

Marketing Plan for Pirkkala Football Club



Bachelor's thesis

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The purpose of this thesis was to create a marketing plan for a Finnish football and futsal club, Pirkkalan Jalkapalloklubi, also known as PJK, which is the commissioning company of this thesis. The reasoning behind choosing this topic was personal preference and a professional curiosity towards a sports club in need of marketing enhancing. The author himself has played in the club for almost ten years. PJK is eager to enhance their brand and visibility because the competition in the sports world is tough.

The aim was to provide help for Pirkkala Football Club in terms of social media marketing, traditional marketing, and content marketing to improve their visibility and presence in the market. The secondary aim was to help other sports clubs in a similar situation to learn about the basics of marketing and social media.

The thesis started with an introduction of the sports culture in Finland and the commissioning company, PJK. It is followed by a theoretical framework, where the related terms are introduced. The specific terms were chosen by the author due to their relevancy in sports marketing. Most of the theoretical data was collected from scientific journals and books. The theoretical chapter is followed by an introduction of methodology and presentation of interviews, which were the primary method of data collection about the situation of PJK. In addition, the author used his own knowledge about the club. The data was then used for a SWOT-analysis.

In conclusion, the outcomes of the analysis were positive and there are many ways for the club to enhance their visibility. Most of the suggestions concluded from the analysis were about improving the identity, social media activity, collaboration, and sporting goals. Based on the results, Pirkkala Football Club has a great opportunity to solidify its position as a big brand.

Keywords Marketing Plan, Social Media, Sports Marketing, Market Research

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Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli luoda markkinointisuunnitelma suomalaiselle jalkapallo- ja futsalseuralle nimeltään Pirkkalan Jalkapalloklubi, joka oli myös tämän tutkimuksen toimeksiantaja. Seura tunnetaan myös lyhenteellä PJK. Henkilökohtainen ja ammatillinen kiinnostus markkinointia tarvitsevaa seuraa kohtaan olivat syitä tämän aiheen valitsemiseen. Myös noin kymmenen vuoden pelikokemus seurassa oli osasy syy aiheen valintaan. PJK on halukas parantamaan näkyvyyttään ja brändiään, sillä kilpailu urheilumaailmassa on kovaa.

Tavoite oli auttaa Pirkkalan Jalkapalloklubia sosiaalisen median-, perinteisen-, sekä sisältömarkkinoinnin sarakkeilla, jotta seura pystyisi parantamaan läsnäoloaan ja näkyvyyttään markkinoilla. Toinen tavoite oli auttaa muita vastaavanlaisia seuroja oppimaan ja hyödyntämään paremmin sosiaalista mediaa sekä markkinointia.

Tutkimus alkoi Suomen urheilukulttuurin- sekä PJK:n esittelyllä. Tästä jatkettiin teoreettisen tietopohjan läpikäyntiin, jossa aiheelliset termit sekä käsitteet esiteltiin tarkemmin. Nämä kyseiset käsitteet valittiin siitä syystä, että ne ovat oleellisia urheilumarkkinoinnin ymmärtämistä varten. Suurin osa teoreettisesta tiedosta kerättiin tieteellisistä lähteistä. Teoreettisen kehyksen jälkeen tutkielmassa esiteltiin tutkintakeinot sekä haastattelut, jotka toimivat pääosin lähteenä PJK:sta kerättyyn tietoon. Kirjoittaja käytti myös omaa tietoaan seurasta hyödyksi. Kyseistä dataa käytettiin SWOT-analyysin luomiseen.

Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että analyysin lopputulokset olivat positiivisia, ja pystyttiin toteamaan, että PJK:lla on monia tapoja parantaa brändinsä näkyvyyttä. Suurin osa kirjoittajan ehdotuksista koski brändin vahvistamista, sosiaalisen median käyttöä, yhteistöitä, sekä urheilullisia tavoitteita. Tulosten pohjalta PJK:lla on loistava mahdollisuus kiinteyttää asemaansa isona pirkanmaalaisena brändinä.

Avainsanat Markkinointisuunnitelma, Sosiaalinen Media, Urheilumarkkinointi, Markkinatutkimus

Sivut 50 sivua ja liitteitä 2 sivua

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1 Introduction

Sports clubs live for their fans. One of the biggest goals for the clubs in sports culture is to satisfy the customer. It's a two-way street, and when fans are satisfied and entertained, they stay connected with the club. Some may even stay as fans for the rest of their lives. When run well, sports clubs can become very successful brands, and companies that employ hundreds of people. A considerable part of this entirety is marketing. It's an aspect that some clubs overlook for no reason without knowing what they are missing on. Especially smaller sports in smaller countries would benefit from proper marketing when trying to survive in the endless competition with other teams and sports.

The topic of this thesis is a marketing plan for a Finnish football and futsal club, Pirkkalan Jalkapalloklubi, shortly known as PJK. The author chose this topic because of his connection to this club. He has played in it for ten years and has had a good basis of knowledge of the club's plans and operations before the research. The author wants to help PJK improve their marketing as a club and bite down to the opportunities that lie ahead of them. The marketing plan is indicated for the whole club, but the main focus is on the first teams in men's and women's futsal. This is because futsal is the side that PJK is more competitive in and puts their resources towards.

The goal of this research is to detect development targets for PJK's operations and find opportunities together with strengths and figure out how to implement them properly. Another goal of this thesis is to act as a guideline to other sports clubs in a similar position and help them use the basics of marketing to improve their brand.

The research methods for this thesis are mostly data collected from different scientific journals, books, and articles in a qualitative way. The author used mainly HAMK -library, and Google Scholar as tools to find the correct information related to PJK's case. Additionally, the author is using interviews he conducted and knowledge he has gained about the club as a source of information. The author wanted to help PJK achieve the goal improving their own marketing, and more broadly, bringing recognition to futsal as a sport in Finland. This is one

of the reasons he chose this topic. The research question of this thesis is “How can Pirkkala Football Club grow their brand through marketing?”

At first, the history of sports and futsal in Finland is being reviewed, followed by an introduction of the commissioning company, Pirkkala Football Club. Then, a theory part follows where the most useful terminology is being defined to prepare for the data gathered about PJK. The specific terminology was chosen because they are fitting and related to this specific case and are useful to know when talking about a marketing plan. After going through theory, the methodology is being reviewed more thoroughly with the explanation of the decisions regarding research methods. The interviews organised are then being analysed and with the information gathered, a SWOT-analysis of PJK is made. The ending of the research includes a plan for the near future with realistic ideas and suggestions for the club’s marketing. A conclusion serves as the last paragraph.

1.1 Finland and Sports

There’s a great number of amazing sports stories and winners in Finnish history and that’s something to be proud of. Finland is a small country and is located by only little bit more than five million people. For that size, Finland has had its fair share of sports success. However, still to this day, at some level there’s a lack of sports- and fan culture, apart from hockey and the Finnish national hockey team, Leijonat. The average person living in Finland tends to follow winners and success stories are forgotten fast and the interest declines back to the original state. The number of loyal fanbases could be higher. Of course, any fan activity is not being undermined by this, but the idea is rather to bring consciousness to the fact that there’s a lot of room for improvement in Finland. Many different sports are marginal even though they have a massive following all around the world. It’s understandable that new sports take time to integrate in Finland and they’re very unlikely to grow into a big sport. The match going people and the media obviously play a big part in this. The Finnish sports media tends to be very critical and downplaying towards smaller sports and athletes. This can create an overall negative image for people about sports. Marketing of sports and the content inside the marketing is an important aspect that comes from within the clubs. The match events are also in need of an improvement in many sports but this,

however, is not a surprise when they are organized by people who do sports as a hobby and only for the love of the game, without payment. (Hetemaj, 2011)

Futsal in Finland has been taking big steps as a sport in the last years. It has grown massively and is slowly becoming a sport that people recognize. The Men's National Team has been a pioneer in bringing the sport forward by being successful in recent years. For example, Finland fought their way to the last European Championships earlier this year, and they even got through the group stages to the playoffs, where they were eventually knocked out in a tight match by the European Champions, Portugal. The games were shown in YLE channels, which is really a step forward for this sport. It's obvious that futsal is going through the battle of becoming a recognizable sport in Finland but it's getting there. Finland's Futsal National Team is also gathering reputation in the world by doing so well in. The head coach of the team, Mico Martic has done a tremendous amount of work and it's showing now. Many countries that may have looked down at Finland regarding futsal are now looking up at them. Some call it a "revolution" of futsal. Martic's contract with the futsal national team ended this summer. (Hirvonen & Vainikka, 2022)

Finnish futsal got a breakthrough in the 2020s following the impressive campaigns of the Finnish National Team. The decision of YLE to show the matches was great for the visibility of sport. The road of futsal has been tough. Behind this current valuation of the sport, there's an endless amount of invisible work by the sport union and clubs. Futsal has been in the shadows of bigger sports for years, and there's still a long way to go. The first person to lead the way in the futsal revolution was Panu Autio, the first Finnish person to go pro. He played a big part of his professional career in Spain and Russia. For the latter part of his career, he returned to Finland and helped raise the National Team to where it's now. After Autio there were shortly other players who went abroad to play futsal as well. Jukka- and Mikko Kytölä, brothers from Jyväskylä, both played many years in Italia, and Leena Lepikonmäki, who went to Italy too. She was the first female player to go abroad. Now, people born in the 2000s and 2010s, have had a choice already from a young age to focus on futsal instead of football because the level of coaching and quality national team activities in many age classes. (Palloliitto, n.d.)

Men's Futsal-Liiga is doing well now, the league has been able to persuade many foreign players and coaches to come to Finland to play, which is an indication of the level of the league. The internationalization is clear. Women's Futsal-Liiga is also developing evenly. The women's National Team was founded in 2017, and it's realistic to wait for a spot in the European Championships in the coming years, which would bring forward women's futsal massively. (Palloliitto, n.d.)

1.2 Commissioning Company

The commissioning company in this research is Pirkkalan Jalkapalloklubi. In English it's known as Pirkkala Football Club. In this research the name can be referred to as "PJK" or "the club". It's known as the club to enable high quality, and versatile football as a hobby in Pirkkala. Pirkkala Football Club is a club specialized in both football and futsal that was founded in 1993. (PJK, 2021)

Pirkkala Football Club has always been based on strong and relentless junior work all the way from ball school for 5-year-old's, to B-junior teams, and the active voluntary work from parents of young players in the club has lasted almost 30 years. This has been one of the cornerstones of the strong foundation on junior work in the club. It has created excellent conditions for all interested young people to come and enjoy football as a hobby, and that way also develop as players. One of PJK's main themes in the club has always been that football should be a hobby that is as affordable as possible for everyone. (PJK, 2021)

Even though Pirkkala isn't the biggest town, every year, 30-40 enthusiastic 5-year-old football youngsters start their journey with the sport in PJK's ball school. There are multiple successful players that have started their journey there and are now playing almost professionally as adults. There have been offensive players from PJK that have played in both Veikkausliiga, and the Futsal National Team in the last years. This is something Pirkkala Football Club can be very proud of. Hundreds of children that are playing in PJK's junior teams will then take part in a series, and different tournaments under the Tampere district over the year. Also, PJK organizes a school football tournament for schoolchildren, a family football tournament for families, and a wooden club tournament for amateur players every

year. These tournaments always gather a big group of people and are very popular amongst the people in Pirkkala and in the near towns. There are also a lot of other futsal and football activities that PJK offers with the municipality and schools of Pirkkala. Pirkkala Football Club does its' best to bring people of any age together around the year. (PJK, 2021)

PJK continued a previously started club development project in 2019, which aims were making the club's operations even better and communal in administrative, and ground level. The project is still going on and has made significant differences already. The club's future is looking better than ever. The development project has different sectors. It focuses on the development of player advancement, financial and marketing sectors, and different improvements on the club's organizational level. PJK also hired the club's first employee and acquired its' own premises in Pirkkala in 2019 as a part of this renovation. (PJK, 2021)

A little word about the teams in PJK. The club has a few competitive flagship teams on both the men's and women's side. The women's futsal first team is playing in the women's Futsal League at the moment, which is the top rated, and highest league in Finland. The men's futsal first team is playing in the Futsal Ykkönen this season, which is the second highest league in Finland. The men's first team was also playing in Futsal League during the season before this but finished in a position where they dropped to the second highest league, Futsal Ykkönen. The goal for the men's first team is to promote back to the Futsal League, and the whole club is determined to make it happen by hard work, promoting juniors, and being consistent. The third flagship team in the club is the P-19 team in Futsal, which won bronze in the Finnish Championship in the 2020-2021 season. During the last seasons, Pirkkala football club has found the most success on the futsal side of the club. On the football side, the men's first representation team plays in the third division, called Kolmonen, where they promoted after the 2019-2020 season after playing in the fourth division. (PJK, 2021)

The men's first team in futsal ended their latest season in Futsal Ykkönen victoriously, even though they did not gain promotion. Therefore, PJK finished third this season, and that can be considered an exceptional performance by the team that was hit hard with few key players leaving before the season, and the team going through a transition. The whole team has rejuvenated a lot. Many new young players from the U-19 age category got to get their

first minutes in the first team during the season. That's a good position to start building for the next season. (PJK, 2021)

The staff in Pirkkala Football Club at present is the following: Rami Naulo is operating as the chairman of the club, and Jussi Jokilampi is operating as the executive director. Risto Hiltunen, Toni Järvinen, Jaakko Lautanen, and Arto Ojala are the remaining members of the board. (PJK, 2021)

PJK is also offering multiple co-operation opportunities for companies. When the staff, coaches and the players are included, there are about 600 members in the whole club. If all the family members are considered, the affection of Pirkkala Football Club reaches the amount of 1 500 residents, which is a very impressive number for a small town. (PJK, 2021)

As said before, during the recent years, the club has taken massive steps towards enhancing its' operations behind the scenes by hiring the first employee for the club and leasing its' own premises. PJK is very enthusiastic about enhancing and developing its' co-operation with local businesses in Pirkkala. The ongoing goal is to create co-operation opportunities that are beneficial to both PJK, its' members, and the company they're working with. A few examples of this kind of collaboration would be doing collateral work, doing business with different local companies through PJK's membership card, and selling products or services by the teams in the club. (PJK, 2021)

PJK has developed a concept for these kinds of activities called "PJK Club". They organize a joint event every year for club members where local companies can network, hear latest news from the club, and spend time together in the PJK premises. These events are free for club members. There are three kinds of possibilities of bought memberships: bronze, silver, and gold. The bronze membership gives a business two season tickets, names on PJK's webpages and seasonal publications with a price of 300€ per year. The silver membership gives the same benefits as the bronze with an addition of an ad on the wall during futsal home games, and the reservation of the premises two times a year free for charge. This membership comes with a price of 600€ per year. The gold membership, being the best, offers the same benefits as the two previous ones with an addition of two more reservations of the premises a year, quarter of a page ad during the seasonal publications, and a sponsor

team. The gold membership comes with a price of 1 200€ per year. However, all the commissions are agreed separately on a case by case -style, and every package is customisable by company if needed. (PJK, 2021)

Now, the biggest sponsors of Pirkkala Football Club are DigiAntenni, Pirkanmaan Sähkömiehet, VesiVek, Pirkkala Municipality, Artelli, and APAkate. Most of these sponsors can also be seen in the home and away shirts for men's and women's representative teams. (PJK, 2021)

PJK has recognized a few cornerstone values for the whole organization: communality, justice, commitment, purposefulness, and joy. These are the few key ideologies that the club works around. Everything that is done in the club is done with these things in mind, and PJK hopes that these values are also on the minds of everyone affected by the club: the players, parents, and even the fans. PJK – playing positive in Pirkkala! (PJK, 2021)

2 Theory

This chapter of the research aims to introduce related terms and concepts to help understand the information in this research better. The author has chosen to include the most important and suitable definitions regarding marketing and this specific research. These following definitions are essential to understand to make most of the research part, which is done later in this research. The concepts introduced are also there to give new perspectives into understanding the marketing plan. Before conducting a marketing plan, a definition of the operating environment needs to be done and known by the researcher. It's the basis for the marketing plan. This, however, is not the area that the author is targeting in this research because the focus is targeted towards the actions that happen after this phase. This is because the author feels like targeting the actions after this phase is more useful to Pirkkala Football Club.

2.1 Marketing Plan

One of the most important parts of management is planning. Every company is running by a carefully conducted plan, meaning that every company should have a clear marketing plan. Overall, a marketing plan should include promising business opportunities for the regarding company and suggest different ideas on how to maintain and even enhance a company's position in their current market, or if they should enter a new market. In a nutshell, marketing plan is a communication tool, that should identify some elements of a basic marketing mix, and how to implement the given information. If we go into more detail, a marketing plan can be made from many smaller marketing plans for different projects for the regarding company. (Westwood, 2011, p. 1)

When doing a marketing plan, you must research the current market carefully, this term is called marketing planning. This is the process of defining different market segments, defining the current position in the market, and revising the size of the current market. During this phase a company needs to define their strengths and weaknesses, forecast their objectives, set their budget, and look at their overall strategy very carefully. This will provide a good base to going forward, and it can be changed or updated anytime, if there's any other changes within the company. (Westwood, 2011, p. 6-7)

One of the stages of completing a marketing plan is setting up a SWOT -analysis, which is a definitive analysis of a company's situation and position. First, SWOTs were only used by businesses to assess themselves, but nowadays it's a widely used technique by entrepreneurs, governments, and individuals. The abbreviation "SWOT" stands out for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It's a useful framework for companies to assess their internal and external qualities. The analysis must be realistic and fact-based because it will only be useful when done accordingly. Any beliefs, or so called "grey areas" are to be avoided when collecting data for the SWOT -analysis. When done right, it can lead to many new ideas and perspectives. (Phadermrod et al., 2019, p. 194-203)

Strengths in this case refer to the parts of the business that they excel in, internally. It indicates that what is separating them from the competition. Some companies may have a very loyal customer base, some organization's brand may be strong, the list goes on, and

every company has different strong points. In this part a company could ask: “Where’s our advantage?”

Weaknesses refer to companies’ internal weak points. It indicates the things that are keeping them from their best performance. Where do they need to improve the most? In this part a company could ask: “What aspects are we lacking in, and how could we improve them?”

Opportunities are certain external factors that are possible market gaps for the company. Noticing these gaps and taking advantage of them could give a company a big competitive advantage. In this part a company could ask themselves: “Is there any new market gaps we can take advantage of?”

Threats are any external influences that can harm the business. For example, price of material costs rises, another company enters the same market, etc. In this part a company could ask themselves: “What are our competitors doing better? Are there any new regulations that could affect us?” (Phadermrod et al., 2019, p. 194-203)

2.2 Brand

Brand is a form of intangible marketing, meaning that it can’t be seen, or touched. The word “brand” is a word that is used in a business or an organization to help people understand and identify them. Brand has also been described as a feature that identifies a seller’s good or product, and noticeably differs it from the competition and similar market. Brands frame people’s perception of organizations and their products, and they bring a substantial amount of value to the company. Creating an appealing brand can give businesses a massive edge over their competitors in the market. (Wood, 2000, p. 662, 664)

However, there’s a lot of different viewpoints when defining the word “brand, as it derives from different ideologies and perspectives. For example, it may be seen from the customers viewpoint, or the brand’s owners’ viewpoint. Brands can also be described by their characteristics or purpose. There are tons of descriptions of a brand, and the boundaries between them are not big, they just focus on different attributes inside the brand. Before defining a specific brand, its’ characteristics must be known. (Wood, 2000, p. 664-665)

An organization, which wants to add any kind of value to their operations needs to think of themselves as a brand. It can be hard to recognize the actual meaning of a brand because it's certainly an intangible asset, but it's still crucial for the organization. Brands have a massive contribution to the whole economy. When talking about single corporate assets, brand is the most important one. (Blackett et al., 2003, p. 2)

Nowadays, the word "brand" is very saturated, and it can be heard in every corner of the society. It's a common misthought that only organizations with B2C -consumers have "brands". This is however not the case at all. B2B organizations are just as "brands" as well, some of the are the biggest brands in the world. Even non-profit organizations are brands just as well, for example Red Cross. (Blackett et al., 2003, p. 2-6)

Brands gather lots of social effects and -benefits when time passes by, and many of the world's most valuable brands have been around for more than 50 years. They are the most sustainable form of asset in business and technology. Brands also have a massive connotation on politics, and are often used in marketing and symbolism, for good or ill. There are multiple examples of people starting to boycott certain organizations due to political issues. (Blackett et al., 2003, p. 3-4)

2.3 Social Media

The term social media means an internet-based, virtual network in which anyone can share ideas, posts, pictures, and information with other people. Different kinds of social medias are used all over the world, and combined there's over 4.5 billion users, dated in October 2021. The most used social medias right now are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, and almost 90% of people aged 18 to 29 have used at least one. They were originally designed for people to connect with their friends, but nowadays they're also used by businesses and corporations to gain a wider customer base and get an advantage on competitors. The influence is vast, and with social media, people have the possibility to connect with anyone from around the world. (Power, 2014, p. 896-897)

Social medias have a lot of benefits, almost every sort of business uses it for marketing to build their following. With social media marketing, it's possible to choose your target audience very precisely, and by doing it correctly, it's possible for any company to build a big following. Loyal fan base and culture behind a company is everything for them. Social media has completely changed the way of interaction, people have an endless amount of information on their hands, and it has made the world seem more reachable. (Power, 2014, p. 896-897)

However, whenever there's positives, there's negatives. The main negative features of social media are addiction, inattentiveness, stress, and jealousy. Social media can be an effective tool and give joy to an extent, but when used excessively, it can create problems. There's also a straight connection to depression. People often compare themselves and their lives to other people on social media, and it's not always as it seems. People give misleading information on social media all the time, and it's important to fact check things you read on social media. (Power, 2014, p. 896-897)

McNab (2009, p. 566) suggests that social media tools have also been implemented into health care in the last ten years, and it's a great opportunity for all the professionals around health care. Stewart et al (2012) has suggested that social media encourages the distribution of evidence-based research to inform different practices to create different practices and collaborations and add opportunities for learning. Professionals can now learn more flexibly because information can be accessed from anywhere, compared to the more traditional way of learning, which is more limited if we consider attending at conferences, all kinds of seminars and study groups as the more traditional ways.

A very familiar form of marketing nowadays is done through social media, called influencer marketing, and it has become an elemental part of marketing. It refers to businesses and companies working with trending individuals called influencers on social media. The influencers get paid to promote the brands, use their products, and show it to their followers and supporters. Brands believe that this can give them more visibility, external capabilities, and more development in their social media and networking sectors. This can also enhance the brands' communication with their own consumers. The collaboration can be either long-lasting, or one-time things. The more the influencer has following and trend

going around them, the more leverage they have on the size of the collaboration, awareness- and finance-wise. However, there's also risks with influencer marketing. Brands must be careful on which influencers they collaborate with, because after the collaboration is done, any inappropriate or harmful thing influencer does or posts, is connected to the company. Meaning that the brand must be sure that the individual they want to work with represents the values of the brand. (Zhou et al., 2021, p. 123)

2.4 Definition of Marketing

In a nutshell, marketing is an activity done by a company, business, or an individual, to promote or sell a product or a service. Marketing can also be done by an affiliate for a company. There are professionals, who work for marketing sections in companies, and their goal in marketing is to get attention from selected audiences with advertising and promoting. Some good approaches to promotions are endorsements with celebrities, catchphrases, designs, and overall display in media. The core of marketing is to find ideal customers and get them interested of the marketer's product or a service. (Lusch, 2007, p. 261)

The whole concept of marketing includes all different aspects and actions that are required for a company to get new customers and manage a relationship with them. Almost everything a company does to get towards this goal can be described as marketing. Matching the company's products or services to their customers' needs is crucial. Networking is also considered a part of marketing, it can be done with a present, or a past client. Every detail is important, answering to emails quickly, sending thank you letters, and meeting clients are a few examples. (Lusch, 2007, p. 261)

Through history, there's always been a shortage of some sort of supply, and that's way the concept of marketing started very early, with a goal of naturally bringing things to the market. When there's demand, there should be supply, and this way there's always a spot for marketing. During the history of times, the buyer and the seller have always been kind of

separate from each other, and marketing's role is to guide the resources the right way and help close the separation. There was a time where production of tangibles moved to the factories, and people became very dependent on the market to satisfy the needs for goods. There were a lot of wholesalers, jobbers, and retailers moving the goods from one place to another to get them to the people. The earliest definitions of marketing referred to these kinds of practices. (Lusch, 2007, p. 261)

As a foundation of marketing, there is a style called PPPP, meaning product, price, place, and promotion. Any company or an individual marketing needs to go through these four collective focal points to succeed in marketing. (Kotler, Armstrong & Opresnik, 2018, p. 38-39)

In this case, product is the object of marketing. It's the component that the marketer plans to promote. The main goal with the product should be to fill a gap or a need in the market that the business is trying to enter to. If the product is being pushed to a market where there is supply already, it needs to stand out from its competitors. The business needs to understand what they are selling. (Wu & Li, 2018, p. 77-81)

As the second focal point, there's price. A business needs to decide the price they're selling their product or products for. Unit cost price, marketing expenses, and distribution costs are some things to consider when deciding a price. Also, the price of other similar products in the market needs to be considered. (Wu & Li, 2018, p. 77-81)

As the third point, there place, which focuses on the distribution of the product. Is the product or service being sold through the internet, as a physical product or both? Both include different consideration points. If it sold physically, the style of product placement needs to be considered. If it's sold online, digital product placement needs to be thought about. (Wu & Li, 2018, p. 77-81)

As the fourth focal point, there's promotion, which includes the marketing communication campaign. In promotion, there's a lot of focal points. Advertising, direct- and indirect marketing, public relations, and sponsorships are things to be considered. For every product, there is a life cycle, and the promotion depends on what stage of the life cycle is the product

in. The price and the overall promotion need to align with the product's quality and, as the consumers usually associate these two. (Wu & Li, 2018, p. 77-81)

2.5 Evolving Digital Marketing

The evolution of digital technology has been fast. The more traditional ways of communicating, such as radio, print magazines, and TV are getting less profitable and used. The new, digital ways of reaching are coming through, such as e-mail, social media, and display ads. The markets on the internet are very dynamic, there's almost an unlimited volume of supply of products and services. Digital marketing is truly international, and the national borders of marketing are fading away. The digital technology has been rising and has become vital for a company to be successful. Both consumer, and company behavior has changed significantly since the arrival of the digital world. Consumers, marketers, and seller are now connected to each other more than ever before. (Molenaar, 2011, p. 19-21)

As new digital methods of marketing keep on making a big impact, value creation for customers and companies has spun greatly. Many companies have been able to take advantage of digital means, and thus have gotten great results in terms of value. It's simpler to take different strategical and tactical decisions that lead to positive outcomes, and it's also more monitorable. (Kannan & Li, 2017, p. 25)

The average customer journey has changed since the arrival of digital means. Choices for customers are expanded from print magazines, and customers are offered a different perspective for their shopping habits. With digitalization, the stages from awareness of the product, familiarity with the product, considering it, all the way to making the actual purchase, are moving faster and the overall decision is made in less time than before. This is due to the easiness of dealing with the product online, the possibility to read reviews of the product, seeing posts about it, and the information about the product being easily accessible. Many consumers want to make the decision easier for the next potential buyer of the same product by leaving an honest review about it. With time, there will always be more information available. In contrast, with offline marketing, the period of the customer journey is rather extended. (Kannan & Li, 2017, p. 26)

The whole concept of a product has also altered after the entrance of the digital age. Many services provided are becoming very digital, such as GPS systems, technologies with cars, and home equipment. Rental services have also been digitalized in the form of Airbnb and Uber, for example. Also, many products that the mankind has known for a long time, have taken a digital form with apps, software, and content like music. (Kannan & Li, 2017, p. 32)

2.6 Sports Marketing

There are multiple explanations on what does sports marketing mean, and they change all the time. The term has and will continue to evolve, but in a nutshell, sports marketing refers to actions of product and service marketers who are using sports as a promotional vehicle. Because of its vacillating characteristics, the term sports marketing can also be described as marketing through sports, meaning that sport is just used as a tool or a vehicle to market more industrial products. There are different organizations using sports marketing, some of them target consumers to promote sports products, and some market non-sport products in the form “personal investment”, in example, events and teams. Basically, the end goal of sports marketing is to fulfill sports consumers needs in an exchange process. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 91)

Sports marketing can be divided into two categories. Marketing of pure sports products, and non-sport products through sports. Both require very strategic focus. When taking the customer into consideration, marketing of the pure sports products is easier from the marketers’ point of view. The non-sport product side is less evident. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 92)

In addition to the two categories of sports marketing, a sports product can be interpreted as an athlete as well. Nowadays, athletes are huge brands and a specific athlete, or a player can be the reason somebody buys a ticket to a game, for example. An athlete’s performance on- and off-the-field, their character, and even attractiveness affects their brand image and sometimes the athlete’s brand can exceed the team’s brand that he or she plays in. Personal

brands are getting bigger and bigger through medias and are something to take into consideration when talking about marketing in sports. (Mahmoudian et al., 2020, p. 245)

To add further knowledge into the categorization of sports marketing, sports products have been categorized in three different sectors. First, there's spectator sports. This category goes all the way from the minor leagues to the biggest events in sports. Football, Olympics, and Formula One for example. Competitive is the main word. The main goal here is to sell tickets to the event, but not only physical tickets. Sports marketers also have a target of increasing the broadcasting in the TV and media. Pay-per-view events are also included in this type of categorization. Nowadays it may be easy to forget, but radio plays are still a goal for the marketers too. In conclusion, spectator sports are the events, where the marketer's main goal is to sell tickets there or bring the broadcasting numbers up. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 92-94)

Second in the category there's participation sports. These sports can be seen as some activities that are not universally agreed as a "sport". Including golf, darts, poker, or other sports that are done on an individual basis. It is questionable, that what kind of sports counts on here. In this category, the marketer's mission may be to increase the number of participants. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 92-94)

The third category here is tangible goods, for example athletic apparel, shoes, and other related products. It's a tricky category to define, because even though snowboard, hockey sticks, and football boots are easy to define in this category, there's a lot of tangible apparel that does not certainly belong in the category. The definition is very diverse. Sporting goods refer to a product that is specific to a sport and these are usually sold to a participant in a participation sport for example. Apparel refers to clothing sold to aid a sport or participation to a sport. Usually, the start of a new sports season is the time when the sales of apparel is at the highest. Athletic shoes are very popular in normal wear as well. Air Jordan's were once only for athletic use, but you can see them in everyday use now, even though they are still an athletic shoe. Finally, there's other sports related products, which refer to souvenirs, magazines, and other related products. These kinds of products usually feature in sports and are bought by a spectator in a sports arena, for example. A pint of beer is also included in

this category, even though it might be hard to believe. It is indeed one of the biggest sources of revenue in sporting events. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 92-94)

As well as any marketing, sports marketing traditionally has the same key elements. A specific target market, and an appropriate marketing mix, meaning product, price, place, and promotion. This type of marketing does not require any official relationship with any sports entities. To boost the advertising, the marketing mix can usually be connected to a promotion with an actor or a known athlete, which enhances the visibility with the target market. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 95)

As an addition to the traditional key elements of sports marketing, many organizations add sponsorships to the marketing of their products to enhance their visibility even more. In sponsorship collaborations, the main goal is to try to exploit with an official relationship with a certain sports organization. The concept of sponsorship deals in sports include two parties, the sponsor, and the sponsored. Usually, the most traditional way of sponsoring is characterized as the sponsor's ability to show their logo and brand to leverage the deal and get acknowledgement by the sponsored. In exchange for the visibility, the sponsored will get for example, funding for the organization's operations. It's also possible for the sponsor to acquire something else from the deal, for example endorsements, venue naming rights, or licensing. All these special add-ons have their own categories. Venue naming rights have been categorized as "Building sponsors", endorsement deals have been categorized as "Personal sponsorships", and licensing is arguably associated with sponsorship-based strategies. (Fullerton & Merz, 2008, p. 95)

2.7 Sports Organization and Football Operations in Finland

A sports organization has been defined as a social presence and a being in the sports market or industry. It's a goal-driven, structured system with identifiable boundaries. However, sports organizations are not easily defined because they're very complex systems moulded by social and historical relationships. Every sports organization needs to have an ownership and management, who drives the club forward in decision-making and tries to reach the strategic priorities. Being a profit, or non-profit organization doesn't affect this. The strategic

goals can be anything, and are possibly altered by any ongoing developments, such as competitive, political, or social challenges. (Slack & Luschen, 1998)

On a general level, nearly every aspect of a football club's organizational doings and activities are under evaluation constantly. Going from club's finances, recruiting, to players actions in the field, and everything in between. To make sure that the operations are handled out in a proper way, a football club needs to act like an organization. Finland, as well as the other Nordic countries, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland have the same kind of style in their governments concerning non-profit organizations. (Brunzell & Söderman, 2012, p. 210-211)

Football is a very popular sport in all these countries, and in the recent decades, professionalism and commercialization has taken a big step forward. Almost all top-tier football teams in the Nordics have a head of the organization, a CEO, although there may be different titles for it. Then, there's a sports director or a president of the club, and a board with members, who handle almost all the operational activities in the club. The board members can usually be selected or re-elected by an annual meeting. (Brunzell & Söderman, 2012, p. 210-211)

It's clear to say that the board has a big responsibility to handle the actions of the football club accordingly. Since all the other aspects of a football club are being evaluated, fans, sponsors, and players for example, the board should be evaluated too. This has lacking in some football organizations, and it may lead to inefficiency and failures in the club. (Brunzell & Söderman, 2012, p. 210-211)

2.8 Use of social media in the football industry

During the last 10 years, social media has become a force that's being used by everybody around the world, meaning that it's possible for people to talk about any product, share their experiences on products and the companies that provide these products. Consumer-to-consumer type of communication has evolved into a massive thing, and companies really need to think about their reputation in the social media as well. A normal consumer on the

internet no longer needs to be a passive consumer of information and messages from companies. They can make their own content, and get their voices heard. The communication between a consumer and a company has changed from one-way to two-way communication. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729)

This change has also happened in the sports community, including football industry. Football clubs can have direct conversations with their fans, and it has enhanced these kinds of relationships. Football clubs also give exclusive content from inside clubs, the training grounds, different competitions, and rewards to their most loyal and active fans on social media. Eventually, when done right, social media presence and activity can even grow the revenue of a football club, so it's a very effective tool nowadays. Media is one of the biggest revenue sources for football clubs, and social media is a part of this. Even though TV-broadcasting, publication, and distribution are a big part of media revenue for football clubs, social media marketing is still very important. A fan possibly spends around one to two and a half hours on their favourite team's social media in a week. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729)

As social media is developing vastly to becoming a competition to traditional medias, many football clubs are focused on social medias a lot. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are leading the race as the most used social medias for football clubs. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729). Also, Instagram and TikTok are very used these days. In October 2021, the top ten football clubs in the world collective have over 1.4 billion followers between these five most used social medias. This proves that social media following has a global effect on football clubs, and it needs to be taken seriously. There are thousands of smaller football clubs that's effects are not as global as the top 10 teams, but their effect is more regional, and still very useful. (Sports Business Institute Barcelona, 2021)

Facebook is one of the biggest social networks in the world, and it has a lot of options for users. Chat, posts, creating events, and adding other users are a few of the options. Like other social media's, Facebook is also a useful marketing tool and a brand enhancer for companies and football clubs. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729)

Twitter is a text-based, free network, where people can read, send, and put out tweets to their followers. In the recent years, use of twitter has gathered pace between sports teams,

and it's a good place for teams to communicate with their fans and give out information. With twitter, teams have a lot of capabilities to keep their supporters informed about games, events, and this way strengthen the relationship with fans. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729)

YouTube is a website made in 2005 for sharing videos. It's where the focal point of content is longer, visual videos compared to the other social medias. It's also essential for brands and sports organizations to enhance their presence with their fans. A firm can create specific channels and share visual content and showcase themselves. YouTube gives the opportunity to sports organizations to communicate with their supporters with videos they can watch anytime. Therefore, the content must be relevant to the audience to give any value to them. The followers need to have a reason for watching and sharing the videos. In YouTube, it's also possible to get revenue from advertising, which makes it essential to make the videos as relevant as possible. (Kuzma et al., 2014, p. 729)

Instagram is a visual social media as well. People upload pictures with different captions and messages there. As of 2016, Instagram has over 400 million users per month, and over 80 million photos are uploaded every day, meaning there's a massive audience waiting on Instagram. On average, there's over 60 times more engagement on an Instagram picture than a Facebook post, and it's not a surprise that many football clubs and marketers are moving towards visual social medias. Being consistent with posts, using hashtags, being social and engaging, and sharing related content should be a good way to operate an Instagram account, and if done correctly, it's also a very powerful tool for football clubs to grow their brand and visibility. The numbers of Instagram show that it's worth it to be active there. (Kirtley & Shally-Jensen, 2019, p. 323)

One single social media has emerged during the Covid-19 lockdown, and it's called TikTok. The Chinese social media grew over 75% in 2020 and is now an essential part of sports teams' marketing campaigns. Every top football club has realized by now that how much potential does TikTok have. The content in there is about short, interesting videos, with many football clubs showing clips from matches, the training sessions and footage from behind the scenes. TikTok could still be described as undiscovered land, and for that reason it's a major opportunity for any brand, football clubs included. It also costs nothing to run a

TikTok account. However, getting on top trends and being successful on TikTok perhaps requires a bit more creativity than Instagram, for example. TikTok has a lot of young people using the app, and they require a lot of stimulus and attention in the videos to keep them interesting. Even though many football teams are on TikTok, they're lacking this sort of creativity in their videos. (Iazzi, 2021)

Ever since the social media era has started, there has been a concern over the conversations on the internet. Football clubs are worried that people are talking very offensively or aggressive about their club on the social media, which eventually harms their brand and image. As it's often presented in the form of a "joke", it seems like it's not serious but however, it mostly is. It's very uncertain that what kind of actions should clubs be taking against this sort of behaviour. These comments are also often made on unofficial sports pages, where the actual club can't even find the comments that easily. These unofficial sports pages are very popular nowadays in the social media world and in the football community. These hateful comments and actions have caused a lot of frustration, and it is possible that it even slows some clubs' social media activity. (McCarthy et al., 2014, p. 190-191)

Even though the hate speech could do some damage to the clubs' image, clubs should remain active, and try to gain as many loyal supporters as possible, since it is the key to gaining a big social media presence. It is also known that specially football clubs have a very high brand loyalty between fans compared to other sectors of brands. It is possible that some fans act aggressively on social media simply because they care so much about their favourite football club. The passion football fans have for their clubs is very powerful, and the community is loyal. Therefore, even if it may sound unpleasant, football clubs need to be prepared to let the fans have their voice and express their opinion, even if the opinion is not a positive one. That's the only way to let fans keep their passion and find more common ground with them. (McCarthy et al., 2014, p. 190-191)

In order to maximize one's brand as a football club, it is crucial to know the fans, who are the consumers of the club. For example, it's very important to realize different age groups in terms of social media usage. Clubs often see themselves as the owners of their brand, which is fair, but the situation is not as simple. The brand is an open structure. Any football club

needs to build a certain type of culture to make it forward and evolve their brand size in social media. There needs to be a feeling of mutuality and the supporters need to feel like they're understood, and important in the process, as that's what they really are. Therefore, football clubs don't need to feel agitated about protecting and guarding their brand in social media as it will slow down their success in that sector. Fan engagement is the essential part of growth. As it is the case with any brand, understanding customer behaviour and having a proper system and a plan are ways to maximize the communications in the marketing department. (McCarthy et al., 2014, p. 192)

3 Methodology

This chapter of the research analyses the methods available for gathering information and goes through in a practical way the research methods and the -question that were used, and why. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the ways of research that the author used to find answers to the research question.

3.1 Research

There is a lot of information available regarding the matter of marketing plans, and marketing overall. However, when talking about a niche of Finland and a sports team in this country, the information is limited. Some information is there to be found, but it goes more on a case-to-case basis. Therefore, some assumptions and interpretations must be made to find patterns and types of operations. For this reason, the author has chosen the form of qualitative research for this specific research. To get more information about the commissioning company, Pirkkala Football Club, the qualitative method works the best. Also, it enables getting more thorough insights about PJK, and suggestions tailored to the club. In this case, every small detail matters and words are eventually more meaningful than numbers, meaning that using the quantitative method would not be as effective as the qualitative way. When talking about marketing on a big scale, numbers obviously matter a lot, but the author has made the decision that words, and specific information go a lot further in this specific case.

Qualitative research refers to information gathered in a more interpretational way. Meaning that the information and knowledge comes through experiences and findings, and the research is carried out in purpose of being revised more iteratively, rather than the information being pure numbers and data. There are a few typical ways of gathering information in qualitative research, such as interviewing, focusing on groups, and sampling. All tend to be flexible, and open-ended. Usually in qualitative research, the collected data is not calculable, and it can be interpreted and used until the saturation point is reached, meaning that if there's data from sampling, for example, the data size doesn't need to be as big as in quantitative research. (Denny & Weckesser, 2022)

The focal point of the research is the men's, and women's first teams in futsal, but the club can implement the given ideas for football- and youth teams as well. Marketing for youth- and adult teams differs a little, but the main concepts and the core principles are similar. There are also some challenges within the football side of the club, which will be talked about. However, the author chose to target the futsal teams as a focal point because futsal is the side where the club is more competitive and serious in. For the last few years, PJK has shifted its competitive orientation to futsal, making it more meaningful to point the marketing plan more towards the futsal side. The men's first team is also the team he has most knowledge about, since he's been a part of it for the last five to six years. The observations made along the way provide a very good premise to understand the big picture with the additional information from the interviews. This way the author feels that he can offer the best possible result to the club of PJK and be as effective as achievable. This hopefully leads to a more advanced and detailed end-result. The end goal would be to give PJK useful tips and lay out a blueprint for them to use and implement into their marketing plan. Even though the focal point of view in this case is the first teams in futsal, the aim is to give visibility to the whole club of PJK as one of the mindsets of the club is that it's a big family. Everybody works with each other, and the goal is to make sure that communication is working as well as possible. Therefore, targeting the whole club as an end-goal is important. Every team inside the club is connected to each other. The timespan for the focus points are roughly 1-3 years as marketing and growing a brand is a long process, and one should not be discouraged when the results don't arrive instantly.

3.2 Research Question

To conclude a successful study, a research question needs to be found. The aim of the question is to give direction for the research. The information gathered should be done in a way that it helps answering the research question. The research question for this specific study is: “How can Pirkkala Football Club grow their brand through marketing?” The aim of this research is to provide insights for PJK on overall marketing, digitally and generally, and to give ideas on how to possibly improve their styles of marketing. This research question was chosen because of its character to consider all aspects widely enough when it comes to a football club’s marketing plan. The focus within the research question is the men’s and women’s teams in the futsal side of the club. However, results and suggestions should be implemented within the whole club. The question can’t only be about one focal point of marketing because for a PJK’s sized club every aspect needs to be taken care of. With that being said, the author is in a good basis to do research about all the focal points because PJK does some sort of marketing already, and it has its’ own social media page and websites already. There’s already an Instagram page for almost all the adult teams and some junior teams in PJK. The maintaining of the pages is up to the players themselves, so it’s impossible to expect a perfect approach to social media marketing due the lack of time and knowledge of the players themselves. However, having Instagram pages already is a very good start and it gives a highly promising start to the case.

The research question is a guideline for the research, and if it’s being analysed more thoroughly, it refers to both local campaign marketing and social media marketing. The research question covers both sides as for a business like Pirkkala Football Club, they’re equally important. In both cases, the approach differs a little. On the social media side, the aim is to do all things necessary to gain audience. There are multiple occasions of proof that growing in social media can happen very fast if you have the right tools, but it can also take time even if you’re doing everything right. The right approach in the social media side would be to try and follow the guidelines and see where the situation goes from there. However, PJK doesn’t have to start from point zero in terms of social media marketing. At the time of writing, on their Instagram page the club’s men’s first futsal team has over 500 followers with an average of 60 likes on their most recent photos, and the women’s first team in futsal has over 350 followers with an average of 40 likes, which is a good start for semi-local teams.

The next logical step in terms of social media presence would be to start applying different methods of marketing and be as active as possible, and this applies for both men's and women's teams. Also looking at social media, most successful football clubs have a big presence in all social medias, not just one. This also belongs to the next step of PJK's social media plan. Get active on all platforms.

Then, when looking at the other side of marketing it's important to realize that the most traditional ways are still effective. Local campaign marketing and physical marketing do a lot, especially in a city of Pirkkala, where there's also a big percentage of older people who don't necessarily use that much social media. Traditional marketing is something that can't be forgotten for this reason. As Pirkkala is growing every year as a city and lots of people are moving in. Making sure that the club is seen for everyone, not just people who follow football or futsal, is crucial. Newspapers, events, advertising, and such are some of the ways to make the club be seen by everyone. However, PJK isn't new to this either, it's just a matter of growing the process and expanding the methods. Something that's already very good in PJK's local marketing is using signboards in Pirkkala. The club has planted signs to the most congested spots in the city, where there's information about the next home game. So far, there's no data available on how this has affected the number of people coming to games, but the idea has potential to grow. So, the next logical step of campaign marketing for PJK is to assess the most useful ways of marketing and getting the club out to be seen in all Pirkkala and expanding the ideas. The ultimate goal is to grow the brand as much as possible in all Finland, but this takes time, and it should be noted that everything in life, also marketing, requires patience and hard work, that's the most important thing. Starting from Pirkkala region, all the way to Pirkanmaa region, the aim is to make people interested about PJK, and this way grow the brand.

To conclude, as the research question is about a brand, it's important to remember that the term carries two meanings in this research, social media marketing and local campaign marketing, which are equally important.

3.3 Research Methods

There are a few different methods used in this research. First one being data collected from different scientific journals, books, and articles. The author used mainly HAMK -library, and Google Scholar as tools with finding the correct information. This sort of information isn't necessarily connected to Pirkkala Football Club's case in this research, as there's not much available, but can and will influence any football club trying to improve their marketing, however. Scientific journals were used because it's a way to confirm that the data found is trustful and properly researched. To be as useful as possible and to reach the trust of PJK, all the information must be top tier. The author chose to use HAMK -library as a tool for finding these journals and books, because it's very broad, and there's hundreds of professional journals to be found there. Also, other types of research about similar topics were used as a comparison by the author because the author thinks that it can be useful to see what kind of methods has worked for others when comparing clubs of different sizes from different countries and leagues.

To gather information about the club and advanced guidelines from a marketing professional in the sports industry in Finland, the author conducted two interviews. Interviews are a great method to gather precise data, and it fits the qualitative method perfectly. Both interviews were with PJK's members. The first interview was held with three board members: the sports director of men's first team, Risto Hiltunen, the executive director of the club, Jussi Jokilampi, and a player of the women's first team in futsal and a marketing professional, Essi Salonen. This gave the author a great amount of knowledge of the actions and plans of the club. The second interview was conducted with the head coach of men's, and women's first teams, Antti-Petteri Mäkinen. He also provided a lot of information about the club from inside the field, and its actions in detail. The interview with Hiltunen, Jokilampi and Salonen was conducted as a big meeting, in the offices of Pirkkala Football Club. The club just recently acquired the premises in Loukonlahti, Pirkkala, and it was the perfect place to break into the details of the club's aspirations.

The author himself has been a part of PJK's organization for over ten years, which gives him an arsenal of knowledge about the club, too. Being associated with a certain club has given him a vast base knowledge about the personality of the football club and where are they

heading. However, there's still a great amount of information missing, and the interviews were a great provider for this issue. From the overall information gathered in the theory - part, the survey, and the author's own knowledge about the club, he conducted a SWOT-analysis about PJK. The SWOT gives a clear picture of what are the club's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This is also useful for PJK, because in recent history, there hasn't been a SWOT-analysis done about them.

To conclude the information gathered about the club, the author is creating a marketing mix -template, which gives PJK a guideline on their marketing. The marketing mix includes information about the product, place, price, and promotion.

3.4 Interview

As said in the previous chapter, two interviews were conducted to get more thorough information and data about Pirkkala Football Club and its' plan for the next few years. The interviews were held to gather as much information as possible about the club's plans and aspirations for the near future.

Two interviews were be conducted with PJK members. The first interview was conducted with Pirkkala Football Club's board member and the sports director of men's first team, Risto Hiltunen, the club's executive director, Jussi Jokilampi, and a player of the women's first futsal team and a marketing professional, Essi Salonen. The author chose the interview Hiltunen, Jokilampi, and Salonen because they are experienced members of the club, and they know many different teams in the club very well. Salonen has great knowledge about marketing, and she has also done communications for the Finnish national futsal team. Specially Hiltunen is connected to the youth teams and has experience on many different positions within the club, and Jokilampi as the executive director has great knowledge about finances and the economic activity of the club. They all also have knowledge about the financial situation of the club and can offer a good number of insights about the club's direction. Any member of the board or club could have been chosen for the interview, but the final decision came to Hiltunen, Jokilampi, and Salonen due to the author and Hiltunen already knowing each other well, and Jokilampi and Salonen being a very important factor in the club's direction for the future. The interview was about the club's actions and plans

about the future and present. They all have a lot of information about the club's actions off-the-field and gave a thorough picture of PJK. They were asked around six questions and they were as followed: "What are the club's goals regarding marketing and visibility for the next two-five years?", "What are some things you see as strengths and development targets for PJK at the moment?", "What are the base values and goals for the whole football club?", "Can you name the biggest competitors for PJK in terms of visibility in the Tampere -region, and what do you think they are doing better than us?", "What are the preconditions for a football club of this size to succeed? What are the main focal points?", "Are there any enlargements in sight regarding the training and playing conditions in Pirkkala?". The questions also sparked new conversations and questions, which had a lot of value in terms of knowledge about the club.

The second interview of members from PJK was conducted with the head coach of the men's, and women's first team, Antti-Petteri Mäkinen. Mr. Mäkinen has a long-lasting connection with the club and knows them very well. He has been a member of the team for over ten years, first as a player and now as a head coach of the men's, and women's first teams in futsal. He's also started as an assistant coach of the men's national futsal team last year. Mäkinen was chosen to be interviewed by the author because of his experience. The author has been able to follow him closely for many years already, first as a teammate and then as a coach. Mäkinen is also involved with many teams at the same time, which makes his information range very broad. His involvement with the women's first team in futsal also gave a great viewpoint to the interview. He has a great deal of knowledge about the club, and its' aspirations on and off the field. He was asked six questions that also sparked more questions. They were as follows: "Is PJK competing well with other teams in the Pirkanmaa - region in terms of visibility?", "How do you think PJK could grow their brand and reputation?", "What do you think are strengths of PJK as a club? On and off the field?", "While you've been in the club, what are some things that have progressed the most in the actions of the club?", "Do you feel like there's any barriers for PJK to grow their brand?", "PJK's fantastic junior work has brought up many players into national teams and to some of the best futsal teams in the country. This gives a great deal of boost to the club, by what means does the club plan on keeping up with this trend?". Mr. Mäkinen also gave insights about PJK strategically on the field, which has an impact on the way the club acts. Everything is connected in a football club.

Based on the information gathered in the interviews, and data found from scientific journals, a marketing mix and a marketing plan were created and tailored to match the club's intentions.

3.5 Limitations

There have been a few challenges in the process of finding data. The first challenge when researching about a club of PJK's size, is the lack of information about other similar research journals. Even when regarding the lack of information, the author has been driven on making the research about Pirkkala Football Club because of the mental connection he has with the club. The data is limited when talking about research of Finnish football clubs overall and specially if they're not playing in the biggest leagues. Even though when PJK's women's first team is playing in Women's Futsal Liiga, and the men's first team has played in Men's Futsal Liiga, futsal as a sport hasn't risen as a sport that's very covered yet. However, the success of Finland's national futsal team has had a wonderful effect on the visibility of futsal. Just a few years ago, YLE, which is the most watched Finnish Broadcasting Company in Finland's national public service media company (Yle.fi, 2018), started showing the Finland's national team's games when they were trying to reach the European Championship -tournament. They were eventually successful and competed on the tournament for the first time in the National Team's history.

However, when talking about enhancing brand visibility for football & futsal clubs, the basic concepts are similar, even though every club's situation is different and unique. There are many different useful, even on a professional scale, guidelines for football clubs and their branding and social media marketing, and those can be used in PJK's situation as well. Of course, every bit of data must be filtered and tailored to the club's personal situation, but the basic concepts are very reachable.

Another limitation for the thesis is the lack of precise target audience during the interviews. This makes the planning for marketing a little more challenging. However, this is not a big problem because the target audience can also be measured and decided in a later stage of the implementation of the marketing plan. This was a decision made by the author because

it made more sense to just focus on the internal points of marketing during the interviews of Hiltunen, Jokilampi, Salonen and Mäkinen. The basis of the scale of marketing and content can be planned before the precise separation of the target audience for different platforms.

4 Results

4.1 Data Collected

The first interview was held with Risto Hiltunen, Jussi Jokilampi, and Essi Salonen in PJK's premises in Pirkkala. The interview was held in an open manner and a better word for it could be a discussion. The author, and the interviewees preferred this style of an interview because it allows everyone to think more freely, and it may guide the conversation to a different route.

The interview started with questions: ““What are the club's goals regarding marketing and visibility for the next two-five years?”, “What are some things you see as strengths and development targets for PJK at the moment?”. These are broad questions, and it took a while to break them down. They stated that it's almost impossible to compete with other bigger teams in Tampere in visibility because they have a lot of background people and routine in the media presence. Hiltunen also brought up the club's desire to grow to a bigger role in the competitive world of futsal because of the situation with other teams in Tampere. He also mentioned the promising situation with the new futsal court in Pirkkala that should be built in the next two years. At this point a problem with lack of staff was presented. At the end of the day, PJK is built on voluntary actions and it's challenging to get more people involved. Salonen stated that it makes bringing the club forward hard and the same problem can also be seen with the women's team. Additionally, the lack of players complicates the recruitment of new players. Another challenge that was brought up at this point was the lack of space in counts Pirkkala, there are many junior teams that have struggled with getting training shifts on the pitch. Luckily, the new court in will facilitate the issue.

The author then asked about the preconditions for a sports club of this size to succeed. Everyone agreed that some of these conditions had already been met in PJK, but some still had work to do. One of these conditions was backroom staff, that's what the club is lacking the most. Then, there's playing conditions, sponsors, sporting success, and a basis of familiarity in the world. Lastly, sporting success was the topic, and everyone agreed that the men's first team in futsal promoting to Futsal-Liiga would be important for both men's and women's teams.

The second interview was done with Antti-Petteri Mäkinen, the futsal team's coach. The topics with him circled more on the sporting side of operations. As a first thing in the interview, he stated that the team for the upcoming season is the best in a while, and that the feeling for the upcoming season is high within the whole team. There are a few new additions in the team and the younger players are once again a year older and more mature. The club is looking to fight for a finish in the top 2 positions. Mäkinen was asked about the affordability from the players point of view and his vision was that it's one of the perks of PJK. The men's team play for free, and the women's team play with an affordable price per season. The premises in Pirkkala are quality and distances in the Pirkanmaa region are decent. Playing futsal in PJK is affordable and enjoyable, to sum the comments up. The topic then shifted to the PJK's competition in visibility in the Pirkanmaa region. Mäkinen thought that since there's a drop of teams in numbers and quality in Tampere, there's now a chance to strike. However, there's still a risk that PJK gets left in the shadow of the bigger clubs. He also added a comment that the national team's success has brought more viewers into the sport, which is fantastic.

Mäkinen also shared his thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of PJK in both futsal and football. He thought that in football, the contrast to bigger teams in Tampere is massive and PJK doesn't have enough capability and resources to compete with this, on-the-field, and off-the-field. In futsal the contrast isn't nearly as big, and it would be a big statement to promote back to Futsal-Liiga now. If PJK's men's team doesn't promote, there's a risk of losing many young players to bigger teams again. It's acceptable for the young players to go and test themselves in the bigger teams and leagues, however. Now's the time to strike, says Mäkinen. For the end, Mäkinen gave some thoughts on the things PJK has most improved on as a club during the years he's been there. The number of juniors, premises, whole futsal as

a sport, finances, and the ability to offer good quality hobby activities to youth are a few things that became a topic. The author and Mäkinen ended the interview with an agreement that to grow the sport of futsal in PJK, more coaches and backroom staff are badly needed. It's the biggest thing that's holding the club back.

5 Analysis

After conducting the interviews with the members of Pirkkala Football Club, the author was able to put together a SWOT-analysis, which was defined in the "Theory" -chapter of the thesis, regarding the club. The SWOT was chosen as the main method of analysis because it's a clear way of showing one's advantages and liabilities. This way PJK gets a visual representation of their pros and cons, which will be useful. Together with the marketing plan, the SWOT-analysis is a good way to communicate to the board and members of PJK that what are the findings of the research. It's also easy to read for someone who's not very invested in the subject. Mäkinen was able to provide a well detailed description about the men's and women's teams characteristics, however the information was more about on-the-field topics. This interview was supplemented well by the interview with Hiltunen, Jokilampi, and Salonen, who had a lot of additions and ideas for off-the-field topics as well. The reasoning behind choosing these two interviews before conducting the SWOT-analysis was to get enough data from within the club. The people chosen for these two interviews complemented each other, so enough information was gathered from every perspective. All the points are thought to be more suited to the futsal side of the club, unless mentioned otherwise.

5.1 SWOT-Analysis

When comparing PJK's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to other teams during the interviews, the most suitable area for comparing was chosen to be the Pirkanmaa region. This is because now, most of the players in the club are from the Pirkanmaa region, the visibility of the club isn't broad enough, and the opportunity to offer financial benefits to players isn't realistic enough to be getting players from the capital region, for example. All

results would be too underwhelming if the comparison would be too broad, and that wouldn't be useful at all. (R. Hiltunen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

5.1.1 Strengths

Together with the interviewees, the author concluded that one of the major advantages and strengths of PJK is affordability from the players point of view. A player gets good support from the club, and from Pirkkala municipality as well, in terms of field turns. The players from the men's first team in futsal don't have to pay a seasonal fee, which is quite rare at this level. The travel, overnight stays and dining is also almost entirely covered by the club during away games. This is because of the balanced and healthy financial situation of the club. The roots of PJK grow deep starting from enthusiastic junior work all the way to adults where there's people who are committed to the cause, and willing to spend their own free time without getting paid for it. According to Hiltunen, on the futsal side, PJK sees itself as a pure competitive club trying to aim as high as possible regarding sporting success and this kind of affordability is one of the ways to push this goal further. (R. Hiltunen & A. Mäkinen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

As concluded with Mäkinen, the players women's first team in futsal, however, still must pay a season fee, but it's relatively cheap, and the club is determined to work towards them playing for free too. The fact that they must pay the fee is because the women's first team in futsal is more recent, and the team doesn't have as much players as the men's team yet. The circle of operators is not as big as hoped yet. The club is hoping that this will hopefully change soon. The seasonal fee on the women's futsal side, however, can still be defined as a strength when comparing to the other teams in women's Futsal Liiga. This kind of affordability is very important when new players are deciding on where they want to come and play the next futsal season, and this is something the club is very proud of and determined to keep the trend going through hard work. (R. Hiltunen, A. Mäkinen & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

On the football side, every team must pay a seasonal fee, both men and women, due to the competition and operations being relatively smaller compared to futsal. Also, that's something that the club is not actively looking to change. On the footballing side of the organization, the club's focus and identity is to grow young players, give them a platform to develop, and next to that, offer hobby opportunities to people in Pirkkala. These are the kind of values the club possesses on the footballing side, meaning that it's impossible to try to erase seasonal fees, but they're still very affordable. On the men's side, it's also possible to shorten the seasonal fee by participating in voluntary actions with the club's partners, such as doing work shifts in one of the open saunas in Pirkkala. The more work you do, the more fee you shorten. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

Another strength within the club is the junior activity. As said, one of the core values of PJK is to offer versatile and high-quality activities from kids to adults. Community spirit, commitment, positivity, and justice work as a bottom for the club's identity. The goal is to enable a clear pathway for a young player to start playing from a young age and to develop all the way to an adult playing in the national team. Now, the club has roughly about 37 different teams from kids to adults and 280 boys, 80 girls, 70 men, and 20 women playing in the club. With about 80 voluntary coaches and background personnel, the junior activities are at a very good basis to work properly. Most of the functioning teams are on the football side of the club because it's commonly more popular than futsal. Also, there's more voluntary coaches available for football than futsal, which is understandable. This voluntary coaching is vital for the functionality of the club. In Pirkkala, there's a lot of families with children nowadays, and when PJK offers quality facilities and teams, many parents with their children playing in PJK want to get involved themselves, too. In the football side, this situation is very healthy and can be seen as a major strength in PJK's activity. However, in the futsal side the situation is not as good. The premises in Pirkkala are fantastic for training and playing futsal, the problem is that they're not enough. This topic will be more thoroughly discussed in the "weakness" paragraph. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

Another strength in the football side is, as said, the premises. Two of the best fields in Pirkkala are called Keskuskenttä, which is artificial grass, and Killon kenttä, which is real grass. During the winter months, there's no heating in Keskuskenttä, but with these fields it's

possible to train from very early spring until snow comes. On top of these two fields, there's multiple other artificial football fields in Pirkkala that can be used for junior activities and training. There's room for everybody. (A. Mäkinen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

When transitioning to the futsal side, the premises are at the same time a strength, and a weakness. First, the two courts, dimensioned for playing futsal games, in Pirkkala are in fantastic condition. Pirkkalan Liikuntatalo is the court where both men's and women's first teams usually play their home games, is a large futsal field and its' parquet was recently changed as well. The stands are relatively well sized and multiple hundred people can fit in there during gamedays. There's also a coffee shop, a gym, and multiple locker rooms that's enough to fit everybody. Liikuntatalo can be seen as the main hall in Pirkkala for playing futsal. Then, there's Nuolialan Koulu, which contains a relatively new quality futsal parquet, also dimensioned for playing futsal games. The downside of Nuoliala is that it doesn't contain stands, which is bad for ticket revenue if a team plays there. It's not common in the Pirkanmaa region to have two futsal parquets nearby each other. This makes Pirkkala quite unique. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

5.1.2 Weaknesses

In sports, weaknesses are rather seen as development targets. As a word, weakness sounds like something that's not improvable, and that's not how people in PJK see things. There's always a constant drive for improving and making things better. A weakness in a SWOT-analysis is categorized as something that can be affected from within, meaning that the problem is mainly internal. There can be a lot of things going right and a lot of things going wrong with a football club and in PJK's case, there's still a lot of room for improvement, even though the club is doing fantastically in many aspects.

One of the development targets that the author concluded with the interviewees was about the club's identity. In sports, it's crucial to have a clear image of what you're trying to achieve as a football- or futsal club, to have an identity. When the direction is clear, it's easier for people to follow. This concerns every part of the club. Sponsors, players, and fans are more likely to start affiliate with the club if has a direction. On a positive note, Pirkkala Football Club has great values and goals. The problem is about getting them exporting them

more efficiently. The value of youth, positivity, and competitive- and community spirit are great values and a great foundation to build on. The problem is that somebody from outside the club may not see that identity very clearly. As Salonen brought up during the interview, she has experienced in her work that when a club's identity and goals are clear, possible sponsors and players are more likely to join the club's idea and direction. The community spirit is there to be felt in the club, but this needs to happen with the people outside the club as well. Having clear values and an image is a fundamental part of growing a brand, and it can be acquired by the right kind of marketing. This would be important for the men's and women's futsal teams, given the fact that both teams need improvements, players and background personnel included. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

The need of improvements is a good lead for the next problem, the lack of staff and people behind the scenes. This will always be a problem when dealing with clubs of this size. Paying salaries is challenging, and there's just enough people that allow the club to operate properly now. If and when Pirkkala Football Club wants to start growing its brand, this becomes a problem. However, now PJK employs two people, and this is a big step into growing the brand. Of course, a club shouldn't just hire as many people as possible but analyse their financial situation and decide if hiring is profitable and PJK has done just that. The most recent recruit for PJK is their youth manager and physio coach, Kari Salovaara. He operates within all the teams in PJK and organizes physical coaching for everyone. Having a physio coach is a big step forward and it's an advantage and an enticement for future players joining the club. However, this trend would have to continue to allow PJK to grow. Backroom staff and personnel are incredibly important for any football or futsal team. The lack of recruitment forces the current backroom staff to multitask between different jobs. It also must be mentioned that it's obviously not given that a club that is based on voluntary actions can just get more backroom personnel. The only way to work towards it is to try and make the club as attractive as possible. This takes the conversation back to bringing forward the club's identity and marketing. As Salonen mentioned during the interview, it can be challenging to entice future players to join because there's not enough players nor a proper pathway for them to move forward and progress. This, however, is understandable because the women's futsal operations in the club are still new and building a proper structure and

base can take years. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

The third weakness in the club's actions now is the activity in social media. After all, social media is one of the fastest ways of growing a brand and get activity around the club. The marketing in social media can either be paid marketing or organic and free marketing. Paid marketing is usually more effective but doing it for free can also have a significant impact on the brand. Now, in both men's and women's futsal teams the activity on social media is down to the players themselves, which is fine. However, it can lead to inactivity if there's not people who are interested enough to keep the social media platforms alive, or if there's not a clear plan on how frequently they should post, for example. This is one of the things where Pirkkala Football Club gets left behind when compared to other football or futsal teams in the Pirkanmaa region or even Futsal-Liiga. In addition, as many competitors of PJK regarding brand visibility may use paid ads on their social medias, updating the ad system on PJK's socials would be smart. As talked about in the theory part, the biggest social medias nowadays are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. All these platforms have different user profiles, and it would be foolish to take advantage of these medias and use them properly. Pirkkala Football Club could start with creating an account on all of them and try being active. Also, posting interesting content to the specific age groups on different medias makes the social media usage more effective. For example, on TikTok, the content is visual with a short time span, and in TikTok the target market could be a little more youthful compared to Facebook, for example. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

However, the problem with social media in PJK isn't that nobody knows how to do social media properly, there's just not enough people to keep all the pages up and running. As mentioned before, there's a serious lack of backroom personnel within the whole club, and even if the club decided to recruit more people, the social media handler wouldn't be first on the list, unfortunately. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

5.1.3 Threats

Threats may be a sum of many external and internal problems. As there are also big teams in Tampere, on the football side of things at least, Pirkkala Football Club is constantly fighting for its name, and when there's a lot of teams, there's a threat of being left behind. For example, for a relatively new football fan, teams like Ilves or TPV may sound familiar already. People who start gaining interest in football tend to become fans of these teams more easily than PJK. It's not easy to challenge these bigger brands and teams in terms of number of staff, coaches, and premises. The bigger teams in Tampere have more resources and opportunities to get more coaches and people behind the scenes. Also, PJK must accept this situation as it would not be wise to try and battle these bigger teams now. This is one of the reasons why Pirkkala Football Club has shifted its competitive ambitions to futsal. In the futsal side, things are looking clearer. There's not as much competition because right now, there's not as many big teams from Tampere competing in the higher leagues than before. The biggest team in the Tampere region, Ilves just dropped to the second division, and the second team in Tampere, PP-70 also gave up their club activities and place in the first division, which makes things easier for PJK. PP-70 and Ilves were two of the biggest competitors for Pirkkala Football Club. However, there's still a lot of competitors left in the Pirkanmaa region. Amongst them are Mad Max, Akaa Futsal, TP-49, and Vehmaisten Urheilijat. In the first division, Pirkkala Football Club has the biggest resources in Pirkanmaa and more of a chance to attract quality players from the Tampere region and the club is starting to look like a competitive and tempting place for a player's point of view. The current players' willingness and enthusiasm to change their competitive focus to futsal has also been pivotal to this change. Players see a clearer path to the top through futsal, compared to football. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

Another threat on the futsal side for a team of PJK's size is the involvement and activity of fans and match goers. The men's and women's first teams are very ambitious and having a full crowd of fans during home games is an important part of the growth. There's been some occasions when the popularity of PJK's home games hasn't been very good. This can happen when the games don't go as planned and the results aren't positive. This, of course, is not the fans' fault but rather a common phenomenon in this kind of situation. The

challenge is to know how to handle these moments. The same problem is also present in the home games in football, but the main focus of the club is to keep the fans active in futsal games. Pirkkala Football Club needs to find a way to get the fans more involved and intrigued, which would keep the stands fuller even when the results aren't there. It's important for the brand and the team's image that the home games are well organized, quality events where a viewer would like to return. (A. Mäkinen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

Even though the futsal premises in Pirkkala are in great condition, the number of fields may not be enough in the long run. In PJK, there are many junior teams already, and with that number growing even bigger in the coming years, there's a risk that every team can't get enough training sessions due to the lack of availability in courts. The threat is that for some juniors, this is the thing that cuts down their involvement with PJK and they move on to other sports. In addition to futsal, there's many floorball, basketball, and other indoor exercise teams in Pirkkala and with this in mind, it's understandable that it's challenging to organize room for everybody. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

Hopefully, there may be a solution that would facilitate this problem. Pirkkalan Liikuntatalo, which is the home court for many teams in Pirkkala, including the representative futsal teams of men and women, is planning to expand in the next two years. The plan is that there would be another full-size indoor field in Pirkkala, with a parquet and opportunities for all the indoor sports that are played in Pirkkala. It would locate next to the current Liikuntatalo, and it would meet the standards of a futsal court. (R. Hiltunen, J. Jokilampi & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

5.1.4 Opportunities

The biggest opportunities for the club are clearly for the futsal side of the club, as that's the side the club is more ambitious in. As talked about in the threat category, fan activity can be a massive opportunity as well. When the results are there, the stands get fuller. This sort of

trend should be kept going. There still a big space for improvement and Pirkkala is full of potential customers. With improved marketing there's a chance of getting even more people to watch games and participate in the culture of PJK. There's a lot of available merchandise, season tickets, possibilities for club memberships and more. As Pirkkala keeps growing in the number of inhabitants every year, there's a great market gap to fill as the most attractive sports team in Pirkkala from a fan's perspective. One part of this is to get the information about gamedays and other schedules out there for the people. After that, it's about making the match events as entertaining and pleasant as possible. The premises are there to accommodate this goal as Pirkkalan Liikuntatalo is a convenient place to come and watch games. It's in the centre of Pirkkala right by the bus line, with a quite spacious parking area. One of the unofficial goals of the club is to improve the range of the people coming to watch the games, from friends, family and relative to other people with no similar connection to the club. This can be done with proper marketing and with improving the image and the brand of the club. (R. Hiltunen & A. Mäkinen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

The other opportunity applies more to the whole club. As PJK offers good hobby opportunities for the youth, it has a chance to continue growing as it has over the past years already. The number of young people playing in the club grows every year, in both football and futsal. The junior activities have grown massively over the couple of years. One thing that's very promising is that specially the number of girl players has grown massively. Growing the number of young players aligns well with the whole club's identity and is also a way to grow the brand. A lot of families are moving in Pirkkala, and the parents are looking for hobby opportunities for their children. Pirkkala Football Club offers a great number of teams for youngsters of all ages and this way their parents become familiar with the club as well. (R. Hiltunen & A. Mäkinen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

One of the opportunities that must be mentioned is the market gap in men's futsal in the Tampere region right now. The goal within PJK's futsal teams is to solidify the place as one of the biggest futsal teams in Tampere and Pirkanmaa. In men's futsal, the situation with competition is ideal now, as many of the other bigger teams are not as competitive, such as PP-70 and Ilves. PJK has all the tools to become one of the biggest futsal teams in Pirkanmaa in the coming years if they play their cards right. These tools include ambition, good basis of the team, proper junior activity, good training opportunities and people that are committed

to taking things forward. As mentioned already, there are many obstacles, threats, and development targets within the club but nevertheless, it's very much possible to move forward and grow as a club while working on these improvements. One of the subgoals in growing to a big factor in futsal in Pirkanmaa is to promote the men's first team back to Futsal-Liiga. The years back in Futsal-Ykkönen, the first division behind Futsal-Liiga, have been instructive for the club in the middle of a "rejuvenation surgery". The core of the team is getting younger and many young players in the team have taken big steps in their development in the lower league. Now, in the next few years the goal is to get back up again. This is necessary for the club's growth in terms of both sporting and branding matters. Getting back to Futsal-Liiga would help the team with keeping their best players and attracting new ones. Gaining promotion would also be helpful for the women's first team. The popularity of PJK's brand would surely increase with promotion and that way bring player traffic to the women's team as well. The women's first team needs new players and creating a more enticing player path for new players is certainly one of the major goals in the women's team now. To conclude, now is the time to strike for PJK. If the club wants to take advantage of the other teams' situations in Tampere, it's time to put on a new gear. (R. Hiltunen, A. Mäkinen & E. Salonen, personal interview, August 31, 2022)

6 Recommendations

6.1 Review

A review of the of the SWOT-analysis is necessary to gather the pros and cons. So far, the club doesn't have a clear order of a marketing plan. Making a clear schedule could possibly make marketing feel less like of a burden. Pirkkala Football Club has some potential aspects to its marketing, and now the goal is to make a more driven approach. There are many things that can be improved even with little effort. There are obviously clear obstacles and problems that make it harder, but improvement doesn't always come easy. One of the problems analysed was the lack of backroom staff and personnel to keep things rolling in the background. Every staff member at the club already has their hands full and it's not fair to assume that these people can squeeze more free time out of their day since they're not employees of PJK, almost everyone working in the staff has a different day job and own

schedules. The club employs two people now, and they both have very much on their plate already.

The work that PJK does now, however, is already brilliant and it cannot be undermined. The club's brand and operations have already grown exponentially and for example the club's finances are in a good place right now. The opportunities that lie within the situation with competition in futsal and the junior activities in the club, are promising and a good basis to build on. PJK's in a good place right now, and the right kind of marketing can bring them car. It should also be noticed that success inside the pitch is one of the best ways of marketing a football or futsal team. Everything comes down to how well are the different teams in the club competing. Success inside and outside the pitch is a perfect combination for marketing. Including more sponsors or the municipality of Pirkkala could also play a factor in improving the club, and of course, one of the goals of marketing with the club is to gain more backers behind the club and get collaborations with local companies.

Improving the self-identity and brand image comes with time and cannot be done at once. It's an accumulation of many actions. It's about bringing the values of the club forward, with both words and actions. One or the other isn't enough.

6.2 Goals

One thing that has been mentioned during the interviews about suggestions and goals within marketing was the identity of the club, the brand need to be out more. Now, the only place you can see the values of PJK is from their website behind many links. This means it's not out there enough. A specific goal regarding this could be to try and mention this in as many places as possible. For example, junior events, in advertising, social media, and match days. The hoped end goal would be that people recognize a personality when PJK is mentioned whether it's regarding the playing style, the club's values, or even their junior work. Mind association is important. For example, many different sports clubs have a clear reputation and people associate them with something specific when hearing the club's name, and that's valuable. These kinds of reputations may not always be seemed by someone who's not interested in the sport or is not paying attention to it, but for someone who's interested, it's clear. In the scale of Finnish football, the task is going to take time, of

course, but Pirkkala Football Club has values it wants to be known for and it's just about pushing the agenda. Junior work, community spirit, pathway from junior to adult, and competitive nature of the futsal side of actions are on the front foot and should be pushed forward. This can lead to more activity in the collaboration and sponsorship aspect.

PJK seriously wants to up their social media marketing and this should definitely be done. The goal could be to at least have an account on every big social media platform and try to post actively on each one with interesting content aimed at the right target audience. They could set a goal that's measured with followers, likes or interactions for example. TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram for example. For some of the accounts, paid advertising could be a welcomed idea. This kind of advertising could be connected to an event or potentially a match day. Some of the board members have expressed their openness for paid advertising and it would have a positive impact on the club's social media presence. However, with paid online marketing it's important to figure out the specific audience and content you want to advertise with. Otherwise, the funds used on the marketing campaigns are going to be lost because they're not going to make any kind of noticeable difference. Regarding the content on social media, there's a lot of different opportunities of different posts, such as challenges, contests, raffles, and interviews. Familiarizing the players and coaches makes them more relatable for the public eye and makes people interested. The goal would be to make relatable content on top of the match highlights and announcements.

7 Marketing Plan

This is the segment, where the marketing plan is conducted and written down. All the suggestions below are realistic targets to be fulfilled in the short-, mid-, and long-term future from a marketing perspective. Some actions are more specific to the men's and women's first teams in futsal, and some are indicated for the whole club. Many of the topics have already been mentioned and discussed previously in the thesis but the author has decided to gather them up in a conductive segment of the thesis, called the "Marketing Plan". The points below are only suggestions, and the club can interpret and implement them as they

wish. The suggestions are the authors interpretation of what could be made to enhance the marketing of Pirkkala Football Club.

7.1 Brand and Values

This part covers the short-, mid-, and long-term suggestions and solutions for the club's brand and values, and what solutions can be found that enhance the club from a marketing perspective. Something that makes the club's identity more enticing to an outside person. These solutions can be implemented by the whole club, both futsal and football side included because at the end of the day, Pirkkala Football Club is one brand no matter what the specific team is.

First point for the mid-term future is to try and bring out club's already set values forward in all operations. This suggestion is fairly wide, and it can be interpreted in many ways but since values are not tangible, it's challenging to make this point not open to interpretation. Identifying and bringing up the values and identity of a club can be done by words or actions. Actions are the ones that have the most impact. First, the values need to be seen more in the club's web page, and other medias. This will be addressed more in the social media section. Then, actions need to follow to supplement the values. The identity of Pirkkala Football Club, especially on the futsal side is to be a competitive and serious club. The goal is to become an even bigger force in the Pirkanmaa futsal culture. To work towards this, all the actions by the club must speak for themselves. It's clear that this goal is interpretative, but the point is to fundamentally make decisions based on this thought.

A suggestion for the medium- and long-term future is to try and up the collaboration with Pirkkala municipality and the backers of the club. Collaboration of many parties always leads to more visibility, and it can be enhanced by organizing more events, for example. PJK has already organized events for sponsors in the past, which is great. However, these kinds of actions could be increased. Additionally, some form of events could also be held with sponsors, for all people in Pirkkala. This could also waken the interest of other potential backers in the nearby area. There are many companies and firms in Pirkkala that have potential for collaboration, but the link between PJK and these firms is missing. Collaboration could also be a one-time thing, instead of the company becoming a backer of

the club. Some companies may be more open for this kind of collaboration because it's more of a short-term investment. As an example, a joint effort with a known brand in Pirkkala could be arranged. Preferably a firm with at least some sort of social media presence. The collaboration could be documented through social media, and it would act as content for the social media channels. Commercial co-operation is very common these days, and it's a fast way to solidify one's presence in the social media, possibly even create more revenue. It also contains very little risk due to its tendency to be short-term, so execution wouldn't be a problem.

Affordability for players is one of PJK's key marketing leads and it's something that should be held on tight. The club is a forerunner in this matter and it's a clear advantage when compared to other clubs of the same size, even when talking about Finland as a whole. So, affordability isn't a goal that is new but rather something that it important to be maintained in the long run for the good of the marketing benefit. Of course, this is a benefit that applies most the potential new players for the club, but that leads to improvement in the sporting matters and strengthens the club's values and identity.

7.2 Personal Marketing

This part covers suggestions for the short-, and mid-term for PJK in terms of marketing themselves, mainly to the potential backers and collaborators and how to make themselves easily approachable, and a tempting partner.

An aspect that was mentioned in the interviews as well, was an email marketing template. This is a short-term suggestion, and it should be noted that the author chose to include this point for the good of the marketing value of the club. It's very important to present yourself as a club very clearly and professionally. This should be done by the time there's an attempt at getting new backers and collaborators for the club. There's been a few mentions from inside the club that it can get a little bit confusing when trying to offer collaboration with Pirkkala Football Club for companies, when the terms and amounts are not as clear. A clear, impressive email template will be of help. First, the template should include pricing. The club needs to decide what is the "product" they want to sell. When thinking of a marketing mix, "product" and "price" are a central part. The price is for the club to decide, but the product

should be around advertisement in shirts, gear, ads on the screens during matchdays, events, tickets, and so on. Many of these are already being offered now and the situation with backers is good. However, the situation can be improved and there can never be too many backers. Overall, the email template that is sent to companies in the process of negotiating for collaborations, should include the prices, different packages, and what each of them includes. Companies need to have the opportunity to contribute with an amount of their liking, and then have their money's worth of return. A second thing that can be done within the template or email is the stressing of the club's values and identity. The author mentioned them previously and this is one of the situations where it's important that they're mentioned and described well. It needs to be clear to the potential backers that who are they collaborating with, and for what cause.

Another step regarding backers for the club could be to go through firms in the Pirkkala area and contact the potential ones about collaboration. There are loads of companies in Pirkkala that could possibly be open to working with PJK, and it's something that's worth checking out. There's a lot of so called "uncharted area" left to be contacted. Using a proper email template and presenting the ideas professionally and with a driven mindset will potentially lead to more backers for the club, which is a clear path to supporting the club's sporting goals and enhancing their visibility in Pirkkala. It applies to the whole club and it's up to the club to decide whether they want to use the majority of backing to futsal or football success. At least for the futsal teams, this suggestion is for a mid-term timespan because it will take time and there's understandably a lot more urgent matters in the middle of a season. This could potentially take place next summer when there's a summer break from Futsal-Liiga and Futsal Ykkönen.

7.3 Social Media

Potentially the biggest part of the plan is activity in social media. This part covers most of the author's ideas regarding all medias, and they can be implemented to the whole club. Each team in PJK can take ideas and decide, whether they could be used. The points could already be interpreted in a short-term timespan.

First and foremost, creating accounts for every big and trending social media is a must. Now, a few teams in PJK have their own Instagram pages, and the club has a Facebook page set up as well. The biggest medias now are Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube. An account for these medias could be created in a short time span. As mentioned in this research, a big part of a sports club's visibility and momentum is built on social medias nowadays, and it's crucial to keep up with other teams' pace and interaction. For this to happen, a schedule for uploading would help. To get the rhythm for uploading, everybody needs to be on the same page and know what they're doing. In PJK's case, new recruitments in staff are not expected anytime soon and if there was an opening for a job within the club, there are more urgent matters to be handled than social media, such as assistant coaches, caretakers, and maintenance people for the players. The clear limitation for staff slows down the evolving of the brand and it's a tough circle to beat because to evolve the brand, additional hands in the staff would be needed. So, it's a safer bet to guess that there's not going to be an outside person taking charge of the social medias, and the responsibility is on the players themselves. This is fine but when there are many people handling the same account, it helps to be precise and to make it clear to everyone that who is uploading what. The author has noticed this phenomenon in the men's first team in futsal. When there's not a strict upload schedule and template, it's unclear for everyone. The actual content needs to be checked too and when in doubt, it would not be a bad idea to ask the followers what type of content they want to see. The content can be decided by the club themselves, but the suggestion is to try and make as engaging and creative content as much as possible, preferably visual content. Short and creative videos for TikTok, questions and answers, photos and highlights in Instagram, results, and statistics in Twitter, and so on. The list of posting opportunities is endless and the main goal is to know the target audience. In Instagram, there's a possibility to set your account as a corporate account, which enables you to see the average age, gender, and interests for example. The slowest target frequency for posting would be at least once a day per media. YouTube can maybe be an exception because it contains longer videos. Putting together a YouTube video is very time consuming and the quality of the videos is as important as the upload frequency.

On top of the creative content, filming home games, sharing results and highlights, posting player interviews and preview info about matches must be a given. Followers and fans want to feel like they're a part of the team, and they deserve a chance to keep up with the club's

progress even without coming to games. This applies to as many teams as possible, even though it's very hard to keep this pace up with every team in PJK.

Being active in social medias is one of the best ways of fast marketing because it's tendency to be free and efficient. Although paid marketing in social media is not necessary, it may be worth a try. It pushes your content even further and wider than authentic growth would, and if you choose your marketing target wisely, it can lead to very fast results. A suggestion for Pirkkala Football Club is to try and activate a paid marketing campaign for 1-2 social medias for a while, even with a small amount of funds, and see how it turns out. The two medias can be any of the club's wishing, Facebook, and Instagram for example. The volume can be increased if the results are as wished. On Instagram for example, you can advertise either your post, page, or both. You choose the target market with an area and interests, and then your post or page start coming up to people's feeds. Same with other medias. This could be at least tried as an enhancement to the activity in social media.

Final suggestion with a possibility of being an upgrade on marketing on a very short-term time span is to organize giveaways, raffles, and competitions with a return of free merchandise or tickets. This is a way to activate the followers and create interaction. It's also free and can cause a surprisingly fast spreading of a club's social media presence. The author chose to include this type of marketing due to trying it himself with his personal business activity on social media, and the results were great. It's organic and voluntary for the targets.

7.4 Sporting Goals

Sporting goals may not be direct marketing but affect marketing greatly and act as a marketing lead. In this research, the greatest opportunity to market through success inside the pitch are the men's and women's first teams in futsal. The higher the league, the higher is the number of viewers. As a competitive sports club that Pirkkala Football Club is, the sporting goals are therefore crucial. In PJK's situation, pursuing the highest possible sporting goals are one of the biggest marketing leads when successful.

The biggest goal sporting-wise in the short-term in the men's first team in futsal is gaining promotion back to Futsal-Liiga, which is very much possible this season. Of course, the team can pursue promotion again next year, but it will slower the process of gaining more visibility to their brand. The team has all the preconditions to do so. The women's first team would also benefit from the men's first team promoting as it would bring visibility to them as well. The major benefit with promoting to Futsal-Liiga is that it is shown by Ruutu+, a popular Finnish streaming service. The visibility that comes with the Ruutu+ package is massive because it contains a lot of other sports as well, and there's a big audience to find their way to futsal without even buying the package because of futsal at first. The financial bonus is also significant when promoting to Futsal-Liiga when comparing to Futsal Ykkönen.

8 Conclusion

This part of the thesis sums up the key outcomes of the research and reflects if the findings and conclusions match with each other. The whole research will be evaluated, and the research question and its answer will be reviewed again and summarized.

8.1 Key Outcomes

The main outcome of this thesis was the marketing plan for Pirkkala Football Club. After conducting wide research in the theoretical framework using scientific journals and books, the data about PJK was mostly collected with interviews and the author's own knowledge about the club and with that data, a SWOT-analysis was constructed. The author has been a part of the commissioning company for about ten years, so the reasoning behind choosing this specific sports club was also based on devotion towards them. On top of that, a professional interest towards the situation in the club now was a factor.

The main goal of this research was to provide value for Pirkkala Football Club in terms of help in the marketing sector, both social media and physical marketing included. As a result, this would help PJK enhance their brand's visibility in many aspects. In depth, detecting opportunities and development targets, and creating measures based on the information

was the goal, and that part was conducted successfully. The opportunities that were determined were activation in social media, brand- and value enhancement, improvements in collaboration, and sporting goals. Some of these opportunities could already be anticipated but it can be clearer for the club to work on these matters when they are listed out clearly. It remains to be seen if Pirkkala Football Club wants to implement these suggestions and if they work. So far, it's only theoretical.

The research question of this thesis was "How can Pirkkala Football Club grow their brand through marketing?", and the results were categorized in four different parts in the "Recommendations" chapter. "Brand and Values", "Personal Marketing", "Social Media", and "Sporting Goals" were these categories. In conclusion, all the suggested actions were a result of data gathering and act as an answer to the research question and as a summary, PJK can grow their brand by activating on social media, maintaining their sporting goals, enhancing their identity, updating their webpages, making a proper marketing email template, maintaining relationships with current backers, and keeping the advantage of being as affordable to players as possible. These are the suggestions collected and bundled up. One of the biggest challenges for the club now is the lack of backroom staff, which is understandable because majority of the operations are done on a voluntary basis. It could influence the implementation of the suggestions, but the most important part is to try and execute them with the best of abilities that are available.

8.2 Reflection

The research about finding specific information about marketing for Finnish football of futsal teams was challenging because there's not much research available. However, marketing for PJK goes roughly by the same mould as a marketing for a bigger international sports club, the scale is just relatively smaller.

The research was very interesting to conduct, and the author is very thankful to the members of the commissioning company, Pirkkala Football Club for being a part of the research and sharing their thoughts in the form of interviews. The club was really open and willing to improve their own structure the whole time and this all helped construct the

marketing plan, and only time can tell if it was useful. The author gained a lot of additional knowledge about the club, and about making a proper marketing plan. The biggest challenges during the writing phase came with time management and finding proper data for the theoretical framework. Although the focus of the thesis is intended to PJK, and specially their first teams in futsal, the suggestions and plan can be implemented to any same sized club or company that recognize similarities from the description of the club.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions English

Interview 1 (Hiltunen, Jokilampi, Salonen):

Q1: How is the brand of PJK doing now?

Q2: What are the club's aspirations for the near future in terms of visibility?

Q3: How well do you see PJK competing with other clubs in the Tampere region in terms of visibility?

Q4: What are PJK's strengths and weaknesses? Are there any external threats?

Q5: Who are the biggest competitors of PJK in both futsal and football?

Q6: What are the biggest preconditions for a sports club to be successful?

Interview 2 (Mäkinen):

Q1: You coach both men's and women's respective teams, how are these teams doing and what's so special in PJK?

Q2: Do you think that PJK is competing in visibility in the Pirkanmaa region? What could be done?

Q3: How do you think that PJK could grow their brand and reputation?

Q4: What are the strengths and weaknesses of PJK? On and off the field?

Q5: What are some of the things that have progressed the most within PJK since you've been here?

Q6: PJK's fantastic junior work has brought up many players into national teams and to some of the best futsal teams in the country. This gives a great deal of boost to the club, by what means does the club plan on keeping up with this trend?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions in Finnish

Haastattelu 1 (Hiltunen, Jokilampi, Salonen):

Q1: Miten PJK:n brändi voi tällä hetkellä?

Q2: Mitkä ovat seuran tavoitteet seuraaville vuosille näkyvyyden kannalta?

Q3: Kuinka hyvin näette PJK:n kilpailevan näkyvyydessä muiden tamperelaisten seurojen kanssa?

Q4: Mitkä ovat PJK:n vahvuudet ja heikkoudet? Onko seuralla ulkoisia uhkia?

Q5: Ketkä ovat PJK:n suurimmat kilpailijat futsalissa sekä jalkapallossa?

Q6: Mitä edellytyksiä urheiluseuralle on menestyä taloudellisesti?

Haastattelu 2 (Mäkinen):

Q1: Valmennat sekä miesten että naisten edustusjoukkueita, miten näillä joukkueilla menee ja mikä PJK:ssa on erityisen hyvää?

Q2: Kuinka hyvin PJK kilpailee näkyvyydessä muiden Pirkanmaalaisten seurojen kanssa?

Q3: Millä tavoin luulet, että PJK voisi kasvattaa brändiään?

Q4: Mitkä ovat PJK:n vahvuudet ja heikkoudet? Kentällä ja sen ulkopuolella?

Q5: Mitkä asiat ovat kehittyneet eniten ollessasi täällä?

Q6: PJK:n juniorityö on nostanut monia pelaajia maajoukkueeseenkin asti. Tämä on arvokasta seuralle, millä keinoin seuraa aikoo pitää tämän trendin käynnissä?