E-Commerce shop and marketing plan for Retro Rebuilds

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2020 Laurea

Laurea University of Applied Sciences

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Business Information Technology
Thesis
November, 2020

Laurea University of Applied Sciences **Abstract**
Business Information Technology
Bachelor's degree

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Year 2020 Number of pages 56

This thesis project began with the client's need for an online store and digital marketing strategy to expand its business beyond a third-party platform for web sales. Having their own webstore would allow them to better engage in their chosen market of used video game consoles, yet they lacked a clear idea and knowledge of how to do this by themselves. The outcome of the thesis project is an e-commerce package that includes a fully functioning online store with a marketing plan.

The client company "Retro Rebuilds" was established by combining the client's hobbies of customized electronics and art. Based in San Francisco, the client has been engaged in customized retro console refurbishing and re-selling since 2019.

The project was separated into two main modules that would divide building the store and developing a marketing plan for the client. This allowed the work to be divided equally between the students involved in the project work for the client.

The project results were deemed acceptable by the client, completing our set objectives successfully. Future developments expect that the client business will be able to grow if they continue to utilize the project deliverables made during this thesis. The client is now able to maintain and continue to develop their business independently.

Keywords: Webstore, Marketing Plan, Digital Marketing, Digital sales

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1 Introduction

Retro gaming consoles are video game consoles that are no longer in production, receive no further support from the manufacturer in terms of warranty nor repair, as well games are no longer produced for these consoles, and yet they maintain a presence in the market as collectibles. This thesis project alleviates the burden of creating an online web store and creating a marketing plan utilizing the inbound methodology for the client's business. This business is the sale of retro gaming consoles that have been refurbished and customized. We approached this with the mindset of making the most user-friendly platform that would allow our client to continue independently with the store and marketing without the need for outside assistance after the project had been completed. This project required us to do research on platforms available that allow a user to create an online store, without any coding experience and without the need for any code involved. The platforms also had to have at least some modicum of built-in backend features for keeping track of orders, inventory, and basic metrics about the users that visited the site. Coming to a conclusion on a chosen platform for the store after reviewing with the client the focus shifted to marketing. Creating a marketing plan for the client required research into the social media platforms that potential clients were the most engaged in regard to retro gaming and retro consoles. This research involved engaging with the retro gaming community and asking questions through a survey and performing follow up via interviews with a sample of the surveyed individuals. Using this research, we came to decisions on which social media channels to pursue, content to use and engage with the client on how best to manage their business social media accounts for marketing and worked on the marketing plan and schedule.

2 Case company

The product our client “Retro Rebuilds” would like to provide to their customers is an electronic gaming device that has been customized to suit the needs and/or wants of the individual. The first step of the process would be the acceptance of a commission by our client. In this commission order the client would choose whether they want upgrades for stereo, LCD screen, shell, buttons and finally custom artwork for a negotiated price. Retro Rebuilds then would take a functioning Nintendo Gameboy Advance system and break it down into its’ individual parts, then rebuild it according to the order and adding the custom artwork if necessary. The newly refurbished device would then be sent off to the customer. The client is currently offering prebuilt Gameboy Advance systems with some variation of the available upgrades on eBay.com this is done without marketing or a business website of their own.

The hopes of the client then are that they are able to engage more with their customers through marketing channels and a professional website that allows for potential clients to make an order with only the upgrades they would like to create an experience and product that is more personalized. This would also allow the price point to be flexible giving access to the customizing process to a wider range of customers.

3 Research methods

Before doing the research for the marketing for the client we had to decide what type of research would most benefit us in answering the questions we and the client had about the possible customers for their business. We had to make a choice between qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.1 Qualitative vs Quantitative approach

Qualitative Research is a way of collecting and analysing data that is not numerical in nature and is used to understand abstract concepts, opinions, and or feelings about a topic or subject. This can be used to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem or create new ideas gleaned from the data that is gathered. This is inherently the opposite of quantitative research which is reliant on numerical data and statistical analysis. Qualitative is generally used when humanities and social sciences come into play in the research and evaluation of numerous subjects. Some of the most common research methods for qualitative research are; Observations, which is recording what you see, hear, or encounter in detailed notes. Interviews, which is asking questions in one-on-one conversations. Surveys, these being questionnaires with open questions that require either short or long-form text answers. Finally, secondary research, collecting data second-hand as text, images, video, or audio. The advantages of qualitative research are flexibility, natural data, meaningful insights, and novel ideas based on the research. The disadvantages of this style of research are the unreliability because of uncontrolled factors, subjectivity, limited ability to make generalizations, and tends to be labour-intensive.

Quantitative Research is a process of collecting numerical data and analysing it. It is used to find relationships between numbers, averages, and patterns. This is the opposite of qualitative research. You can use quantitative research when trying to find correlations between number groups, find an overall summary of data such as an average, or look into whether there is a cause-and-effect relationship between set variables. This type of research can be used in testing statistics or making predictions of future trends in data based on historical numbers. You can summarize for larger populations using a sampling method as well. Collecting quantitative research requires replacing and representing abstract concepts

with numerical values for easy understanding. Some common methods of quantitative research are; experiments, and numerical surveys. The positives of this type of research are that it's easy to replicate, you can make direct comparisons of the data, large samples can be easily organized and analysed, and you can use it for testing a hypothesis. The disadvantages of quantitative are the superficialities of the data, a narrow focus, lack of context, and structural bias.

3.2 Data collection methods

3.2.1 Interviews

To do the interviews with potential clients we went back to the surveys and asked the participants if they would also be available to answer why they choose any of the particular answers to the questions we had in the survey.

3.2.2 Surveys

The questions we had for our potential customers had to deal with how they felt about retro consoles and what features they were most interested in for the consoles. We also wanted to know where they typically found out about retro consoles and/or purchased them. The answers we were looking for dealing with feelings, and abstract data so we decided that the best method needed for our research was qualitative and then created a survey with open-ended questions in which the participants could fully explain their feelings.

After the participants answered the surveys, we collected the data and organized it, then reviewed the data to see if there were any recurring themes.

3.3 Data collection methods

3.3.1 Comparative analysis

Another method of research used in our project is comparative analysis. While this research method is mainly used in social sciences, it is meant to deliver a deeper understanding and explanation of the differences and similarities between two or more objects, relationships, or events.

There are several methods for conducting comparative analysis research, four to be exact. Though for our project, we will be using only one of them. The type of comparative analysis used in our project is the individualizing method. This sub-category of comparative analysis focuses directly on the explanation of differences and similarities. While it sounds simple, it should be noted that this method is not perfect, as the outcome of this analysis can be influenced by the analyst, which means that in some cases the results of this comparative

research method can be biased and should not be taken as absolutely accurate. This means that any sort of decision or conclusion made by us for this project using this particular method will always be open for future discussion and revision.

As our client wishes to have a webpage for their business, there are multiple choices and options in realizing this goal. However, the variety of options is quite large, with many popular or highly rated offerings seeming to be very similar on the surface. Since our main webpage creation focus is on web-building platforms, we would use comparative analysis to find the key separations between multiple web-building platforms, available to our client.

3.3.2 Grading scale

With all of the data gathered from the comparative research about the different web-building platforms, one contender must be chosen and presented to our client, with an assurance that, in our opinion, this would be the best option for their business. To ensure that we have the best chance of picking the right option, we require the use of another tool - an assessment/grading scale, which would provide us a score of 1 to 5 for each set of data gathered from the comparative analysis research. For this tool to be effective, we must first set a list of evaluation criteria with different levels of requirements. Moreover, to gather more accurate data and get a deeper grasp of each web-building platform, we must simulate a real user experience. We would do that by recreating the same webpage on each platform.

Once both versions of the same webpage have been created, the process documented and evaluated using the grading scale, we can then present the best option for our client out of the two web-building platforms, by picking the highest scoring contender in the range from 1 to 5.

4 Retro gaming

Retro gaming is a term used to describe people playing or collecting older consoles and videogames which are typically based on systems that are obsolete or discontinued by the manufacturer. For a gaming system to be considered retro, most would argue that it has to be at least fifteen to twenty years old, however, there is no set rule on how old the system or game has to be, thus there is no one definitive answer.

Retro gaming saw a rise in popularity during the last decade when emulation technology evolved, and the internet made digital copies of older games much more accessible.

4.1 Why is retro gaming so popular?

With Nintendo officially releasing their 'Virtual Console' in 2006, allowing players to enjoy older game titles on newer systems, the retro gaming community saw a considerable increase in popularity. (Brandon Perton, 2020) In the following years, digital copies of older games, mainly known as ROM's (read-only memory), flooded the internet and let PC users have access to older games without owning an older system. Specialized machines designed to run emulations of older games also started appearing on the retro game market, replicating the feeling of owning an older console, on newer unofficial hardware.

It is considered that the main reason why so many gamers and retro console fans are drawn to the idea of retro games is nostalgia for a different era of games and the idea that older games were simpler, more innovative, and more original. And this nostalgia and will to have the authentic experience of playing an older game is what motivates and drives the part of the retro game industry that this paper is focused on - vintage / refurbished retro gaming.

4.2 Types of retro gaming

There are mainly three categories in how players achieve the retro gaming experience. (Vox Creative, 2019)

The first and most authentic category is vintage retro gaming. Vintage retro gaming involves players collecting the original hardware, cartridges, and discs the video games were originally released on. While by many this is considered the best way to experience an older game, collecting older consoles and games has its downsides. First of all, the hardware is old. There is no guarantee that it will work flawlessly and many manufacturing issues or quirks the console had on its release, are still present today. Secondly, some of the collectible consoles and games can be fairly expensive and hard to find, limiting the access to some older games, considered classics in the community.

This is where refurbished/renewed retro gaming comes in. The main focus here is that many quirks and problems an older, original system might have, are resolved and the system is often improved, delivering a better playing experience. This is different than playing the older game on a newer system, as the game is still played on original hardware. This hardware is just slightly improved or restored, to deliver a better overall experience.

The second and arguably the most popular way to enjoy retro games is retro gaming emulation. As the name suggests, retro gaming emulation has older gaming systems emulated on new hardware. This eliminates the need to collect old consoles and their original games, making the retro gaming experience more accessible for most users. The game emulation can be achieved on personal computers, dedicated systems built for emulation, or even on newer

generation systems, provided that the correct software is installed. With a large online library of ported classic game ROMs and plenty of options for emulation software, this type of retro gaming is favoured by a majority in the retro gaming community. However, there is a slight downside to retro game emulation. Many older games were not designed for newer and more powerful hardware, which can result in issues such as graphical problems, game instability, and various glitches and bugs in the game software, that do not recognize the newer hardware. In a lot of cases, the older games do not look visually pleasing on a modern high-resolution screen, or a newer generation gamepad might not be fully compatible. There are workarounds to these issues, but unless the user buys a machine specifically dedicated for emulation, the setup and running issues can take away from the overall experience.

The third most popular method to experience retro games is Ported retro gaming. The main concept behind ported retro gaming is vaguely similar to retro game emulation - running old games on new systems. This method differs from emulation mainly because the old games are rewritten for the modern hardware and do not use the original ROMs of the old games. This means that ported retro gaming is often available from official game developers as downloadable content on the current generation of consoles and the setup process is fully plug and play, making the experience seamless. On the other hand, ported retro gaming is relatively rare, since it takes time and resources to port an older game onto a newer system. On top of that, emulation offers a more considerable library of games and is more available for non-licensed third-party systems.

4.3 What consoles are considered retro?

First of all, the definition of what can be classified or considered retro is very subjective. Secondly, there have been eight generations of consoles released so far. It is important to note, that the end of one generation, does not mark the start of the next one, as many consoles receive a mid-production hardware update. (16-Bit Dad, 2020) A list has been compiled showing all game console generations and their production periods.

First generation from 1972-1980;

Second generation from 1976-1992;

Third generation from 1983-2003;

Fourth generation from 1987-2004;

Fifth generation from 1993-2006;

Sixth generation from 1998-2013;

Seventh generation from 2005-2017;

Eighth generation from 2012-ongoing.

While there is no set rule on what makes a game or a console retro, normally, for one to be considered retro, it has to be from the previous generation, discontinued by the manufacturer, and at least be fifteen to twenty years old. There are arguments that a system becomes retro when developers stop making new games for it. However, quite often there are many new games being released for various older gaming systems, which are more than 20 years old, making the previous statement contradictory. (Daz, 2020) For the purpose of our project, we will consider any console that was released before the seventh generation to be retro, with the deciding factor to be their initial release date.

4.4 Retro game console market

Over the last decade, the retro video game market has expanded significantly, from dedicated, officially licensed systems that run emulations, to restored original retro systems and even illegal copies and knockoffs. Our particular area of focus is the restored/refurbished original retro console market. Unlike newly released systems that are made to look retro but feature new hardware, refurbished original consoles are restored cosmetically and made to work the same or better when originally launched. Because the restoration process requires more effort and these refurbished consoles are no longer mass-produced by their original manufacturer, the market is more niche, and the products tend to be more expensive than their licensed emulation copies.

While the majority of the retro console community is most likely to buy newer emulation systems, there still is a large fan following that supports the original consoles and is willing to spend more for the authenticity and nostalgic experience of owning an original retro console.

Furthermore, it is possible to upgrade, and fully customize the retro console when refurbishing. This allows the customer to have their system fully personalized and tailored to their needs, making the refurbished consoles more compelling.

4.5 Refurbished current generation vs refurbished retro consoles

Lastly, there is another category within the refurbished console market which is not considered retro - refurbished current generation consoles. Just like older retro consoles, these units have been repaired or improved by an independent third party and are sold as second-hand items to customers. The key difference here is that these consoles are still being produced and supported by their manufacturer. Meaning that anyone can purchase these units

brand-new at most large electronics retailers.
The refurbished current generation consoles are a viable option for those customers who are after the newest gaming experiences but do not wish to spend full retail prices on a new console. Consoles that are considered current generation are PlayStation 4, Microsoft Xbox One, and Nintendo Switch.
While there are many people who will gladly purchase a refurbished PlayStation 4 or Xbox One in order to enter the current gaming market at a lower entry cost, these consoles do not share the same community support and nostalgia factor as their discontinued or retro counterparts.
Additionally, spare parts or options for customizability are not as readily available as those for older generation consoles. Partly because these consoles are still being manufactured but mainly because the refurbishing community of these consoles has not become large enough.

Thus, our client does not engage in this part of the refurbished game console market.

4.6 Refurbished retro console market in Finland

Retro gaming is a growing sub-culture of the gaming community in Finland. As for stores that sell retro consoles and games in Finland, a considerable number of them are based in the capital area of Helsinki. In Helsinki alone, we have Retromagia, Konsolinet, VPD, and Gamehouse as retro gaming shops that sell consoles, games, and accessories/peripherals. The main issue with these stores is they sell only original equipment manufacturer (OEM) consoles and accessories. They are not familiar with, nor do they accept the trading of customized console hardware. Our client fills the gap in this market by providing a unique service and product comparatively to retro game shops in Helsinki. It should be noted that although these stores sell retro games and consoles only one of them is a specialist in such, that being Retromania. All other stores specialize in current-generation console sales and focus their advertising on this.

5 Marketing

Today we have two methods for marketing, Outbound and Inbound Marketing. We can describe Outbound marketing as the methods that we are most familiar with and are what can be called the traditional channels. It is a way of advertising and marketing that pushes itself at the audience, “TV and radio ads, telemarketing, banner and display ads, billboards, newspaper and magazine ads, cold calling, pop-ups and pop-unders, and contextual ads are all examples of outbound marketing” describes (Ference 2020). Furthermore, she goes on to say that Outbound in the last 10 years has increasingly lost favor because of over-saturation, especially on the internet. Inbound Marketing on the other hand is a very different

methodology. (Moorehead 2020) tells us that this way of marketing is based on earning the attention of ideal buyers at different stages in their buying process. Inbound is especially well received today because of the vast variety of social networking channels that can be used dual purpose for connecting with potential buyers and creating a narrative that resonates with them. This narrative that leads to interest is the essence of the Inbound methodology.

Because of the visual nature of the client's products and services we choose the Inbound method as going the older traditional outbound method would not show the unique nature of the business against similar businesses. This is because the products and services sold by the client are in and of itself not wholly unique, but the client is an artist and thus has his own uniqueness to his craft. This is what Inbound takes advantage of. We will convey the story and narrative of the client as a unique artist and each product and service as pieces of purchasable artwork.

Understanding the effectiveness of marketing channels means we have to define what is considered effective. One such indicator of this would-be engagement between the brand and the desired audience. Hubspot's Amanda Slavin calls brand engagement, "An emotional connection with a message." Furthermore, she says, "a message can be something internally with your colleagues, and it also canoe externally with marketing." If we look at engagement as a dialogue in that sense we can look to see if the desired audience is receiving the message from the brand, and in turn responding with their own messages. We must also consider what social media platforms have the most active audience. There is a particular metric we can consider, Monthly Active Users (MAU) when looking at audience activity. (Lau 2020) Looking at this metric we can see raw audience size available on each platform and decide which would be the best to develop marketing strategies for.

5.1 Comparative analysis of inbound & outbound marketing

Inbound and Outbound marketing are two sides of the same coin. They are similar in some of the tools they use, such as video, images, and text to convey a message to an audience, but the way they use them fundamentally differs. Inbound uses video, images, and text to tell a story from the perspective of the company to interest the audience in the business itself and get them emotionally invested. Outbound uses video, images, and text to showcase a product or service and singularly tell the audience they need or want it. Social Media is also a tool used by both methodologies. Inbound continues with the same approach, furthermore, creating a narrative. Because we are trying to tell a narrative that shows the expertise of the business and its' uniqueness we decided upon Inbound marketing.

5.2 Inbound marketing channels

With the interconnection of individuals through social media, Inbound marketing has grown and has become a valuable tool, in the kit of marketers. This has opened up positions in companies specifically for social media marketing, and social media content creation, that strays from typical ads and thinks outside the box. The story of a company has become an invaluable tool for making companies more relatable and creating diehard fans that feel connected with the message of a brand or company. (Moorehead 2020)

Because Inbound marketing is directing flow to you through gathering interest from potential customers and converting them into fans, we want to use the social media platforms as the means to do this. We created a business account for Facebook, and Instagram for Retro Rebuilds, a channel for YouTube, and finally a Twitter account. The main purpose of these social channels will be to forward the idea that Retro Rebuilds is first and foremost an expert in the field of refurbishing retro consoles. We showcased their work across all platforms, with visual media. The first set of visual media being images of their work with brief summaries of what they are. To complement these static images in the future are tutorial videos of building the consoles and showcase videos of various artwork on the consoles.

5.2.1 Instagram

According to Instagram itself, they describe themselves as “a free photo and video sharing app on android and iOS.” These pictures and videos can be shared with followers and friends. (Instagram INC. 2020) Followers being those that have subscribed to see what you post in their daily feed of new photos and videos. Business accounts are able to attach links to their web stores from images of the products that they post. Companies typically share what Instagram calls “Stories” which are short-form video clips or still images that are typically used to give “behind the scenes” looks at the operations of a company. These story posts can also be linked to specific product pages or link to any other website.

5.2.2 Twitter

Twitter is a short-form text social networking website that was launched in 2006. There are 100 million daily users and over 500 million tweets posted per day. Twitter is used by many to receive news, follow celebrities, or keep up with your friends. (Forsey 2020) Businesses are able to use Twitter similarly to Facebook in keeping in direct contact with customers and their fans.

5.2.3 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site, that allows people to contact and connect with friends and family. You are able to post text, video, and pictures to what Facebook calls a “wall”

where your friends and family will see what you post and be able to comment on it or leave “likes” or other similar attachments that represent their feelings on the post. (GCF Global 2020) Facebook also allows its’ members to use a chat interface to directly converse with those on their friends list. Facebook for business allows you to post ads into feeds of users. You can also use chat to directly answer questions from your customers and clients. As a small business one of the main intrigues is using Facebook to grow a community of fans for your company.

5.2.4 YouTube

Started in 2005 YouTube is a video-sharing website owned by Google. The platform is home to mostly user-generated content that can be shared and viewed for free. YouTube requires a google account to post videos to their platform. It is currently one of the most popular websites in the world with 100 hours of video being uploaded every minute, and visitors watching around 6 billion hours of video per month on the platform. (GCF Global 2020) Companies typically use YouTube to share tutorials, and promotional videos to showcase their products and or services. These types of videos can give potential customers an informed idea of what to expect from the company’s offerings. Companies also use YouTube to share video content that promotes a narrative or share a story. This narrative can create a personal connection for the prospective customer and the company.

5.2.5 Hootsuite

Hootsuite is a tool for connecting all your company’s social media platforms and managing them. This platform is what we had my previous experience with as a social media manager. With this in mind, we decided to continue using this tool for this project. we felt it would be better for ourselves and the client if we proceeded with a tool that was already familiar and could easily be taught knowing from previous experience the features. The most important features our client needs of Hootsuite is the integration for all major social platforms, the ability to create posts for all social media platforms, edit them and add tags, and then use the built-in scheduling function to choose a time appropriate for the posts. This would give the control the client needs in a single environment without having to move between multiple apps and content libraries, and the flexibility to do all of their social media marketing at a pace that is comfortable for them and as their schedule allows, and yet still post at the optimal times to have the greatest outreach.

We collaborated with the client to create their accounts for social media, and then we linked them to the Hootsuite platform afterward. From here we created a dedicated library of content for them to continually add to and refer to when using the platform and making their posts. The client was given control of the Hootsuite account after initial setup. There are three main important sections in Hootsuite’s Dashboard that give you control over your social

media channels. First the My Streams section gives you an overview of your posts, and you can as well directly post directly to your social media accounts here.

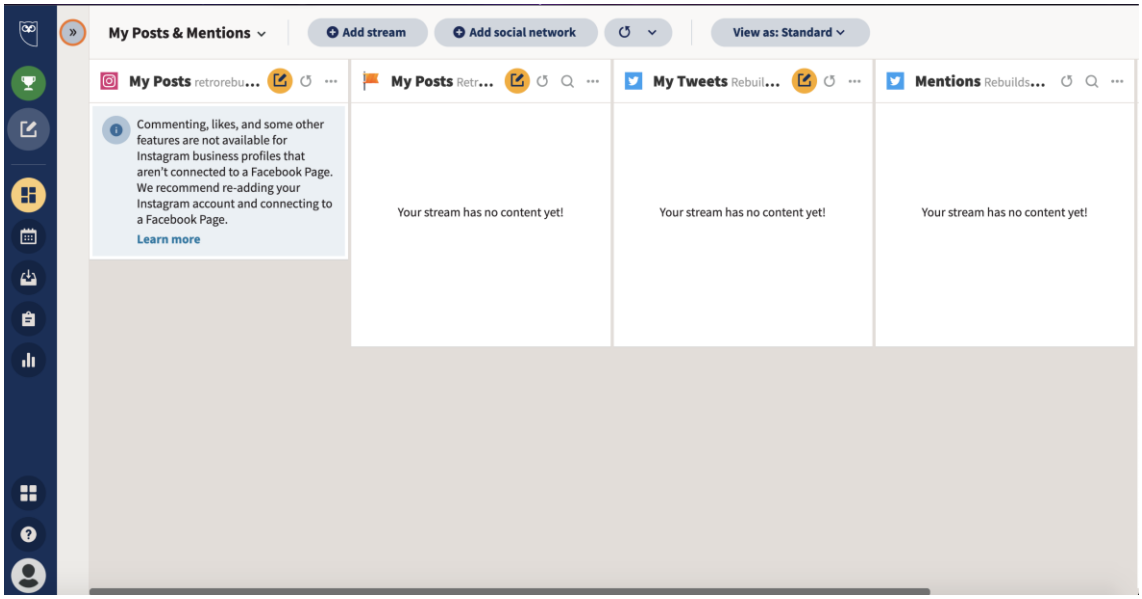

Figure 1: Streams

Arguably the most important section of Hootsuite's dashboard is the Publisher section as it allows you to schedule posts across your social media channels for specific days and times in the future. This gives you control to look at marketing in the long term.

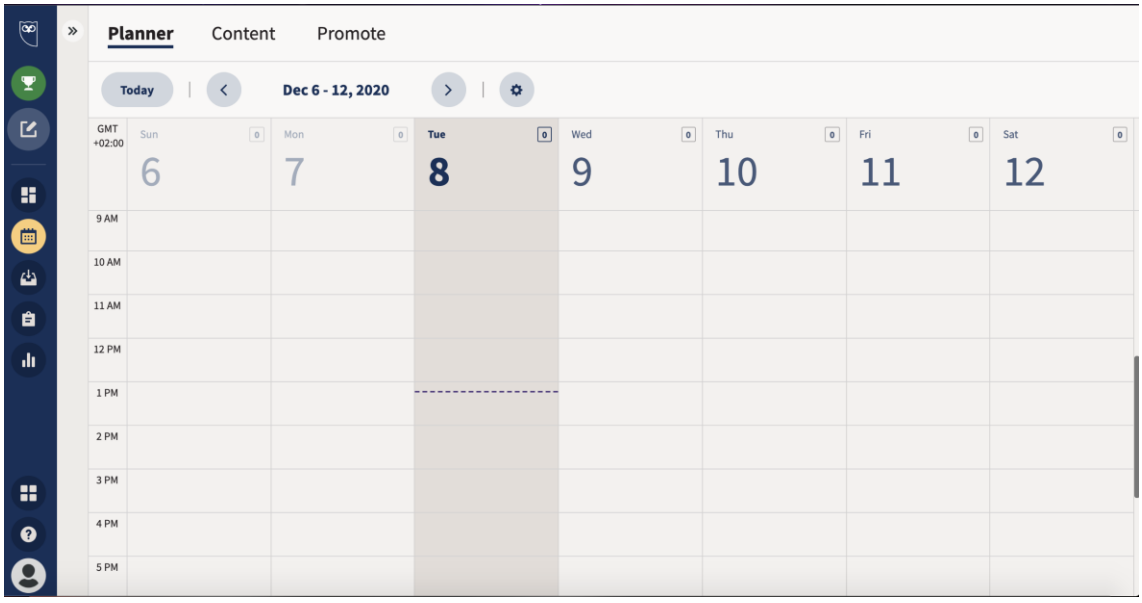

Figure 2: Publisher

Finally, for most businesses to measure their success they will want to become familiar with the Analytics Section. The analytics shows the number of fans or followers you have and when

you gained them. You can see growth in a specific time frame or as a whole, as well as separated by social media platform.

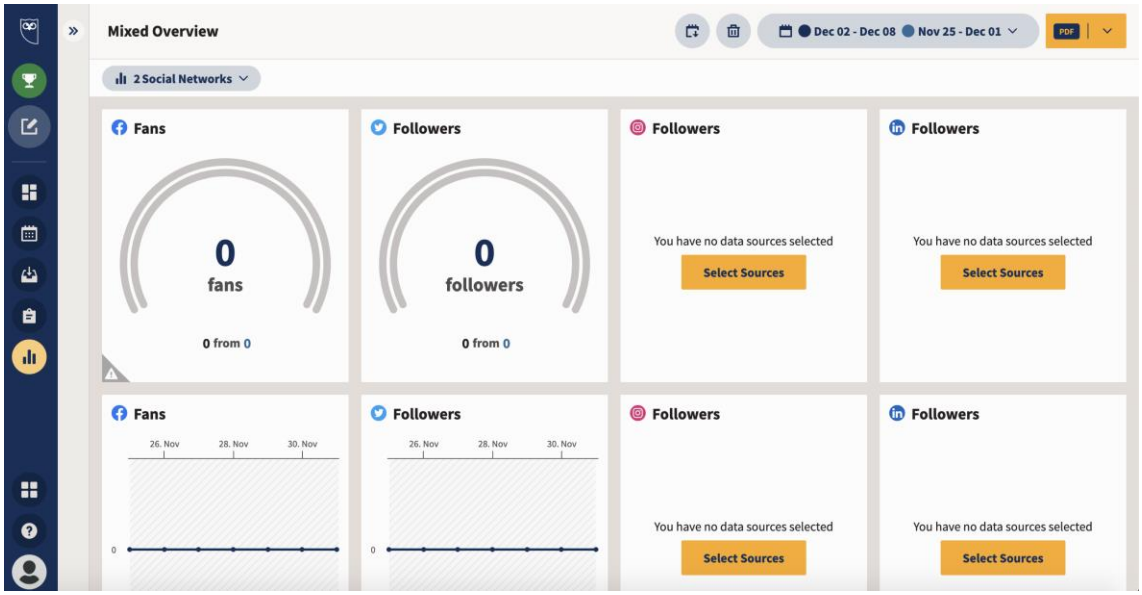

Figure 3: Analytics

5.3 Marketing planning & Implementation

Betancourt & Zuromskis

Marketing Plan

Betancourt & Zuromskis

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Figure 4: Retro Rebuilds marketing plan page 1-2

Business Summary

Company Name: Retro Rebuilds

Mission Statement:

"Our mission is to promote the preservation of classic gaming consoles for yesterday's gamers and the gamers of tomorrow. We strive to bring a high quality experience to every gamer with our refurbished consoles and grow the retro gaming community."

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- original retro hardware has large fan base that can be tapped for potential customers
- Refurbished consoles look and feel new, and run better than most only OEM consoles
- Custom artwork can make an already collectible item even more valued for some customers

Weaknesses:

- New business in the market
- Getting the business running can be time intensive
- Costs of consoles fluctuates

Opportunities:

- Once established in the market a service of customising consoles sent in by customers could alleviate the company's need to source consoles
- Most retro console stores don't customise newer generation hardware yet

Threats:

- Established players in the market
- Possible console scarcity
- Increased or decreased demand could drastically affect prices

Business Initiatives

Overarching Initiatives:

-Develop into a established community in retro gaming

-Keep on top of new trends through social media, and established community websites

Marketing Initiatives:

Develop our Social Media presence

-Filming content for Youtube: Tutorials, Filming the custom art process

Photographing consoles for Instagram and Pinterest

-Staging and editing

Market Strategy

Product:

Our product is unique refurbished consoles. The Gameboy Advance line of products containing upgrades to meet the standards of today's gaming consoles. New IPS LCD backlit screens, brightness dimming, higher output stereo, new custom colour shell and buttons, and the possibility for customised artwork.

Our custom Sony handheld consoles are relatively new in the retro market. This line of products is still being developed, but much of the same work can be done the same as GBAs. Additionally backlit buttons with RGB lighting could be a potential upgrade.

Price:

Our price for custom Gameboy Advance consoles is competitively set at 110 USD

Pricing for Sony handhelds has not yet been decided. Pricing will be based on the final cost of upgrades.

Figure 5: Retro Rebuilds marketing plan page 3-4

Promotion:

A key part of marketing for us will be in our video and photography. Our customisation process videos can easily convey the amount of work that goes into each product. Photography of the final product can showcase the unique beauty of each item.

A giveaway could be done for a product or custom artwork for customers that take photos of consoles they buy from us and post them to their own social media and tag us in them. Using this as a vehicle to increase visibility for the business.

Process:

The product is the delivered via 3rd party shipping services. Starting a small business account with a shipping company would support efficiency in the long run and could lower shipping costs for the company and customer.

We could continue to support our customers in the long-run with repair service for their retro consoles, and give a discount for those that purchased their consoles from us originally or purchased custom artwork done on their device.

Physical Evidence:

Our products are displayed on our own web-store and on social media. As stated before having fans of our products post on their social media as part of a giveaway would increase visibility.

Budget:

Marketing Expense	Estimated Price
Adobe Photoshop	12.99 USD per month
Hootsuite	25.00 USD per month
Giveaways	60-80 USD each time
Ads (Facebook, Instagram)	10-100 USD each round of targeted ads

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Marketing Channels

Facebook:

Purpose of Channel: Building a retro gaming community with the company as the center. Raise brand awareness. Communication with potential customers.

Metrics to measure success: 50 likes and follows per week.

Instagram:

Purpose of Channel: Create a dedicated following for the business. Develop as a funnel to the company website.

Metrics to measure success: Long term goal of 10,000+ followers, short term goal 100+ followers per week, each post having 100+ likes and comments

Youtube:

Purpose of Channel: Convey the inherit value of the products through showcasing the work that goes into each one.

Metrics to measure success: Each video getting at least 1000 views and likes. Long term goal of 10,000+ subscribers.

Twitter:

Purpose of Channel: Provide company news, and be a channel for communication with the retro gaming community.

Metrics to measure success: Seeing some type of engagement either likes or comments. Users engaging in dialogue with us on each tweet.

Figure 6: Retro Rebuilds marketing plan page 5-6

The marketing plan was created as described below,

We discussed with the client what objectives he had for his business and what kind of growth he would like to see. Next, we did a brief summary and research of the competition in what is called competitive research. The competitive research consisted of searching for retro console resellers and seeing what their product offering was, what social media channels they were active on, their pricing models, and if they provided a similar custom artwork option like our client. We also wanted to see what content on social media they had and what their best performing content was. Best performing content is decided by views, likes, and comments on social media. Knowing what the client wants, and what the competition in the retro gaming space do we were able to begin to form our content plan. We would use the content plan to decide what frequency to post to social media, and what type of content should be posted. The decision was made for the content to primarily be video and images, with some short captions. This decision was made in conjunction with the information from our survey and interviews. (appendix 3) For a company such as Retro rebuilds, the appeal to potential customers lies mainly in the visual nature of the product, and we are also able to translate the process of making said product into a video. Video content of this behind-the-scenes nature would give a feeling of being invited into an intimate environment to learn the inner-workings of the business. The image content posted on social media would be able to visually draw people in for their interesting designs and polished presentation. For our scheduling, we followed the most active times for engagement on social media according to Elizabeth Aren from Sprout Social. She explains that the most active times for users on social media are weekdays starting at 8 am in the morning and ending early afternoon about 2 pm, as people find time within their workday to take short breaks and consume content. Making these times the peak hours with the highest number of users engaging with content on social media.

6 Contemporary web development and design

These days, it has never been easier to build a website thanks to the rise of advanced website builders. About fifteen years ago a professional website building experience would cost large amounts of money and would take months or sometimes even a year to complete and be live. Web developers would build customized websites on demand, incorporating the latest website building practices of the time. Today, however, any business or private party can go online, buy a website from Squarespace or Wix for under 20 euros, and have it published live the same day. (Drew Thomas, 2017)

The likes of Squarespace or Wix are called advanced website builders. These platforms are subscription-based services, where any user can create and launch a fully functioning website

without any prior knowledge in coding. In fact, many users who have built a website using these platforms have never even seen a line of code. The process of setting up a webpage is very easy and straightforward, there are many guides and helpful articles online and most of these webpage builder platforms also cover other necessary basics, such as domain name and hosting.

Ten or even five years ago, it seemed crazy that an online platform could potentially replace a fully tailored, built to order website. However, it is clear that these advanced website builders are becoming more advanced and easier to use, and that their growth in popularity will continue to increase.

6.1 Web building platforms

For our project, we have chosen two of the most popular website and e-commerce builders online - Squarespace, and Shopify. These platforms are often mentioned in the top 10 lists of recommendations by experts or community members or in miscellaneous advertisements on social media platforms. We will be taking a closer look at what each platform has to offer in terms of features, pricing, and user-friendliness. Additionally, we will be putting these two platforms against each other to find out, which in our opinion performs better, and would be better suited for our client.

A short side note about Wix must be mentioned, as it is arguably the most popular web building platform as of writing this report. We chose not to include Wix in our testing for two reasons - its advanced web editor is far better than most other competitors, and at its core, Wix is a personal blog builder, just like Squarespace. We try to keep all tests and comparisons as fair as possible, taking into account the separate advantages and disadvantages of each platform.
Squarespace will be representing the blogging web builders while Shopify will be the representative for dedicated e-commerce builders.

6.1.1 Squarespace

Almost anyone who has been online, looking for any sort of web platform or searching for website options, has heard of Squarespace. This platform focuses a lot on their own marketing, sponsoring many YouTube creators, publishing advertisements and offering many gift and discount options for new users. Most online reviews mention how good the platform is for bloggers and personal websites.

New websites on Squarespace are always built with a template. Once the user has picked one, the platform offers a good array of customizability options, though everything is locked to a

pre-defined grid system. Many would argue that this grid system is meant for users who are unfamiliar with web design and it helps them keep their websites looking good and tidy. That may be true, but an option of free customization for more experienced users would be nice.

Making websites on Squarespace is quite easy with their e-commerce building platform. They also offer a list of good features, such as e-mail receipts, gift cards, tax management, etc. There are also many very well-made templates for online stores, letting the user set up their shop very quickly. The caveat here, is that Squarespace is primarily focused on blogs and blog-posting. This is a slight drawback for e-commerce, especially when compared to competitors like Shopify, which offers more powerful tools for online stores.

Squarespace has a mobile editor, allowing users to manage and edit their stores on the go. Though the mobile editor and available customization features are not as good, mainly because everything is limited by the grid. Additionally, so far Wix has the best most powerful and most customizable SEO. And while Squarespace's option is not bad, it is not as intuitive and well optimized as Wix.

Pros:

- The platform is quite good and easy to understand for blogs and e-commerce websites.
- All templates have the same features.
- Easy to switch templates and change the look of the website thanks to the grid system in the editor.
- Intuitive & easy page management.
- Nice list of tools and features for marketing.

Cons:

- The grid system is good for beginners but restricts full customization.
- While pages are easy to manage, there is lack of multi-level page management. The editor only allows one sub-level, making it inadequate for big and complex websites.
- The platform does not offer any backup or autosave features.

6.1.2 Shopify

Unlike Squarespace or Wix, Shopify is primarily an e-commerce platform - adding, editing, and managing products and pages is simple and intuitive. There is a section for managing orders, checking payment status, and fulfilment status, along with the option of adding notes, creating shipping labels, and editing customer information on the same page.

Shopify offers by far the largest list of payment options, compared to its competitors. Pretty much anything is possible since there is an option to add a third-party payment service if it is not offered by Shopify by default. Though there is a separate payment processing fee when using any payment provider that is not Shopify itself. This fee can average anywhere from 0.5% to 2% of the transaction.

While still on the topic of payments, Shopify lets the user define a tax rate depending on the country. They also offer an option of displaying the products with or without the tax and taxes can also be added to shipping rates. During checkout, Shopify has an extra feature of real-time shipping rates being displayed during checkout. Additionally, countries and regions can be divided into separate shipping zones, which altogether makes it easier to manage or change the shipping rates.
Finally, unlike Wix or Squarespace, Shopify offers more than one currency option.

Shopify lets users to integrate other sales channels into their websites, such as Facebook, Instagram, eBay, Amazon, and many others. This enables easy management of sales if the business is not done only online (easy to integrate, real-world in-store sales with Shopify). Regarding in-platform apps, Shopify offers paid and free app options. The app store lets the user add extra features to their web store, even if those features are not offered on Shopify by default.

Lastly, the SEO on Shopify requires a little more involvement than Wix or Squarespace.

The SEO manager is not the best and does not offer as many features as Wix. However, it does cover all of the necessary basics, making it still a competitive option.

Pros:

- An e-commerce platform first and foremost. It is apparent that Shopify was built with online stores in mind and other options like Wix and Squarespace cannot compete with Shopify in this area.
- The backend of the platform is easy to use.
- It has many good looking and modern templates, although not as many as its competitors. Shopify allows for a fully customized and tailored theme as well.
- A very big offer of payment methods and easy to manage shipping tools.
- Has a decent number of useful apps on the app store.

Cons:

- SEO is falling a little short when compared to its competitors.
- There is no free website building and there are no refunds for premium plans.

- There are extra transaction fees for any payment method, that is not backed up by Shopify itself.

6.2 List of features each platform provides

A list of relevant features can be found on the about page of each web platform. The features we chose to include in our list are directly dependent on our project needs.
This approach is meant to simulate the user experience of a potential customer exploring the web platform builder website for relevant information.
It is worth noting that most of the website builders offer a very similar style and customization related features. The main difference is in the amount of information about these style and customization features available on each website builder page.

6.2.1 Squarespace features

Hundreds of multipurpose templates & template switching (multiple designs on the same website); Layout and content customization within the grid system; Fast and responsive site editor; Mobile optimization; Free Google & type-kit fonts; Custom CSS; Responsive figures and graphs; Very customizable image manager; Gallery manager. (Squarespace, 2020.)

Extensions:

Third-party tools for transactions, accounting, and bookkeeping; Third-party inventory management tools; Third-party tools for order fulfilment, shipping, and return management; Keep customers informed with branded tracking info and notifications; Marketing and sales tools.

Social media & content:

Link accounts with a large list of social media platforms; Dropbox account & file synchronization; Amazon associate account; Simultaneous social media posting; Announcement bar for highlighting promotions; Custom code for website header & footer; Custom lock screen & redirect when the website is undergoing maintenance; Multiple users & access levels; Cover pages; Commenting system; Email campaigns & mailing analytics.

E-commerce:

Unlimited product amount; Flexible product variants; Product image zoom; Limited availability labels; Product quick view; Embedded products; Product management using drag & drop; Combine digital and physical products & storefront; Custom product forms (for

customer info); Product import from other e-commerce platforms; Multiple currencies & payment methods; Gift cards & discounts; Express checkout; Customizable & mobile-optimized checkout; Customer accounts; Product subscription plans; Social media integration; Tax rate & shipping cost calculation; Flexible shipping options; Custom email styles; Customer and purchase analytics; Commerce APIs; Related products;

SEO and additional tools:

Very good and easy to use SEO; Clean site URLs; Anti-spam tags; Site analytics and KPIs; Traffic overview & sources; Abandoned cart; Other useful analytics tools.

Tailored logo service; Data import & export; Custom website search engine; Privacy & data protection.

6.2.2 Shopify features

Web builder with easy drag & drop; Mobile commerce compatible; Multiple languages; Unlimited bandwidth & online storage; Social media integration; Sell on Facebook; Good SEO and Marketing tools; Easy management system. (Shopify, 2020)

E-commerce:

Unlimited products; Shopify POS - physical store or pop-up store integration; Online sales channels; Fraud analysis; Manual order creation; Promotions & discount codes; Abandoned card recovery; Multiple shop accounts; Overview dashboard - key analytics, sales, orders & online store visitor data; Finance reports; Multiple payment methods; Automated shipping and tax calculation; Reminder system for customers; Email templates.

Additional features:

Customer profiles & accounts; Order fulfilment centres (similar to Amazon fulfilment centre); Drop-shipping (place an order with a third party that takes care of the entire order fulfilment process).

Shopify Apps; Easy product management; Price synchronization between Shopify and marketplaces; Update shop inventory among all distribution channels.

Including such long lists of features that are all very similar, may seem a little unnecessary. However, from the customer's perspective, these lists are the only official source of

information regarding these features. Moreover, we have included only a portion of the entire list available for each platform. Analysing our list, a conclusion can be drawn that while each platform provides similar features, the points of focus are quite different.

Additionally, are also many other community-based sources providing information about each platform, along with online tutorials and videos on YouTube, though some of them can be very biased.

6.3 Web building platform testing

In order to find out which of our chosen platforms is best suited for our clients' needs, we will evaluate each one of them by concluding a test, which involves creating a functioning website followed by a pre-approved mock-up. During the test, each platform will be judged in five different categories - Initial setup, Editor, Web Design, Commerce, and time spent. All of the results and opinions for this test are unbiased and the best-suited web building platform will be chosen by the highest average score across all categories. Lastly, the score for each category will be given according to a simple grading system from 1 to 5. Each grade will have an explanation and justification attached to it. The grading system goes as follows:

1 - the platform performs a given task very poorly or is heavily lacking in the select area

2 - the task/requirement is fulfilled to a minimal standard

3 - the platform performs/completes the task sufficiently for the client's needs

4 - the task is completed with satisfactory/above average results

5 - excellent execution of the task, with minimal effort and full functionality

Lastly, ease of use for each platform will be evaluated by the time it took to reach the desired result - how long before the website is up and running as requested. Another criterion used for testing ease of use is how hard it is to solve a problem - how long/often will it be necessary to search the solution online or contact customer support for each platform.

7 Functional requirements

For the web builder test to be relevant to the client and our project, a list of set requirements has been given. The expected outcome of the website builder test is to meet or exceed all of our clients' requirements. Without completing the basic list, the website cannot be deemed finished or usable. The list goes as follows:

- A web store that displays the merchandise
- Showcase of all item options available to order
- Clickable logo that brings the user to the landing page
- Shopping cart and search function
- Slideshow banner - popular items or sale items
- FAQ
- Social media links
- Newsletter sign ups
- Payment processing for all major services
- User account management
- CRM
- Analytics + dashboard
- Contact form for customer service
- Custom logo and graphics

To aid us in the process of making two versions of the same website and keeping the testing fair, we have created a visual mock-up of what the finished product should look like. To be used as an additional tool, the visual mock-up design must meet the technical requirements and be approved by the client.

The mock-up consists of two pages - the landing page and individual product page. Any additional pages as well as the main storefront are not pre-defined, in order to keep the scope of the project feasible. Main visual assets are either sent in by the client or created by us for this project specifically. The mock-up and the test webpages are not meant for commercial use.

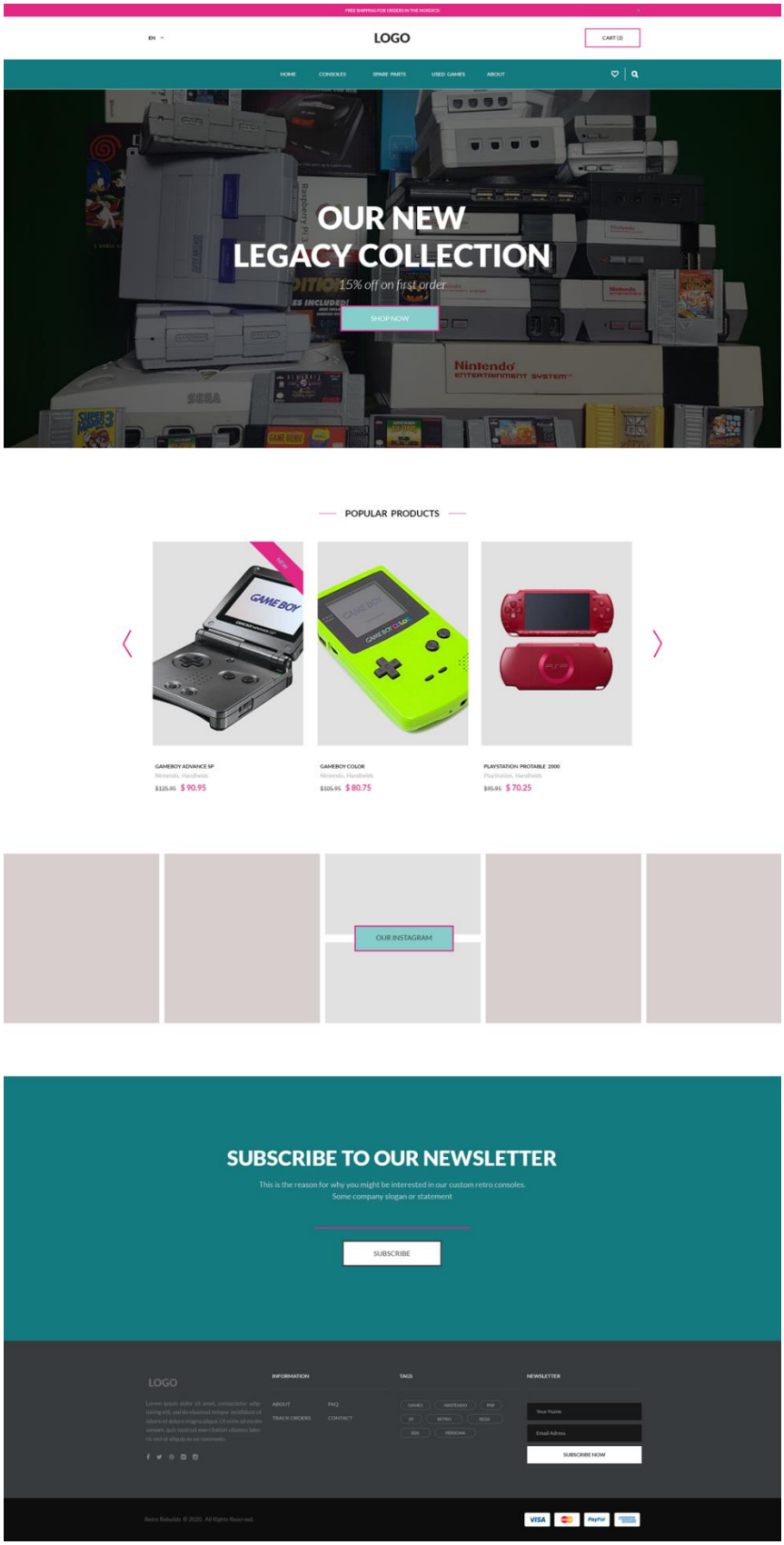

Figure 7: Website design mock-up - landing page

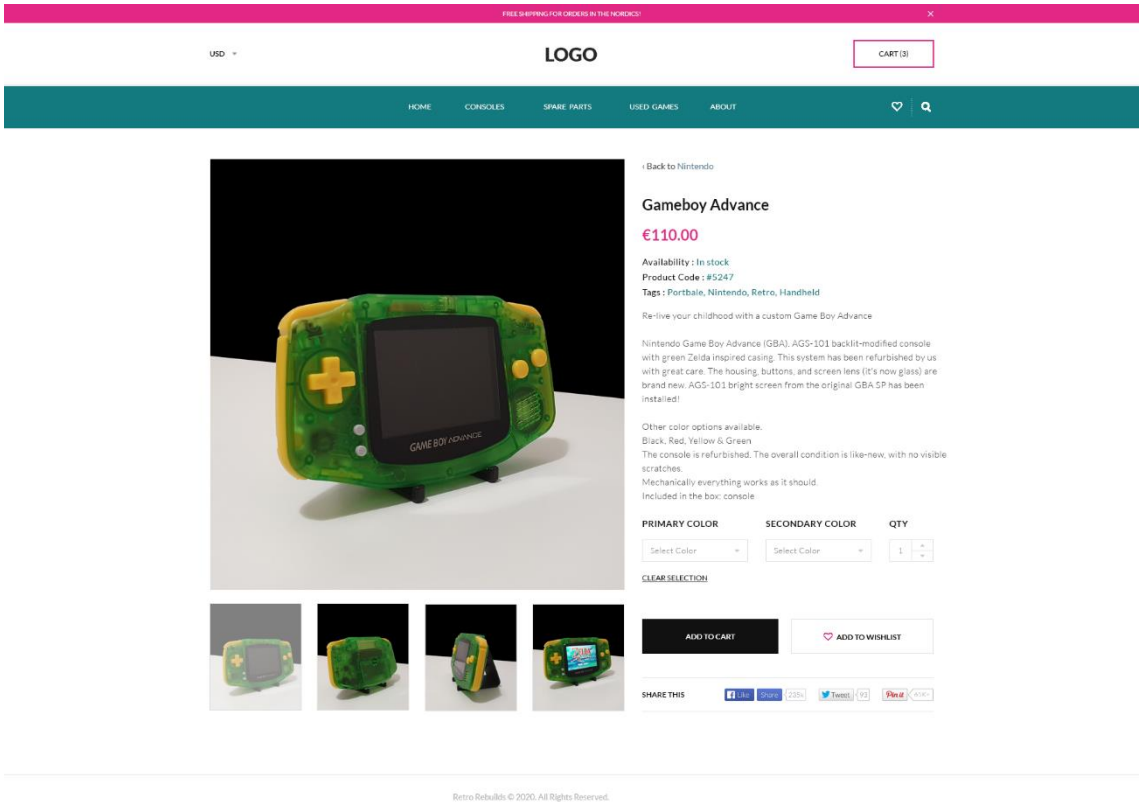

Figure 8: Website design mock-up – product page

7.1 Webpage implementation

For the implementation itself, we set a few ground rules to make the platform testing as unbiased and fair as possible. Firstly, we can only use the tools and services each platform provides out of the box. No additional apps or resources may be added to each website. Secondly, the design and layout of the webpage must follow the mockup to the best capability of each web builder platform. No additional code or CSS styling is to be added to the webpage. This test is set out to find out how easy or difficult the process of creating a web store would be for a user with no coding background or experience.

Lastly, we have mentioned three different web platforms so far, however, only two of them will be used for our tests. For our test, we will be only comparing Squarespace and Shopify, leaving Wix out of the comprising. This is because Wix and Squarespace, at their core, both are online blogging website builders, whereas Shopify is a dedicated online e-commerce platform builder. It does not bring enough justification to compare two very similar platforms that are designed to perform the exact same task, as the amount of acceptable data for our research will not be sufficient.

So, to reduce redundancy, we will only use two completely separate web building platforms with differing key functionality and targeted customer base.

7.2 Testing results

During our testing, we took notes of our e-commerce shop building experience. We then would take those notes and reflect on them by writing a summary of each test and our results, followed by a score we have decided on.

7.2.1 Squarespace

After account creation, the user is immediately presented with a questionnaire inquiring about what the site is going to be about. Once the basic info has been entered, a list of suggested templates is presented to the user. There is a large variety of templates, tailored for different types of webpages. However, a lot of the themes share the same visual assets with a slightly changed layout, making the feel of theme variety a mere illusion. Overall, for a new user, the setup experience was very smooth, and picking a theme similar to the mock-up took around 10 to 15 minutes.
After the template is picked, the main web building editor becomes available with almost all features available in a single menu. The user is greeted with typical tutorials and explanations teaching the core navigation features and editing options available.

While we were allowed to start customizing the picked template, the editor keeps promoting the users to set up the e-commerce side of their website. This is because, during the initial setup, the webpage was identified as an online store. The e-commerce setup is identical to the initial webpage setup, with a questionnaire asking the user about their services/products and their details. A downside to this setup is that the user must choose one of the paid subscriptions to activate the payment methods and checkout feature of the store. Due to this restriction, we were unable to test the checkout process for our client's website. It is also worth noting, it is not possible to see any analytics or storage management before the e-commerce setup is completed. Total store setup time - 10 minutes.

Initial setup rating: 4 out of 5. The setup process is simple and straightforward without any irrelevant extras. The theme picker is very basic, and the templates are similar to each other. This makes the user spend more time than necessary browsing through multiple pages of templates.

Editor:

The design editor is arguably the most important part of the web builder platform. The simple menus and straightforward drag and drop system seemed very promising in the beginning. But it became apparent very quickly that the grid system in Squarespace is very structured and it almost feels like the user is only allowed to edit the template in the way

Squarespace feels is right. The page builder encourages the use of separate sections, which keeps things tidy and organized. We believe that this type of web building can be very useful for inexperienced users but can be very limiting for those who wish for more freeform customizability. Some of the competitors, like Wix, have a fully customizable freeform editor, which to many could be more appealing, especially if they already have a pre-made design in mind.

Editing pages might be the strongest and most appealing side of Squarespace. It is simple, quick, and gives many good options for choosing sections to add to your page. There are 24 easy to navigate section categories, with multiple designs and layout options for each section. Weirdly enough, you cannot add a separate element to the section you already have if it does not meet the right space and layout requirements. Additionally, there is no undo button, so quickly reverting the changes you made can be frustrating at times. Managing existing pages is very simple though that is to be expected from any modern website builder.

Editor: 3 out of 5. The overall idea of a systematic page editor is good, just not polished enough. It lacks some basic essential features.

Design:

Regarding actual web design, there are many opportunities to fully customize any theme that Squarespace offers if the user knows how to implement custom CSS. On the upside, a regular user with no experience in coding still can customize the website to suit their needs. In most cases, the experience is very good, though it leaves an impression that Squarespace definitely is a personal blogging web builder first, and an e-commerce platform second. Throughout the design editing process, there are many roadblocks and unnecessary complications.

For example, there is a separate section for adding social media images or links. The setup process is very easy and straightforward; however, the available image grid options are very limited - only three options with further image customization of limited to only four sliders. Furthermore, adding custom colours is quite simple but applying to separate areas of the website is near impossible. To keep things simple for the average blogger, the website is split up into different sections, with each section having its own colour palette. At first, this seemed like a good thing, until we found out that there are only six colour palette presets. On top of that, editing the colours will affect any website section that has that colour palette enabled.

Moving on to Header/Footer and buttons. As mentioned earlier, adding separate elements can prove to be difficult but it is near impossible to add them to the Header and the Footer. When creating a Footer, the user is presented with several design presets which are difficult

to edit, while the Header is entirely preset by the theme, offering five layout options with logo, navigation & shopping cart, and does not have the ability to add custom elements.

Web design aspect: 3 out of 5. Easy to manage and edit if the user is satisfied with their preset template. Anything beyond that is necessarily difficult and often requires custom code.

Commerce:

The online store is not an option that can be built into your main page seamlessly. It has to be its own separate page, and while it can be used as a home/landing page, it does not provide the option of displaying the most popular or featured items on a separate page that is not part of the store. The only way of achieving a similar effect to having top products on a regular landing page is to create a gallery or a slideshow of popular item images from the store paired with either a separate store button or an embedded link.

Adding and managing products is one of the most important features of our test website. The storage and product editor are quite simple, featuring good design and reasonable features. When adding a new product, another survey will pop up, asking about the type of the product, which then will show appropriate options that the user can choose for their product presentation and customization. It must be noted that product images have to be trimmed and adjusted in the Squarespace editor, as the uploaded images will not be optimized for the template by default.
The physical product page has an option for up to three product variations with a total limit of 100 variation combinations, which in some cases can be a problem, especially if the product offers a lot of customizability.

During our testing, we ran into stability issues, with Squarespace returning a random/unknown error, which made us lose the product information we had already entered. It took around 20 minutes to add a single item, due to random crashes and overall instability. What was supposed to be a simple process of adding a new product, turned into a frustrating experience, forcing us as new users to seek out help through Google and Squarespace's support page.

Product management and e-commerce: 2 out of 5. Is very pretty and feels modern but lacks core features and stability.

With our overall Squarespace online e-commerce shop building experience taken into consideration, it took us around five hours to build the website and have it styled as close as possible to the mock-up. Five hours does not sound like much, though it must be said that we

only created the landing page and the e-commerce page, as other static information pages do not affect the outcome of our testing. We added a total of six products from different manufacturers, complete with descriptions, colour variants, and images.
From the user-friendliness aspect, we spent over an hour in total searching for help online to solve either an unknown bug or other problem with the unintuitive editor.

Total time spent customizing the website: 230min

Total time spent looking for solutions online: 70min

Lastly, the final website failed to meet the design mock-up expectations perfectly. While from a technical standpoint the website was operating normally and all of the technical requirements were met, the design was lacking in a few areas due to Squarespace's built-in web building limitations.

Overall, we would rate the experience working with Squarespace as mediocre, scoring only **3 out of 5**.
There are many good ideas and functions Squarespace is trying to implement, however, their execution, limitations, and the time we spent solving problems all affect the overall user experience.

7.2.2 Shopify

User account creation is tied together with store creation. Shopify instantly puts the emphasis on e-commerce by asking for a store name and presenting a setup questionnaire that gathers core info about the planned web store and the products the user wishes to sell. It is not required for the new user to have a product to sell, as the store can be set up for future business. Completing the initial setup, the user is greeted with the main page displaying the dashboard with a side menu containing everything related to e-commerce and store management. Unlike Squarespace, Shopify does not ask for a template to be chosen. It starts by requesting the user to add a product if they have one, followed by choosing one of the nine free website templates and finally picking a domain and launching the web store. Additional templates can be purchased and added to the user's website though most of them come in at a premium price of 160 euros. These templates are pre-made by designers or other Shopify users, who create fully functional themes for other stores and do not require any optimization or setup. For our project, the free themes proved to be more than sufficient as the variety of layouts and UI differed greatly. This saved us a lot of time picking a theme and publishing our test online store. Total time spent setting up the store and launching the website - 15 minutes.

Initial setup rating: 4 out of 5. As new users, we found that the setup required very little to complete and did quite well explaining all of the basics. The theme variety of preset templates felt a little underwhelming, although the free available options provided sufficient variety to satisfy most needs.

Editor:

Shopify editor is much simpler but arguably more limited and inferior to the likes of Squarespace or Wix. On the surface, the editor may seem very simple and intuitive, with many options the average user or store owner might need. In reality, it offers little to no flexibility when it comes to personalization and customizability. There are separate editing options for regular pages such as about us or landing page, and for the shop themes. The editor offers only seventeen section choices that cover the most important areas - products, social media, visual content, and store promotion. The store editor, on the other hand, only offers a single section for either products or product collection, which can be edited with a series of sliders and toggle switches.

It becomes quite clear that Shopify does not treat the editor as the most important part of the building platform, unlike Squarespace. That said, each section or part of the website can be changed, replaced, and managed quite easily. There is a lack of deeper customization since the feature of adding extra elements to every section either does not exist or is presented in a very simple form. Everything within this editor is controlled with sliders and simple text boxes with no drag and drop functionality. However, while the editing options may not be as advanced and innovative as Squarespace or Wix, they are intuitive and work very well.

An extra feature is a quick undo button - something Squarespace does not support.

Lastly, Shopify manages the website structure separately from its content by having a traditional content management system or CMS. Its design looks quite dated, sharing similarities with other web platforms, such as WordPress or Drupal. Nevertheless, during our testing, we did not come across any bugs or unknown crashes, making our experience as Shopify users quite pleasant.

Editor: 4 out of 5. The webpage editor is very simple yet well-executed. It runs without issues and lets the users edit their pages very quickly. It does have some additional features that Squarespace is missing, though a little more in-depth customizing would be a welcome edition.

Design:

Webpage design so far has been the weakest part of Shopify. Advertised as the best e-commerce platform builder, expectations were set quite high. However, being greeted with simplicity and the basic features of the design editor could potentially turn away new customers as it can come across as outdated and incompetent in modern web design. The biggest issue with this web builder design is the lack of personal customization. If the user is willing to settle for one of the free pre-made themes or purchase one from the Shopify store, all of their basic online store needs will be covered. On the other hand, if the user wishes to implement their own customized design, without any prior coding knowledge, Shopify may not be the best choice in web building platforms. The main reason is - everything about Shopify's pre-made themes can be easily modified and tailored to each customer's needs, with some exceptions, whereas non-standard layouts, color combinations, or element styles are virtually impossible to implement, without separate code added to the website.

To give a better perspective of how limited the web design customization actually is, we have listed the main features found under the design tab:
Colors, Typography, Search, Social media, Favicon, Add to cart notification, Checkout, and Theme style, which allows the user to swap between light or dark style.

Each section features very basic editing options, in some cases only a single toggle switch is available. Unsurprisingly, sections that offer the most design options are the store and the checkout elements. Beyond what has already been mentioned, there is not much that Shopify offers for styling or design.
This web builder does not offer any extra features, unlike its competitors. There is no image editor built-in, meaning the user is forced to edit their content before uploading, it does not feature drag and drop functionality, and the header/footer areas are pre-set with almost no editing options.

Web design aspect: 2 out of 5. The design editor is far too basic and limiting to be competitive with other modern web platforms. It keeps the design process simple and beginner-friendly, however, for customized designs, we would recommend looking somewhere else.

Commerce:

Being Being primarily an e-commerce platform, Shopify, in theory, should score quite well in this category. As mentioned previously, this web platform puts a lot of emphasis on online shopping and store management, which is apparent in almost any part of the editor or content management system. On the home page of CMS, the very first section is an educational video on how to increase sales and reach out to local customers. Below the video, Shopify has implemented a system similar to a progress bar, which guides the users in managing the store or editing their website.

Everything presented in the CMS is meant to promote better sales and acquiring new customers. Unlike in the CMS for Squarespace, here we are presented with not only options for products, customers, marketing, and analytics but also with sales traffic, shipping, and payment methods. Shopify also offers its users to create a test order, to see how well the checkout and shipping information is working.
The product section covers a lot of information the user might have about their product. The main features can also be found in other web building platforms, however, what sets Shopify apart from its competitors are the extensive options for shipping, product promotion, inventory management, and many other features, focused on making the buying and selling experience as good as possible. Additional extras include automated discounts, customized gift cards, and marketing campaign creation. Lastly, Shopify promotes free and paid apps that add extra functionality to a website. These apps are categorized by marketing, selling, inventory, and retail.

Our overall e-commerce experience with Shopify was very good, almost to the point where comparing it to Squarespace would be somewhat unfair. The product management experience was smooth, adding a new product took us less than five minutes and we did not experience any crashes or poor performance when using the same visual assets as for Squarespace.

Product management and e-commerce: 4 out of 5. The CMS covers virtually anything an online store owner might want. Additional functionality can be added via the app store although there are no options for changing the layout. In our testing, we concluded that the backend of Shopify works very well but looks quite dated and sometimes feels unintuitive.

With all tests concluded for Shopify and recreating the mock-up design to our best ability, it took us just over three hours. The time spent on creating this web store prototype was noticeably shorter than Squarespace, especially when we take into account the fact that we used the same visual assets and number of pages or sections. The exact time we spent on creating the website and searching for help online was:

170min spent working on the website

20min spent looking for help online

Unfortunately, just like with Squarespace, Shopify failed the task of recreating the mock-up perfectly. Though Shopify did allow us to make the prototype look closer to the mock-up expectations than Squarespace and did not require the storefront to be separate from the main page.

Our final grade and thoughts on user experience and user-friendliness for Shopify are:
4 out of 5 based on Shopify providing good overall functionality and stability when creating an online store. Its only major let downs are lack of full website customizability and older looking system that does not provide modern features such as drag and drop or click & edit. We would like to see more design and styling options, especially for those users who wish to have a fully personalized website but do not possess the necessary skills in coding to do so.

7.3 Key differences, strengths, and our recommendation

After testing and reviewing both platforms, we were able to spot key differences, as well as provide a recommendation for our client based on our findings.

The main area where Squarespace had an advantage over Shopify was the web builder and editor. It felt more open and intuitive, while the larger variety of themes allowed for a more personalized website. It also features a more advanced design and color editor, along with a very good media and content editor, though those had their own flaws as well. Squarespace then is ideal for content creators and bloggers, with the e-commerce aspect feeling like an afterthought.

Shopify, on the other hand, works just as advertised - it is a true e-commerce platform with many powerful tools made to make more sales and boost business. Unlike Squarespace, Shopify does not require the online store to be a separate page since it can be implemented throughout the entire website. The content management on Shopify is also a lot more robust, though a little dated looking. Unfortunately, the biggest issue with Shopify is its website builder side. The editor and design creator simply cannot compete with Squarespace if we overlook the stability issues with Squarespace.

Shopify embraces the tried and tested look and feel of typical web platforms and their content management systems, while Squarespace chose to adopt a new and modern look. Unfortunately, the modern CMS and editor set Squarespace back a little, mainly due to unknown errors and bugs, whereas Shopify did not display such problems. In the future, Squarespace can potentially become a better overall web building package than Shopify. However, as it stands right now, the lack of core e-commerce features, overall instability, and structure design choices are what made us choose Shopify over Squarespace.

Our recommendation for our client and their purposes - Shopify. It makes the experience of doing business online easier and more manageable. It also took us less time to set up the entire store than Squarespace.

8 Web platform research framework

There are many well-known types of project management frameworks. Some of the most popular project frameworks are - Waterfall, Lean, and Scrum. These frameworks cover all of the key components for planning, executing, and managing different projects. They are especially useful if the project is run by several people or even teams. Normally, the framework includes a project cycle that defines the project from start to finish. This cycle usually has five sections: Initiation, Planning, Execution, Monitoring & Controlling, and Closure. (Wrike, 2020)

For our web platform research, we created a custom project framework that would guide us through the entire process of the research. To visualize our project framework, we used Miro - an online collaborative whiteboarding platform that helps teams to work together efficiently and effectively. This platform allows users to create brainstorming boards, project flowcharts, data collection posts, and also project frameworks. Miro is mainly a paid service, however, there is a free option which only allows exporting of low-resolution pdf files. Nevertheless, for our project needs, this platform delivered the desired results.

A visualization of our research project framework:

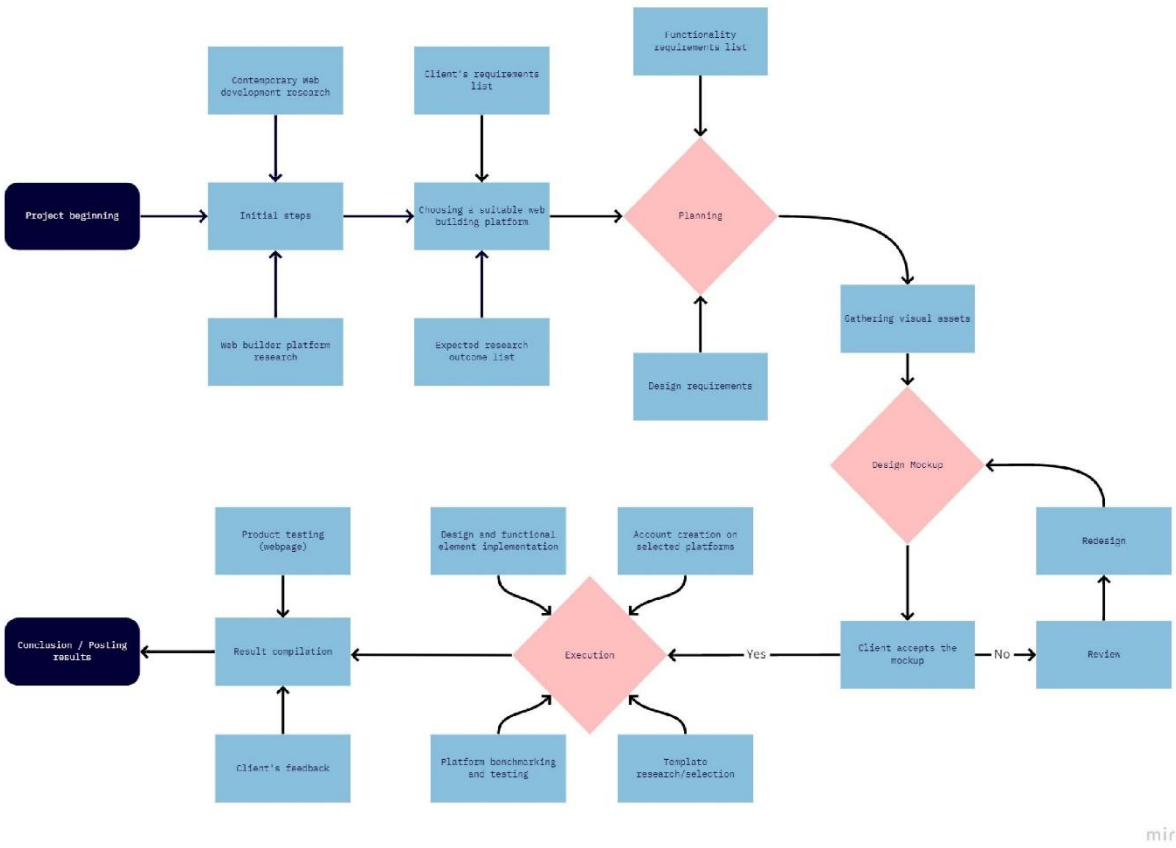

Figure 9: Project framework flowchart

9 Results

For this project was completed using varying methods. We employed surveys, interviews, and reviews, and lists as tools for collecting data.

9.1 Surveys

The following are the major themes that we were able to find from the surveys and the interviews with potential customers and the retro gaming community. First, overall, there was excitement about buying retro consoles so that people could play games that they grew up with. We could call this a nostalgia factor. Next, there were those who wanted to buy retro consoles, so that they could purchase and play games that they were not able to when they were younger. Third, there were those that bought retro consoles and games simply for their collectability and resale value in the future. Next, there were a few physical aspects of the consoles that appealed to potential customers. There were those who liked that the refurbished console felt new and the new look was the main appeal to the customer. Next, there were those that felt that the modernized backlighting and other technology is what made refurbished consoles appealing to them. Lastly, for those who liked to collect custom artwork was the most key feature for them.

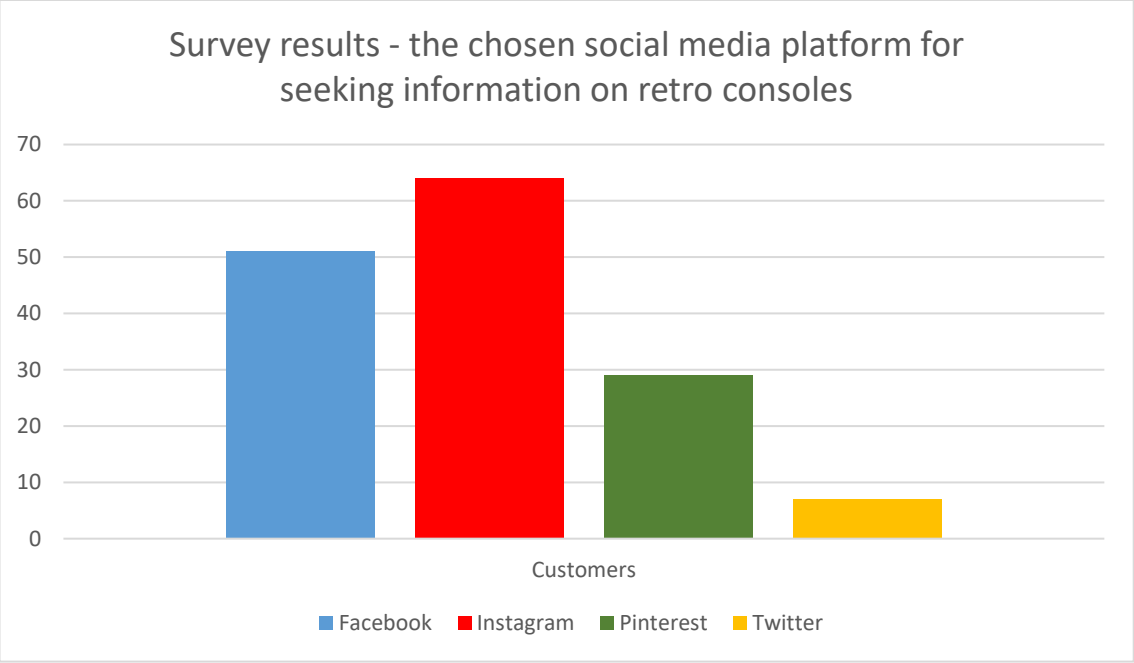

Figure 10: Chart displaying survey data on preferred social media platforms

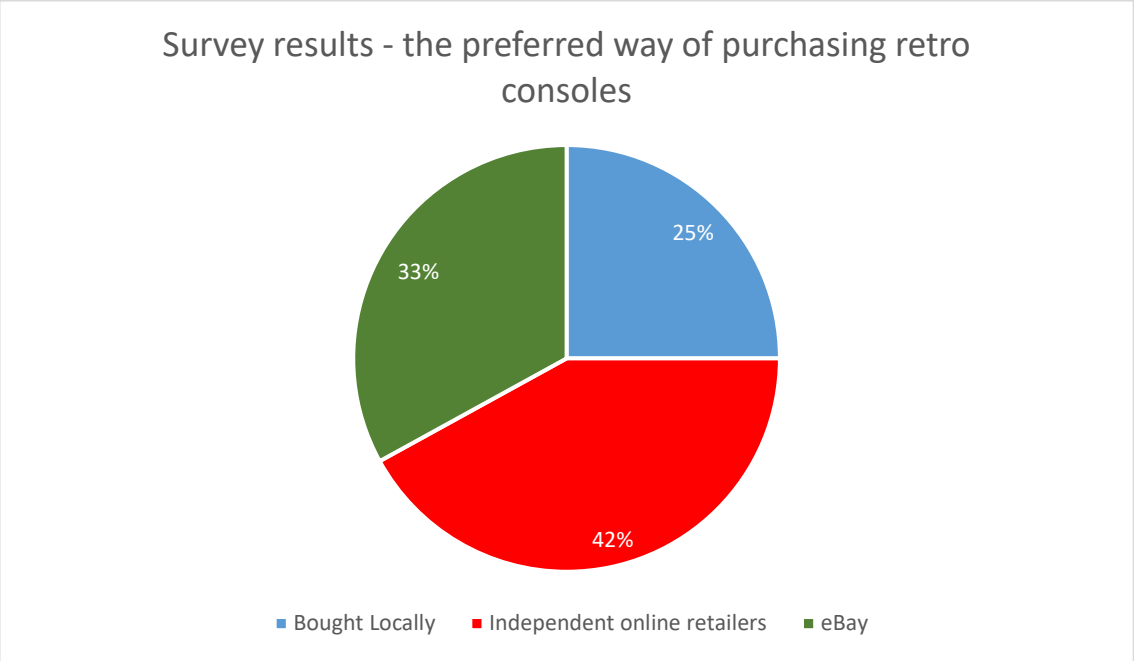

Figure 11: Chart displaying survey data on proffered purchase methods

9.2 Reviews

Web platform research and testing process was concluded by our client reviewing the prototypes and delivering their feedback. The client was asked to review both - the final online store visual design along with the website and content management system experience. To ensure that our clients' user experience is as close to the real-world situation as possible, we provided them with our Squarespace and Shopify account credentials, followed by a quick tour of available tools and features, as the initial tutorial was completed and disabled by us. The client did not receive any further guidance in managing and navigating the online store prototypes.
For communication with our client, we used Zoom, a video communication platform, which allowed us to have virtual face-to-face meetings to receive their immediate thoughts on our project. After reviewing the online store prototypes, our client had the following to say:

Comparing Design mock-up to reality:

“It wasn’t what I expected, and I would’ve liked to see it closer to the mock-up. But the themes available on Shopify were interesting, and I ended up liking one of the themes available. It was complicated to change themes on Squarespace. They also did not fit in my mind with what I expect from an online store.”

Comparing the Analytics, Marketing, and Customer Management System:

“Both have easily available options, but the presentation from Shopify is nicer, I prefer to see all the analytics in a single dashboard instead of separate pages. I don’t understand why you would want to separate all that information.
I didn’t like that Squarespace has an option for Instagram themes, but it brings you to a separate app. That seems like false advertising to me. If I have to make a new user account for a separate app that’s too much.
The CMS is more robust on Shopify, and easier to navigate. In the future when I add products to my store, I want the process to be simple, and it was not so in the Squarespace example. The Shopify site was much easier to use and intuitive.”

Judging by the review our customer provided us, it is clear that their preference in web building platform favors Shopify. While their motivation and thoughts for this decision may be somewhat different from ours, the client acknowledged our choice and chose to agree with it.

10 Conclusion

We set out on this project with very specific goals and ideas with how we should reach them. The aim of our project was to alleviate the burden of creating an online web store by conducting research on different web building platforms, comparing them creating the online shop for the client. Equally important was the creation of a marketing plan. As it involved researching to gain a better understand of the retro gaming community as a whole. We were surprised in the process of our research by how similar on the outside a webstore might look to potential customers, but involve very different processes in creation, and with varying levels of difficulty to the user. Our goal was to select a user-friendly manageable platform for our client. Research for the marketing part of our project was very informative and we were able to draw conclusions on what social media channels would be most productive and helpful for the client. From there we developed an easy-to-follow content plan and marketing schedule. These were designed to go along with either website prototype or are meant to be used as a complete package after this project is completed.

The client accepted the project result and has deemed it to be successful and useful for their business. Beyond the customer's reviews, no additional comments were given about the future plans or use of our web store and marketing package.

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Appendix 1: Retro Rebuilds survey

RetroRebuildsSurvey

Marketing Survey for Retro Rebuilds

* Required

1. What excites you about refurbished retro consoles? *

2. What qualities of a refurbished retro console appeal to you? visuals(new shell and buttons), upgrades(backlit screen, stereo upgrade, etc.)

3. How do you typically find retro consoles to purchase? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ LOCALLY (garage sales, craigslist)
- ◯ Independent online retailer
- ◯ Ebay

4. What social media platforms are important for seeking information or inspiration on retro consoles? *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Twitter
- ◯ Instagram
- ◯ Facebook
- ◯ Pinterest
- ◯ Other: _____

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Appendix 2: Competitive Research

Retro-Modding:

1. Does custom build to order consoles.

2. Consoles are consistently sold out. (Unknown whether this is lack of stock or quickly sells out.

3. Sells UV-printed shells for consoles. (These have custom artwork, but these are machine-made.)

4. Sells other parts for DIY refurbishment.

Handheld Legend:

1. Does not do custom builds.

2. Sells parts for DIY refurbishment.

3. Has a section on their website for prebuilt consoles, but this section is empty.

Gaming Cobra:

1. Does not sell custom consoles

2. Is a parts reseller for DIY.

Appendix 3: Survey and Interviews highlights and results

100 people surveyed

Overall, many people get excited about retro consoles so they can play the games they grew up with. (Nostalgia factor)

Being able to play games they did not get a chance to play when they were younger.

Like them for their collectability. /resale value in the future.

Like it when a refurbished console feels new, the new looks given to the console appeal to the customer

Many customers mention the backlighting in many refurbished consoles

Custom artwork also plays into the collectability of the console.

The least mentioned upgrades were new speakers and a rechargeable battery

25 find retro consoles locally

42 find retro consoles on independent online retailers

33 find retro consoles on eBay

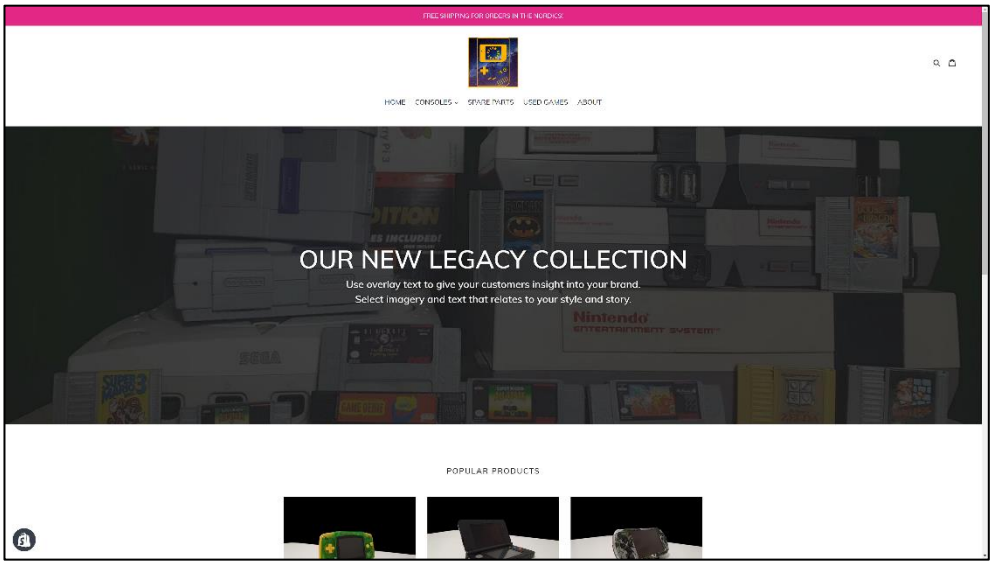
7 people use Twitter for information on retro consoles

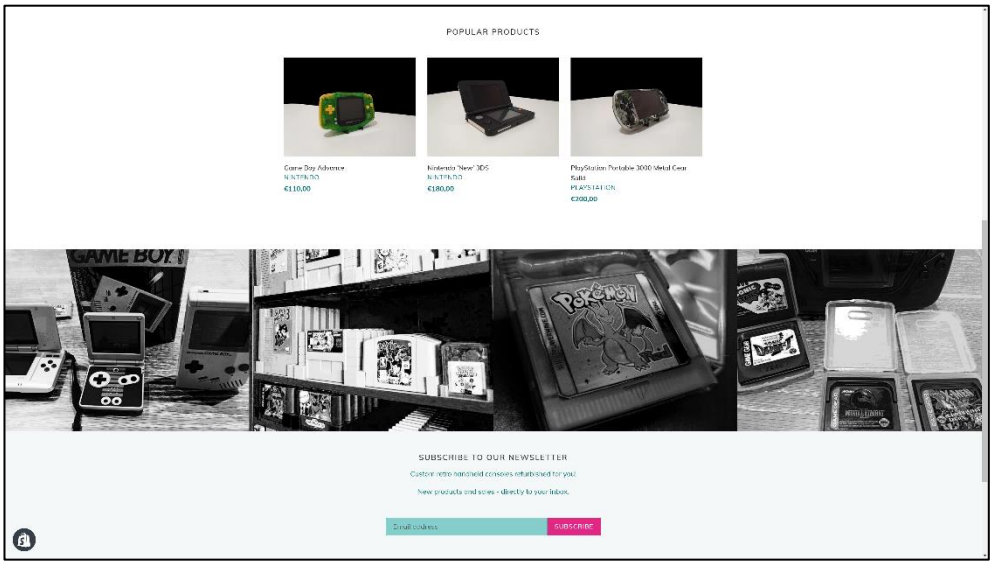
64 people use Instagram for information on retro consoles

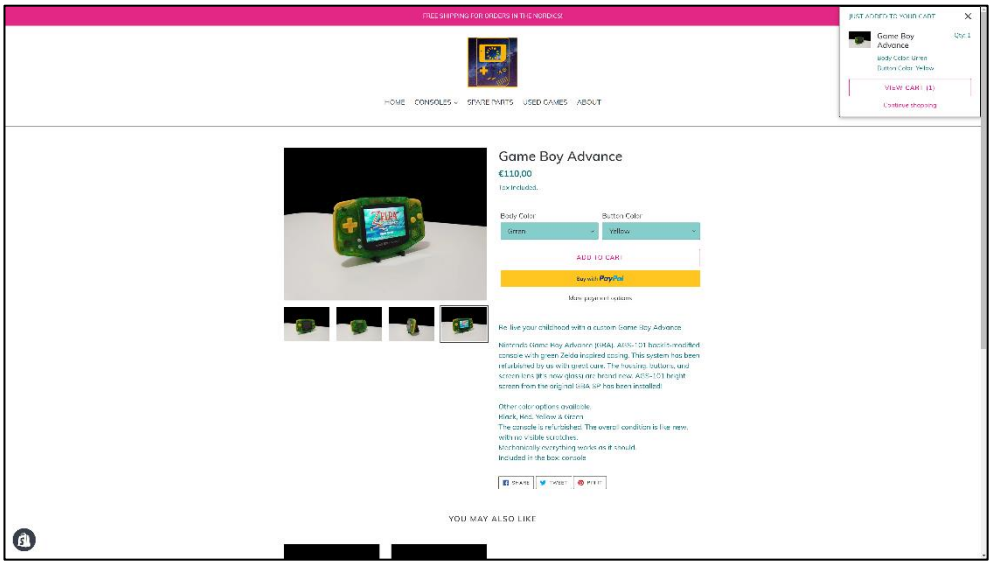
51 people use Facebook for information on retro consoles

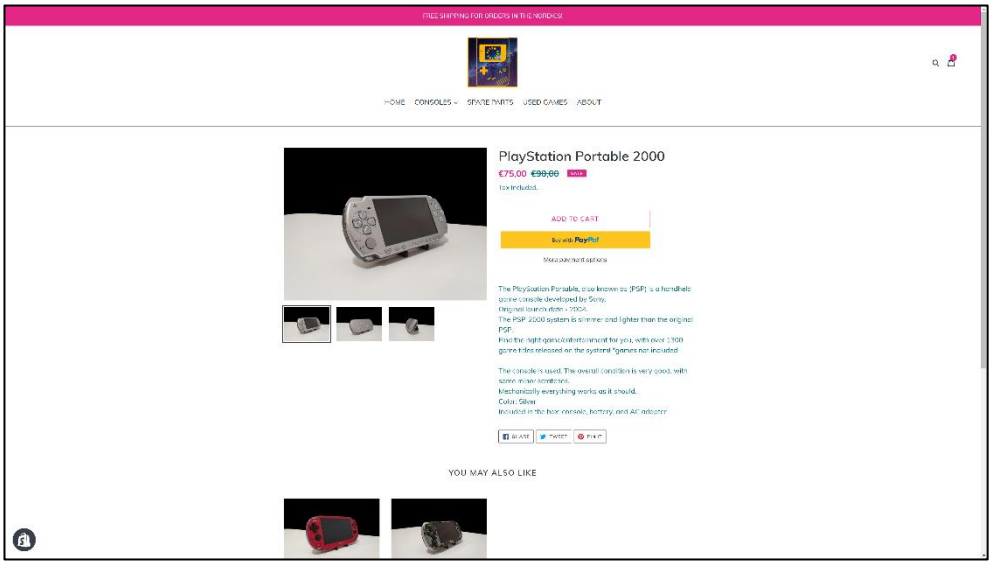
29 people use Pinterest for information on retro consoles

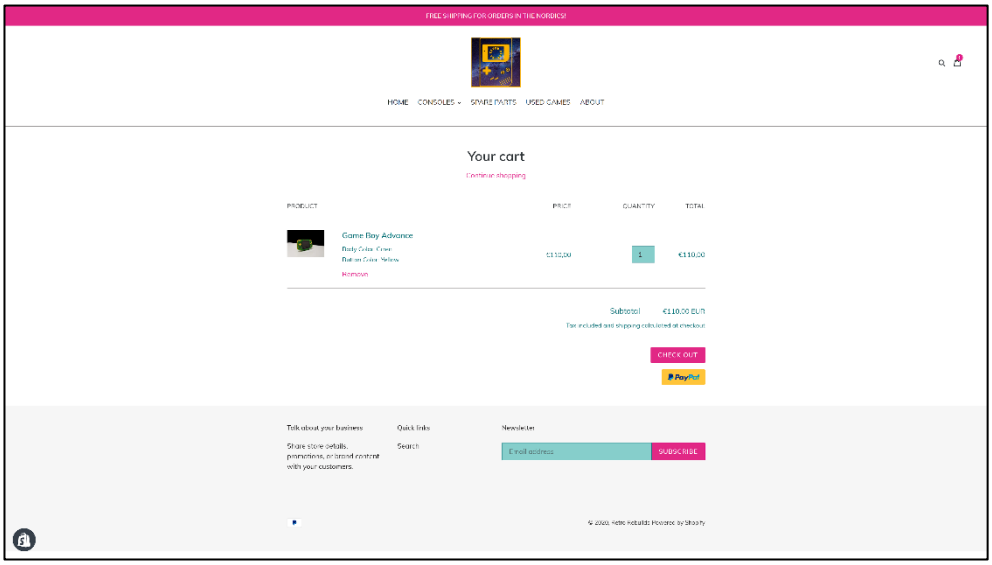
Appendix 4: Shopify prototype screenshots

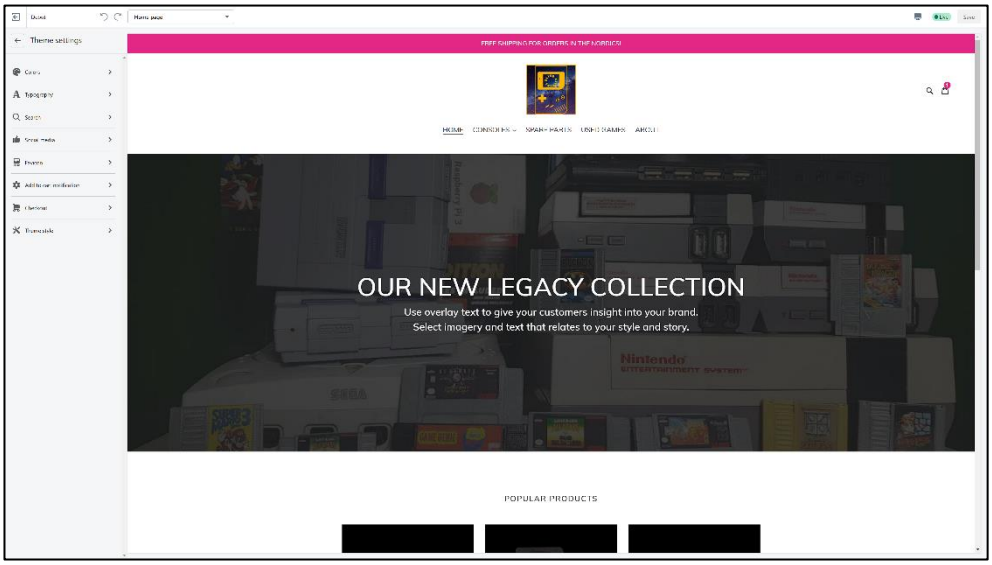




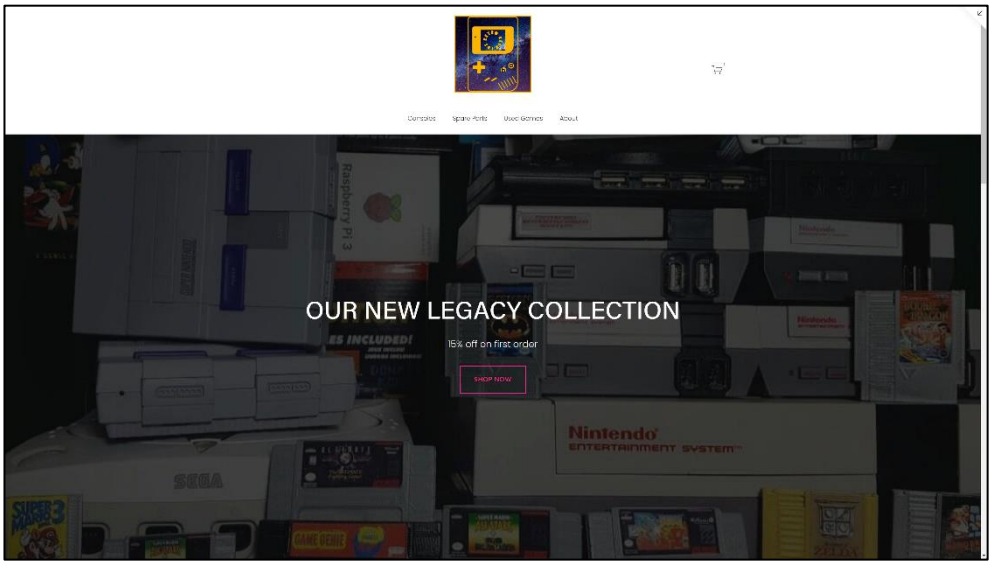


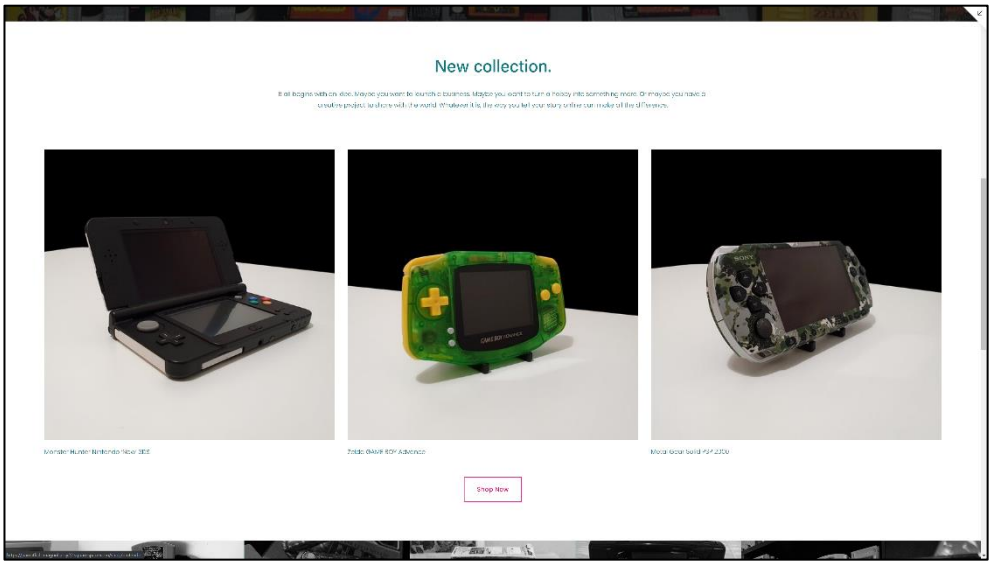

FREE SHIPPING FOR ORDERS IN THE NORDICS!
HOME CONSOLES SPARE PARTS USED GAMES ABOUT
PlayStation Portable 2000
€75,00 €90,00
ADD TO CART
YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

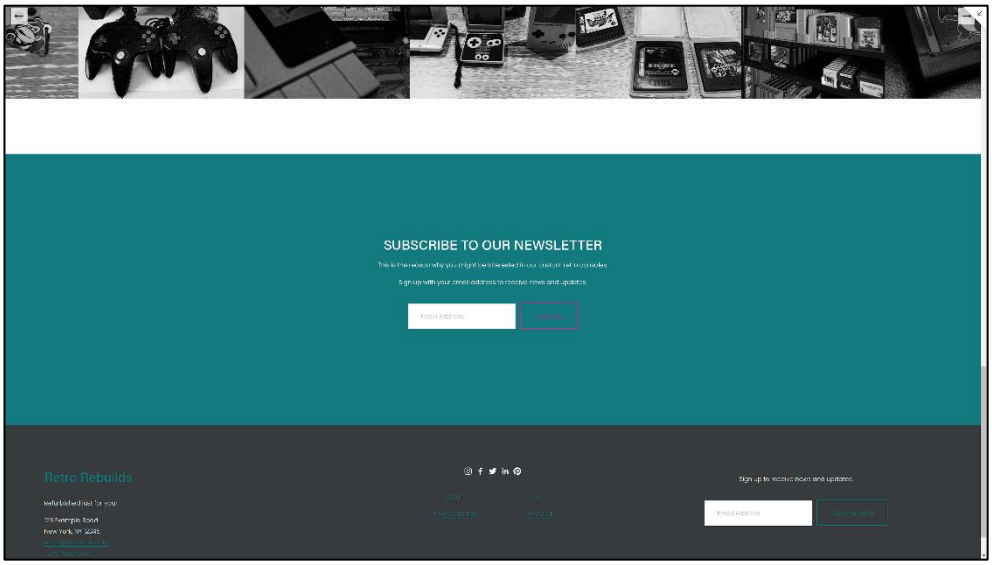

FREE SHIPPING FOR ORDERS IN THE NORDICS!
HOME CONSOLES SPARE PARTS USED GAMES ABOUT
Your cart
Continue shopping
PRODUCT
PRICE
QUANTITY
TOTAL
Game Boy Advance
Subtotal
CHECK OUT
Talk about your business
Quick links
Search
Newsletter
SUBSCRIBE

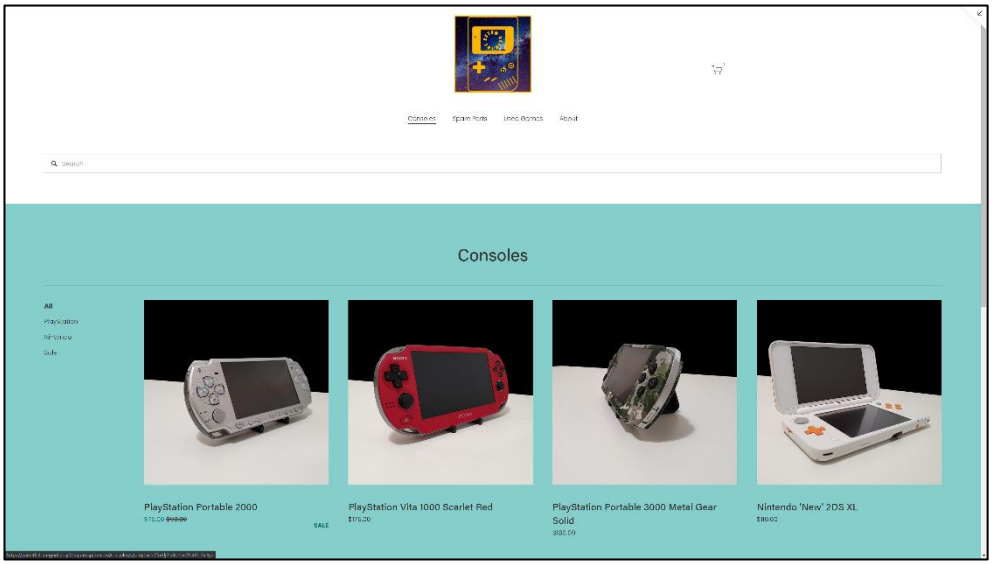

Theme settings
FREE SHIPPING FOR ORDERS IN THE NORDICS
OUR NEW LEGACY COLLECTION
Use overlay text to give your customers insight into your brand.
Select imagery and text that relates to your style and story.
POPULAR PRODUCTS

Appendix 5: Squarespace prototype screenshots








Consoles
Spare Parts
Used Games
About
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All
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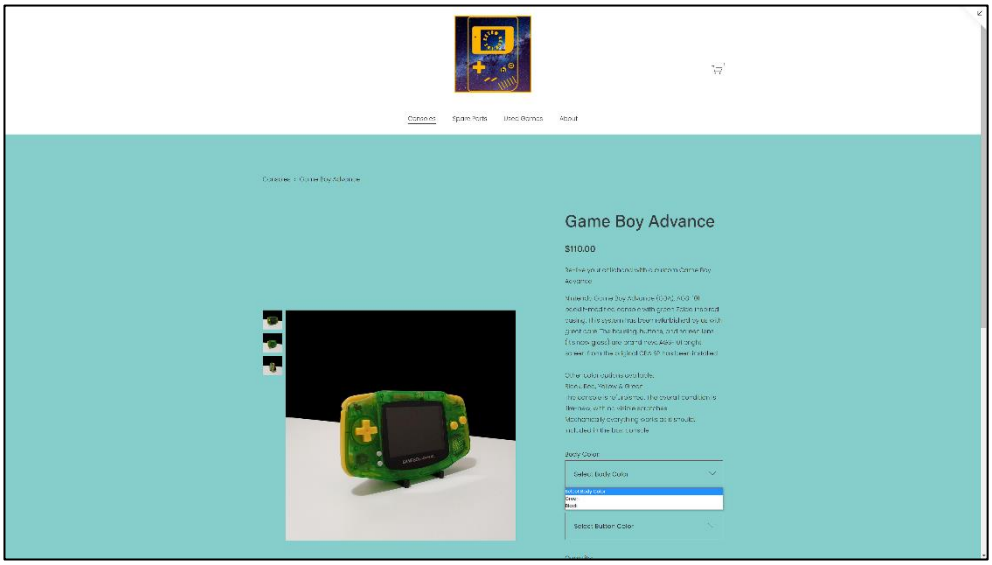
PlayStation Vita 1000 Scarlet Red
PlayStation Portable 3000 Metal Gear Solid
Nintendo 'New' 2DS XL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Spare Parts
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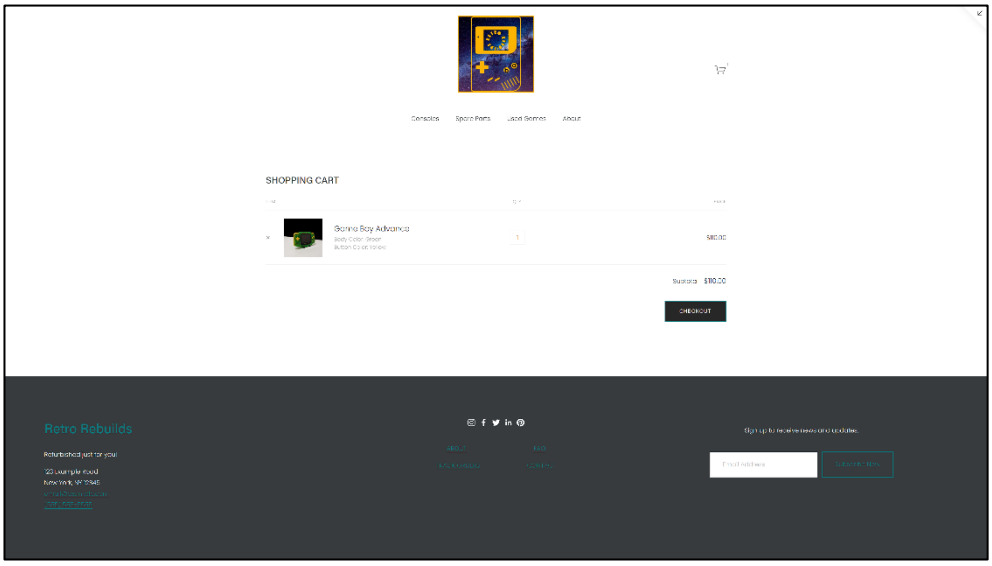
About
Game Boy Advance
$110.00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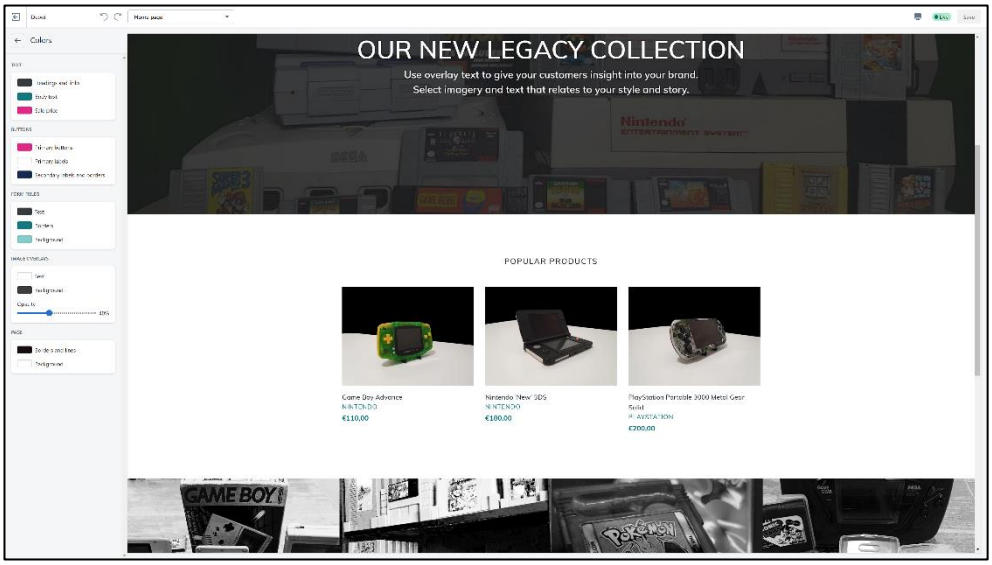
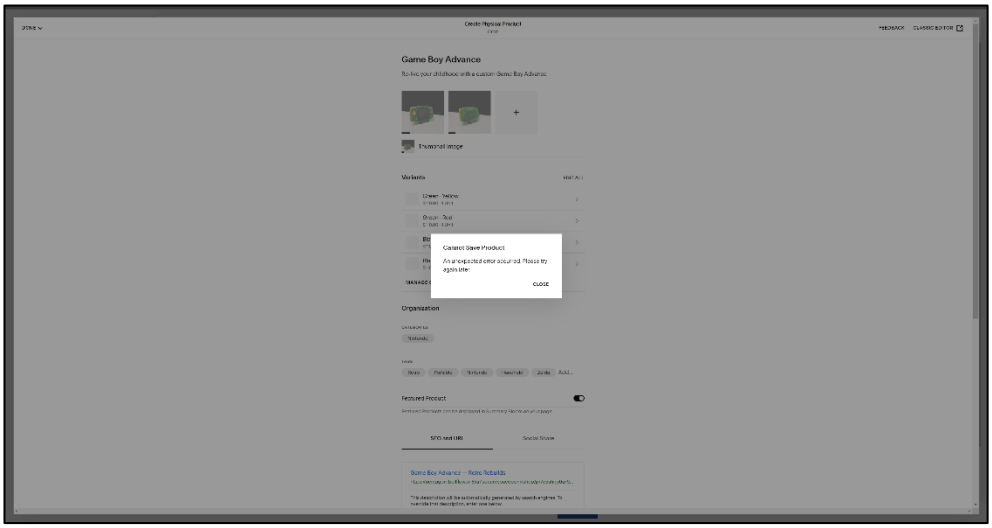
Used Games
About
SHOPPING CART
Game Boy Advance
CHECKOUT
Retro Rebuilds


Colors
OUR NEW LEGACY COLLECTION
Use overlay text to give your customers insight into your brand.
Select imagery and text that relates to your style and story.
POPULAR PRODUCTS
Game Boy Advance
NINTENDO
€110,00
Nintendo New 3DS
NINTENDO
€100,00
PlayStation Portable 3000 Metal Gear Solid
PLAYSTATION
€200,00
GAME BOY


Game Boy Advance
Thumbnail image
Variants
Cannot Save Product
An unexpected error occurred. Please try again later.
CLOSE
Organization
Featured Product