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Investigating Team Apparel Buying in the English Football Market

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This thesis is a qualitative study for a sports retail start-up company. The research revolves around gaining an insight and knowledge on team apparel business and the English market. The thesis aims to understand the target customer an English football club. The basis for understanding the customer requires investigating the market environment in which they operate, customer's organisational structure and the buying process of the customer.

Market characteristics, customer organisations and business buyer behaviour form the structure for the theoretical framework. Business buying is generally done by an appointed individual or group of individuals. These business buyers are influenced by various different stakeholders in their organisation.

The research process is outlined in the methodology of the thesis. England is studied as a target market due to their football heritage and culture. England is a part of the United Kingdom and it is important to understand that with regard to national football associations the United Kingdom is divided in to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Primary data, was collected through an interview with a seasoned football veteran from England, who has an extensive background in football. The main interview topics covered football in England, club organisational structure and club buying process. Additional primary data is collected through the U.K. embassy in Helsinki. The commissioning party requested that the author write a commissioning letter to the U.K. embassy for a market overlook study of the English football market. Additionally, statistics from acclaimed and traditional football organisation sources such as the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and The Football Association (FA) was accessed.

The data was analysed alongside with the case company process for customer acquisition, to see how it could fit and what can be learned from the English football market.

The results indicate that there are 40 000 football clubs in England. A majority of the clubs have an annual buying process where end-users have very little say on the apparel that is bought for them. The results of this study are to be used by the company management and owners. In order to assist the case company to receive funding, the results are presented to Business Finland. The results and author's conclusions are a useful foundation for future studies, market entry and development of the brand.

Keywords Business buyer behaviour, business buying process, sports apparel business, market characteristics, market research, marketing process.

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1   Introduction

Sports have a tendency to flare emotions. Sporting clubs have fanatic followers and de-
voted members. Due to the emotional ties and the people involved, sports lead to opportu-
nities for business. The first chapter of this thesis, introduces the reader to role of busi-
ness in relation to football. The reader is also introduced to the topic of the thesis and the
commissioning case company. The topic of the thesis is – Investigating Team Apparel
Buying in the English Football Market. Investigating refers to gathering information to
study and interpret to discover new facts (Oxford Dictionaries). The thesis was commis-
sioned by a Finnish start-up company called FC Pelikamat.net Oy.

A start-up company, is a company that is just beginning its operations. Still developing
their product to meet the criteria of their selected target customers (Investopedia).
The case company has created an innovative way to sell team apparel equipment to the
players in sports organisations. Team apparel is a uniform worn by players to represent
their club. The first chapter acts as a funnel, starting with general information about the
background leading up to the study and moving to more specific information such as de-
marcation and anticipated benefits.

1.1   Background

The case company is called FC Pelikamat.net Oy. The case company believes that the
market for team apparel in Finland is small and has stagnated. The aim of this research is
to give the company a clearer understanding of the English football market, where sports
apparel to football teams is an established business. The objective is to learn from this
market, understand the customers and provide concrete evidence with which to assist in
future go to market operations.

The case company commissioned the thesis in order to gain an insight in to the English
football market and the potential customers in that market.

The case company currently employs four people. Their business model is based on elim-
inating warehousing and the unnecessary middle men that collect money and data. Tradi-
tionally, volunteers are in charge of collecting the money and player size data. FC Pelika-
mat.net Oy business process also gives the customer the choice of team apparel brand.

FC Pelikamat.net Oy customers are football clubs, even though the end users of the team apparel products are individual players. Their business model grants players the opportunity to purchase what they require, when they require it. While maintaining the apparel in line with the club's apparel strategy.

In the process of marketing, the end goal is to receive value from the customers and create profits for the company. But the very first step in the process is research. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 31.) In order to deliver value to the customer, the company must understand who the customer is and what they require. The thesis is focused on the understanding the customers environment, organisational structure and buying behaviour. The results of the thesis are used to create a marketing strategy.

Football is the world's most popular sport. It is also a team sport. Like in various other sports, a football club involves more than just the players. Coaches, managers and other staff members are involved in the club activities. Organisers, referees and other officials are involved in league and division activities.

According to a study done by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), in 2006, four percent of the population of the world, was somehow involved in football. This means 270 million people, all around the globe. (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 1.)

The number of footballers in the world grew 10 % from the year 2000 to 2006 (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 1). As the world keeps developing, the author foresees this number increasing. There is evidence of the sport spreading, growing and developing. BBC writer Richard Conway, writes that he expects China to become a football superpower by the year 2050. Even the current President, Xi Jinping has ordered the construction of at least 20 000 new football training centres by the year 2020. (Conway, R. 2016.) More training centres mean more players.

There is no universal definition for a club member. Therefore, it is difficult to compare the number of members between football clubs. The reported number of members in clubs differs based on whom you ask. According to FC Pelikamat.net Oy CEO, the individual clubs may present a differing number of club members in comparison to the regional football association. It is not necessarily important to focus on the specific number of people in the clubs. But instead the approximate size and their buying behaviour with regards to team apparel acquisitions.

It is also important to remember, that especially in junior teams the number of players fluctuates. This is due to kids trying different sports and not necessarily sticking to only one sport and team. The number of players diminishes as they get in to the pre-teen age group and sports start getting more competitive. As the kids grow older, those who can't quite keep up with the competition quit or move to other sports. While those who stay as players and face more demanding requirements, so does their equipment and apparel as they must train throughout the year.

1.2 Research question

The purpose of the thesis is to understand the customer and market conditions in England. Based on the results, the author is able to give his recommendations for future actions for the case company. The target customer for the case company is an average football club from England. An average football club refers to an amateur or semi-professional club with more than one team of players. The thesis objective is to provide the start-up company with valuable information from their target customer and market. The objective is achieved through an insightful interview with a key individual from the English market. Insight in to the market is gained from a study commissioned by the author from the U.K. embassy and Department for International Trade.

The research problem for this thesis, revolves around understanding how English football organisations, make buying decisions with regard to their team apparel strategy. To understand how the buying decisions are made, not only do we need to know the structure of clubs and organisations but additionally, we need to understand their purchasing process and the characteristics of the market that they inhabit.

It is important to understand why customers buy from us. Even more so, it is important to understand why customers are not buying from us. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 131.)

The research question: What are the elements of team apparel buying in the English football market?

The following investigative questions are established to clarify what needs to be studied. These investigative questions were selected to open up the research question and provide the study with a framework for understanding the elements of team apparel buying. The elements include the market, customers and the customer's buying processes.

IQ 1. What are the market characteristics in England, for football?
IQ 2. What is the organisational structure of football clubs in England?

IQ 3. What is the buying process like in English football clubs, with regard to:

        IQ 3.1 Who is involved in the buying process

        IQ 3.2 Influences on the buying process

IQ 4. What are the recommended steps for FC Pelikamat.net Oy after the study?

Table 1, demonstrates the investigative questions and presents both the theoretical framework and research methods used. The table also discloses where the results can be located in the thesis.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical framework	Research methods	Results chapter
IQ 1. What are the market characteristics in England, for football?	Market Characteristics Characteristics in the microenvironment - Market characteristics (Sharp 2013) - Analysing the marketing environment (Armstrong, Kotler & Opresnik 2017)	Market overview study commissioned by the author to the U.K. Embassy Qualitative analysis of theory and market overview	4.1 English football market characteristics
IQ 2. What is the organisational structure of football clubs in England?	Understanding the customer organisation - Club structures (The FA 2010) - Ultimate Football (Baddiel 1998)	Qualitative analysis of author's experience and the interview Qualitative online research	4.2 Customer organisational structure in England
IQ 3. What is the buying process like in English football clubs?	Buying process in organisations - Decision making in purchasing (Van Weele 2014) - Business buying process (Kotler & Armstrong 2016) - Participants in the buying process (Kotler & Armstrong 2016)	Qualitative interview Qualitative analysis of theory	4.3 Team apparel buying process in England.

After the investigative questions one through three are answered, the author answers the fourth investigative question. This is done in the recommendations chapter.

1.3   Demarcation for research

Buying behaviour is divided between consumer buying and business buying, both share similarities but business buying is influenced by more complex variables. In comparison to

consumer buying, business buying involves more individuals, is more rational and requires more planning. (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 128.) The thesis is aimed towards business buying. Football equipment bought for players is divided in to two categories, individual equipment and team apparel. The aim is to study the team apparel buying process, individual equipment such as cleats and the motivations behind players buying personal equipment is excluded. The research excludes other team sport activities and their apparel needs. The thesis can later work as a structure to further study individual equipment purchasing and possibly implemented for other sports activities as well. The research acknowledges that clubs can have at least four different categories of players, adults, juniors, females and males. But no distinction on their team apparel requirements is made.

There is a five-step marketing process as described by Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 54). The first step contains research and the second a marketing strategy. The third step is creating a marketing program and the fourth deals with customer engagement. Lastly, the process finishes with receiving value from the customer. The thesis focuses on the first step. Understanding the market environment and the customer's requirements. This is elaborated on in chapter 2. The remaining four steps are not elaborated on in this thesis.

The market characteristics can be divided in to microenvironment and macroenvironment. Macroenvironment contains larger forces of nature, as well as the demographic environment, economic environment and political environment. While the microenvironment contains the lower level stakeholders such as customers, competition and suppliers. (Armstrong & al 2017, 96-113.) The thesis does not take the macroenvironment in to account.

In business buying, buyers commonly face one of three situations, either a straight rebuy, modified rebuy or new task. A straight rebuy is where a previously bought good or service is bought again. In a modified rebuy situation, specifications of a previous purchase are redesigned and then bought again. Lastly a new task situation is where customer organisation faces a completely new buying situation, be it a new selling organization or new product. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016.) This thesis does not take in to account other business buying scenarios than a new task situation. The author acknowledges different legal structure in football clubs, but no distinction is made in the results analysis. Even though the U.K. embassy was contacted by the author, the thesis focuses on the English football market. All four countries in the United Kingdom have their own national football associations.

1.4 Anticipated benefits

The case company will gain an insight look in to the market. This includes the market characteristics, the customers organisational structure and the buying behaviour and process of the target customer in the English market. Comparing the buying process to the case company's own customer acquisition process, called the boarding process provides opportunities for development of the boarding process. The boarding process is elaborated on in the case company introduction.

The results of this thesis form the structure on which the case company can form their marketing strategy on. The marketing process begins with researching the market. When researching a market, all of the characteristics must be examined with special attention to understanding the customer and their requirements. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 135.)

Additionally, the results of this thesis can be used by the case company employees and owners to apply for funding to their internationalisation from Business Finland, formerly known as Tekes.

With market research, we can learn about market characteristics such as size and the different groups in the market. The author's personal experience in the football market as both a player and student of the industry benefits this study and the analysis of results. This includes experience on how teams and clubs purchase apparel, what kind of apparel and when during a season.

1.5 Key concepts

Marketing: This is the business function that revolves around the customer. Understanding their requirements, making a good or service that fits these requirements. The idea of marketing is to create content and deliver value – in the form of a good or service – to the customer in return for profits. (Armstrong & al 2017, 32.)

Business buyer behaviour: The way in which, businesses and other organisations purchase goods and services for the benefit of the business or organisation and the individuals within it. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 20.)

Business buying process: Identifying a need in an organisation. Choosing the product, price and its supplier are amongst the steps prior to receiving the bought good. (Van Weele 2014, 22.)

Buying unit: Individuals and groups of individuals whom affect the buying behaviour of the organisation (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 202).

Market: A collection of sellers, buyers and other stakeholders in a specific physical area either global or local. The market can also be tied to a business field and not a country or region. (Investopedia.)

Microenvironment: The environment closest to a company in any given market. Affects the ability to interact with their customers (Armstrong & al 2017, 96).

Organisational structure: A framework that outlines the hierarchy, reporting, roles and responsibilities within an organisation (Investopedia).

1.6 Case company introduction

FC Pelikamat.net Oy is driven by a passion for sports. Their business model is a new way of doing things, they believe that the team apparel business in Finland has stagnated and failed to develop with the digital age. The company has four employees and a board of investors and advisors.

The case company business model requires the acquisition of a club as a customer first, in order to be able to set up a web store for the club where individual players can make purchases in.

With FC Pelikamat.net, we need to view two figures. First their business model and what makes them special as seen in figure 1. In addition to this, it is imperative to mention their "boarding process", visualised in figure 2. The boarding process, is their own terminology referring to the process of getting a new customer and preparing them to buy.

As shown in figure 1. The FC Pelikamat.net Oy business model removes unnecessary data and money collecting from the team volunteers and gives individual players a choice of what equipment they want. This is done while maintaining the uniform specifications established by the team apparel strategy of the club. The apparel manufacturer, sponsor and the printing of sponsor logos and playing numbers all come together under the FC Pelikamat.net Oy platform and products are shipped directly to the player. For football teams the club logo, sponsor and individual player numbers need to be printed on to the team apparel fabric.
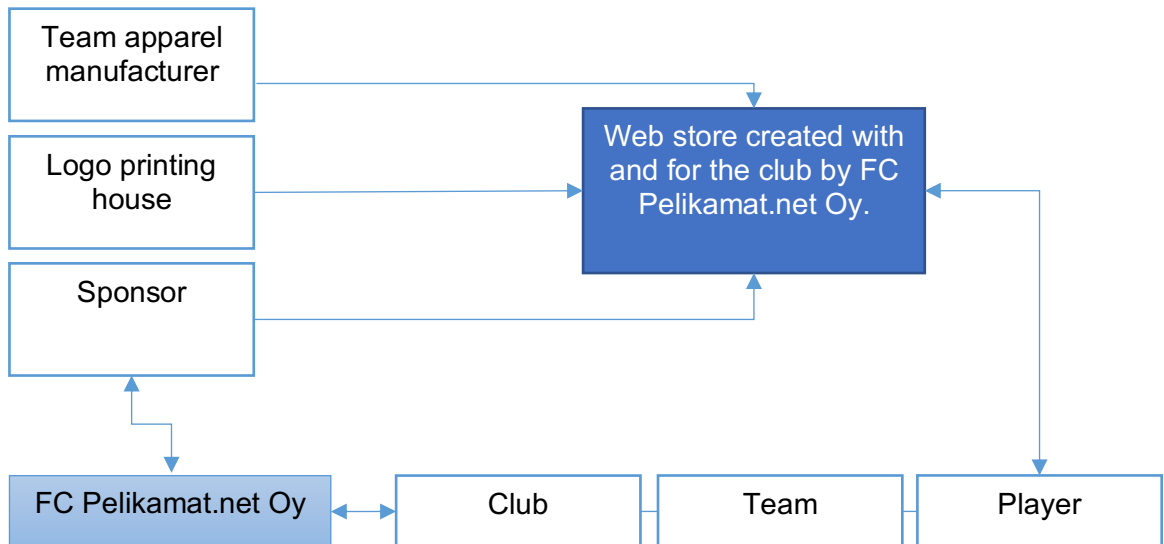
Figure 1. The FC Pelikamat.net Oy business process

FC Pelikamat.net opens a web store for the club, from which individual players can make purchases. In some cases, the case company may even connect the club with a sponsor.

The clubs benefit from one partner that helps the club execute their apparel strategy. As seen in figure 1, FC Pelikamat.net Oy, combines the clubs with the sponsors, print houses, manufacturers and delivers the finished products directly to the players. FC Pelikamat creates a web store for the clubs it caters to. This web store also acts as a platform that offers a sleek service for a unified system and reporting directly to the clubs. The teams benefit from an automated ordering process that minimizes the need for volunteer activity. It is easy for the teams to follow the apparel strategy of the club and there will be no need for the teams to warehouse extra equipment in case of new players joining the team. The players can buy equipment when they need and want.

As new players join they can order their team apparel player package immediately. The apparel is delivered directly to their home and payed for it using modern payment options. Currently, equipment is ordered for the whole team in one big order. This means volunteers have to collect everyone's sock, shirt, short and track suit sizes and the make sure everyone pays their share before ordering for the whole team. This is slow, clumsy and has a high chance for errors as one person is responsible for the equipment of many. Additionally, in the traditional way teams may be required to find their own sponsors and a printing house to print the sponsor logo on to the team apparel.

The process of client acquisition which the company uses is called the "boarding process". This process is visualised in figure 2. The process is used to track new customers and preparing them to buy. When you begin to acquire a new team as a customer there is a lot

to do. When establishing a contact, you require a contact person. They should be someone with the ability to influence and make decisions within the club. Second, the company creates a trial collection, for this step they require the logo and fonts used in the club's jerseys and equipment. In some rare cases, FC Pelikamat.net Oy might have to re-make or modify the logo and fonts if they are unprintable in their current state.

After FC Pelikamat.net has the required logos and the targeted club has shown interest, the club and FC Pelikamat.net agree on the collection they will begin with. The collection refers to the quality of items such as shorts, shirts, socks, a track suit and rain jacket. Then they must estimate the sales for the first year, and make sure the estimations are sent to both the equipment producers' warehouses and printing houses. So that they can take this in to account in their production cycles. When the collection is agreed upon, it is time to open the web store for the club. This requires pictures of the collection items and pricing for individual items as well as bundles. FC Pelikamat.net may need to order and give the club a few trial items that can be used for fitting so that players know their sizes.

When the web store is set up, it is time to engage the players with marketing and communication. The message should be spread through the club channels either by word of mouth, club website, social media or even direct emails to the players or their parents. This process leads the new client to a phase where they are ready to buy.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                     Contact person                       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
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│  Create the model collection for the team, this step     │
│         requires logo and fonts from the club            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Quality control                       │
│       Modify or remake the logo and fonts if necessary   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Agree on the first collection            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Estimate how much will be sold            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Volumes sent to the printing house          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Establish the clubs online store          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Order and deliver fitting pieces          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                   Communication plan                     │
│  Get the message out to the clubs channels and make      │
│               the players aware                          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Ready to purchase                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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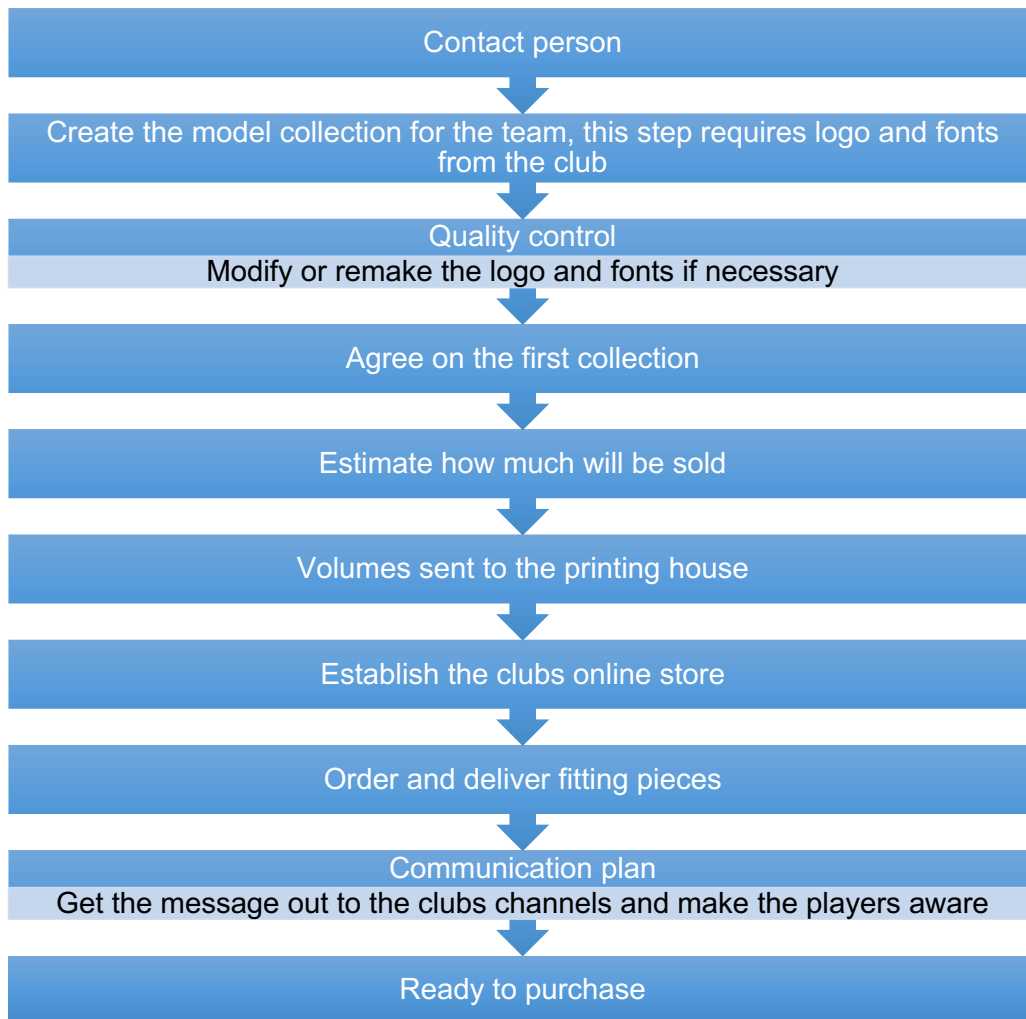
Figure 2. FC Pelikamat.net Oy boarding process

The process in figure 2 - going from top to bottom - showcases the steps and path that the company takes with a new client. At the start, the new client is being scouted and is not yet necessarily aware of the solution FC pelikamat.net offers. As the first initial contact is made, the process begins for the client as well. The boarding process should be compared to the buying process in the target market football clubs.

2   Understanding the customers and their environment

This chapter is structured as a funnel for understanding team apparel buying in England. Beginning from the market characteristics and moving to the organisations in the market and processes in these organisations. The structure of the theory part of this thesis consists of three sub chapters. The first introduces the marketing process and also defines the characteristics of a market. The second chapter focuses on organisational structure of customers in the target market. The third chapter views the buying processes, who it involves and what influences the buying decisions. The goal of market research is to understand the market. In order to understand, one must know the market is comprised of.

This thesis focuses on the first step of the marketing process as described in figure 3, understanding the marketplace and its characteristics. The implications of the research enable the second step, creating a marketing strategy for these markets.

2.1   Market characteristics

The marketing process, is made up of five steps. The first step focuses on understanding the marketplace and all of the organisations and individuals that have an effect on the market, be it directly or indirectly. These organisations and individuals form the groups that define the market characteristics. (Armstrong & al 2017, 33.) The second step is building a marketing strategy that drives value for the customer, the third step is creating a marketing program. The fourth step is engaging with customers and building relationships that lead to profit for the company. After successfully completing steps one through four, lastly the marketing process captures value from the satisfied customers. (Armstrong & al 2017, 33.)

Research → Marketing Strategy → Marketing Program → Customer Engagement → Capture Value

Figure 3. Process of marketing (Armstrong & al 2017, 33)

The first step, in the process is research. As in most cases, a solid foundation is the key to success. In order to successfully enter and compete in a market, a business must take care to complete the first step well. Organisations require information in order to allocate their resources in the best possible manner. (McGivern 2013, 7.) The process of marketing is defined as the management process in charge of identifying, predicting and satisfying the end user in order to receive profits (Chartered Institute of Marketing 2015, 2).

An organisation's task is to continuously seek out new business opportunities. In order to seek out new opportunities an organisation can conduct research. The research can be conducted on a new target market, where the organisation can move to and offer their existing product or service. In order to validate new opportunities, an organisation must assess the characteristics in the new market. In order to assess the characteristics, they must first be identified. (McGivern 2013, 8-9.)

Market research is vital in providing evidence to support problem solving and decision making within an organisation (McGivern 2013, 41). Market research aims to find out the market size, the main suppliers and competing brands in the market. In addition, market research views who the potential end users are. These elements are referred to as market characteristics. (McGivern 2013, 47.)

As a part of the marketing function in a company, a primary requirement is always to understand the customer, their requirements and the market environment in which the customers operate (Armstrong & al 2017, 34). In fact, Drucker (2001, 20) states that the purpose of a business is to forge a customer, he continues that the two main responsibilities of any business are to focus on marketing and innovation.

When a company sets its sights on a new market, they must identify characteristics in the market. A market consists of the actual potential buyers for the products and services provided by a company. These buyers have a specific need or want that they share amongst each other. (Armstrong & al 2017, 36.) The market can be viewed as an environment, according to Sharp (2013, 185) he defines the market as an environment and the businesses inside the market must react to changes in the environment. In order to do this, one must identify the characteristics in the environment.

The market is not some fabricated environment created by the act of a higher power or nature, but by people (Drucker 2001, 20).The core of the market, is called a microenvironment (Armstrong & al 2017, 96; Sharp 2013, 185).

The characteristics in the microenvironment are both directly and indirectly related to the success of the business. The groups in the microenvironment are stakeholders to the organisation which means they are affected by the organisation and can in turn affect the organisation. (Sharp 2013, 186.) Armstrong & al (2017, 96) add that, this requires identifying the characteristics and building relationships with the major actors in the market. Table 2 describes the groups in the microenvironment.

Armstrong & al (2017, 96-100) describe the characteristics in the microenvironment to include various groups. The company is at the centre. Surrounded by various groups with an effect on the company. Starting with suppliers who provide the resources to produce a good or service. Marketing intermediaries assist with selling, promoting, distributing and financing operations. Competitors are other companies attempting to serve the same target customer. The public is a group that can impact the organisation's business potential. This includes financial, media, government, citizen action, local and internal publics. Last but not least, the customers. They are the most significant of the group in the microenvironment. Serving the customer and giving them value is of greatest importance. (Armstrong & al 2017, 96-100.)

Sharp (2013, 186-190) divides the microenvironment characteristics in to more specific sub groups. In the marketing microenvironment, the customers are the most important part of the microenvironment. As consumer preferences change, so must an organisation's products and services develop. These are the end users of an organisations good or service. Where there are customers, there must also be competitors. Maintaining an idea of who the competition is and what they are up to is critical to an organisation. Intermediaries exists to provide assistance to the company. Intermediaries are wholesalers, retailers and agents who act as interfaces between an organisation and the end users. Suppliers supply resources to the company. They provide an organisation with the materials required to bring value adding product and services to the end users. Every market is affected by the ruling government. Legislation and taxation have an affect an organisation in the microenvironment. The financial community assist with financial resources provided to an organisation before, during and after the beginning of commercial operations. Near the company, there are local communities. The local people may not necessarily be customers but affects companies of all sizes. Pleasing the public with charitable actions is important. Pressure groups have their own objectives that they are willing to fight for, in case an organisation's action interfere with those of the pressure group. (Sharp 2013, 186-190.)

Sharp (2013, 186) does not include the company as a separate group in the microenvironment but as a part of an internal environment within the microenvironment. The internal environment also includes internal operations such as financing, research and development and equipment of the business.

However, Armstrong & al (2017, 96) include the company as a part of the microenvironment, this takes in to account the other groups of the company such as top management, finance, research and development, purchasing and human resources.

There are characteristics and groups in the microenvironment to identify and analyse when viewing a new market. (Armstrong & al 2017, 96-100; Sharp 2013, 186-190.) The characteristics within the microenvironment are compiled in to a list in table 2 by the author, including the most relevant characteristics in a market.

Table 2. Market characteristics within the microenvironment (adapted from Armstrong & al 2017, 96-100; Sharp 2013, 186-190)

Market characteristics in the Microenvironment.	
Company	The organisation and its internal environment at the core of the microenvironment. All internal groups working together to forge relationships and create value for the customer.
Customers	The most valuable group within the microenvironment for the company. The customers are the end users of the product or service. Creating content for this group and delivering value for them at a profit is the most important task of the company. For a company to succeed they must understand how this group acts. This means understanding their purchasing process and behaviour.
Competitors	The other brands attempting to provide similar or substitutive value to the customers. In order for the company to succeed, it must provide a higher amount of satisftaction to the customer than the competitors do.
Suppliers	The partners who provide the tools, resources and materials that enable a company to create value in the form of products and services.
Business intermediaries	Includes all intermediaries related to business operations. Financial intermediaries provide financial support to keep the operation going. These include both private and institutional intermediaries such as shareholders and banks. Other marketing related intermediaries include resellers, distributors and marketing agencies that provide promotional services,
Society	Includes all public relations. Local communities, government and pressure groups. Public relations affect the ability of a company to achieve its targets and run its operation. It is possible to cause harm to a company's image by upsetting these groups, even though they may not be customers of the company.

An organisation entering a new market must understand, identify and analyse the characteristics within the market. The most important group to understand, identify and analyse is the customer group. Customers are the end users that an organisation creates value for in the form of goods and services for. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 30.)

It is important, to monitor an organisation's environment. By doing this, an organisation will be better equipped to handle and respond to changes in the environment. There is a large quantity of poor examples of companies failing to adapt to the change. Understanding what is going on in the business environment and adapting to changes is not easy, but

necessary. The task gets more and more difficult as companies grow, so it is important for an organisation to take care and observe the market as they grow. (Sharp 2013, 206.) Especially new businesses should be market oriented. This means they should not lose track of the market which they are catering to. Monitoring the market and the changes within it are essential to success in business. (Drucker 2001, 146.)

In a business environment, an organisation is dependent on its ability to create value for all the groups in the market, the customers, suppliers, intermediaries and even to the public. This requires taking in to account all the characteristics of the market. Value creation is defined as the action in which an organisation uses the potential resources in its arsenal and turns them in to goods for the customers. (Ojanpää 2018, 17-18.)

Ojanpää (2018, 18) continues that, it is important to understand that value creation is done for and in cooperation with every group in the market, however the customer is the essential group for whom to create value for.

From a business perspective. Customers and their happiness is the key to financial success. Out of the groups that form the market characteristics, understanding the customer and their behaviour is key. This means understanding who buys the products and services provided by an organisation. (Sharp 2013, 35.)

From the perspective of the company, the customer is the vital characteristic in the micro-environment (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 98). Scott (2015, 46) adds that in order to create success for a business and reach the target buyers, it is highly important to first understand the customer and their processes.

With a combination of experience and studying characteristic in a market. An organisation has an opportunity to identify not only who the customers are, but also what their needs and processes are. (Davis & Hilbert 2013, 227.)

Understanding characteristics within a market is of high value regardless of what type of business one is involved in. When viewing the variables which have an impact on the purchasing process, it is inherently important to understand the characteristics of the market. In the purchasing process, market transparency is important amongst all the characteristics in the market. (Van Weele 2014, 25.)

When an organisation has identified the characteristics in a market, identifying and understanding the customer is essential (Scott 2015, 164).

2.2   Understanding the English football club structure

Marketing relates deeply with the task of understanding the customer in such a matter that products and services match the needs of the customer and practically sell themselves (Drucker 2001, 21). When considering the existence of a business in the marketing environment, it is safe to say the customer defines what the business should be (Drucker 2001, 24).

Getting in to a deep understanding of customers and their requirements is done continuously through data research, observation, interviews and analysis (Armstrong & al 2017, 34). Davis and Hilbert (2013, 28), state that even though sports organisations and non-sports organisation share similarities, sports clubs have unique aspects.

There are differences in the size and wealth of sports clubs. The differences are mainly due to other sports being more popular and attracting more participants. Regardless, throughout the entire world local sports clubs are responsible for the individual athlete's ability to participate. Sports clubs can offer both recreational past time activities and competitive participation. Sports have become a part of both national and global economies. The sports clubs consume sporting goods and apparel and in turn create entertainment for viewers. (Masterman 2005, 41.)

Football is not just a sport, it has become an industry. Football is seen as a business and even a career opportunity for some individuals. The beloved game involves much more than just players. Football organisations consist of various individuals in different roles. (Baddiel 1998, 6.)

Every football club has at least one team. The teams have two types of players on the field during a game, outfield players and a goaltender. The jersey, short and sock colours of the goaltenders have to be different than those of the outfield players. (Baddiel 1998, 13-16.)

During a football match, of the eleven players on the field, one is a goalkeeper who requires a different colour of jersey, shorts and socks (Christensen 2017). The players in a football club are required to wear team apparel. During a game the minimum required equipment is a jersey, shorts, socks, protective shin pads and cleats. (Parrish 2017.)

In most cases the structure of a club, consists of teams or squads. One club can have many teams and teams contain many individual players. The players can be divided in to

the teams based on age, sex, geographical location, skill level or player preference. Clubs, are a governing body for the teams and therefore, have a board of members. Each individual team requires workforce for training and game organising. Staff members can include a team manager, at least one assistant manager, head coach, at least one assistant coach and a kit manager. (The Football Association.)

In addition to players, clubs must have managers, coaches, a chairman, kit manager and a physiotherapist. These individuals and their effort make it possible for the players to play. The manager's task is to create a team that is able to win. The manager decides the play and practise style. A coach is a person who runs the practise sessions of a team. The manager and coach must work closely together. In some teams the coach and manager may even be the same person. The chairman can also be known as the club president. Alongside the rest of the board, the chairman is responsible for the finances of the entire club. Chairmen generally have a business background while coaches and managers have a football background. The person in charge of the team apparel of the club is known as the kit manager. The kit manager is responsible that the players have a set of team apparel to put on during practise, games and other events where they represent the club. Football players have a risk of being injured because football is a physically demanding sport. Clubs may have physiotherapists to help player recover from injuries. (Baddiel 1998, 28-29.)

Sports clubs, especially amateur clubs tend to rely on cheap labour or even volunteer activity to run their operation. In 2002, the United Kingdom the Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) scheme was announced. The Community Amateur Sports Clubs scheme even enables amateur sports clubs to register for tax benefits from Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs. (HM Revenue & Customs 2016.)

The difference between amateur and professional players is that professionals get paid to practice a certain sport whereas amateurs do not get paid (Livestrong 2017). Semi-professional players might get compensation, but not enough in order for the sport to be considered their occupation (Oxford Dictionaries).

According to the Community Amateur Sports Clubs scheme, amateur sports club must be open to the community without discrimination. There is also an income limit that separates amateur clubs from professional clubs. (HM Revenue & Customs 2016.)

Organisational structure is based on the tasks required for an organisation to complete (Robbins & Judge 2016, 272). Organisational structure, roles and functions are aligned

accordingly with the objectives and purpose of the organisation (Corkindale 2011). The purpose of any organisation is a challenge for the management of that organisation (Palin 2013). Traditionally, for a sports club the purpose is to promote the success of the club by improving the development or experience of the players, coaches, other staff and stakeholders of the club. Additionally, a club must manage its finances in a way, that they enable the participation in the sport. Participation often requires grounds, facilities and equipment. (Walters 2015.)

The Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme (HM Revenue & Customs 2016), adds that the main purpose of an amateur sports club is to provide facilities and management for the organisation of at least one sports activity.

The English Football Association (The FA) does not require clubs and teams to adhere to specific rules and regulation concerning the organisational structure of a football club. However, clubs must have at least one team. The required number of players per team is not regulated, however during a match a team plays with 11 players on the field with an additional 7 players as substitutes. According to the aforementioned, one team should have at least 18 players. (The Football Association.)

Clubs require workforce in order to organise the activities of teams within the club. Workforce in sports organisations often consists of volunteers. Roles and responsibilities are divided to volunteers by the management of the club. (The Football Association.)

Regardless of the structure of the club, management is elected by members. The Football Association (FA) recognizes two main legal structures for clubs, unincorporated associations and limited companies. (Russel 2010, 6-7.)

Unincorporated associations are also known as private members' clubs. This structure consists of individuals united under the rules of their club. In this case, the club is not a legal person, but instead individual members sign and enter contracts on behalf of the club. Within the limits of law, the rules of the club can be solely dictated by the members. A lion's share of football clubs in England are unincorporated associations. (Russel 2010, 6.)

Limited companies are companies limited by a guarantee. Much like the unincorporated associations it too is owned by the members. As a distinctive feature, companies limited by guarantee have a separate legal entity. This structure is common amongst clubs and charities, which are not seeking a profit. Unlike unincorporated associations, the limited

companies can enter in to contracts, for example to loan or own property and land that can be used for training, games and other activities of the club. (Russel 2010, 7.)

The FA requires that clubs are managed by a committee which can consist of people from the team management, officials and other members such as players or parents of players in junior teams. Even supporters can be a part of the committee in some cases. (The Football Association.)

According to the Football Association, the minimum required roles in a committee are as follows:

- Chairperson: In charge of overseeing the managers in the club and organising committee meetings.
- Secretary: The link in communication between the club and local football association. In charge of competition applications and membership, as well as the transfer and registrations of players.
- Treasurer: Administrator and manager to the finances of the club. Maintains expenditure and income records and balance sheet.
- Welfare Officer: This role is required for clubs with teams containing players under the age of 18. In charge of the activities and responsibilities the club has towards the wellbeing of children.

More important than the roles are the responsibilities that come with them. It is up to individual clubs to organise themselves in order to operate accordingly (The Football Association).

The organisational structure of football teams, in Europe, don't differ in a major way. In European football culture, clubs usually have history and traditions, dating back to as early as the mid-19th century. As far as record keeping goes, a British club Sheffield FC, formed in 1857, is considered the first football club in the world. Cambridge University AFC was also formed in the same year, while the Cray Wanderers, formed in 1860, are the oldest team in the British Capital, London. (The Sportster).

For a business organisation to successfully deliver value to a customer organisation such as a football club, they must engage with the target customers and form a relationship with them. A good relationship between an organisation and its customer leads to profitable operations. (Armstrong & al 2017, 394.) However, Van Weele (2014, 23) emphasises the power of a good relationship in business to organisation transactions as customers are often interested in long relationships.

The customer's final experience is based on the entire interaction process between the company and the customer. This process often begins before representatives from the two even meet. (Bhattacharjee, Müller & Roggenhofer 2016.)

In organisational purchasing, more people are often involved in the purchasing process, meaning there are more people to impress (Van Weele 2014, 23).

2.3   Buying process in organisations

The buying processes, roles and structures of organisations are determined by the requirements and resources of the organisation (Murray 2017). In comparison to consumer buying, business buying is more rational and structured (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 128).

Organisational buying processes can be complex. In organisational buying, decisions are made by an individual or a group of individuals with an identical idea concerning the goods that the organisation requires. (Van Weele 2014, 27.)

Organisational buying behaviour can be viewed from the point of view of the buying organisation, as organisations develop so do their buying requirements. For an organisation, buying means the acquisition of external resources that enable the operations of the organisation to function. (Van Weele 2014, 3.) However, Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 198) view the organisation buying behaviour from the perspective of the organisation delivering value to the buyer.

Business buyers are organisations - such as sports clubs – which purchase goods and services for their own use. Most business organisations purchase goods and services which they further develop in to products that they bring to the end users. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 198.) The two further explain that the business buying process includes the selection of goods and services for the organisation to purchase. This means finding, evaluating and choosing amongst various suppliers and brands.

Buying goods and services for an organisation, requires a longer process in comparison to consumer buyer behaviour. This is due to the purchase involving more individuals within the organisation as well as more money. The individuals who are affected by the purchase and its outcome do not generally form a specific group but are scattered around the organisation in their own groups. (McDonald & Rogers 2017, 60.)

Whilst dealing with organisations as buyers, it is imperative to remember the value of not only supplying to the buyer's current needs but also helping the customer solve their problems (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 200). Bergström & Leppänen (2015, 128) remark that to solve problems for the customer, it must clear how the customer buys and for what purpose.

According to Van Weele (2014, 27) and Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 202) there are five key roles within an organisation that come together and form the core of purchasing for the organisation referred to as the buying unit:

- Users: These individuals are the end users of the products. Users assist with specifying the performance requirements of the purchased items.
- Influencers: In this group, members have an effect the result of the purchasing process based on their expertise and indirect knowledge of the products. Their expertise is used to evaluate alternative options.
- Buyers: Often in organisations not the same as users. Buyers negotiate and place orders. Their role is to formally select suppliers and negotiate the terms of purchase.
- Decision-makers: The decision-makers have the final and decisive say on purchase. This role can vary amongst organisations and is dependent on the budget available, the decision maker may even be the same person that controls the budget. In some cases, this role and the buyer role are the same.
- Gatekeepers: These individuals control the flow of information between the other members in the core of purchasing and the supplying party. Failing to get past a gate keeper automatically means a failed business opportunity for the supplying party. In some cases, the gatekeeper can be the same individual as any of the aforementioned roles.

Additional roles in a buying unit can be used to provide external advisers or other industry specific roles. (McDonald & Rogers 2017, 61.) A business is left with the task of identifying the individual or individuals with the highest influence in the decision-making process of the buying unit (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 129).

More important than titles are the roles which they fill. These core roles make up the buying unit in organisations. (Van Weele 2014, 27.) Likewise, Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 200) define a buying unit within organisation. The unit includes many individuals whose roles differ from decision makers to product experts who provide insight for the decision makers.

Thus, organisational buying process includes many individuals whom are connected through the same purpose to purchase goods for the organisation to put to good use. These individuals form a buying unit within an organisation. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 200; Van Weele 2014, 27.)

Organisational buyer behaviour is affected by various aspects. The stimulus from the supplying companies in the market such as price, product, promotion and place have an effect. This is referred to as marketing stimuli. Also, environmental and organisational elements as well as the thoughts of individuals and interactions between the individuals in the buying unit influence the decision. In the end, the buying unit is responsible for the buying decision, they often conduct research of their own, select the best supplying candidate and begin negotiations to purchase. (Van Weele 2014, 27.) The model for behaviour is available in figure 4.
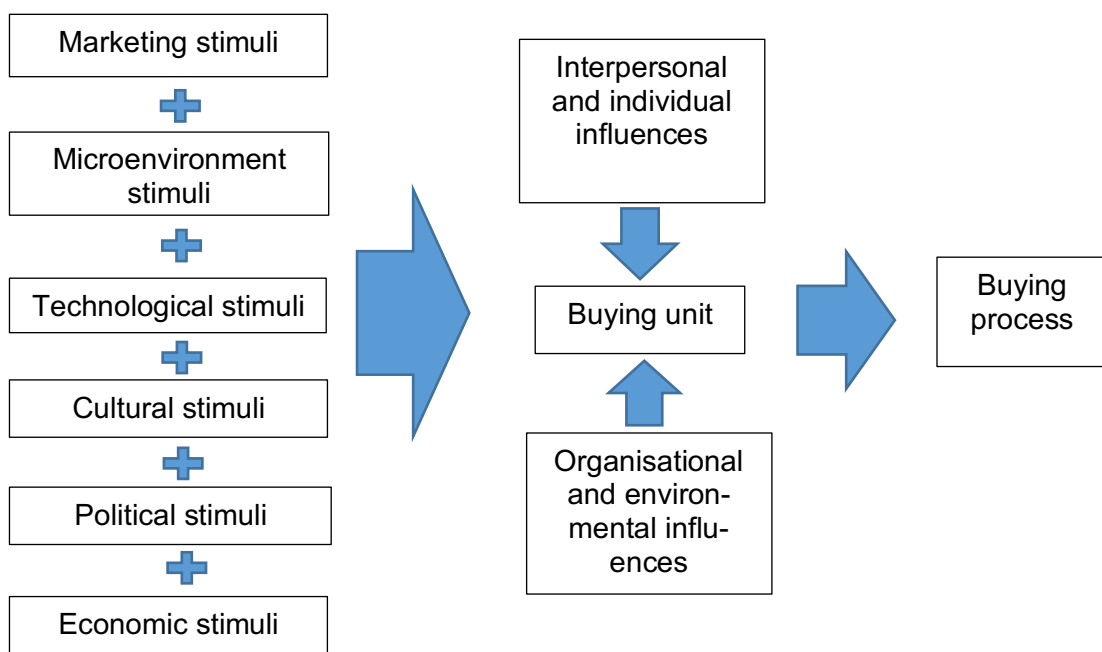
Figure 4. Stimulus affecting business buying (adapted from Van Weele 2014, 27; Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 201)

Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 201) state that in business buying, the market environment that affects buyer behaviour, contains marketing stimuli such as product, place, promotion and price. These are not dissimilar to the stimulus presented by Van Weele (2014, 27.) However, Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 201) consider other stimuli such as market characteristics, economic, technological and political factors.

The buying unit is also affected by individual, organisational and external elements. Eventually, the buying unit makes a decision concerning the ideal product and its supplier, order quantity and the terms or the transaction. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 201.) The stimuli are presented in figure 4.

How customers make buying decisions determines what a business is or should be. The customer's decision to buy and therefore pay for a good or service that transforms resources in to monetary returns. When the customer makes purchases, they are less affected by the price or product in comparison to the solution it is offering to the customers problem. (Drucker 2001, 20.)

Various elements and characteristics have an influence on the buying process for an organisation. In business buying, both organisational and personal factors have a great influence on the buyers in the buying unit. Reason, is a powerful tool since buyers need to justify their decisions based on for example cost or quantity. But the buyers aren't searching for necessarily the largest quantity of products or the lowest price search. In addition to reason, emotions also influence the buyers which in turn influences the buying decision. In fact, the closer we get to the purchasing decision, the more important emotional factors such as personal preference, personality and buying style come in to affect. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 203.)

The business buying unit influencers are divided in to four categories. Environmental, organisational, interpersonal and individual. Environmental influences include market characteristics as well as the political climate, governmental and economic situation. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 203.) The buyers are influenced by the developments within the characteristics in their market (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204).

Organisational influences include the objectives, strategy, structure and systems of the buying unit group (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 203). An organisation attempting to bring a solution to the buying business, must be aware of both the structure of the buying organisation and the structure of the buying unit in that organisation. As well as the processes in the buying organisation. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204.)

Interpersonal influences revolve around the individuals within the buying unit. Their expertise, authority and dynamics amongst one another influence the buying units buying behaviour. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 203.) The level of authority and influence do not necessarily always go hand in hand. Assessing group dynamics isn't an easy task, especially

in buying units where other members might control the outcome for the whole organisation. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204.) However, Robbins & Judge (2016, 269) add that conflict is natural within a group organisation and it may even have positive outcomes.

Within the buying unit, the individuals are influenced by their own internal motives, preferences and motives (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 203). Scott (2015, 45) adds that it might be important to take note of individual buyer personas in a buying unit when offering a solution to them. The influences on the buying unit are presented in figure 4.

A gatekeeper's individual motives, desires and wants can act as an entry way for an organisation to offer a solution to the buying unit. (Scott 2015, 45; Van Weele 2014, 27.)

These individuals in the buying unit, bring their own personal motives, ideas and preferences in to the buying unit (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204). Just like any individuals, they are not immune to the digital age and tend to check references on the internet before making purchasing decisions (Scott 2015, 196). The research conducted by the buyers online, influences their buying decision. This means the online content must be up to date and leave the best possible impression on the member of a buyer unit. (Scott 2015, 197.)

The buying unit is in charge of buying the required items for the whole organisation, the amount of decisions they make and the time the buying process takes varies between buying situations. In buying situations referred to as new tasks, organisations have the largest amount of decisions to make and these processes last the longest. The new task refers to a buying organisation deciding to acquire a new solution from a new supplier. These new task situations are also a great opportunity for new businesses targeting the buying organisations as customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 201.)

Business buying behaviour differs depending on the buying situation. In new task situations, the buying process begins with problem recognition and identification. Following the problem identification, the unit goes through several steps that make up the buying process. (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 131.) In figure 4, the buying unit is affected by the stimuli and influences. While under the pressure of the stimuli and influences, the buying unit begins the buying process. The process can be viewed in figure 5.

The buying process of an organisation, begins with a problem. Identifying a problem is the first step to finding a solution. If there's no problem, there's no need for a solution. Once the problem is recognized, the buying unit needs to define and agree upon what the quality and quantity requirements for the purchased goods are. In complex orders, the quality

of the purchased goods needs to be specified. Once the buying unit has settled on their requirements for the products, they begin the supplier search. After finding suitable suppliers with the ability to deliver the required products. This is followed by proposals sent in from the suitable suppliers after which, the most favourable supplier is selected. After the supplier is selected, the buying unit creates the order for the supplier with the quantity and quality. Finally, the buying unit reviews the performance of the supplying organisation. A successful performance that receives good reviews, will generally lead to continuous purchases from the buying unit. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 205-207.)

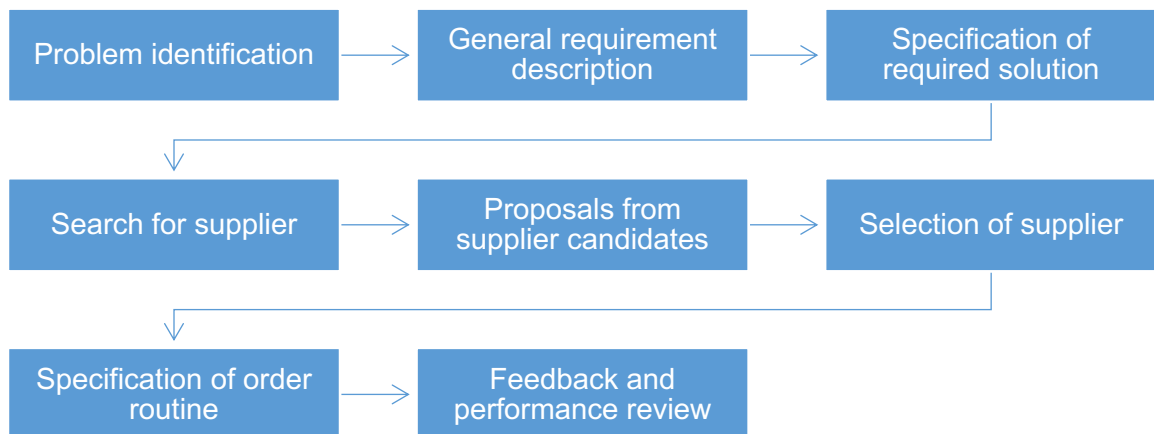| Problem identification	→	General requirement description	→	Specification of required solution
Search for supplier	→	Proposals from supplier candidates	→	Selection of supplier
Specification of order routine	→	Feedback and performance review		

Figure 5. Stages of business buying process (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204)

The stages of business buyer behaviour narrate the journey for the buying unit that begins with identifying a problem, so the necessity to make a purchase and ending with review the success of the purchase. (Johnston 2016.)

Van Weele (2014, 28) views the buying process with six stages that take place after the identification of a need. Compared to the stages of business buyer behaviour by Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 204) the six steps are focused on the last steps. Beginning with defining specifications for the required product. Secondly, selecting the supplier. This step includes the evaluations of possible suppliers and the supplier proposal. Third on the steps is the contract negotiations and signing. Up fourth is the order, which includes establishing the routine for ordering. The fifth step is referred to as expediting. Expediting means setting due dates and receiving an invoice from the supplier. Finally, as the sixth step is the evaluation (Van Weele 2014, 28.)

The stages in the buying process are characteristic to a new task buying process, in which the buying unit is purchasing the specific good for the first time (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 131).

Nowadays, it is important to not necessarily consider business as selling to customers but solving a problem for the customer (McDonald & Rogers 2017, 114). For a positive buying decision to be made, the seller needs to present the problem-solving ability of their product or service (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 132).

When viewing sports organisations as buyers, it is important to remember that even at professional levels clubs are not always profitable as organisations. The top ranked football league in the world, English Premier League has faced serious debt problems. During the years 2009, 2010 and 2011 over 75 % of the clubs in the league lost money. (Davis & Hilbert 2013, 311.) It is important to remember to understand the customer and their requirements and problems in order to deliver value to them. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 130.)

Customers, whom have experienced a successful transaction with a company tend to buy again from the same company. Whereas, unsatisfied customers usually try a different company that offers a similar product or service. (Armstrong & al 2017, 35).

Selling to an organisation, requires much more than presenting brochures and collecting orders. The key focus should be to listen and understand what problem the customer has identified. (McDonald & Rogers 2017, 136.)

3 Research design and methods

In this chapter, the research design and process for data collection are explained. Additionally, analysis methods are demonstrated, and the substantial risks are discussed. Research is an investigative practice, the purpose is to observe and learn (McGivern 2013, 4). Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 135) add that research is generally required to provide insight in to both the customers behaviour and market environment.

3.1 Research process through approach and methods

In organisations, resources are usually limited. Limited resources mean that the organisation must have a clear plan for using the resources in order to get the most out of them. (McGivern 2013, 5.) To get the most out of an organisations resources, the collection of research should be systematic. This is one reason why organisations turn research in to a process (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 135).

Studying a target market and the behaviour of customers in the market, provides the building blocks for forming a market entry plan and marketing strategy.

In the case of studying the customers and their processes in a specific market, there's a requirement for descriptive and exploratory data. Qualitative research is ideal for this scenario. (McGivern 2013, 52.)

The research process described by Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 135) contains four steps. First listing the need for information, also known as requirement for research in the form of defining a research problem and objectives. Second, an organisation should develop a plan for conducting the research. The third step is implementation. This means collecting data – both secondary and primary – In order to analyse it. Last step is to interpret, understand and report the found data. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 135-136;148.)

Qualitative research, results in detailed and high context data that goes below the surface to generate emotional responses from the interviewed party. Instead of only gathering data to measure, qualitative research presents an opportunity to gain insight and a vast understanding from the data. Qualitative research aims to discover the reasons why someone acts the way they do. It attempts to figure out, what drives a certain way of acting or behaviour. (McGivern 2013, 52-53.)

When there's a requirement to develop business or form a strategy, qualitative research provides the best data. Although, qualitative research does not result in statistical data, we can use quantitative research to provide statistics to strengthen our qualitative research. (McGivern 2013, 53.)

Qualitative research is divided in to two methods, observational and interrogative. Observational research requires observing and participating in the activities of the target group. Interrogative research refers to discussions and interviews with a target group representative. (McGivern 2013, 146-148.)

The author, was able to observe and partake in the processes within clubs as a football player for almost 20 years. The author has played in various clubs in Finland, Canada and China. Pre-existing observations benefit the author's ability to understand and analyse the results of the interviews. Pre-existing observations combined with an interview provides the clearest picture of the processes in the clubs. (McGivern 2013, 148-149.)

Interviews are considered an interrogative method. However, rather than using the word interview, researchers prefer the word discussion. Qualitative interviews are meant to provide in-depth insight in to the target. They are generally done one-on-one with the interviewer and respondent; the interviews are recorded so they can be analysed later. (McGivern 2013, 162.) The author interviewed a professional with experience from the English football market for this thesis.

Qualitative approach provides the ability to understand what people experience, what influences their behaviour and form an idea of the processes by which they act (McGivern 2013, 148.) As buying behaviour in organisations, is generally driven by a process that buyers go through when facing a new task (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204). It is important to listen to stories by individuals to find out how their process differs from the traditional one (McGivern 2013, 148).

In addition to the interview and author's observations, the author commissioned a market study from the embassy of the United Kingdom in Helsinki, Finland. This study was done, based on a written request in the form of a letter from the author to the embassy.

Statistics from the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the English Football Association (The FA) provide more background information for the thesis. The author's experience of playing football in various countries and clubs should prove to be a valuable asset, especially whilst analysing and validating the interview results.

3.2   Research design

In order to gather information to answer the investigative questions, the research was designed with the investigative questions and the theory structure in mind. Figure 6, elaborates on the data collection. The process begins at the top and moves downwards.
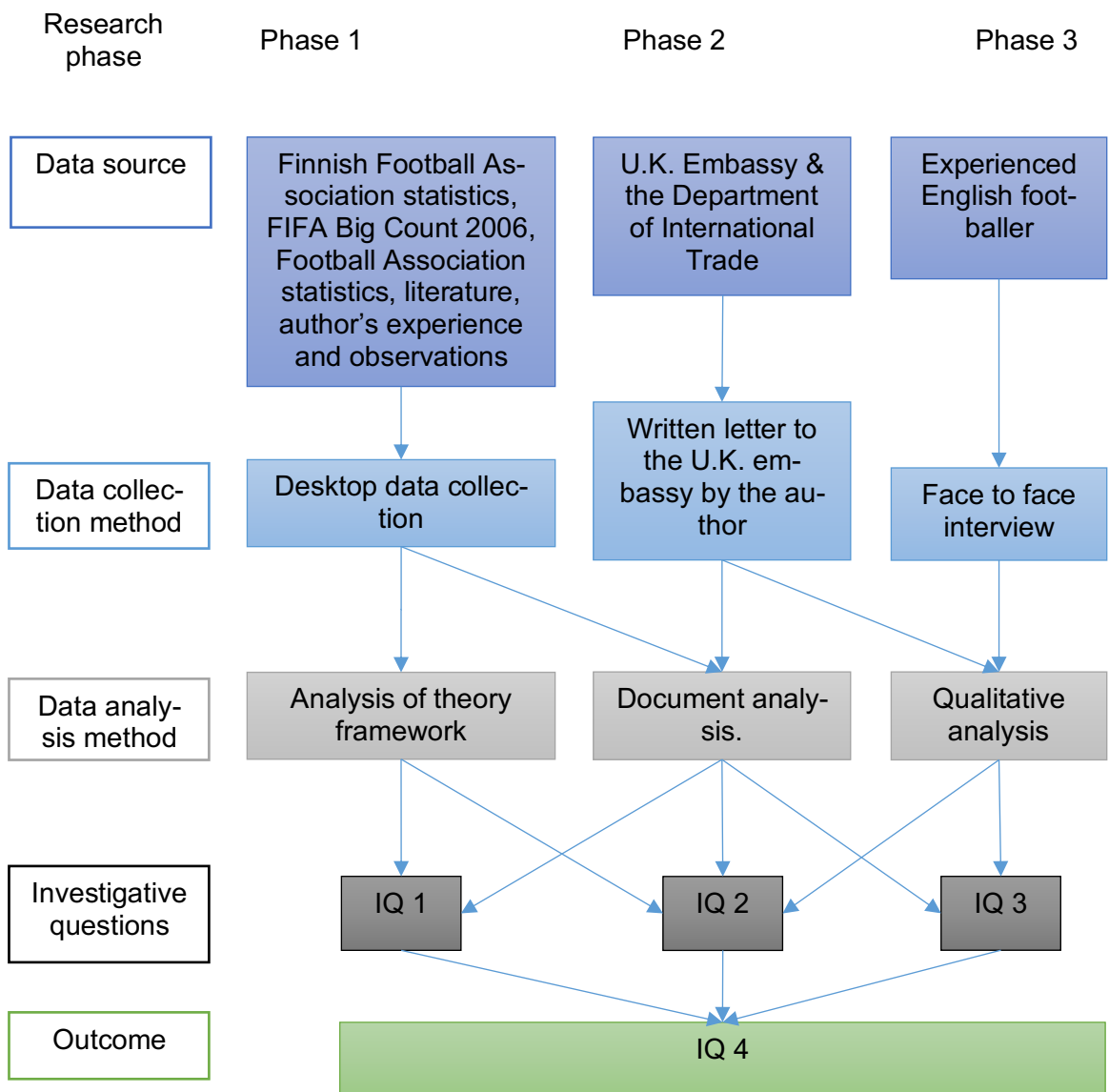

Figure 6. Research design

After the data collection, the analysis brought value to all investigative questions.

3.3 Data collection

Primary research consists of data collected for the case scenario at hand (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 137). However, McGivern (2013, 49) continues that primary data only exists after primary research is conducted. This means primary research is required when the same problem has not been addressed before and is distinctive. The research aims to solve a specific problem. In the case of this thesis, the majority of data was collected from an interview with a prominent English footballer and a study commissioned by the author to the U.K. embassy. The structure of the interview is designed based on a list of questions demonstrated in table 3.

The interview is made up of questions, which the interviewee is supposed to answer much like in quantitative research. However - in qualitative research - the researcher is involved in each transaction where the questions are being answered, hence making it a discussion. (McGivern 2013, 267;346.)

Instead of a questioner, the structure is called a discussion or interview guide. In qualitative research, questions are more open ended (McGivern 2013, 355). The discussion provided a player's point of view on the market characteristics but focused on the organisational structure and buying process of the target customers. The interview guide, lists topics for discussion. The topics are based on the investigative questions of the thesis and backed up by the theory chapter.

The style of the discussion guide depends on the research objectives and data collection method. In addition, the expertise of both parties involved in the discussion play a part on how specific the topics can be (McGivern 2013, 354). The author's expertise enabled an in-depth conversation to probe the interviewee's experiences.

The structure of an interview guide is the introduction, main body and wind down (McGivern 2013, 358-360). The structure and topics are based on the theory part of the thesis. This is demonstrated in table 3.

Table 3. Interview topic structure

Interview structure	Theory framework	Discussion topic
Introduction		Introduction on the thesis, case company and the interviewees' background
Main body	Market characteristics	Overview of the football market in England and the culture within a club
	Organisational structure	The structure of the interviewees club - Teams - Club leadership
	Buying process	- Buying unit - Buying process
Wind down		Summary

The interview provided insight for the investigative questions, with an emphasis on the second and third investigative question. After data was collected to answer the investigative questions one through three, the author was able to answer investigative question four. This is demonstrated in figure 6.

The interview ensured the most valuable answers. The experience gained from acting in a club organisation justifies the most correct and relevant answers. The interview was conducted with the interviewee in a quiet place and recorded for later analysis.

The interview lasted for 50 minutes. The interview topics were selected based on the theory structure of the thesis. The interview began with the introduction where the author presented himself, the reasoning for the interview and the case company. The interviewee was asked to describe his football background.

Traditionally, a sample size in qualitative research is small and the validity justified by the expertise of the researcher in the field (McGivern 2013, 350). The author decided to interview John Hollis. Mr Hollis is an English native but currently resides in Finland. His background in football in England is extensive and impressive.

An incentive is required for the participants to partake in the discussions (McGivern 2013, 350). The size of the incentive does not need to be notable, just as long as it lets the participant feel appreciated (McGivern 2013, 351). In this case, the incentive was the author's passion for the sport and genuine interest towards the organisation which the interviewee represented. Additionally, the author offered to make beverages and snack available during the interview.

The pre-existing knowledge in the sport and genuine interest towards the organisations including their history and the people in the organisations helps build rapport. Rapport is all about forming a trustworthy environment and focusing all of the researcher's energy in to paying attention (McGivern 2013, 363). This required getting to know the organisation before the interview.

Additionally, an in-depth look at the English football market was required. In order to do so, the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Finland was commissioned by the author, on behalf of the thesis commissioning company FC Pelikamat.net Oy. With the help of the Department for International Trade, the embassy provided a market overview of the United Kingdom. The overview focused on England and the English Football Association. The process for collecting this data, began by contacting the U.K. embassy in Helsinki, Finland. A written request was designed by the thesis author and given to the embassy market research team. The team replied with a thorough presentation covering the English football market. The presentation was made by the U.K. Department for International Trade and supplied to the author by the embassy. The research was done for free, as an incentive for the company to consider expanding in to the U.K. market. The written request can be seen in appendix 2, it describes the research and requirements for the case company. The request began with the introduction of the author, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and the case company. The letter explained why the U.K. was selected as a potential market and what sort of information is required from the market. The author requested market size estimates in the form of the number of players and clubs. Information was requested also on the potential competitors, popular brands and partners in the market. The written request included information on the Finnish football market as an example of the data requested.

Additionally, the author accessed pre-existing information from online sources. This part of the research is called desk research. It also assisted with validating the findings from the U.K. embassy market overview study.

Secondary research is considered desk research. This means the collection of pre-existing data from valid sources. Secondary data still requires evaluation and analysis in order to be successfully implemented in to the research. (McGivern 2013, 50.)

Before the thesis, the author contacted the Finnish Football Association (Suomen Palloliitto) and requested statistical data on the football market in Helsinki. Some of this data

is also presented in the thesis. This data was used by the author in the commissioning letter to the U.K. embassy. Secondary data concerns the identification and accessing of pre-existing information (McGivern 2013, 111).

Statistics from associations such as the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the English Football Association (The FA) provide structure for the secondary data as well. In addition, important secondary data was obtained from reliable internet sources and club web pages. The data provided information on the structure and number of teams in a club.

Generally, secondary data can be collected before the primary data (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 137). This was the case in this thesis. Prior to the interview, the desk research provided the author an excellent opportunity to learn about the market and customers. The observations made by the author, before this research also add value and credibility to the research. It is still important for the author to not have bias due to pre-existing experiences from football clubs.

3.4 Analysing qualitative data

Qualitative analysis is not only mechanical, but also intellectual. The results must be viewed, and thematic similarities located and highlighted from the results. The analysis process does not begin only after the research case is complete but must take place during the whole research process. (McGivern 2013, 414.) The author was able to analyse his own experiences even before the research phase 2 and 3 as demonstrated in figure 6. With qualitative research, there are various available analysis approaches depending on the researcher's previous experiences (McGivern 2013, 416).

The results of the discussions were analysed with qualitative methods. The interview was recorded, and the results compared to the discussion guide structure. The author listened to the recorded interview and wrote the discussion in to text. Segments of the discussion text were then highlighted accordingly to match the topics of discussion, which were selected based on the theory structure of the thesis.

The author's own experience from playing football in various countries and clubs, benefited the interview before, during and after the discussion. Because the questions are open-ended, the answers are vast and informative. This lead to some answers falling in to various theory framework categories.

When analysing results, a helpful method is to write down and summary the discussion (McGivern 2013, 422). McGivern (2013, 423) mentions various analysis strategies. The author decided to analyse the results based on the investigative questions. This way both the interview and U.K. embassy market overview could be analysed side by side.

When the interview was completed the author had an image of the buying process in a football club. The author compared the theoretical business buying process with the results. Then, the author compared the buying process with the boarding process of the case company. Comparing the two processes enabled the author to view team apparel buying from two perspectives. This is made available for the reader in chapter 5.

3.5   Risk management

The author's expertise is a valuable asset, but during analysis there is a risk that the author's bias from his own experiences could falsely affect the conclusions.

While conducting a research through discussions and interviews, it is important to remember the risk of misinterpretation and bias. McGivern (2013, 418) mentions the risk created by all researchers having their own biases. To tackle the pre-existing experiences of the author, the results are gathered from different sources and compared to organisational buying theory. To aid in the results analysis, a researcher should confide in a reliable theory structure (McGivern 2013, 419).

Finding an individual to interview, who has enough knowledge of a football clubs behaviour in England proved challenging. There's also a chance they may not be willing to release too specific information from their organisation's buying process. In order to deal with this risk, the questions were formed in such a way as to not seem too interrogative.

With a study from the embassy of the United Kingdom, it is possible to receive biased results that favour the United Kingdom as a potential market for business. Also, as the United Kingdom includes four separate nations with their own separate football associations, it is possible some statistics may differ. The author checked the results of the U.K. embassy study with available statistics from FIFA and the FA to make sure they matched.

The author remained vigilant and was able to read body language during the interview. The author must not adhere to the topic guide too strictly. The conversation was steered naturally with the flow of conversation. The interview guide is important to create prior to

the interview but during the interview some discussion topics may appear as irrelevant and should be skipped.

It is important to note, that the study on the English football market was conducted by the U.K embassy. The results ended up being centralised on the English Football Association. But the study does mention the football associations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. To ensure the results concerned the English football market, the author verified the results based on sources from the English Football Association.

4   Results

This chapter presents the findings and results from the study. The chapter is divided in to three sub-chapters all of which have a corresponding investigative question. First this chapter views the English market. Secondly, the target customer organisational structure is presented using an amateur club selected by the author. The second sub-chapter also includes additional experiences from an English football player. The third sub-chapter presents the reader with results on the buying process of an English football club. To answer the investigative questions, results were obtained from the interview, Department for International Trade and online sources. The online sources are compiled from international and national associations. Club specific information was obtained from the club website.

Insight on the market was commissioned from the U.K. embassy by the author. The interview was conducted with an experienced English footballer because of their practical experience, observations and insight on the football market and culture.

4.1   English football market characteristics

According to the U.K. embassy study, every fifth adult from England participates in football in some way (Department for International Trade 2017, 5). Additionally, England has the largest number of football clubs in the world (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 12). A stellar sign of heritage and history, is that the oldest club in the world is also from England (The Sportster). The U.K. appears to be an appropriate - though competitive - market to enter for a football team apparel business.

Judged by the number of players and clubs, the largest football nations in the world are England, Germany, Brazil and France. (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 12.) The number of registered clubs per country is presented in figure 7.

Figure 7. Largest football nations based on club registration numbers (adapted from FIFA Communications Division 2006, 12)

England, has the highest number of registered clubs in the world. Even though Brazil, Germany and France have a larger population. When comparing the number of registered players by country, Germany has the largest number of players in total, in adults and in youth. Brazil and France also overtake England with the number of registered players. (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 9-11.) As seen in figure 8.
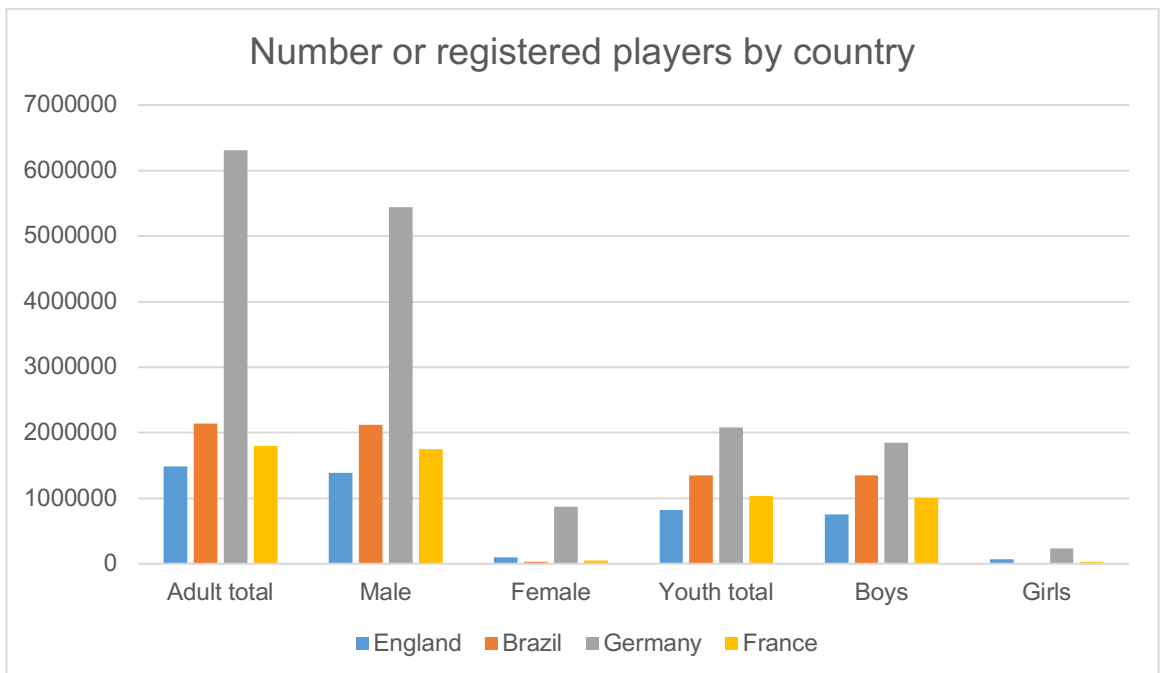

Figure 8. Number or registered players in the largest four football countries (adapted from FIFA Communications Division 2006)

In figure 8, we see that in all four countries, the number of adult players is higher than under 19-year olds. This means that people are participating in football even in their adulthood. Of the top four nations, England has the largest number of clubs. Despite having the lowest number of registered players in both adults and youths. For example, Germany seems to have clubs with larger number of players per club, whereas in England there is a larger quantity of smaller clubs.

In 2006, England had 2 306 000 registered players. The majority of them were adult men, covering 60% of the players. At 33% percent, boys under the age of 19. Adult women covered 4% while girls under the age of 19 were only 3%. (FIFA Communications Division 2006, 9-11.)
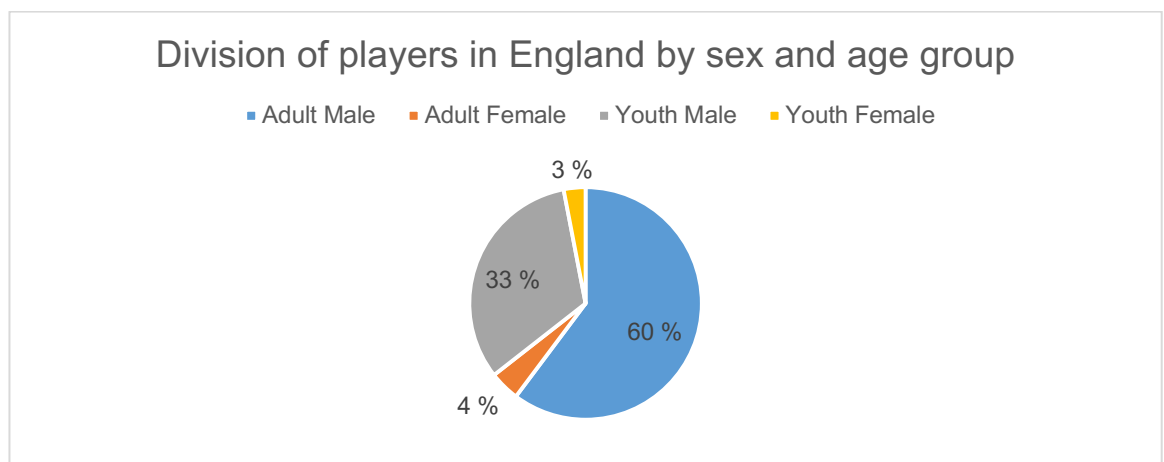
Figure 9. Division of players in England (adapted from FIFA Communications Division 2006)

In figure 9, the division of players by sex and age group is demonstrated. The English Football Association has committed to increasing the number of female youth players (Department for International Trade 2017, 6).

There seems to be no signs of slowing down for the growth in participation within football in the United Kingdom. The study revealed, that both youth and disability football participants have increased in the last years. In 2014 the participants in disability football increased by 14%, while there was a surge of 100 000 people within the ages of 14-25 who began participating in football. During a month, there are almost 3 million participants taking part in football activities in the U.K. (Department for International Trade 2017, 5.)
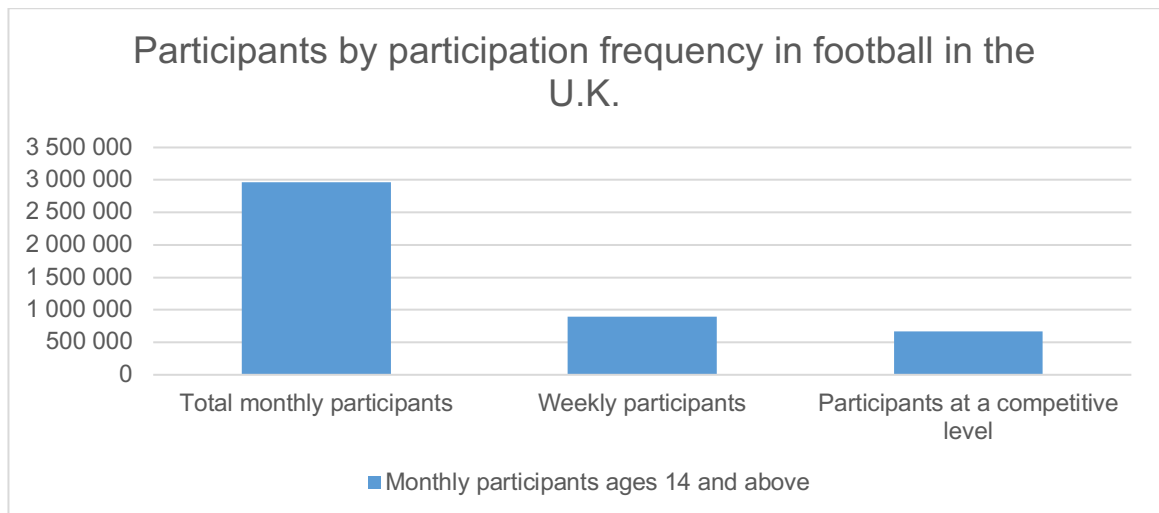
Figure 10. The frequency of participants above the age of 14 in football in the United Kingdom (adapted from The Department for International Trade 2017, 5)

As shown in figure 10. There are an astounding 2 968 600 people from the age 14 and above partaking in football in the U.K. every month. 892 300 of these partake in the sport at least weekly. Of the weekly participants 670 600 partake at a competitive level. Competing generally means that the number of participations is higher than once a week. (Department for International Trade 2017, 5.)

The football association in England, has committed to further increasing participation and the participation at a competitive level, the latter aims to produce better players of the game. This is supported by the commitment to invest 48 million pounds towards developing training and playing facilities. In addition to the 48 million pounds, the FA has committed to investing 16 million pounds in the next four years, in player development through quality coaching for kids from the age of 5 and upwards. (Department for International Trade 2017, 6.)

Football in the U.K. and England specifically seems to continue growing, presenting business opportunities not only now but also in the future.

The case company is targeting football clubs as customers. Therefore, it is important to know how many clubs there are in the market. According to the study, there were 40 000 registered clubs in the English Football Association. This is the largest number of clubs per any country in the world. These 40 000 clubs are spread out amongst 55 different county associations. In a large market such as the England, there must also exist competitors. According to the study, the largest suppliers of football kits in the United Kingdom

are Genesis Teamwear, Toga Sports, Pendle and Avec Sports. (Department for International Trade 2017, 15-16.)

All of the four football kit suppliers have an online presence. Genesis Teamwear is the most similar when compared to the case company, as they too offer an online web store personalised for the customer club. (Department for International Trade 2017, 15-16.)

- Genesis Teamwear
    - Exclusively distributes Puma brand team apparel
    - Provide kits for over 20 professional teams in the professional leagues in the United Kingdom. Also, to a large number of amateur clubs.
    - They create a personal website for each customer club to set up and manage. Received praise for being easy to use and available around the clock.
- Toga Sports
    - Known for providing cheaper alternatives to football kits. They manufacture their own team apparel.
    - Toga Sports offer the printing of numbers, logos and sponsor logos as a part of their service.
- Pendle
    - Offer kits directly to clubs and schools without distributors.
    - They offer in house printing and have the fastest delivery time in the United Kingdom.
- Avec Sports
    - Avec Sports has a large number of professional clubs in their customer portfolio.
    - Also supplying schools, universities, football academies and amateur clubs.

In addition to competitors, the market contains suppliers. It is important to note that in this context, suppliers supply to team apparel companies such as the case company. Which in turn provide apparel to the customers. The case company, receives team apparel gear from various different brands. Their business plan is based on giving the customer the choice of brand.

The most interesting business intermediaries in the United Kingdom, for our case company are associations and events. (Department for International Trade 2017, 18-19.)

- The UK Fashion and Textile Association
    - A British fashion network that grants its members a vast network of contacts in the textile industry.
    - Newsletters, breaking news and seminars are offered to members.

- The Association of Suppliers to the British Clothing Industry.
  - o Members well connected within the clothing industry. Well-equipped to serve every sector in the clothing industry, including sports team apparel.
  - o Offering includes seminars, technical visits publications and conferences.
- Souvenirs, Memorabilia, Sports Merchandise, Marketing (SMMEX International).
  - o An annual event. Latest event organised in the beginning of March 2018 in Wembley Stadium.
  - o Provides businesses a platform to network and find partnerships with sports clubs, associations, corporations, universities, retailers and distributors.
  - o Offer a way to promote a brand, find and interact with potential customers and improve the effectiveness of sports apparel business in the United Kingdom.
- The Sports Merchandise and Licensing Show.
  - o An annual event. Next event in November of 2018 at Stamford Bridge.
  - o During 2017, their event was the largest amongst the sports merchandising industry in the United Kingdom.
  - o Showcasing a large amount of licensed and promotional merchandise.

The game of football is beloved in the United Kingdom. It is important to note the impact of and towards the society. In the United Kingdom, all four nations have their own associations. These associations have specific county and regional associations. Community engagement is a big part of football in the United Kingdom. Already, 8.2 million adults are participating in football every month. With youth numbers on the rise, expect the role of society in football to continue to increase. As the sport becomes a part of more individuals lives, the clubs have more of an impact on families and even towns. (Department for International Trade 2017, 5-6.)

Table 4. Market characteristics overview for the UK (adapted from Department for International Trade 2017, 5-20; Armstrong & al 2017, 96-100; Sharp 2013, 186-190)

Market characteristics in England.

Company	Case company: FC Pelikamat.net Oy. The choice of brands to the customer clubs, individual players can make purchases from a web store made for each club by the case company. This group includes the employees of the case company.
Customers	40 000 registered clubs in the United Kingdom. Clubs have various teams divided based on skill, sex and age. The case company should create a more specific target customer profile. The player's in the club are the end-users of team apparel but often they don't have a say in purchasing.
Competitors	Big competitors in the market include Genesis Teamwear, Toga Sports, Pendle and Avec Sports. Smaller competitors also exists on a regional level.
Suppliers	Various brands. Puma, Nike, Adidas, Givova, Patrick and so on. The case company doesn't want to be restricted by brands, but attempts to sell which ever brands fit clubs strategy.
Business intermediaries	The UK Fashion and Textile Association, The Association of Suppliers to the British Clothing Industry, SMMEX International (Souvenirs, Memorabilia, Sports Merchandise, Marketing) and The Sports Merchandise and Licensing Show. Institutions such as Business Finland fit this group, as they can provide financial assistance to the case company.
Society	More than 8.2 million people affected by football. Four nation specific associations in the United Kingdom. Each with county specific associations. Football brings any English community together. Even non-participants are affected by the football market in England.

Table 4, presents the characteristics based on the ones established in the theory chapter of this thesis. The characteristics of the market in the microenvironment as listed by Kotler & al (2017, 96-100) and Sharp (2013, 186-190). The author has listed the most relevant aspects found from the study commissioned from the U.K. embassy and the interview.

The study reveals that the professional league in England, called the Premier League, is a contest of 20 teams. These Premier League teams are the flagship of English football, the money involved in the league and the clubs participating is substantial. The cost of a sponsor logo on the shirt of a Premier League club ranges from 1 to 53 million pounds. The sponsors have no involvement in the design of the kit, their logo is just visible on the front of the kits. (Department for International Trade 2017, 10-11.) The top eight, sponsor deals in the Premier League based on worth in pounds showcased in figure 11.
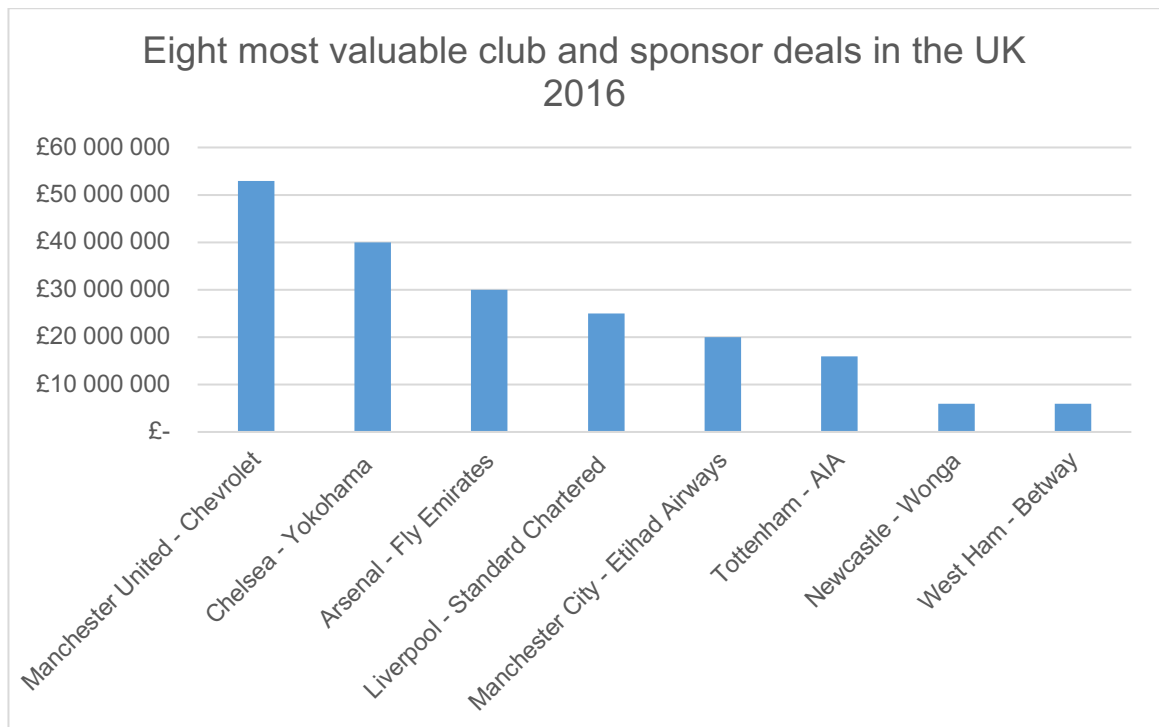
Figure 11. The eight most valuable sponsorship deals in the English Premier League (adapted from The Department for International Trade 2017, 10-11)

Figure 11, showcases the amount of money involved in the football industry in England. The deals in figure 11, cover one year.

The English Football League is separate from the Premier League, relationship between the two is maintained in so that the bottom three teams from the Premier and the top three teams from the English Football League change places at the end of the season. The money in the English Football League is notably less, due to the lack of an international audience. The English football association is called the Football Association (The FA). The clubs in the Football Association are centrally governed by county associations within England. The 55 county associations include non-county association such as military and school associations. A majority of the clubs in the Football Association are amateur or semi-professional clubs. The county associations organise competitive leagues for youth players under the age of 19, on a national level. The top level for youth football is called the Premier Academy League, containing 40 clubs, below this league the Football League Youth Alliance contains 58 clubs. The FA also organises the FA Youth Cup annually, in which 4000 youth clubs partake in. (Department for International Trade 2017, 7-8.)

4.2 Customer organisational structure in England

The football clubs consist of a board and teams. The teams consist of players and staff. The organisational structure is demonstrated with a traditional English amateur football

club in figure 12. The structure of the world's first football club, Sheffield FC, includes over 10 teams in its organisation. Like for many clubs, community engagement is important, this means they require an offering to all members of society. The Sheffield FC includes both men's and women's teams. Hundreds of players in boys and girls from the age 8 and upward. Not to exclude the disability squad and connection with over 40 schools in the area. Sheffield FC is an amateur club. (Sheffield FC).

Specific team that the club lists are as follows. For men, the first team acts as the top level of football for the club. They play in the in the Evo-Stik (NPL) League Division One South. The competitive level teams for juniors are the development squad's for under 21's and under 19's. The under 18's have their own squad, just like the under 16's and 15's. The club also has a team for over 35-year olds and a separate squad for Sheffield FC veterans. The women's first team - which plays in the FA Women's Super League - was only formed in 2003. Other teams include the ladies' development team and girls teams under 18's reds, under 16's blues and under 14's. (Sheffield FC). Sheffield FC was selected by the author to represent the example club structure, due to the club having both men's and women's teams. The structure of Sheffield FC is visualised in figure 12.
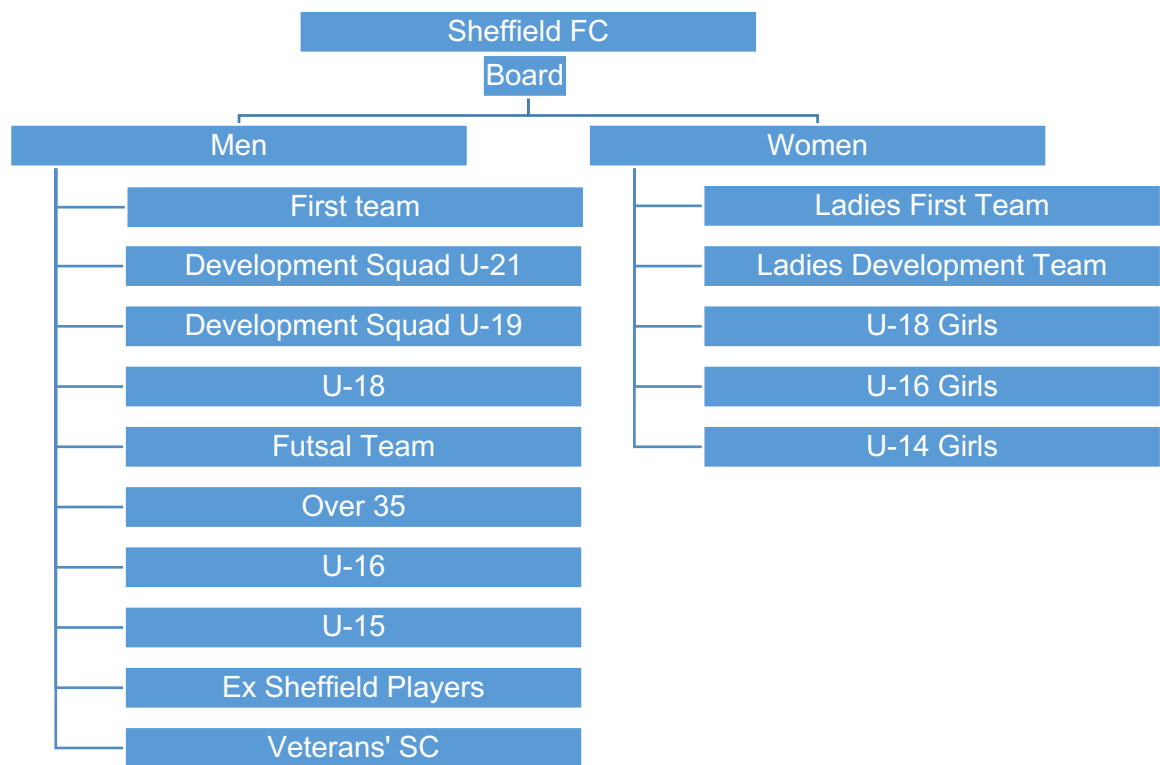
Figure 12. The structure of Sheffield FC, football club division of teams (Sheffield FC)

According to Sheffield FC & The Football Association, the structure of the club has a board in addition to the teams in the club. The board is in charge of running the operations of the club. The board of Sheffield FC and their roles consists of the following:

- Chairman: Oversees tasks by the rest of the managers.
- President: Leader of the club, not involved in the day to day operations.
- First team manager: Manages the men's first team.
- Club & Community manager: In charge of community development and education.
- Club secretary: The contact between the club and local football association.
- Treasures: Acts as the financial officer for the club.
- Ladies general manager: Manages the ladies teams.
- Ladies first team manager: Manages the first ladies team.
- Head of operations: In charge of staffing and health at the stadium for home games.
- Media manager/match day secretary: Responsible for digital and print media.
- Club historian: Keeps records of historical data.
- International relations manager: Maintains relations with groups outside of England.

(Sheffield FC; the Football Association.)

As stated in the theory chapter, organisational structure is based on the tasks required for an organisation to complete (Robbins & Judge 2016, 272). As in the market, there are 40 000 football clubs, responsible for enabling the participation of almost three million monthly participants. The structure of these clubs must contain teams based on gender and age. Within the teams, there needs to be coaches and managers. The teams under the club have one governing body which is the board of the club. The chairman of the board represents the club in county associations of which there are 55 according to the study commissioned from the U.K. embassy. (Department for International Trade 2017, 7-8.) This is showcased in figure 13.
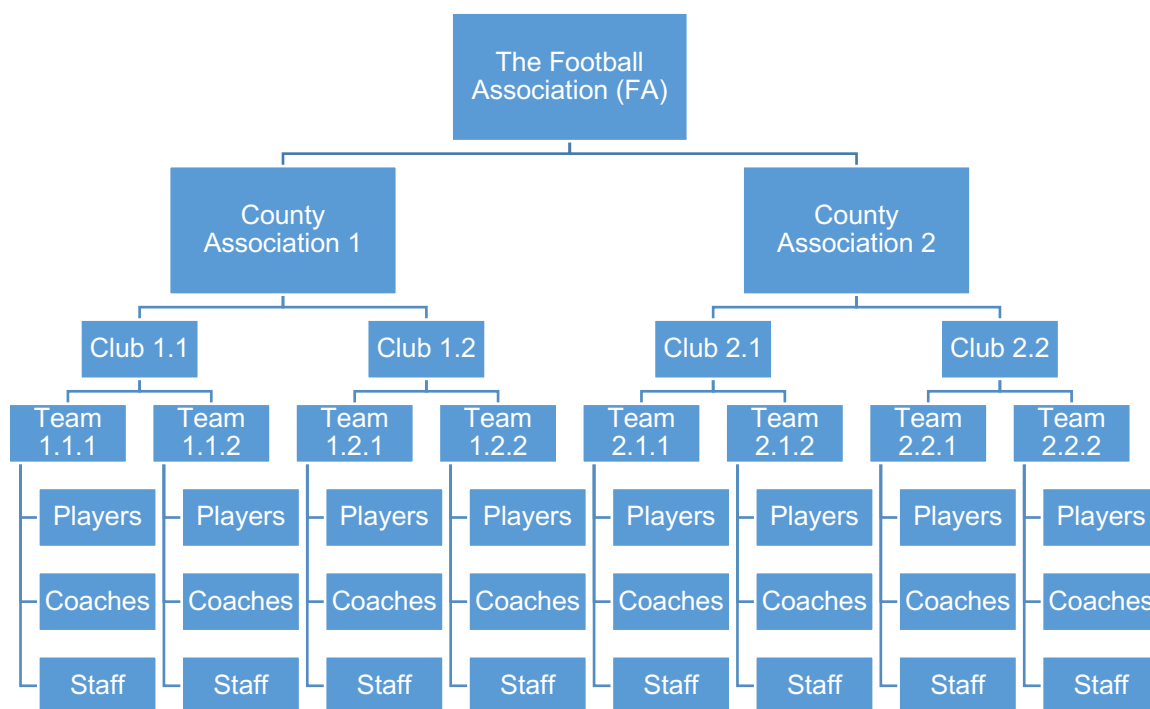
Figure 13. Example of the structure of hierarchy in the Football Association (adapted from The Department for International Trade 2017, 7-8)

The figure 13 presents the structure of the Football Association in England. Below the FA, there are 55 county association, presented here as two separate county associations one and two. Beneath the county associations are the clubs. There is a total of 40 000 registered clubs in England, so on average that makes 727 clubs per county association. (Department for International Trade 2017, 7-8.)

The clubs here are presented as 1.1, 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2. Within clubs, there are teams based on sex, age, location and skill level. These teams all require players, coaches, and staff to operate. Staff includes managers, volunteers and assistants. Figure 13 presents the structure of the Football Association.

In the theory chapter of the thesis, the author notes that as explained in the Community Amateur Sports Club Scheme, the main purpose of an amateur sports club is to enable the playing of football by providing facilities and management for the club. (HM Revenue & Customs 2016.) Figure 13 showcases the structure of associations, clubs and teams that are responsible for enabling the individuals to play football.

The interviewee Mr. Hollis spent a majority of his playing days at Fairford Town FC. The organisation of Fairford Town FC was described by the interviewee as quite a standard semi-professional club. The club has one team per school year starting at the age of four.

The transition in to the adult teams happens at sixteen. As the interviewee described the adults have three teams. 1st team which is the most competitive. The 2nd and 3rd team make up the reserve of the club's first team.

The interview began with a question about the interviewee's participation in football in England and the club for which he played for. The interviewee responded:

> "I played at Fairford Town F.C. since a young age, 4 or 5 years began at youth teams and all the way up, played in school as well, then at least at the level I was playing at, at 16 had the option to move to men's team. At 16 I advanced to the men's team level football. Played in the country side, lots of traveling for matches but an easy way to progress to the first team. This was the highest level I played at which was a semi-professional level. Lot of traveling but football culture is really different in comparison to Finland. Saturday is match day. "(14 April 2018.)

The author requested further description of the club and activities. The interviewee continued:

> "Fairford town FC is located near Gloucester, west of London. Played in the club youth teams from 4 to 16 and then progressed to the adult's semi-pro teams. Adults had 3 teams. 3rd and 2nd train together and make the reserve squad, 1st team trains separately. Played from 20 to 26 in the men's first team. Playing was year-round. Pre-season started late June. 2 months of pre-season, season starts beginning of august and finishes beginning of May. So only about 6 weeks off. Matches go out through the whole season, so the worst time in England weather wise. Games might be postponed due to the weather. "(14 April 2018.)

As the weather in England during the football season can be rainy, cold and even snowy the team apparel needs to meet the challenges of the climate. As the author required a more thorough understanding of the market. The author steered the conversation accordingly to the microenvironment characteristics as presented by Armstrong & al (2017, 96-100) and Sharp (2013, 186-190). With regard to the company, the interviewee did not recall a company that would have offered a similar solution compared to the case company. Concerning competitors for the case company the interviewee mentioned Prodirectsoccer.com which is a company that sells all football equipment online. They sell equipment such as cleats and footballs to individual players and team kits in bulk to clubs. With regard to suppliers, the interviewee mentioned that even though Adidas and Nike are the most popular brands, they used Puma, Umbro and a lesser known Stanno brand apparel.

For the society and publics in the microenvironment it is important to understand how in-volved the local communities are in football. The interviewee explained that as Saturdays were match days, Saturdays brought hundreds of people together before, during and after the game.

With regard to customers in the microenvironment, the author asked the interviewee about the other teams in their league.

> "We were a smaller club; some other teams were able to pay players. As I started, some of our players got payed but I never did. Quickly due to lack of funds none of our players were getting payed salaries. Training, travel, post-match meals, team apparel was payed for us. I think it worked out well, eve-ryone knew that everyone else in the team was getting the same treatment. Other teams in our league had bigger budgets and were able to pay a few hundred pounds per game for the top players. 250 quid was the largest per game salary I heard of. We had more local players, so they didn't need to get paid in order to come play." (14 April 2018.)

According to the answer, at the semi-professional level some players may be receiving salaries while other teams can have no paid players. The answer confirms that resources tend to be scarce in semi-professional football in England. As there are high expenses for the club such as purchasing team apparel to the players.

The interviewee also explains that the number of teams has slightly diminished in the area as the lack of funds have led to more volunteer-based operations. Less volunteers have been willing to partake without any rewards. The interviewee continued that he does not believe this to be a sign of football culture doing poorly in England. He feels the culture is strong and will continue to be.

In the separate county associations, there are many different tiers of play. As described earlier, the highest level of football in England is the English Premier League. The author asked the interviewee to describe the level of football Fairford Town FC partook in and he replied:

> "Fairford is still hanging on, not looking to advance to a higher level but not to relegate down either. Some of the clubs had quite big budgets. One opposi-tion team player was on 250 pounds a game from Hungerford Town, the player was an ex-professional and they have since advanced to a higher divi-sion. I'd say the average salary in our division was about 50 pounds per

player per game with 22 teams in the division. We played 8th tier football in England. The tiers are of course ranked at the top the Premier League, followed by the Championship. After that we have Leagues One and League Two. They are followed by the National League beneath which is the National League North and National League South. After that we get in to the semi-professional leagues in tier 7 followed by the 8th tier where we played. The football culture even at our level was very competitive and run very professionally. "(14 April 2018.)

According to Mr. Hollis, there is plenty of competitive football in the English market that isn't considered professional football. Even below the 8th tier, there are semi-pro leagues which are followed by amateur leagues.

When asked about the structure of the club, the interviewee replied:

"The teams from ages 4 to 10 were really more of a football play-school style and not very competitive or serious, one training and maybe one game day a week. One team per age group or school year. Fairford did not have a women's or girls team. At the age of sixteen, most of the player advanced to the adults, either 1st, 2nd or 3rd team.

According to Mr. Hollis, the staff, coaches and facilities seemed very professional and up to standards. Training was focused on tactics and physical fitness. When asked about the number of players in a team, the interviewee said they mainly had more than enough players, with the exception of one year in youth teams where they had to make do with sixteen players.

The author asked the interviewee to describe the leadership roles and responsibilities of the club. The interviewee replied as follows:

"Chairman and treasurer were in charge of the finances for the club. Marketing manager took care of promotion and behind the scenes operations at the office. Club secretary was involved with the players, helped out in general. Kit manager, with the help of the secretary responsible for the acquisition of team apparel for the club. Groundsman, responsible for the pitch and other game and training facilities." (14 April 2018.)

Of these roles, the chairman was the leader of the club and was responsible for all actions. The finances and funding of the club he had directed to the treasurer. The kit manager was responsible for the selection and ordering of team apparel. He was also responsible for the washing and keeping of the match jerseys.

4.3 Team apparel buying process in England

Nike and Adidas are the most popular brands in team apparel in the U.K. The brands are mainly distributed by team apparel companies. According to the study done by the U.K. embassy, of the four big players in the market only two sell Adidas and Nike. (Department for International Trade 2017, 10-11.)

As stated in the theory chapter, the buying units within organisations – or clubs – are affected by product, price, promotion and place (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 201). Additionally, other stimulus such as economic, technological, cultural and political have an effect (Van Weele 2014, 27). In football business, stimulus come from other characteristics in the microenvironment. According to the commissioned study from the U.K. embassy Nike and Adidas supply kits to the largest clubs in the English Premier League, Chelsea and Manchester United. (Department for International Trade 2017, 11.)

In football business, team apparel deals last from 5-10 years for the big clubs. Smaller clubs make deals that usually last under 5 years. Sponsorships have a great influence on the sales of football kits, even though the money involved is different on a competitive level such as in the Premier League, the idea of presenting the sponsoring company on the team apparel is the same in lower level clubs. Especially youth clubs, require new kits almost every year because kids grow out of the old team apparel kit sizes.

The final topic in the main structure of the interview focused on the buying behaviour and process of the football club. According to the interviewee, the biggest expenses of the club were travel expenses, pitch maintenance and team apparel. The kits were an annual acquisition before the start of the season during the pre-season.

The interviewee explained that the players had no say in the quality of kits received. They were just given to them. The interviewee explained how this turned out to be problematic. As the players were not made a part of the acquisition, their shirt numbers and apparel sizes were based on the kit manager's estimations. The result was a battle for the best sizes between the players. The interviewee made an example of shorts, which he never seemed to get the right size of. The interviewee explained as follows:

"Players had very little or even no say in the acquisition. For example, with Pro-direct Soccer the club kit manager would order in bulk and hand the apparel out to players. We never bought our own kit, so we never got to choose our shirt sizes or squad number for example. Short and sock sizes were usually horrible, there were never enough sizes to go around for everyone to get the ideal one. Turned out to be a bit of a mess especially as a new player you were literally left with what was left over apparel. The reserve team usually played with 1st teams last year kit." (14 April 2018).

The author asked the interviewee where the club bought the kits, which apparel they bought and which brands they ordered. To which the interviewee replied:

"Ordered them from big sporting chains. Prodirectsoccer.com was one we used. Pro-Direct Soccer is one of the most popular for the kits as far as I know. We had Puma, Umbro and even a smaller brand Stanno, never heard of it before or after! We didn't change the brand every year, but it was chosen according to which one happened to have the best deal going at the time. Value for money was important. We received a training top, socks, shorts, track pants and track jacket for ourselves. Additionally, both home and away kits were ordered but kept by the kit manager. "(14 April 2018.)

With limited resources and lots of volunteers, value for money seems to be the most important factor for amateur and semi-professional clubs. The kit manager began his buying process even before he knew the exact player roster for the next season. The kit manager bought in bulk, various sizes that were then handed out to players. The players were allowed to keep their own apparel which they got new sets of every year. The game jerseys were collected by the kit manager and passed down to the reserve team for next season. The game jerseys would always receive a sponsor logo branded on them according to the interviewee.

As the interviewee explained the difficulties they faced with finding the correct gear the author continued to ask about additional purchases he and other players made during the season. To which the interviewee replied:

"Yes, we bought our own shin pads, shoes and kit bag. Because we were just given equipment without the kit manager consulting with us, the sizes were usually off. So, usually the players would buy socks for themselves because the club provided socks were wrong sizes and really uncomfortable. I understand the club might have been on a tight budget, but myself

and other players were willing to pay extra for socks that are comfortable, tight and fit well. The sock needs to hold the shin pad in place and as your feet get wet in almost every game. Uncomfortable socks would leave bruises and wear out quickly." (14 April 2018).

In summary, the players required both a higher quality and quantity of socks than what the club was able to provide. They were willing to pay extra to get that.

To finish the interview, the author asked the interviewee to describe his personal purchase of football gear and whether he prefers online purchases. The interviewee replied:

"Nowadays always online, you can get the gear delivered directly to you and the available stock is better than in a store. Especially socks and shoes because I know my sizes, I can order the same ones. I would really appreciate when an online store has the sizes laid out well and compared to specific height, weight and for example the chest circumference. It makes buying apparel so much easier. Shin pads are not a yearly purchase, but shoes, socks and training gear like shirt, shorts, jacket and pants." (14 April 2018).

In addition, to valuing apparel that lasts long and fits well the interviewee felt confident that online purchases are the best method for acquiring apparel if the buyer is familiar with the brand and sizes.

The buying unit in an organisation, as described by Van Weele (2014, 27) and Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 202) included five roles the users, influencers, decision makers, buyers and gate keepers. In the case of Fairford Town FC, the influencers, decision makers, buyers and gate keepers seemed to be very separate from the users. The users had very little opportunity to affect the purchasing process.

As stated in the theory chapter, buying in organisations happens inside a buying unit. According to Van Weele (2014, 27) and Kotler & Armstrong (2016, 202) there are five key roles that form the buying unit.
- Users: These individuals are the end users of the products. In the case of sports team apparel, they are the players and staff of the teams.
- Influencers: In this group, members have an effect the result of the purchasing process based on their expertise and indirect knowledge of the products. For example, in sports clubs these may be the same as users with experience from different team apparel brands. Their expertise is used to evaluate alternative options.

- Buyers: Players are rarely in this group the managers and board members act as the buyers. Buyers negotiate and place orders. Their role is to formally select suppliers and negotiate the terms of purchase.
- Decision-makers: The decision-makers have the final and decisive say on purchase. Football club decisions are made by the board but are influenced by team managers.
- Gatekeepers: These individuals control the flow of information between the other members in the core of purchasing and the supplying party. In small clubs and teams, players can often be the gatekeepers as they may have a direct line to the leadership.

From the desktop research, commissioned study from the embassy and the interview. The author is able to present the buying process of an English football club. In figure 14, the author demonstrates the buying process of an English football club, taking in to account the buying unit and influences on the unit.

External and internal influences				

The buying unit				
Users	Influencers	Buyers	Decision makers	Gatekeepers

Problem identification

Once a year, during the pre-season June-August. Identify need to buy team apparel for players this season

General requirement description

Teams estimate the number of players that require team apparel

Specification of required product

What team apparel is required? In which quality and quantity

Search for supplier

Kit manager searches online and through existing network, views options for companies supplying apparel

Proposals from supplier candidates

Quotes are requested from various suppliers or cost estimations made by the kit manager.

Selection of supplier

The kit manager presents his selection to the board and awaits confirmation from chairman and treasurer

Specification of order-routine

Both quality and quantity of team apparel is confimred with the supplier and the order begins

Contact and involve printing house

The club must find a printing house that will print the sponsors logo on to the newly acquired team apparel

Feedback and prerformance review

The buying unit reviews the purchase of team apparel. Even though the users are dissatisfied, the process does not evolve or change.

Figure 14. Purchasing behaviour of an English football club (adapted from Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 204)

In a new task buying situation clubs buying unit tend to realise approximately the same problems annually around the same time during the pre-season. The amount of team apparel has slight fluctuation in accordance with the number of players. But as stated in the interview, purchases may be made before the actual number of players is known. The required team apparel products include a home and away jersey, shorts and track suit. Depending on the budget, more equipment may be ordered to deal with the challenging weather conditions. Buyers tend to select suppliers they've bought from before, additionally they may search the internet for suppliers. Usually clubs buy from big companies, the best chance for a smaller company to deal team apparel is a personal relationship with an influential gatekeeper.

After the apparel is ordered, the club must find a way to get their sponsors logo on to the apparel. This requires additional work.

The results of the interview and U.K. Embassy study present the football market in England and enabled the author to view the culture and operations of an average club in England. These clubs are the target customer for the case company.

5   Conclusions

The last chapter of the thesis summarizes the results of the study and their relationship to the research and investigative questions. First the key findings of the study and interview are presented. Second, the author reports on the restrictions faced during the thesis. Third, the author describes his recommendations for the case company and himself. Lastly, the author reflects on his journey throughout the thesis.

5.1   Conclusions and findings

Table 4 summarises the answer to the investigative question 1: What are the market characteristics in England, for football?

There is a vast amount of football players and clubs at different levels of skill and equipment requirement. It is important to note, that not all teams within a club are able to acquire new apparel annually. But those that do, make purchases during the preseason. As the weather and pitch conditions can be rough, clubs and their players require reliable, lasting and warm team apparel. The football culture in England is profound and radiates throughout the entire community. As every fifth adult participates in football. Business wise, football is huge in England. Looking at the top tier clubs and their sponsor ship deals which can reach an astonishing 53 million British Pounds annually. With such high involvement, big companies are catering their team apparel to the 40 000 clubs active in the market. Specifying the service to fit a specific club type leaves the case company with an opportunity to enter in to the English market. The results on the market characteristics were obtained throughout all three phases of research as shown in chapter 3, figure 6. The summary of microenvironment market characteristics is shown in table 4.

To understand the potential customer, we view the second investigative question: What is the organisational structure of football clubs in England?

All clubs exist within the Football Association. The FA includes various regional associations which local clubs belong to. These clubs, include varying amounts of teams which can be divided based on sex, location, age and skill level. The teams include players, coaches and managers. The clubs have a leadership unit responsible for running the club. This leadership unit is in charge of various aspects including financing the clubs' operations. The clubs task is to enable the teams and their players to partake and compete in the game of football.

The apparel requirements are generally the same but there may be regional and skill level-based differences. The acquisition of apparel, is heavily dependent on volunteers or individuals without the influence of the end users.

The third investigative question: What is the buying process like in English football clubs? Is also answered through the research.

When describing the buying process, we have to include the buying unit, influences and process. (Kotler & Armstrong 2016, 202.) As we learned from the interview, the end-users of the products – the players – might have very little to no word on the quantity and quality of team apparel. The buying unit is centralised around the decision maker and buyer which mean the kit manager, chairman and treasurer in English football clubs. Clubs tend to currently order in bulk during their pre-season which takes place during June-August. Clubs are generally interested in value for money instead of specific brands. Players may be stuck with second rate quality and are willing to spend their own money in order to re-ceive better equipment such as socks. The purchasing in England may be somewhat old fashioned and changing this behaviour may be difficult. Instead it is better to adapt to the current process and offer the customer an effortless way to buy team apparel.

In figure 15 the case company boarding process is compared to the buying process of an average English football club. The case company process also takes place from top to bottom. The boarding process of the case company should begin during or before the clubs' problem recognition step. At this stage the club realises it has a need to buy ap-parel for the next season. This need arises annually during the same time frame. In the second and third steps, the club is specifying the requirements for their apparel. Usually these requirements remain the same from one year to the next. The case company is in-volved in this process in order to maximise the benefit of cooperation and align the ap-parel with the club apparel strategy.

In the traditional buying model, at this phase through steps 4 to 6 the club views possible candidates for supplying apparel. In a successful scenario, the case company is already involved, and these steps are not required. However, the case company should keep in mind that at the moment of contacting the club personnel, the club may already be at this stage. Meaning, they have already identified a problem and know what they require.

From the customer point of view, in step 7 the two organisations agree on the collection and ordering. FC Pelikamat.net Oy should be involved so that the traditional step 9, find-ing the printing house is not required for the customer to do. As stated by Mr. Hollis in the

interview, players don't mind online purchases as long as they are familiar with the size charts. Delivering fitting pieces to the club and it is players is an important piece of the boarding process.

In the end, the customer reviews the process, regardless of the case company or its process. This means FC Pelikamat.net Oy should actively seek out feedback from the customers. The author expresses a need to add feedback collection to the end of the boarding process.

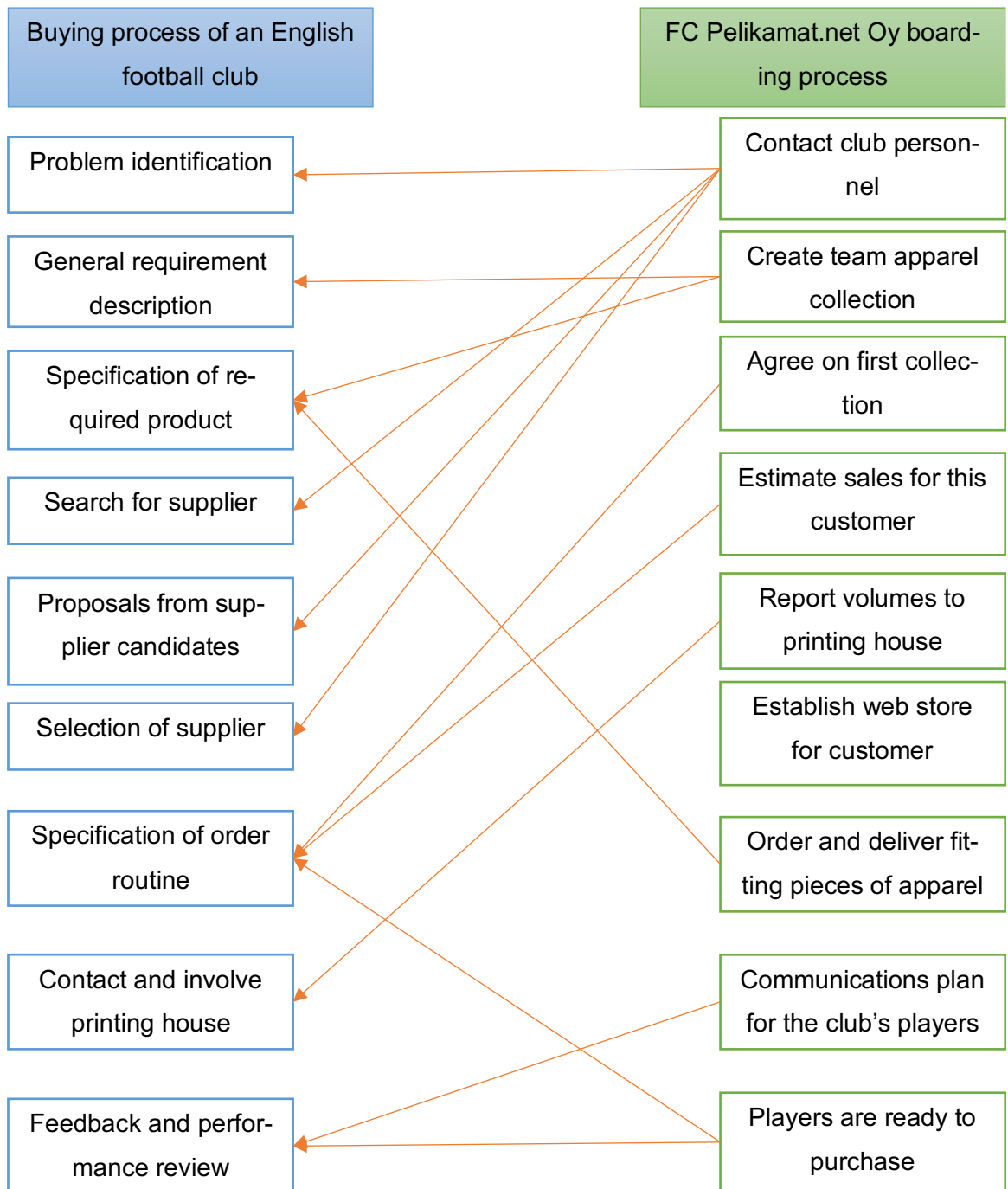| Buying process of an English football club	FC Pelikamat.net Oy boarding process
Problem identification	Contact club personnel
General requirement description	Create team apparel collection
Specification of required product	Agree on first collection
Search for supplier	Estimate sales for this customer
Proposals from supplier candidates	Report volumes to printing house
Selection of supplier	Establish web store for customer
Specification of order routine	Order and deliver fitting pieces of apparel
Contact and involve printing house	Communications plan for the club's players
Feedback and performance review	Players are ready to purchase

Figure 15. The buying process of English football clubs and case company boarding process compared

Following the arrows in figure 15, it is clear to see that the buying process is set up in a different order in comparison to the boarding process. The key areas of note are the first two steps in the boarding process, can eliminate the first six steps from the buyer's perspective.

Lastly, the author's recommendations. Or as they are referred to in the fourth and final investigative question: What are the recommended steps for FC Pelikamat.net Oy after the study? A feedback collection method should be planned and added to the end of the boarding process. Customer satisfaction should be reviewed and collected in any case. As for the marketing process, the case company should move to step 2 whilst using this thesis as a background. More recommendations are available in the recommendations chapter.

The research question: Who makes the purchasing decisions in English football clubs for team apparel, what their process is like and who the process involves? Is answered through the investigative questions. To summarise, the club leadership makes the purchasing decisions with very little input from the end-users.

5.2   Restrictions

The study was limited by the inability to find English football professionals to interview. Despite best efforts from the case company and the author. Fortunately, the author's own experience from playing football in various different countries helped validate the findings from the interview. Writing to heads of football clubs in the U.K. is quite easy, but getting a response is apparently rare. The author would pick a few clubs in the same league and write to either the chairman, manager or other member from the back office. It is possible that these members are approached by so many people they can miss or ignore messages.

In an ideal situation, the interview framework from the thesis is used to further discuss with other buying unit members in football clubs.

The author identifies many similarities between football clubs in various countries. But it is important to realise that in specific details each club can be unique. Buying behaviour can be different and it can even change throughout the annual purchase cycle in any given club due to the people in the critical roles of the buying unit changing or developing. In the theory of the thesis, there were issues finding reliable sources to describe the structure of

the customer organisation. There seems to be an absence of relevant theoretical frame-work for the organisation of sports clubs. The author's experience helped validate findings from online sources.

5.3 Recommendations

As shown in figure 11, there is a substantial amount of money involved in football in England. The author recommends that before entering the market, the case company specify more clearly which club types they want to target. While doing this, they should take in to account the apparel requirements of the club based on the training environment and training tasks. As stated by Mr. Hollis in the interview, that training was focused on tactics and physical fitness. Additionally, they may wish to create a lean canvas for specific customer segments. As there are 40 000 football clubs just in England, they cannot hope to have the resources to market and deliver to them all. These 40 000 English football clubs can be further categorized for example by size, activity and performance levels. This means the amount, gender and age of players. Additionally, taking in to account the frequency and competitiveness of participation. Competitiveness levels can be organised as amateur, semi-professional and professional.

As the case company expands in to the U.K. market, the author suggests reaching out to one of the mentioned business intermediaries and associations with a pre-existing network in the market.

The second step in the marketing process by Armstrong & al (2017,33) refers to the creation of a marketing strategy. Now when creating the strategy, the case company should take in to account what types of club they are targeting.

With regard to the boarding process, the case company could adapt a new perspective depending on the behaviour of customers in a new market. Buying units in clubs have their own procedures which are not dependant on the procedures of the case company. The case company is responsible for modifying their process to fit that of the customer.

5.4 Reflection on learning

During the process of the thesis the author learned a great amount of football business, organisational buying behaviour and market research. Also, the author gained an insight in to the operations of a start-up and the sports apparel industry. During the thesis, the author realised the contrast of learning theory in school versus seeing the theory in practice during work and the thesis.

The development of the thesis can be seen in appendix 3. The author collected data from various sources which cost time and effort. Simultaneously constructing a career at another company took extra energy and effort.

The thesis, being a practical objective to complete, presents an opportunity to reflect on a development curve. The development curve is familiar to the author and its role became even clearer during the thesis. The curve in figure 16, represents progression. In any project, getting started takes time. As the thesis began to progress rapidly, that the author felt that the thesis was nearer to completion than it was. It seems that approximately the last five percent are the most cumbersome. The thesis is referred to as "the product" in figure 16. Where the development line and dotted line meet, the author felt incorrectly that the thesis was complete. This it is natural to do whilst plenty of progression takes place in a short period of time. This is presented with the sharp rise of the development curve. In fact, the thesis or any product is not complete until the development line touches the finished product line.
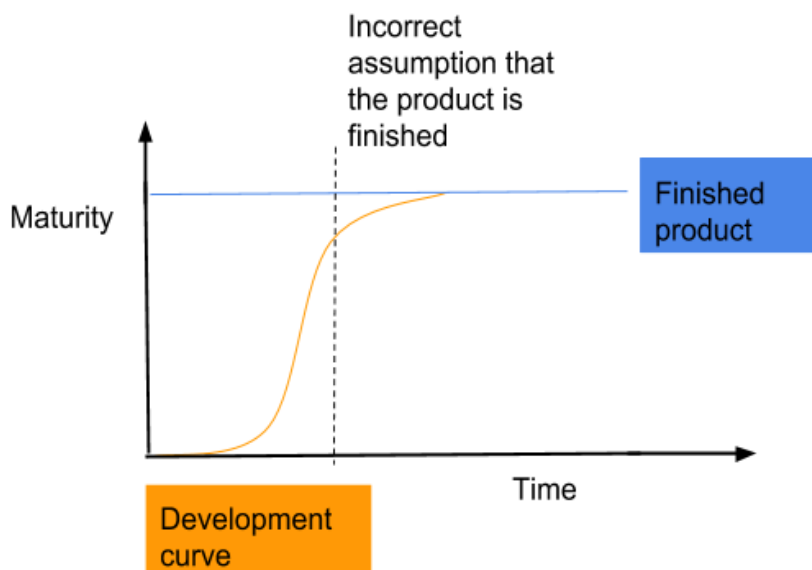
Figure 16. The development process of the thesis

The x-axis represents progression of time and the y-axis represents the progression of maturity of the product in figure 16.

The author also learned the importance of planning in the form of concept work and setting down the criteria for a finished product, or thesis in this case. Having a pre-determined criterion for the finished thesis makes the work a lot less stressful and cumbersome. The criteria are set by conceptualising. This means coming up with the what, why

and for whom. The author used this concept work in various stages of the thesis to determine whether something was relevant or not. The predetermined criteria is represented in the figure 16 as the finished product line marked with blue. With the aforementioned in mind, the author gained valuable experience from project management and setting targets. The thesis is an excellent opportunity to reflect on one's own abilities. For the author, a remarkable moment from the thesis came approximately three months before completion. A powerful motivation took over the author and the thesis as a project began to advance in both quality and quantity of text. Finding moments of motivation such as this, are something to search for and take advantage of when they arise.

The themes of both qualitative and quantitative research became clear to the author. Their similarities and more importantly their differences are important to understand. Research, especially market research is one of the most central aspects in any business. Particularly for a small and growing business.

During the process of the thesis. The author gained confidence for business correspondence due to the task of communicating with the U.K. embassy and constructing a commissioning letter to the embassy on behalf of the case company.

The author learned about the buying behaviour of businesses in both theoretical and actual context. The author also now understands the core of marketing in a more profound way through the marketing process. Throughout the thesis the author began to understand the sports business industry and especially the football market in England.

Figure 17 demonstrates the marketing process and the requirement of understanding the customer and their environment as a part of the first step. The author is confident that this framework will assist him and others now and in the future.
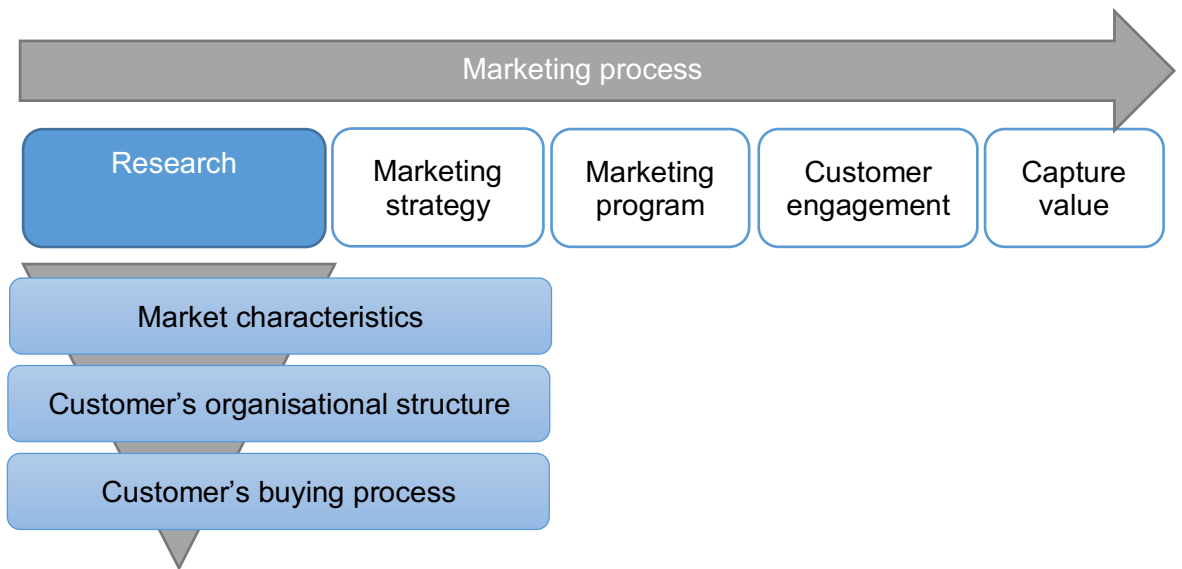
Figure 17. The marketing process and structure for market research (adapted from Armstrong & al 2017, 33)

Now, having learned about the industry and business buying behaviour. The author is interested in adding to this by taking this knowledge in to real business context. For example, in a marketing or account management role. In addition to taking this knowledge in to practice, the author is keen on adding to his knowledge especially with regard to the second step in the marketing process. Now that the author has a thorough understanding of the customer, the next step could be learning to create a marketing strategy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview structure

The following structure was constructed by the author. The topics are based on the theory framework. Each topic in the main body is linked to theory. The topics have planned questions attached to them. During the interview the author made improvised questions when required to keep the flow of conversation. The structure of the main body may also fluctuate during an interview.

Introduction.

My name is Eero, I'm a fourth year BBA student and for my thesis I'm studying football organisations and their buying behaviour in England.

The thesis was commissioned by a Finnish start-up with a new business model to serve the sports organisations and their team apparel needs
The interview will take 40 to 50 minutes. You, (the respondent) were chosen due to your experience from football organisations in England. The respondent's organisation will not be directly contacted as a result of this interview. (for sales purposes, unless requested). With the respondent's permission, the interview will be recorded.
The information will be used to broaden insight in to the team apparel buying behaviour of an English football club.
Thank you for taking part in this interview, it is completely voluntary yet highly beneficial for the author.

There are no wrong answers, I'm interested in all emotions, thoughts, insights, experiences and feelings. The first questions for the interviewee are as follows:
- Can you tell about your background in English football?
- Which club or clubs did you play for?
- What roles did you have in these clubs?

Main body

Topic 1. Market Characteristics.
Questions concerning the customer from case company point of view:
- Can you describe the general football environment in your region?
- Please describe your club and league competitiveness level.
- Please describe the season and preseason

- Can you describe the weekly football activity during the season?
- How did your club compare to others in the league?

Questions concerning the competition from case company point of view:
- Which company or companies did you buy the team apparel from?
- Please describe the companies you acquired team apparel from.
- Did it change? If so, how frequently?

Questions concerning the suppliers from case company point of view:
- Any popular brands?
- Which brands did your team use and do you know what effected the brand choice?

Questions concerning the publics from case company point of view:
- What was your experience of community engagement through your club?

Questions concerning the company from case company point of view:
- Are there other similar businesses pre-existing in the market?

Topic 2. Organisational Structure

Questions concerning the football club structure:
- Can you tell me about the structure of your club?
- How many Teams/individuals per Team?
- Please describe the changing of players on a season-based cycle.
- Please describe the number and activity of volunteers with the club.

Questions concerning the leadership of the club:
- Can you tell me about the leadership or governing body of the club?
- Number of members
- Roles & responsibilities

Topic 3. Buying process

Questions concerning the club purchase cycle:
- Can you describe the buying process?
- Any notable purchase cycles?

Questions concerning buying team apparel,

- What did you buy as team apparel?
- What did you feel was unnecessary?
- Would've needed but didn't get?

Questions concerning buying unit in the club:
- Did end users have an influence on the buying process?
- Who was responsible for the buying of team apparel?
- Can you tell me about what or who affected the buying decision?

Specific questions about the buying unit:
- Users - Requirements, any say in the matter?
- Decisions makers - Who made the decision what to get
- Buyers - Responsible for payment, collection of sizes and quantities
- Gatekeepers - between the seller and the buyer
- Influencers - other people (community) with influence on the seller choice or brands selected?

- Can you tell me about what the buying unit has to consider when buying team apparel for the club?
    o Sponsors
    o Apparel quality
    o Environmental factors
    o Quantity of players
    o Community

- Can you tell me about a successful experience when buying team apparel for the club's teams?
    o What made it successful?

- Can you describe your preferences for buying football equipment?

Wind down

Ask the wind down question and any other notes from the interviewee
- What do you see in the future for the culture in English football clubs?

Present summary and get final comments.

End interview.

Appendix 2. Commissioning letter to U.K. embassy

The following text was written by the author and sent to the U.K. embassy in Helsinki in order to receive a market overview study from the English football market. The embassy and Department of International Trade gathered a proposal PDF for the author.

I am conducting a qualitative research for FC Pelikamat.net Oy as my final thesis for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The Research will be in the form of an international market research, concerning a possible market to enter.

Fc Pelikamat.net Oy is a Helsinki based Start-Up led by The CEO / Founder and serial entrepreneur Atte Roine. In most cases, football clubs lack a solid apparel strategy. For junior players, their parents are left with the responsibility of ordering of new equipment. In most cases the parents have to rely on one of them to volunteer as the teams' equipment manager. One person who is in charge of collecting data and money. Usually with a pen and paper method. The data refers to shirt, sock, trouser etc. sizes. This is very clumsy and slow.

FC Pelikamat.net Oy has come up with a 21st century solution. By leveraging the digital channel and open boarders' transportation in the European Union. FC Pelikamat.net Oy builds a web store personal for each of their customer clubs. The web store is linked directly to the clubs' own website.

The web store sells precisely the equipment that the club wears and the players or their parents can order the products they want and pay with modern payment options either by card or a bill delivered to their home.

FC Pelikamat.net Oy requires knowledge on the market environment, customers in the market and existing team apparel providers.

Why the United Kingdom?

The United Kingdom is a world leader in football. Their prestigious national team is known around the world and the football culture envied by many. The vast number of players and teams in the United Kingdom presents an intriguing opportunity for FC Pelikamat.net Oy. To continue its efforts to expand the business, FC Pelikamat.net wants to learn more about the U.K. market for football team apparel. We want to know how the business model would adapt to the U.K. market.

We are interested in the number of clubs and players in the U.K. We understand that many clubs can have many teams based on the age or skill level of the players. We are also interested in the brands that the clubs wear and who are the largest distributors of team apparel in the U.K. football market.

As an example, this is what we have done with the Helsinki market for football teams, their players and the brands they wear.

DISTRIBUTION OF BRANDS AMONGST THE CLUBS IN HELSINKI

- Givova 4 %
- Umbro 4 %
- Joma 9 %
- Stanno 9 %
- Puma 13 %
- Jako 13 %
- Adidas 17 %
- Nike 31 %
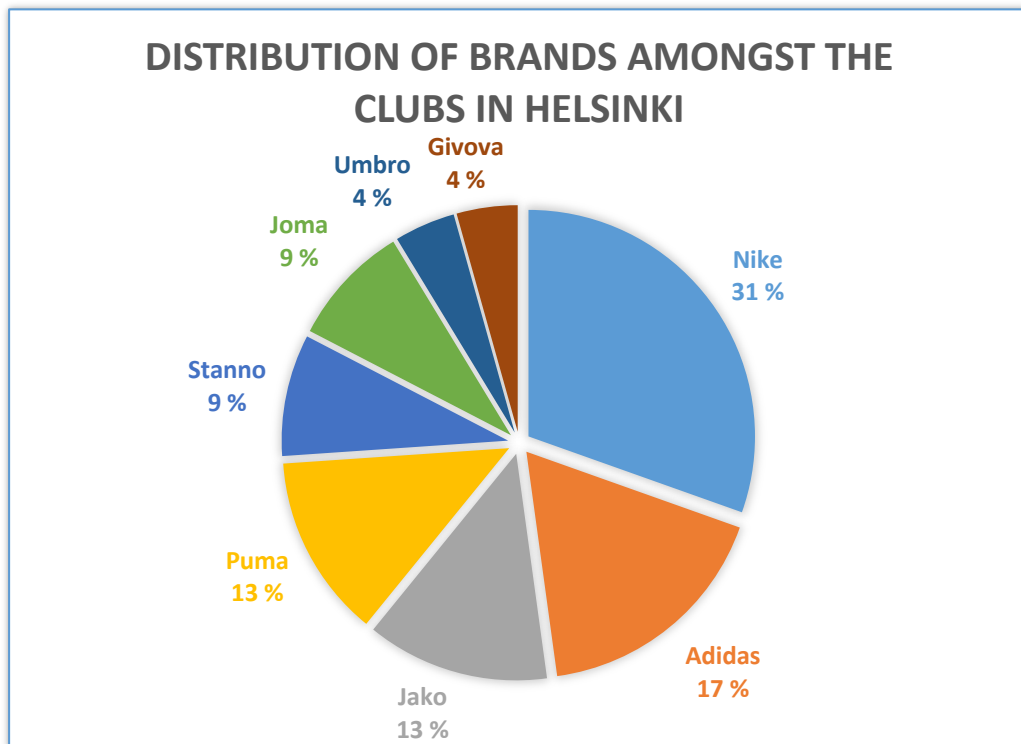
Chart 1. Brands used in Helsinki football clubs

The chart below, demonstrates the division of players in to clubs in the Helsinki region for junior football.

Juniors
Registered players by club SPL Helsinki
Total 13 648
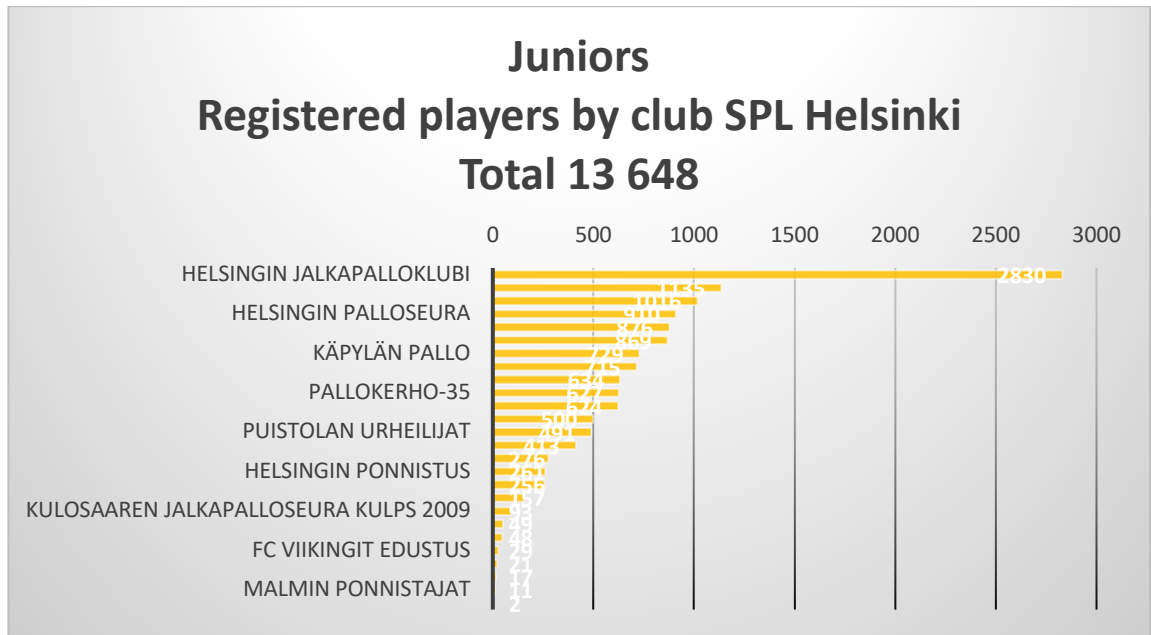
Chart 2. Registered junior players by club in Helsinki

Similar to the charts above, we would require information from the English football market.

The results

This study would be used by FC.Pelikamat.net Oy to further their business and plans to expand in to the United Kingdom. The study is also a part of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Global Bachelor of Business Administration studies. The results of the study is a public information and can be accessed by Haaga-Helia staff, teachers and students.

For further information, I can be reached via email: eero.moilanen@xxxxxx.com or by phone +358400 xxx xxx."

End of letter.

Appendix 3. Gantt time chart

The Gantt time chart represents the development process of the thesis.

THESIS ACTIVITIES TIMECHART (GANTT) 2017 — Calendar Weeks

No.	Task	No.	Subtask
1	Negotiation & Consultancy	1.1	Contacting etc.
		1.2	Thesis advising session 1
		1.3	Thesis advising session 2
		1.4	Methods workshop 1
		1.5	Thesis advising session 3
		1.6	Methods workshop 2
2	Background	2.1	Learning about the case company
		2.2	Writing about company process
		2.3	Writing the introduction
3	Theory frame	3.1	Finding source literature
		3.2	Reading source literature
		3.3	Writing the theoretical framework
		3.4	
4	Interview form	4.1	Interview questions
		4.2	Feedback from Atte Roine on questions
		4.3	Set up the interviews
5	Data Collection	5.1	Conduct the interview
		5.2	Contact UK embassy
		5.3	Double checking the interview results with available data and literature
		5.4	Writing down key points from interviews
		5.5	secondary data collection
6	Data Analysis	6.1	Analyse primary and secondary data
		6.2	Witing down results results
		6.3	Study results
7	Results	7.1	Analyse and summarize results
		7.2	Writing down results in to the thesis
		7.3	Double check results
8	Conclusions	8.1	Results
		8.2	Obtaining feedback from the company
9	Other tasks	9.1	etc.
		9.2	etc.

Actualized activities (green)
Planned activities (yellow)

THESIS ACTIVITIES TIMECHART (GANTT) 2018 — Calendar Weeks

No.	Task	No.	Subtask
1	Negotiation & Consultancy	1.1	Contacting etc.
		1.2	Thesis advising session 1
		1.3	Thesis advising session 2
		1.4	Methods workshop 1
		1.5	Thesis advising session 3
		1.6	Methods workshop 2
2	Background	2.1	Learning about the case company
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		5.2	Contact UK embassy
		5.3	Double checking the interview results with available data and literature
		5.4	Writing down key points from interviews
		5.5	secondary data collection
6	Data Analysis	6.1	Analyse primary and secondary data
		6.2.	Witing down results results
		6.3	Study results
7	Results	7.1	Analyse and summarize results
		7.2	Writing down results in to the thesis
		7.3	Double check results
8	Conclusions	8.1	Results
		8.2	Obtaining feedback from the company
9	Other tasks	9.1	Last check.
		9.2	Return thesis