomitea.fi/2018/10/10/urheiluseurojen-tunnuslukuja/> [Accessed 3.12 2021].

Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö. 2018. Liikuntatoimi tilastojen valossa Perustilastot vuodelta 2017. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2018:41. PDF document. Available at: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161346> [Accessed 3 December 2021].

Petermans, A. & Cain, R. 2019. Design for wellbeing: An applied approach. London: Routledge.

Polenske, K. 2004. Competition, Collaboration and Cooperation: An Uneasy Triangle in Networks of Firms and Regions. *Regional Studies* 38:9, 1029-1043. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 12 January 2022].

Pope, J., Isely, E. & Asamoah-Tutu, F. 2009. Developing a Marketing Strategy for Nonprofit Organizations: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 21. 184-201. PDF document. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10495140802529532> [Accessed 18 January 2022].

Radicchi, E. 2014. Sports Sponsorship Evolution in the Economic Recession: Analytical Evidence from Empirical Cases. *Physical Culture and Sport. Studies and Research* 61, 51-64. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 21 January 2022].

Ruane, J. M. 2016. *Introducing Social Research Methods: Essentials for Getting the Edge*. Ebook. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 10 December 2021].

Rundh, B. & Gottfridsson, P. 2015. Delivering sports events: the arena concept in sports from a network perspective. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*. 785-794. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 31 March 2022].

Saldana, J. 2011. *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. Ebook. New York: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 19 December 2021].

Saul, Jason. 2004. *Benchmarking for Nonprofits: How to Measure, Manage and Improve Performance*. Minnesota: Fieldstone.

Seippel, Ø. & Belbo, J.S. 2021. Sport clubs, policy networks, and local politics. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 13, 1-21. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 12 January 2022].

Seuratietokanta. 2021. *Kilpa- ja Huippu-urheilun tutkimuskeskus 2021*. WWW document. Available at: <https://www.seuratietokanta.fi/> [Accessed 18 December 2021].

Silipo, D. 2008. Incentives and forms of cooperation in research and development. *Research in Economics*. 62. 101-119. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 13 January 2022].

Simons, H. 2009. *Case Study Research in Practice*. Ebook. London: SAGE Publications. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 12 December 2021].

Smolianov, P., Dolmatova, T., Smith, J., Nordberg Morrissette, J., Schoen, C., El-Sherif, J. & Dion, S. 2020. Elite sport methods for public health: the analysis of world practices. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*. Vol. 20 (4), 1847-1854. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/711e1e26a69191346219fd10071c7035/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1006394> [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Stenbacka W., Mäkinen J., Lämsä J. & Nieminen M. 2018. Liikunnan ja urheilun julkinen tuki ja rakenteet Suomessa, Ruotsissa, Norjassa ja Tanskassa. Kihun julkaisusarja nr 62. PDF document. Available at: https://kihuenergia.kihu.fi/tuotostiedostot/julkinen/2018_ste_liikunnan_sel99_27365.pdf [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Suomen Olympiakomitea. 2020. Kehity huippu-urheilijaksi. Helsinki: Suomen Olympiakomitea.

Sutton, J. & Austin, Z. 2015. Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management. The Canadian journal of hospital pharmacy 68(3), 226–231. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 27 January 2022].

Swanson, R.A. & Holton, E.F. 2005. Research in organizations: Foundations and methods in inquiry. PDF Document. Available at: <http://www.kharazmi-statistics.ir/Uploads/Public/book/research%20in%20organization.pdf> [Accessed 7th of February].

Taylor, S.J., Bogdan, R. & DeVault, M. 2015. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource. Ebook. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 19 December 2021].

Thorpe, R. T., Atkinson, G., Drust, B. & Gregson, W. 2017. Monitoring Fatigue Status in Elite Team-Sport Athletes: Implications for Practice. International journal of sports physiology and performance, 12. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 23 January 2022].

Tiirikainen, M. & Konu, A. 2013. Miksi lapset ja nuoret katoavat liikunta- ja urheiluseuroista murrosiässä? Valtion liikuntaneuvoston julkaisuja 2013:3. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.liikuntaneuvosto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Murrosik%C3%A4-raportti.pdf> [Accessed 21 December 2021].

Torkildsen, G. 2010. Torkildsen's Sport and Leisure Management. Ebook. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 7 December 2021].

Tracy, S. J. 2010. Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. Sage Journals 16(10), 837–851. PDF document. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 18 February 2022].

Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2018. Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Tammi.

Tuominen, K. 2021. Motivation for Benchmarking: Development Manual. Ebook. Turku: Oy Benchmarking Ltd. Available at: <https://kaakkuri.finna.fi/> [Accessed 13 December 2021].

Valanko, E. 2009. Sponsorointi – yhteistyökumppanuus strategisena voimana. Helsinki: Talentum.

Vesterinen, V. 2021. Asiantuntijatoiminta valmentajien työn tukena. Blog. Available at: <https://kihu.fi/blogi/kihun-blogi-asiantuntijatoiminta-valmentajien-tyon-tukena/> [Accessed 18 November 2021].

Vuorinen, T. 2013. Strategiakirja: 20 työkalua. Helsinki: Talentum.

Warren, M.A. & Bordoloi, S. 2020. When COVID-19 exacerbates inequities: The path forward for generating wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing* 10(3), 1-6. PDF document. Available at: <https://internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/download/1357/925> [Accessed 6 January 2022].

Wibowo, A., Chen, S.C., Wiangin, U., Ma, Y. & Ruangkanjanases, A. 2021. Customer behavior as an outcome of social media marketing: The role of social media marketing activity and customer experience. *Sustainability*, 13(1). 1-18. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/1/189> [Accessed 30 December 2021].

Wolk, A. M. 2007. *Social Entrepreneurship and Government: A New Breed of Entrepreneurs Developing Solutions to Social Problems*. PDF document. Available at: <https://rootcause.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Social-Entrepreneurship-and-Goverment.pdf> [Accessed 14 January 2022].

Zakaria, M., Abdulatiff, N.K. & Ali, N. 2014. The role of wellbeing on performance in services sector. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 164, 358-365. PDF document. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814059084> [Accessed 30 December 2021].

Thematic interview with sport club in cooperation

Yhteistyössä oleva urheiluseura**Taustatiedot ja nykytilanne yhteistyöympäristössä:**

1. Mikä rooli Teillä on seurassanne?
2. Miten kuvailisitte nykyistä yhteistyötä Active Life Labin kanssa?
3. Mitkä tekijät vaikuttivat päätökseenne aloittaa yhteistyö Active Life Labin kanssa?

Yhteistyöhön vaikuttavat tekijät:

4. Mitkä asiat ovat toimineet yhteistyössä Active Life Labin kanssa?
5. Mitkä ALL:n palvelut koette arvokkaimmiksi seurallenne?
6. Löytyykö mielestänne yhteistyöstä parannettavia tekijöitä? Jos on, niin mitä?
7. Mikä helpottaisi yhteistyön tekemistä Active Life Labin kanssa?

Yhteistyön lisääminen:

8. Millaisia ajatuksia yhteistyön syventäminen herättää Teissä?
9. Voisiko yhteistyötä syventää koskemaan uusiin projekteihin ja mahdollisesti tuottaa lisätuloja seurallenne? (Leiritysten pakettimyynti ja / tai omanosaamisen myynti Active Life Labin tiloissa).
10. Mitä olisitte valmiita tekemään yhteistyön syventämisen / kehittämisen eteen?
11. Liittykö yhteistyön syventämiseen haasteita? Jos löytyy, niin mitä?

Vapaa sana:

12. Vapaa sana: mitä muuta haluaisitte sanoa?
-

Thematic interview with sports clubs not in cooperation

Ei-yhteistyössä oleva urheiluseura**Taustatiedot ja nykytilanne yhteistyöympäristössä:**

1. Mikä rooli Teillä on seurassanne?
2. Minkälaisia yhteistöitä Teillä on Mikkeli alueen toimijoiden kanssa? Miten rakensitte ne?
3. Minkälaisia ajatuksia tai kokemuksia niistä on jäänyt?
4. Millaisissa projekteissa tai kehityshankkeissa olette mukana? Mitä lisäarvoa tai lisätuloja ne tuovat seurallenne?
5. Millaiset yhteistyöt ja projektit seuranne kokee onnistuneiksi?

Nykyinen toimintaympäristö:

6. Miten Teidän seuranne pyrkii tukemaan urheilijoiden hyvinvointia?
7. Millaisia haasteita Te koette nykyisessä toimintaympäristössä?
8. Mitkä palvelut/tuotteet parantaisivat Teidän nykyistä testaustoimintaa?
9. Millaisia palvelu-/tietotarpeita Teillä on urheilijan polulla testausten ja kuntoutusten osalta?

Yhteistyön mahdollisuudet:

10. Mitä mahdollisia uusia tai tulevia projekteja Teillä on, tai tulee olemaan, mihin Active Life Labin tiloja, osaamista tai palveluita voitaisiin mahdollisesti käyttää hyödyksi?
11. Millaisia ajatuksia yhteistyö Active Life Labin välillä herättää?
12. Voisiko Active Life Lab vastata johonkin Teidän nykyiseen haasteeseen?
13. Mitkä asiat saattaisivat vaikeuttaa yhteistyön tekemisen Active Life Labin kanssa?

Vapaa sana:

14. Vapaa sana
-

**HARJOITTELE TAVOITTEELLISESTI JA TEHOKKASTI
OPISKELUN OHELLA ETELÄ-SAVON URHEILURKATEMIA
OPPILAITOKSISSA**

URHEILIJAN POLKU MIKKELISSÄ

ETELÄ - SAVON URHEILURKATEMIAN URHEILUOPPILAITOKSET

1 **KALEVANKANKAAN URHEILUUYLÄKOULU**
MIKKELIN LYSEON KOULU
URHEILUPUISTON KOULU
RANTAKYLÄN YHTENÄISKOULU **PERUSASTE**

2 **MIKKELIN LUKIO**
ESEDU
SUOMEN NUORISO-OPISTO **TOINEN ASTE - YHTEISHAKU**

3 **XAMK -**
MIKKELIN KAMPUS **KORKEA - ASTE**

 Etelä-Savon
URHEILUAKATEMIA

WWW.ETELASAVONURHEILURKATEMIA.FI / MIKKELI

Thematic interview questions for benchmark organisation and Active Life Lab

Teemahaastattelu

-
1. Teemahaastattelu vertailuanalyysin organisaatiolle, selvittääksemme miten he ovat rakentaneet yhteistyömalleja alueensa urheiluseurojen ja muiden urheilutoimijoiden kanssa.

Tutkimuskysymykset:

1. Miten yhteistyötä urheiluseurojen ja urheilutoimijoiden (Urheiluakatemia yms.) kanssa on kehitetty valitussa organisaatiossa?

Laadullinen tutkimus:

Tutkimus vastaa kysymyksiin, miten, miksi ja millainen?

Mikä on vallitseva tilanne aiheen suhteen?

- Mikä on nykytilanne vertailuanalyysiin osallistuvan organisaation sekä heidän | alueensa urheiluseurojen/toimijoiden välillä?

Taustatiedot ja aikaisemmat kokemukset yhteistöistä:

1. Millainen rooli Teillä on organisaationne toiminnassa?
2. Kuvaile omin sanoin lyhyesti organisaationne tämänhetkistä toimintaa.
3. Millaisia yhteistöitä Teillä on tällä hetkellä? Mitä hyötyjä erilaiset yhteistyöt tuovat Teille?

Aikaisemmat kokemukset yhteistöistä urheiluseurojen/-toimijoiden kanssa:

4. Onko organisaatiollanne yhteistyötä urheiluseurojen ja/tai urheilutoimijoiden kanssa? Ja jos on, keitä he ovat ja miten rakensitte yhteistyökumppanuuden?
5. Millaisia ajatuksia tai kokemuksia niistä on jäänyt?
6. Mitkä asiat ovat olleet keskeisiä yhteistyön rakentamisen kannalta?
7. Onko yhteistyö alueenne urheiluseurojen ja -toimijoiden kanssa muuttunut vuosien varrella? Jos on, niin miten? (Miten teoria on muuttunut käytännöksi?)
8. Miten toimintanne rahoitus urheiluseurojen ja -toimijoiden kanssa toteutuu? Miten mahdollinen ulkopuolinen rahoitus vaikuttaa toimintaanne?
9. Millainen järjestely Teillä on testaajienne suhteen? (Kuka on vastuussa urheilijoiden testaamisesta/mittaamisesta ja yleisellä tasolla yhteistyön toimivuudesta?)

Yhteistyön mahdollisuudet ja hyödyt:

10. Miten voisitte mahdollisesti lisätä yhteistyötä urheiluseurojen/-toimijoiden kanssa?

Yhteistyötä mahdollisesti rajoittavat tekijät:

11. Mitkä tekijät mielestänne vaikeuttavat yhteistyötä urheiluseurojen/-toimijoiden kanssa?

Tulevaisuuden näkymät

12. Millaisena näet yhteistyön tulevaisuudessa alueenne urheiluseurojen ja -toimijoiden kanssa? Mihin asioihin Teidän mielestänne pitäisi kiinnittää erityishuomiota?

Vapaa sana