



The possibilities of creating an online store for an amateur sport club

A case study of the Tampere Rugby Club

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis was commissioned by the Tampere Rugby Club ry to explore the feasibility of having their own online store to sell their officially licensed products or “merch”. To their own admission the club has a less than efficient irregular process in place and was interested in learning about the different options regarding having their own online store and what it entails. Their main constraints were having a limited budget, time, and workforce to dedicate to such activities.

In order to assess properly their situation at that point, it was decided to follow the principle of qualitative research, more precisely performing evaluation research, as the main methodology. An intensive case study composed of a semi-structured interview was used as the main data collection technique. In addition, desk research was conducted, to provide insight and best practices regarding the main aspects of running an online store.

The interview helped to establish the main pain points and areas of focus as followed: knowledge of Ecommerce platforms, stock management, storage, shipping, and after-sales. Based on existing literature and online resources, these main aspects were explored and developed later in the thesis, which helped to provide general guidance and targeted recommendations befitting the rugby club's situation.

As conclusion, it was recommended to implement several solutions in parallel to reach the club's goals. First, to answer to the immediate demand, to rely on solutions such as drop shipping to sell low profit products, as this should help them with organizational challenges as well. Secondly, to create and implement their own online store on an easily accessible and relatively cheap platform such as WooCommerce to sell a limited selection of products with higher margin and generate profits. In the future, they could also move all their operations on their own online store, once they are more experienced with the platform, and have generated enough income. To solve the process related issues, they were invited to follow the best practices listed in the thesis.

Key words: ecommerce, online store, stock management, shipping, after-sales

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
Ecommerce	Electronic Commerce
Merch	Merchandise
RY	Rekisteröity Yhdistys (registered association in Finnish)
TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
TRC	Tampere Rugby Club

1 INTRODUCTION

As a complementary source of income and additional opportunity for visibility, the sales of officially licensed merchandised products or “merch” is a common practice for many sports’ club and associations. The commissioner of this thesis, the Tampere Rugby Club ry, is looking to improve their current process regarding that matter. The purpose of this thesis is then to research the possibilities of creating an online store for a relatively small, local sports club.

Existing under its current form since 2001, the Tampere Rugby Club ry (later also referred as “the rugby club” or “the club”) is an amateur rugby club based in the region of Tampere in Finland. The club currently has around 50 active members registered for the season 2023. There are currently two active teams, the ladies’, and the men’s team, both performing in the highest division of their respective competition. Both teams also have players represented in the two national Finnish rugby teams. On social media, the club has over 1000 followers on Instagram and 1400 followers on Facebook. The club is managed by a board composed of 4 to 7 members and 0 to 2 deputy members. The board manages all official aspects of the club, including the sales of merch, but also organises activities and coordinates most internal and external communications.

Most rugby clubs in Finland, including the national teams, have their own merchandised product, mostly clothing items with the club logo and colours, such as beanies, scarves, or various training gear. There is some disparity on how to obtain the merchandised products among clubs, while most of them have their own internal and closed process, some work with large sports retail distributors in Finland such as Stadium or various other methods assimilated to drop shipping. It is then interesting to consider the possibility of improving the sales of merchandised products online in the context of one of these clubs, as this thesis could also offer insights and best practices to other Finnish rugby clubs.

As an intent to offer a better solution to their customers while potentially reducing their current workload and process issues, the Tampere Rugby Club’s board has commissioned one of their members to research the feasibility of having their own

online store and everything that it entails. The research that constitutes the core of this thesis has for goal to identify the issues the club is facing with their current process and provide general insight, best practices, and targeted recommendations to the main challenges of running their own online store.

2 THESIS PLAN

2.1 Thesis topic

This thesis has been commissioned by the Tampere Rugby Club, to explore the feasibility of having their own webstore to sell their merchandised products. The club's current structure exists since 2001 and they have been sporadically selling some products to their members and supporters. Previously they have been organizing the whole process among themselves, utilizing their own network to plan, purchase, sell and distribute the products. As efficient as this method can be for a small tight-knit group, it represents a lot of work and commitment from the board members, who are not being retributed for their time. The club being a non-profit organization, all board members are acting as volunteers. In order to streamline and simplify the process, they are exploring the possibility of selling their products through an online platform, with minimum budget, effort and supervision while being still profitable and thus offering better benefits to their active members.

Aligning with the current trend of digitalization, this topic also encompasses the modernization and professionalization of small structures such as an amateur sports club. The club has a constant demand from members and supporters for official merchandised products (e.g.: t-shirts, beanies, training gear), and taking care of supplying for that demand without an organized, definite process and structure can suddenly become time consuming. Having a centralized point of sales available yearlong with stock and prices could potentially save some valuable time and energy, while greatly improving the customer experience and satisfaction.

An interesting fact to take into consideration is that the club being a non-profit ran by volunteers, it has an extremely low and tight budget dedicated to that kind of activities. This is going to be reflected in most arguments advanced by the author. While exploring different possibilities and solutions, among different factors, the lower cost option will always be considered first. This will impact the choices

made and may seem counterintuitive when compared to a strategy for a for-profit company or organization.

2.1.1 Thesis objectives, purposes, and research questions

The main research question can be formulated as “What is a feasible way for a small non-profit organisation to create and handle an online store?”. Therefore, the thesis will have for purpose to answer the interrogation of the rugby club on whether it is possible for them to sell their products on an online platform, while still being profitable, considering the time and personal constraints. The main research question is complemented by secondary considerations related to the best way to choose and create an online store for the club. The thesis will consider the different aspects of it, including but not limited to:

- The club’s needs, budget, and time constraints
- The choice of platform
- The stock management and shipping
- The after sales experience

Depending on the research results, recommendations and guidelines will be given as complementary answer. These recommendations are aimed for the club, to help them consider seriously the possibility, advantages, and disadvantages of selling their merch online. The research questions will be answered by first conducting an interview with the club to assess their needs, and then analysing the possible choices regarding the above-mentioned areas related to creating an online store.

As the thesis applies to a well-defined case, it will look into the best interests of the commissioner, but as the wider topics covered can also apply to other situations, certain key insights and recommendations will also be applicable to any other similar company/organization with similar needs and objectives. For example, the recommendations could benefit any other rugby club in Finland as they usually operate following a similar structure and business model.

2.1.2 Concepts and theory

The thesis will explore the broad topic of Ecommerce, short for Electronic Commerce, which can be defined as the process of selling, buying, exchanging, or transferring services, products, or information through networks, mostly internet (Sims, 2018). The concept of Ecommerce exists since internet became widely available. Opposed to a traditional shopping experience in brick-and-mortar location, it allows individuals or business to buy and sell products or services online via a multitude of different processes. On that note it has been observed that more and more of those traditional stores are closing, losing the “war” against online retail. (Sims, 2018)

In this context it seems imperative for any new business to consider implementing at least some elements of Ecommerce to their business plan and strategy. It is important for any company to stay relevant on a competitive and customer satisfaction level. In the past, the creation, implementation and maintenance of any type of online business were reserved to larger companies with sizeable dedicated budgets as it was quite expensive and required a lot of time to handle, but with the development and popularization of new technologies, it became accessible to any company, regardless of their size. (Sims, 2018) This means there is an Ecommerce solution for every type and size of business and finding the most suitable option mostly depends on the business’s goals and objectives.

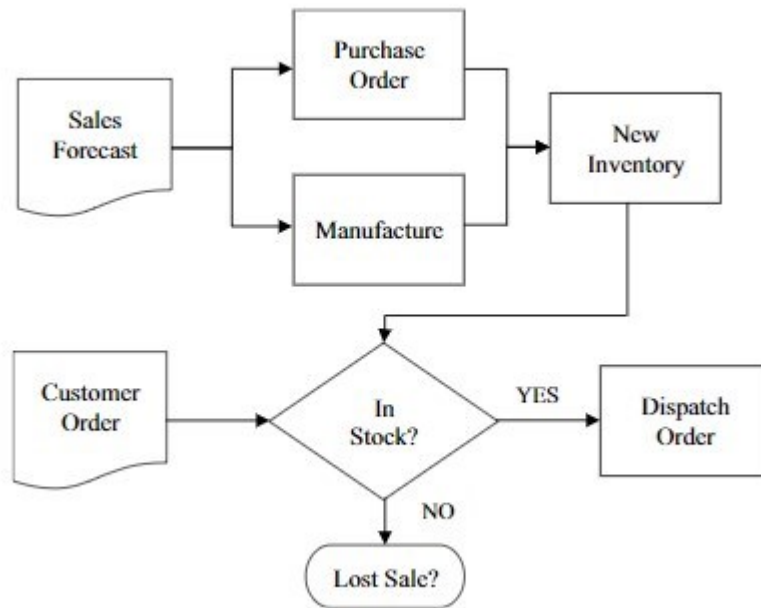
As Ecommerce encompasses many different types of sales and transactions, it can be broken down into different categories, such as B2B (Business-to-business) or B2C (Business-to-Consumer). B2B can be described as the exchange of information, products, or services between companies or businesses (Lutkevitch, Chai and Holak, 2022). It refers then to business operated solely between professionals and not average customers. B2B Ecommerce platform is usually employed by a company to source products and resell them for profit. A great example of B2B Ecommerce platform is the marketplace “Faire” that connects hundreds of thousands of independent retailers’ shops (Dopson, 2022). As for B2C, it can be defined as the retail part of the Ecommerce. This is a business model where companies sell directly to the customers their products or services

(Lutkevitch et al., 2022). B2C is also characterized by the fact that there is no third party involved or middleman such as retailers. Among other advantages, this usually ensures higher profit margins and more control over their products for the sellers. Amazon is probably the best example of B2C Ecommerce website (Lutkevitch et al., 2022).

As one of the main research points of this thesis will be to compare and choose between different Ecommerce Platforms to build up the online store, it is crucial to understand what the concept encompasses. An Ecommerce Platform, in this context, can be defined as a software that allows the sales or purchase of products via the internet (Marchand, 2023). Opposed once again to the physical store, it is the platform that will allow the seller to put their products online for their potential customers to buy. Ecommerce platforms usually offer an array of additional services such as order management and sometimes fulfilment options for additional fees. There are many different types of Ecommerce platform available online such as marketplaces, multi-vendor or vendor specific, all serving their own purposes (Nikita, 2023). The business may choose to sell on a platform rather than another depending on their needs and goals but also by taking into account their personal constraints such as budget or time.

The second topic and focus point of the thesis is the issue of stock management. Stock management can refer to the process of ordering, storing using and selling the inventory of a company. It includes the management of finished products, warehousing, and processing of the items. (Hayes, 2023) All these activities have their own goals and metrics, but their common purpose is to avoid unnecessary expenses or loss of time for the seller and answering to customer's demand in the best delay. Failing to renew the stock on time or carrying enough stock to answer demand could result in poor customer experience and potential loss of sales.

As illustrated below (Picture 1.), there are many aspects of the stock management to cover in order to avoid losing sales. To keep inventory available, it is crucial to anticipate demand and to act accordingly, typically by ordering the right quantities and anticipate demand leads. (Jones, 2020)



Picture 1. Typical order fulfilment using forecasts (Jones, 2020).

The following concept to cover relates to shipping activities. As simple as it may seem, shipping activities cannot be resumed by simply wrapping up sold products in a package and dropping it at a carrier to be shipped. It involves many steps such as figuring out costs, choosing adequate packages, correctly label them, track the shipments, provide updates to the customers, and complete the delivery (Siegel, 2023). All these aspects having variables costs and outcomes, it is the responsibility of the seller to assess every step of it and pick the most suitable solution. To help the seller better understand and make the best choice based on his needs there are several key concepts recommended for the seller to follow (IntelligentHQ 2022):

- Understanding shipping costs
- Pick the best packaging
- Familiarize themselves with shipping regulations
- Work with the most suitable delivery service
- Streamline the process
- Follow trends

Finally, once all other aspects of the sales have been concluded, the club will be informed on how to retain existing customers, improve their satisfaction, and encourage repeated sales. All of that is considered through the concept of After-Sales, which is a service that can be offered after the merchandise is purchased. It often encompasses some legal aspect such as guarantee/warranty and sometimes other complementary services (Rouse, 2018). After-sales activities are also an important step to improve customer satisfaction and therefore retention (Kurata and Nam, 2010). Additionally, it is also a great opportunity for companies to improve their competitiveness (Li, Huang, Cheng, Zheng and Ji, 2014).

2.1.3 Working methods and data collection

As principal working method of data collection, the principles of qualitative research will be followed. This type of research covers many approaches and methods to study the natural social life. The collected data is primarily non-quantitative and can involve various text material and sources relating to human experiences in state of reflection and social actions (Saldaña, 2011).

As this thesis is a specific case study, and in order to gather information about the expectations of the club, a single interview will be conducted with the board of the rugby club. The format chosen for leading the aforementioned interview will be a set of open questions submitted to the board via email. The board will be invited to either answer as a whole or elect a representative to do so if they judge this more relevant.

The interview will cover every aspect of creating and handling an online store mentioned before, with the aim to gain a broad and comprehensive view on the club's needs, expectations, and limitations. This will define all the factors to take into consideration while choosing the Ecommerce platform to use and the further processes to apply regarding the logistics. Ultimately, the goal, strategy, budget, time, and other constraints will be the defining factors.

Once all the objectives and possible limitations are set, desk research based on literature and online resources will be executed by the author to answer best the

club's expectations. This involves comparing different types of platforms, processes, and solutions to best identify and justify the choice of each, according to the expectations and limitations identified in the interview.

Following the research associated and observations, this thesis will provide general guidelines covering all the main aspects to take into consideration while considering running an online store and associated targeted recommendations for the rugby club.

2.1.4 Thesis process

The first chapter of this thesis will introduce the context of this thesis, i.e. the rugby club as well as the thesis topic, i.e. the creation of an online store for the club and all major aspects it entails. The second chapter will be the thesis plan which gives a more in-depth account of the thesis topic and presents the research questions. In the chapter two, the author will also present the theoretical framework and presents the main concepts of this thesis, which include Ecommerce, business models, stock management, shipping, and after-sales. Lastly, at the end of the second chapter, the author will briefly explain the working methods used to obtain answers to the research questions.

The third chapter will develop on the methodology and type of research methods used in the thesis. The fourth chapter consists of an analysis of the conducted interview, where we will learn more about the club's current situation regarding merchandise sales as well as the club's expectations for the future merch sales, but also the limitations the club faces regarding the creation and operation of an online store. The fifth chapter will be dedicated to the actual research to justify the choice of a suitable platform, logistics and processes. The fifth chapter is divided into five sub-chapters, which will cover the different aspects that should be considered while running an online store, the main logistic decisions, such as warehousing and method of shipment. At the end of the chapter, the aftersales topic will also be covered. The sixth and final chapter will be dedicated to the conclusions and final recommendations. In the annexes can be found the interview conducted with the rugby club.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be used as an umbrella term regrouping many approaches and methods to study the more natural aspects of life. The collection and analysis of data is mostly made of text or visual materials from various possible sources and forms. The goals of qualitative research depend on each project and therefore can be multiple. The results can also take different forms such as observations, insight, understandings or critique of individuals, groups, programs, processes, or social matters. It is conducted across various fields and disciplines and can even be subdivided into different genres. (Saldana, 2011) This is the research method of choice to collect non-numerical data, analyse it and find results. Qualitative research was deemed to be the most suitable approach for this thesis as the main goal is to identify possible issues the club faces and attempt to offer them the best solutions. On the other hand, as the club operates as a non-profit organization, there was some limitations regarding the possibility to obtain relevant and cohesive sales data from previous sales.

3.2 Evaluation research

As a qualitative research genre, evaluation research focuses on assessing the effectiveness or quality of organizations or people. The focus is on systematically assessing the effectiveness of processes. Evaluation research can combine both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. While tailored to specific purposes, it's usually contracted by a company and involves their direct stakeholders as part of the research in order to identify their feelings and expectations regarding the study. Involving the stakeholders in the research process does also help to define with them directly how the evaluation could help them develop their processes. While not always having a definite objective, the researcher assesses the value of case-specific project and offer practical and constructive recommendation to improve procedures. (Saldana, 2011)

In this thesis, evaluation research is conducted qualitatively, to assess the rugby club's current situation regarding the sales of their merchandise and the possibilities for developing a process for selling merchandise online. Through the interview, the club was directly involved in the process of mapping out the current situation. Additionally, the conducted evaluation will help creating the best types of recommendations for improving the club's current sales procedures.

3.3 Intensive case study

As this thesis's scope solely relies on researching one specific case, it will follow the research principles of a case study. It means that the research questions will only relate to solving that one case, what it encompasses and what can be learned from it.

In business research, a case can be defined as an economic actor, usually an individual like a manager, employee, or customer for which the researcher will gather insights, such as the economic sphere or life from that person point of view. The insight will then be reported as a narrative in its specific economic and business context, completed by an analysis and interpretation of all other processes and actors. An extensive case study might compare or replicate a number of cases to reach its goal, where an intensive case study aims to understand a unique case by giving a complete and detailed description of it. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008)

In the context of this thesis, it could be described as resembling more to an intensive case study research. Since the focus of this is on one entity, the rugby club, it is more interesting within the scope of this thesis to focus on gaining a complete understanding of what online merchandise sales would require from this specific rugby club.

3.4 Semi-structured interview

The goal of a semi-structured interview, as data collecting method, is to gather data from either individual participants or groups. After identifying the best representatives to be interviewed, it usually starts with a warming up phase meant to make the person interviewed comfortable with questions about himself and/or the organization. Then comes the exploration of present and future aspects, to address both the current situation with present knowledge and the needs, expectations, and ideas. As final part, to be sure that nothing is left out, the interviewer usually concludes by summarizing the interview and may give some feedback. (Wessel, Weymann and Spreckelsen, 2006) This method eases the collection of data for an interviewer that already has knowledge on the topic while allowing the interviewee to talk freely. It also helps having a better connection with the interviewee and better-quality answers.

4 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

4.1 Process

As the topic of this thesis concerns one specific case, it was decided to focus solely on the needs of the Tampere Rugby Club and their own scope. A semi-structured interview made of opened questions was chosen as method, to allow the respondent to give his own interpretation of the situation while not limiting the amount of information he chooses to disclose. While the respondent was encouraged to answer as completely as he wishes, the questions were designed based on common topics regarding Ecommerce and the club specific situation. The goal was to assess the current state of affairs regarding the merch sales and their expectations regarding the creation and management of an online store.

4.1.1 Limitations

As complete as the author tried to be covering the topic, he wrote and conducted the interview based on his own knowledge and expertise of the topic, which can potentially lead to omitting some other aspects of the business. The author also being involved in the board or the rugby club, may also have not investigated some other aspects that were already known to him due to his active involvement. The open-ended questions did, however, give the possibility for the interviewee to answer as broadly as they felt was suitable, as well as to bring up possible angles that they would consider important and may not have been explicitly expressed in the interview questions.

Finally, although it was asked from the rugby club to elect the most suitable representative respondent for the interview, only one interview was conducted, and it is possible that some knowledge or insight is missing from the other board members.

4.1.2 Key results

It appears clearly that the Tampere Rugby Club is not fully satisfied with their current process regarding the sales of merchandized goods and products. The process currently is lengthy, tedious and its organisation and management can appear somewhat frustrating. To their own admission, the amount of work necessary often outdo the financial results. Nevertheless, the club wishes to continue to improve the procedure as it entails other benefits than financial compensation, such as developing their community and bringing satisfaction to their members and supporters. They wish to explore the feasibility of having an online platform as it could potentially bring solutions to most of their issues.

A reorganisation of the club's current process could mean an increase in productivity while maximizing visibility and profitability down the line. They are aware of their own limitations, being that the rugby club cannot commit too many resources, whether time or budget wise. However, they do understand that stepping up with a more professional approach could mean having to reconsider their commitment to the whole sales process. They have basic knowledge and understanding of selling their own products but are not familiar with running an online webstore and all it implies. Regarding the offline part or products sales, they have some solutions already put in place to support their current process, but they wish to have some of them reconsidered as the current system is less than optimal to them. The main pain points appear to be their lack of knowledge regarding online platforms and every aspect of the stock management, from building stock to shipping. Some other areas such as aftersales or sales targeting also appear to need to be covered in order to improve their situation.

5 SOLUTIONS RESEARCH

Based on the results of the interview, this chapter will focus on the main issues the club is facing and possible solutions. Each point will be detailed considering the club's needs and possible limitations. In addition, desk research will be conducted to support the main findings on each topic.

5.1 Different Online Stores

From their own admission, the Tampere Rugby Club has limited knowledge on how to create, implement and run an online store or "web shop". They also have a limited budget, time, and workforce to be allocated to the task, but are open to suggestions and raising their commitment if the profitability is worth it. Considering the knowledge and limitations for the rugby club, and the actual market, this thesis will consider the three most practical types of Ecommerce websites for a company to sell products online: single brand websites, online retailers, and marketplaces. These will be discussed in the subchapters below.

5.1.1 Single brand website

This method, which is a common Ecommerce type of website, allows a vendor specific or single brand to manage their own store fronts. The only seller is the owner, it allows you to target specific customers and sell directly to them without the involvement of any third party. It also lets the seller to fix their own prices and communicate directly with the customers, allowing them more flexibility and choice-making on how to conduct business. (Nikita, 2023) There are a lot of Ecommerce platforms allowing to build a website based on this system, few examples being Shopify, WooCommerce or Magento.

This system seems suitable for the Rugby Club as it would allow them to fix their prices freely and have some control on their profit margins. On the other hand, the complexity of building a store based on these types of platforms and operating it might be an issue. Even if some of them are more user-friendly than others,

using this type of platform might require acquiring some specific knowledge. Regarding costs, those platforms usually have a small fixed monthly fee to cover, sometimes in addition to small percentage on the sales, which makes it one of the cheapest options available.

5.1.2 Online retailers

Opposed to vendor specific, online retailing allows several vendors to sell their products on a unique website. The sellers can have their own storefront there but are totally dependent of the main entity. The developing and maintenance costs are covered by the website owners, but they usually charge you a certain percentage of your revenue. The seller has less control over everything as they are under the rules and regulations of the owner. The owner usually also provides some warehousing and shipping solutions and will take care of those against a fee. (Nikita, 2023) Again, a lot of similar platforms exist, but some of the most known worldwide are probably Amazon (vendor model) or Macy's.

This type of platform is great for brands that are just looking to sell their products online without hassle, but to enter these types of online retailers, which can sometimes be very selective, you need a well-established brand and a solid supply chain to provide high volume and the quality required. It is quite simple to operate but the associated costs can be high and therefore not the ideal choice when you are looking to improve your low benefit margins. As this solution is more suitable for big names of the industry such as Adidas or Nike that are looking for a greater reach, it then falls outside of the scope and target of the club.

5.1.3 Marketplaces

Unlike the online retailers that can be very selective on which sellers can use their platform to sell their products, marketplaces are usually more open. If the model can be assimilated to some online retailers, there also can be notable differences. With this model the seller is usually in charge of the warehousing and shipping (Nikita, 2023), which means that operational fees can be lower compared to the

previous model. But it can also mean additional operational difficulties for a company if they do not have already a performing system in place to support those aspects. Some good examples of these platforms are Amazon (seller model) or CDON.

Marketplaces are once again an easier way to sell your products online, and a cheaper one than some big online retailers, but it still requires a strong commitment to the platform's owners, involving also strong rules and regulations. Additionally, there are fees to pay on every sale you make to cover the use of the platform, and additional operational responsibilities for the seller. This business model can be suitable for any kind of business, providing they have what it takes to answer to the potential demand and associated financial and operational costs. It could be considered if the club decides and has the means to scale up in the future.

5.2 Stock management

Due to inconsistency with the methods and not having a well-established process the club is currently facing quite a few challenges regarding their stock management. Every aspect of stock management, from one end of it to the other, needs reconsideration and reorganization if the club wishes to have a more streamlined process that requires only a minimum but constant effort. Topics such as assessing demand, purchase from the suppliers, storage and tracking need to be explored and various solutions considered.

5.2.1 Demand forecast

A critical element allowing the seller to figure out how much products they need to have in stock to answer to its customer's demand. A typical demand forecast is composed of four main components: historical data, customer orders, sales team forecasts and market overview (Jones, 2020). As the club does not have a set way of doing things, getting usable precise information on these components

can be tricky, they will have to rely on what's at hand and sometimes assume to the best of their knowledge.

Historical data can be found, by example, under the form of previous years invoices (Jones, 2020). It will help the rugby club to understand what their average demand has been for their products. They can compare the evolution of the demand for certain products and determine what would be a good and safe amount of stock to hold. It can also help to determine which products to include into their catalogue by comparing the popularity of some items.

Because of the nature of their actual process, the club cannot have visibility on current customers orders. This is a problem that could easily be resolved if they had stock and orders coming all the time through the year, rather than at one instance. Alternatively, they can use one of method they've used in the past, such as organizing polls to assess intention of purchasing from their customers.

Sales team forecast is not an information at the club's disposal as they do not have any dedicated salesperson among the board members. Regardless they can cover the topic during one of their meetings and gather as much insight as possible. They can by example compare the evolution of sales from the historical data with the number of active members in their community and try to deduct a possible evolution pattern in the demand. Figuring out seasonality in demand and products might also be beneficial.

Market overview can provide some extra information as to which supplier to work with (Jones, 2020). Outside of larger concerns such as the evolution of price of raw materials to manufacture the finished product, comparing the prices and offers of different supplier and their lead time is an imperative while planning purchases.

5.2.2 Purchasing

Once all the parameters are set from the demand planning and that the type and number of products to be purchased has been determined, the seller has to place

a purchase order from its suppliers. This is applicable while constituting a starting inventory but also to replenish it, if and when necessary. There are five aspects of purchasing activities that can influence the inventory: pricing structure, lead times, minimum order quantities, data entry and supplier relationship (Jones, 2020).

Regarding the manufacture of clothing items, there are several elements affecting the pricing of the supplier. One of them is the number of items ordered: it usually tends to be lower by unit as the number of units ordered raises (Jones, 2020). This should be taken into account as it will directly impact the benefit margin of the club, while being cautious not to exceed the allocated budget or severely exceed demand as it will cause other issues such as storage constraints.

The next step is to consider the lead times of each supplier and accommodating them in the planning strategy. Each supplier may have various lead time for various products. As this may not be an issue while creating a starting inventory it might affect quite a lot the replenishment. (Jones, 2020) The club should figure out each product cycle in order to avoid being out of stock or delaying the delivery of their products. This could cause dissatisfaction among their customers and cash flow issue. The creation of a safety stock could also help to prevent such problems.

Figuring out if the manufacturer has minimum orderable quantities is also an imperative while considering inventory replenishment. It may not be possible to order only few units at the time for various reasons, whether being from the suppliers not offering that kind of service or the costs of doing it outdoing the benefits. The cost of delivery by units being inversely proportional to the amount being delivered, this should encourage the seller to plan efficiently. (Jones, 2020) Considering that the club might order limited quantities at the time, maybe scheduling planning on a quarterly basis could be the most viable solution.

Due to constricted budget, any clerical error of any sorts should be avoided. It is important to report and track efficiently the numbers in every step of the process. The amount and costs should be properly reported and verified while planning,

purchasing, and inbounding the orders from the supplier. This will avoid unnecessary costs and loss of time from the board of the rugby club.

Lastly, the seller and the supplier should maintain good relations by fulfilling each other's obligations. It is also important to have a system in place to assess any new supplier as to see if it will fit with your current established system. Maintaining balance is the key.

5.3 Storage

Storage is a key element to Ecommerce businesses, usually this type of service is provided by fulfilment centres or more broadly put, warehouses. They support the whole supply chain strategy and can influence the type of service the company provides and its costs. Stock management can sometimes be a complex balance, as failing to hold and dispatch the right stock at the right time can result in unhappy customers but keeping unnecessary stock will also generate costs (Grant, Trautrim and Wong, 2022). There is a multitude of solutions concerning warehousing activities, but among those, four types are the most common: self-storage, third-party logistics, warehousing or drop shipping (Damen, 2022).

5.3.1 Self-storage

The first party solution can be owning and using your own storage space, whether it is an extra room in the seller's house or in a garage. This solution is the most accessible and the cheapest as you do not need to pay any extra costs, but it comes with organisational difficulties and lack of opportunities for scalability (Damen, 2022). This model is ideal for newly starting or small businesses operating from the seller's house. It is also the most simple and accessible when budget and technical knowledge is limited.

This solution could be fitting for the club as they start, since they won't require a large space and considering the potentially limited number of units stored, inventory can be sorted by hand. It may pose issues when developing further, as the physical constraints may hinder the scalability.

5.3.2 Third-party solutions

Third-party solutions, which involve renting storage space sometimes with fulfilment services associated or even drop shipping. This solution can be very handy as you can delegate the fulfilment part and often get better tracking solutions but comes with the big downside of high additional costs. This type of solution also usually requires operating with a large number of products as the seller needs a bulk stock investment to secure a spot in the warehouse. (Damen, 2022) The model is therefore more suitable for larger companies expanding or opening more locations. The rugby club being a very small company with modest number of sales, it wouldn't be in their best interest to commit with a third-party fulfilment centre. They simply do not have the traffic required to push those doors, and the additional costs would be too consequential.

5.3.3 Warehouse storage

More traditional, owning your own warehouse is another possible solution. It involves creating a central location to store all the seller's product, and most likely hiring and training staff to operate it. From that central point, the seller can receive, process, and ship their products directly to their customers. This solution offers a more professional approach with more control over the inventory, but it comes at the price of a huge upfront investment (Damen, 2022). This type of model is suitable for growing retailers with established earnings, wishing to reduce long term stock.

The warehouse storage solution could be considered in the future as the business side of the club grows, but currently due to financial constraints and lack of certainty around future profit and expansion, this should probably be put aside for now.

5.3.4 Drop shipping

Drop shipping can be described as a way to sell your products online without having to hold your own stock. Orders are fulfilled by a third-party company that ships it directly to the customer (Ferreira, 2023). While this may seem like the ultimate solution solving most of the issues of the club, it comes with huge caveats. Low profit margins being the first and most substantial issue, it is most likely that the club would benefit from even less income while employing this method. Secondly, drop shipping may impose challenges such as inventory issues and shipping complexities. If the club decides to carry several items from different suppliers, they will need to deal with the complexity of handling different stocks and shipping products to the customers from different locations. This can complicate the process and generate extra costs either for the club or the customer. Finally, this process may also limit the options for customization or branding of the products. Ultimately this is a strategic decision for the club, but if the end customers are not happy with the products or shipment, it might prove difficult or impossible to change things without having to change your supplier and renegotiate everything once again.

5.3.5 Other considerations

Considering the size of operations the Tampere Rugby Club currently has, and the limited budget associated, it would be smart to find the less costly solution that would fit their needs. Finding the right balance between storage solutions and services they would like to offer to their customers. As for constituting a stock itself, taking advantage of demand planning is primordial. As mentioned in the dedicated chapter of this thesis, the club can base themselves on the demand and forecast to calculate what would be the optimal stock to have and when to

replenish it. On top of this, considering having a safety stock is recommended to avoid losing any potential sales and bad customer experience. Although not always necessary while generating the initial stock, the safety stock is more important in later phases of the product lifecycle. To avoid common issues with it, it is recommended to frequently reassess and adapt it (Jones, 2020).

5.4 Shipping

Currently the rugby club is not utilizing any shipping method as they solely rely on customers collecting their purchases at an agreed upon dropping point. As they are looking to increase the number of sales and having a more professional approach, it is smart to compare which viable process could suit their needs while considering their actual and future financial and workforce constraints. Among a multitude of more or less creative solutions, there are three main options: shipping yourself, drop shipping and using a third-party logistics service (Siegel, 2023).

5.4.1 Fulfilment options

Shipping yourself can be the easiest when the company plans to ship directly from their warehouse or home. While being potentially more cost effective, it can come with more manual work. This solution gives more control and over the shipping process and customization of it, while allowing the seller to use software solutions to find better rates, it also offers chances to build a stronger customer relationship with the help of personalized notes or gifts. On the downside, this process can prove very time consuming and may induce extra costs as the sellers may need to purchase extra materials (e.g., tape, boxes, labels), it may also require hiring additional employees during busy promotional periods. (Siegel, 2023)

Considering the Tampere Rugby Club's budget, this solution could be favourable, but it would also imply a great commitment on their side regarding the processing and shipping of orders. As they have mentioned in the interview, committing people and work hours can be sometimes difficult, but in this instance, it might be necessary if they would consider shipping products themselves directly.

As mentioned in previous chapters, drop shipping is a viable option for companies that do not manufacture or design directly their products. With that process the supplier ships directly to the customers, which can be low-cost and offers more flexibility with the seller's offering as they wouldn't be tied to a specific inventory. On the other hand, it limits the control over product selection, quality and can generate longer and less reliable shipping times. It also exposes the seller to shipping issues that can be longer to resolve and create a bad customer experience. (Siegel, 2023)

While providing the most efficient and possibly most time and cost-effective solution, drop shipping comes with certain risks that can down the line cost more to resolve and offer a poor experience to the customers. If the club were to consider that process, they would need to make sure that the suppliers they'd work with would be suitable to their needs and up to their standard.

While exploring different shipping solutions, using a third-party service is also to be considered. Suitable for companies that do not want to commit budget, time, and resources to do their own warehousing and shipping, it can prove expensive for smaller businesses, depending on their sales volume. This service comes with numerous advantages such as fulfilment service that handles the whole shipping process for the seller, potential money saving as they often have relationship with major carriers, easy scalability and not having the obligation to hire extra staff or even keeping your own inventory. But in return it offers less control over the shipping, additional fees and prevent the customers to directly interact with the seller on that matter. (Siegel, 2023)

This solution is more suitable for larger companies with large sales volumes wishing to save costs on warehousing as it could prove rather substantial on their level if they do not have that aspect already covered. As the rugby club operates with low volumes and therefore may not have any expensive cost regarding warehousing, the high costs of such services would outdo the remaining benefits they could potentially provide.

5.4.2 Carriers and methods of shipping

Regardless of the fulfilment option the seller may chose, there are many shipping carriers and methods the sellers need to become familiar with. Related information will need to be added in the online store settings and communicated to the customers, especially if the stores offer multiple options. The main determining factors while choosing the carriers and methods are places, dates, and weights (Siegel, 2023).

While selecting the places the seller wishes to ship to, it is important to consider the target audience and market. Depending on the size of the market and audience, it can be decided to ship internationally, nationally, or just even regionally. Another defining factor is the potential costs and resources needed to ship on the different levels. While it can be relatively cheap and easy to ship locally, the opposite is also true for international shipping as it may fall under difficult regulations or limited and expensive carrier options. (Siegel, 2023) As the rugby club's product are quite niche and targeted to local members and supporters, the places where they could potentially ship to is rather small and therefore should focus on a regional span. It would also help them to keep the costs low and operations simple.

The seller needs to decide on the delivery times that suits better their business. The products need to arrive to the customer in a timely manner, especially if the items sold are time sensitive. Carriers often offers several options at different costs, such as standard, expedited, or overnight shipping. Offering those different options can provide additional satisfaction for the customers. (Siegel, 2023) Considering that the club has limited resources and is looking to improve their profitability, it could be smart to prioritize the costs over speed in this situation. This should allow them to keep their selling price intact without having to be concerned about high additional fees at the charge of the potential customers. High costs incurred by fast shipping could prove dissuasive considering the whole price of the transaction, cost price and delivery included. In addition, the club currently have extremely long lead time between the customer's order and delivery, that can span from several weeks to months. Any cheaper shipping options from any carriers, which rarely exceed ten days, would be a well-received improvement.

The last parameter to take into consideration is the weight of the packages. The sellers need to know the weight and size of their products once packaged as it will be defining the best shipping method for each product. There are various solutions in packaging and carriers offer related to it. While some are directly related to the weight of the products some others can be solely fixed on dimensions. It is the seller responsibility to assess what is the most suitable for their needs. (Siegel, 2023) Regarding this topic, the club needs to figure out which solutions fits their need the best as they may have a large selection of different products that may be package together or individually. As standardizing the packages may help to save money and ease the general organization, the shipping costs may vary a lot depending on the weight if it is a variable that the carrier considers for one of its shipping options. It is therefore crucial to compare different options and consider individual options for each product.

5.4.3 Packaging

One main defining factor while considering shipping is how the products are packaged. The seller needs to find the most cost-effective solution while making sure the products arrive in good condition. As poorly packed products can generate bad reviews and experiences from the customers, the seller needs to ensure that the products are packaged securely and safely. It is also important to consider the size and weight of each product and to pack them accordingly while considering all inherent costs. It can be by example more effective to ship larger orders in different packages rather than in on huge one that will most likely generate additional fees for oversized box. (Siegel, 2023) The rugby club has been shipping mostly clothing items in the past which can be easily packed together, but in order to save costs they need to consider what is the best option regarding very small or large orders as those could easily generate extra unnecessary costs to their customers. If more fragile items were to be sold as part of their catalogue, it would be recommended to consider how fragile these items might be and how to package them as securely as possible.

Size and weight are not the only parameters to take into consideration while optimizing packaging. When choosing packing materials, it is equally important to consider the items fragility, the brand experience, eco-friendly materials, and packaging costs. (Siegel, 2023) It is common sense to consider how fragile products can be while shipping, but one needs to remember that any extra packaging item has a cost. Plastic or bubble wrap by example, can be very costly compared to the potential profit made on some lower price items, and this need to be taken into consideration while choosing the best packaging material and solution. On that note, the club will need to make sure that the cost of packaging and wrapping does not outdo their benefit margin. It can also be considered while creating or expanding their catalogues, to not include items that would be too expensive for them to package and ship safely. On the other hand, investing in quality wrapping and packaging can be an opportunity to show off the seller's brand identity, whether with their logo or using materials that reflects the brand's values. On that note, considering eco-friendly packaging could be a good solution if it's something the club wants to push forward at their own expenses.

5.5 After-sales

After-sales activities encompass a lot of services and opportunities for the customer and the seller, all of them targeting at keeping the customer engaged and satisfied. On one side, it can be services that assist the customer directly in using the product correctly and having different types of support from the seller such as updates, maintenance, provisions, repairs, servicing money-back guarantees and replacement (Rouse, 2018). On the other side, it is an opportunity for the seller to improve customer retention and lifetime value (Kelwig, 2022). As both the customer and seller benefit from after-sales activities it is in the best interest of both parties to consider implementing them on an online store. Once a sale has been concluded, the responsibilities and opportunities of the seller are not done yet. The main opportunity lies in encouraging the existing customers to repeat their purchase, as the probability to sell to them again is around 60 to 70%. In comparison, the chance of a repeated purchase is significantly lower with new customers, on average around 5 to 20%. (Bendle, Farris, Pfeifer and Reibstein. 2016) Even with this, those activities will have a certain cost that need to be taken

into consideration as it will lower the profit margin, but on the long term these investments will prove beneficial. It has been observed in different fields that investing 5% in customer retention can boost the profits by 25% or more (Reichheld, 2001).

5.5.1 Customer support

Different activities can be dedicated to make the customer feel well treated and supported after their purchase. Providing after-sales support is a good way to do this. Whether it be through phone or online, it is good to have one or several ways for the customer to reach out regarding any potential issues. On that note, prevention can help to avoid any issue needing to be reported, and it can be good to provide the customers with training material if applicable. But in cases where mistakes would still happen, answering them swiftly and generously can prove to be a demonstration of good customer service. (Kelwig, 2022)

As the club has currently limited sales and distribution, they can offer support through their usual channels of communication, like email or texts. Outside of usual concerns regarding shipment tracking and lost packages, the Tampere Rugby Club can investigate the different type of products they want to sell and figure out any possible related issues. As most of the products will likely be clothing items, knowing the specifics of each product regarding the material, washing and maintenance instructions, by example, may prove useful to answer any customer's potential questions. The more prepared the club is to provide this type of information, the faster they will be able to solve their customers issues. This will also help to save the time and energy of the club's members.

5.5.2 Seller's opportunities

From the seller's point of view, any after-sales interactions can be viewed as an opportunity to raise brand value, increase retention, deepen brand loyalty, or even drive additional sales (Kelwig, 2022). To achieve this, several strategies can be implemented, but none are as simple and efficient than just simply asking for

feedback. Actual existing customers are the best source of information for the seller when he's looking to improve his brand and products. Another great opportunity is the chance to cross-sell with paired products. Pairing some products with matching ones can easily drive sales but also improve the customer's experience (Kelwig, 2022).

In the case of the rugby club, implementing a feedback process, via survey or email, could prove to be a valuable source of information as to assess the quality of their products. It could also help to have recommendations and suggestions about new potential products to add to their catalogue. The opportunity for cross-selling is also very great as merchandized product usually pair very well with each other. Tracking existing sale and pairing accordingly or potentially offer deals on popular pairing could prove an excellent strategy to improve sales.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this thesis was to provide the Tampere Rugby Club with general recommendations on the main aspects of creating and running an online store while providing some targeted recommendations based on the analysis of their current process of selling merchandized products.

The interview conducted and its analysis has helped to map out the rugby club's current process and identify their expectations and pain points. It appeared clear that the lack of a well-established structure is generating frustration and potentially preventing the club to conduct sales in an ideal environment. The interview also showed another complication in the form of a difficult balance for the club in committing financial and physical means to selling club merchandise, while having the double objectives of improving profit and simplifying processes.

Based on these findings, research of different options and best practices regarding running an online store and the related tasks was conducted. The results took into consideration all the physical and financial constraints of the club. The results showed that while there are several viable solutions and processes available for the club, unfortunately none of these independently would solve all of the club's issues at once. The researcher recommends then that the rugby club assesses and prioritizes their objectives, and possibly implements several solutions in parallel. The creation and implementation of their own online store on a single brand platform attached to their own website such as WooCommerce could be achieved within the limitations of their budget, but it will require some self-training and education as well as commitment from one or several members of the board.

Regarding stock management, it is advised to take into consideration the educational points of demand forecast and purchasing as it will help the club avoid unnecessary expenses and make this part of the business more streamlined and efficient. As for the storage solution, the recommended solution would be to continue with self-storage as it is the solution best fitted to their current situation. On the shipping side, the rugby club may want to explore the possibility of combining different options. Letting the customers pick up their purchases at the storage

location or dropping point of their choice based on convenience, would significantly help reduce shipping costs. But as this can be limited to a certain area and could potentially hinder sales, considering shipping themselves with cheaper options such as standardized packaging and using local or national carriers, even at the cost of longer delivery time, should prove beneficial. Finally, it was showed that implementing after-sales solutions would help to improve their customers experience while potentially helping with improving sales.

Alternatively, it appeared that one simple, but least profitable solution would be to collaborate with a company that could use drop shipping or any assimilated service. This solution while preventing the club to make any extra profit solves all organisational issues and removes most of the complications for the club. On the other hand, it also comes at the cost of limited selection for their products and possible quality and delivery issues depending on the partnership made.

Depending on the timeline and resources available to commit, it could be smart to combine both implementing their own online store to sell more exclusive products with higher product margin while distributing more generic products with high volume and low margins through collaboration with a drop shipping partner. In that way the club can both address the immediate need of basic products for their customers while giving them time to create, implement and train themselves to operate their own webstore with more exclusive products where they could keep high margins. With time and experience they could also stop their collaboration with their partner and start selling all the products themselves if it proves feasible. In that case, this thesis already gives observations and recommendations on what to do if they would be considering growing and scaling up.

While conducting the research and writing this thesis, the author faced some limitations. Firstly, the non-availability or lack of numerical data on past sales activities prevented to add relevant quantitative research. In the future, completing a quantitative analysis could help the club to gain a broader image on their merchandise sales. Secondly as this thesis focused on one local rugby club, it could be interesting in the future to research the online merchandise sale of Finnish rugby clubs in a comparative setting. Thirdly, as the emphasis was on analysing the current situation, issues, needs and objectives of the rugby club, only general

guidelines, best practices, and targeted recommendations were given to the club, omitting purposely some more technical aspects such as the implementation of the online store itself. For future research, it could be interesting and a valuable initiative to implement the recommendations of this thesis in the form of creating an actual online store for the club.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview with the Tampere Rugby Club to map out the current situation and possibilities to develop the sales of club merchandise.

Question 1: Could you please introduce yourself and your role?

Chairman of the board.

Question 2: Could you please introduce the rugby club and the board?

Tampere Rugby Club was founded in 2001 and is one of the oldest rugby clubs in Finland. TRC is the only rugby union club in Tampere and the entire Pirkanmaa region. The men's team has won the 15-a-side rugby Finnish championship in 2006, 2007 and 2013. The team celebrated the Finnish 7-a-side rugby championship in 2012. The women's team has won the 15-rugby Finnish championship in 2017, 2020 and 2021 and the 7-rugby championship in 2018, 2022 and 2023.

We currently have around 50 players registered and are seeing an increase year after year over the numbers of active players and social members. We are a nonprofit organization ran by a board of currently 7 members + 2 substitute members. We all have our own responsibilities (such as social media, treasurer, secretary) but we are sharing each other's workload.

Question 3: Can you please explain the commissioned work to the thesis author? What is expected?

We have been selling merchandised products inconsistently for years, and in an effort to make it more professional and accessible to our members and supporters, we would like to know if it might be feasible and practical for us to have our own online store. Ideally this would also help us organise the sales of our products, and by simplifying the process, make it easier and less time consuming for the board.

Question 4: Can you explain your expectations for the thesis?

As we have only little knowledge on how to create, implement and run an online store, we would like to have someone to do the research for us and help us figure out all it takes to do so. We would like to know if it is a viable option considering our limitations, especially with time and budget. We would appreciate any tips and recommendations that could help us figure out the best ways to manage our merchandise sales online.

Question 5: Can you give your expectations for the online store?

Ideally, it would be a page where our members and supporters can purchase our products without difficulty. If it can be attached directly to our website to centralize all our traffic it would be great. We need an easy solution that can be ran with minimum knowledge and experience and at low cost as we unfortunately cannot commit much budget to it. We are a nonprofit organization, and our end goal is to offer the best experience possible to our members while contributing to develop our sport visibility and growth on a national level.

Question 6: What have you been doing previously regarding the sale of Merch? Could you explain step by step?

Previously, we've been rather inconsistent with the methodology and processes. What we usually try to achieve is, once a year, we're getting some products ordered in a big batch from various sources and we sell them to our members via our social media pages.

Usually, we decide with the board which type of items we'll be having (shirts, beanies, socks, ...), this decision is often based on the demand we have from our members within our internal discussion channels. As we are a small community, we also consider variation year over year of the type of products we offer to drive more sales. The following step is giving the responsibility to someone from the board, to find out where we will be ordering those products, and at which cost. Once it's decided, we compare the different offers and make the final decisions on who we will work with that given year. The next step is through social media, we post pictures and potential prices (usually tied on the amount

of unit we will be producing) and our members get to select which products they would like to purchase and which size if applicable. Their orders are collected through an online survey where payment instructions are also given (Bank transfer to the club bank account). After few days we then place the order to the manufacturer and wait for the delivery to happen, which depending on the source can range from 3 weeks to 3 months. Once the delivery is received, we usually distribute the products during training time, as both the ladies and men's team usually train at the same location and time.

Question 7: Which hurdles are you currently facing with the sales of Merch?

As we are a small nonprofit organization, we have to face numerous challenges. The first one would be that all of us are volunteer and even if we're happy to do so, we have to serve our duty as board members during our free time, which means that we cannot ask or expect our board members to give too much of their personal time over daunting tasks. At the moment the amount of work and commitment required from us to handle all the steps related to the sales often outdo the rewards. Another issue is that we're limited in budget, most of our income as a club comes from the player and members fees we're collecting every year at the beginning of the season, but for obvious reasons and to try to keep the sport accessible to everyone, we're keeping those as low as possible. Any extra income we're able to secure, such as the sales of merchandised products is a non-negligible help for us but as it is, only represent a fraction of our yearly operating costs.

In a nutshell, we have to work too hard for too little results.

Question 8: What motivated the consideration of having you own online store?

Outside the profit considerations, and all the challenges we're facing with our current process, we're happy to continue doing this because it also serves other essential purposes for the club. Our members (players and supporters) are happy to have merchandised products to wear and show off, regardless of the cost. It also a good publicity for us if our members wear products with the club

logo in public spaces, it offers visibility and may help with the recruitment of new players. It's for all these reasons that we're continuing to sell our products with, admittedly, a less than productive process. But if we could generate some extra profit while improving the experience for everyone involved, it would be a great achievement for the club.

Question 9: What are your main priorities regarding the online store?

Offering a better experience to our members, improve access to our merchandised products while reducing the time involvement of our board members. Basically, a more streamlined experience, with hopefully the possibility of offering our products throughout the year rather than just for a limited time period.

Question 10: Which budget are you willing to commit?

This is a difficult question. We're willing to commit as much as necessary, under reasonable circumstances, as long as the benefit of the sales cover all inherent costs. It is not in our interest to spend some money if it doesn't generate additional income for the club down the line. Considering this and our usual average annual budget, keeping the costs under 250€ a year seems like a healthy option, but as mentioned before, extra revenue could mean extra budget if justified.

Question 11: How much time do you think you'll be able to commit on a weekly basis to the online store?

As we're all giving our free time to the board as volunteers, it's difficult to quantify exactly the time we'll be able to commit. In this instance, less is best, but we understand that it will require commitment on our side and are willing to work as much as necessary if the benefits are worth it. Currently we're having some real heavy weeks around the time we plan, sell, and distribute our products, but no time is then allocated for such tasks for the remainder of the year. If that workload could be redistributed throughout the year instead, it would be easier for us to manage and assign responsibilities.

Question 12: What is your current solution for purchasing/manufacturing the merch products? Is there something you would like to change?

We have been changing our supplier regularly based on the type of products needed, delivery time and price offer. We usually decide for which type of products we would like to produce that year, usually based on demands gathered by word of mouth within the club. We investigate which suppliers matches our needs and get a pricing list. We determine demand via our social media channels, usually with an online poll and then submit an order to the manufacturer/supplier. The delivery time varies according to the supplier but can range from 3 weeks to 3 months, this is also considered while choosing which company to work with.

If we could have a more set process with our different suppliers so we do not have to restart conversations from zero every time, and maybe a less random schedule about delivery, it would be easier for us to organize the sale and manage existing stock.

Question 13: What is your current customer base and how do you reach them? Is there something you would like to change?

At the moment, our customers are mostly our members, most of them being either active or old players, and their close ones. We reach them through an announcement on our internal social media page/group and give them the opportunity to buy order products.

This is a bit limiting as potentially interested customers can miss our internal communications, or not having someone active enough in the group to relay their intent to purchase. If we could reach a wider audience and extend to any potential supporters or members individually it would probably increase naturally the sales.

Question 14: What is your current solution for warehousing the products? Is there something you would like to change?

It also has been changing from year to year, depending on the items ordered and the season, it can vary. We've been using our personal homes or during

summer, the limited space we have in a shed nearby our training pitch. Recently one of our members has offered to store our products at no costs in a warehouse he uses for professional purposes. This has been the ideal situation for us as it doesn't cost the club additional fees and offers a more flexible solution as it is safer and not weather dependent.

If we can keep relying on the existing system, this would be ideal for us.

Question 15: What is your current solution for shipping the products? Is there something you would like to change?

We currently do not ship any of the products as we do not have the logistic for it, also it would incur additional costs we can't afford at the moment. Instead, we give some dates and locations to all our members where all the purchased products will be brought, then one or several of our board members organise the distribution. This solution is the easiest for us but we're aware of the flaws of it. This system works a lot on trust and also limits our possibilities of sales outside of our active players.

Ideally, we would like the customer to get their merchandise as soon as possible, but we have to be realistic about the cost of shipping and the time it would require for us to handle it. Some kind of hybrid model would probably work best for us.

Question 16: Do you have any formal after sales process? Is there something you would like to change?

Not really, it's mostly through word of mouth at trainings or via our communication channels (WhatsApp groups for active players). We usually have returns on the quality of the prints and the products, we take those into consideration for future purchases.

As we develop to a more professional approach, making sure our customers are satisfied with our products is becoming more important, we would also benefit from having returns regarding the available selection of products so we can plan better our future purchases with our suppliers, or expand our existing selection.