



# Investigating the Irish Market and How Medisol Can Further Penetrate This Market

Research Justification

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## Executive Summary

This research was carried out as part of the intern's final graduation internship for the study program International Business at HZ University of Applied Sciences. The internship began on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2021 and ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. The internship was carried out at Medisol B.V. where the intern researched whether Medisol can successfully expand in the Republic of Ireland. This research was performed because the company is growing and needs to start developing expansions plans and strategy in certain markets, the Irish market being one of these markets.

The results of this research were as follows:

1. There is a lot of opportunity for Medisol to expand their sales operations in Ireland since they will have very little restriction the law. There are also opportunities within the market when comparing Medisol to their competitors.
2. Medisol's supply chain is sustainable enough to tackle sales to the republic of Ireland. This is due to the space available to allow a large influx of incoming and outgoing orders and the newly hired employees to work in the warehouse. New supply chain management systems are being developed to further optimize their supply chain. The customer prices should often be adjusted to the environment to have a clear overview of the margin percentages should be.
3. Continuously optimizing and updating their SEO search is necessary to improve their websites visibility and trust in Ireland. Looking at the situation from a critical point, it would also be very beneficial to hire the intern so they can continue working on the Irish market.

The following recommendations and solutions derived from these results:

1. It is important for Medisol to build and develop a stronger presence through social media as well as improving SEO search. With added brand awareness, Medisol could further increase their sales and market share in Ireland.
2. Medisol has management systems that they use to manage their supply chain, sales, products, and delivery but these systems quickly become outdated. They must regularly optimize and update their management systems.
3. For the Irish market, they do not have enough colleagues to support this market so it would be most feasible for them to hire the intern that is currently working at Medisol.

## Foreword

This research justification was written by Stephanie Olumba, an International Business student from Ireland. She is currently studying in Vlissingen, the Netherlands. This research was conducted while she was an intern at Medisol. B. V. in the second semester of 2021. This internship was a final graduation internship that needed to be completed in order to graduate. She decided to work at Medisol B.V. because she is very passionate about improving healthcare access to all and Medisol was the right fit for her. She was designated to work on the Irish market due to her Irish background. During this internship period, she helped Medisol learn more about the Irish market and increase sales. It was a very enjoyable and beneficial internship period.

## Abbreviations

In this table the abbreviations mentioned in this research justification and their meanings are explained.

| <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Full word</b>                        |
|---------------------|---|
| AED                 | Automated External Defibrillator        |
| B.V.                | Besloten Vennootschap                   |
| SME                 | Small Medium Enterprise                 |
| CPR                 | Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation           |
| OHCAR               | Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Register |
| UK                  | The United Kingdom                      |
| SEO                 | Search Engine Optimisation              |
| CSO                 | Central Statistics Office               |
| GDP                 | Gross Domestic Profit                   |
| EU                  | European Union                          |
| USA                 | United States of America                |

*(Table of abbreviations & their meanings)*

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# 1. Preliminary Research

In this chapter, a brief analysis of Medisol and its products will be provided, followed by a description of the problem analysis. The information gaps will be identified and analysed, and the project aim will be clearly stated in this chapter.

## 1.1 Company and product analysis

### *Internal environment*

When looking at the internal environment, the products and services provided, the company's background, their goals and their organisational structure is discussed.

Medisol B.V. is a company that sells automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and other lifesaving equipment necessary for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to clients and customers in Europe and other parts of the world. They perform their business operations within the healthcare industry and their market of the company is targeted towards resellers and end-users. Therefore, Medisol is operating in both B2B and B2C businesses. Below of a list of the products they sell:

- Semi and fully automatic AEDs
- AED electrode pads
- AED batteries
- AED carrying cases
- Wall cabinets
- AED trainers & training accessories
- Training manikins and accessories

They also provide AED maintenance as an additional service for AEDs purchased at Medisol (AEDexpert, n.d.-a).

The main brands that are sold at Medisol are:

- Cardiac Science (Cardiac Science, n.d.)
- CU Medical (CU Medical, n.d.)
- Defibtech (Defibtech, n.d.)
- Defisign (Defisign, n.d.)
- Heartsine (Heartsine, n.d.)
- Philips (Philips, n.d.)
- Physio Control (Stryker Emergency Care, n.d.)
- Primedic (Primedic, n.d.)
- Schiller (Schiller, n.d.)
- ZOLL (ZOLL, n.d.)
- AMBU (AMBU, n.d.)
- Brayden (Brayden, n.d.)
- Laerdal (Laerdal, n.d.)

Relating to their maintenance services, they currently offer two contracts. The first is the AED Safeguard Plan and the second is the One-time AED Service Contract. The AED Safeguard Plan guarantees you a functioning AED, while the One-time Service Contract offers once off maintenance where the customer can send their AED to the company's service centre for servicing (AEDexpert, n.d.-a).

Medisol B.V. is a small private limited company with 2 shareholders, Pieter Joziassie who owns 95% and Anne-Marieke Wieman who owns 5%. A private limited company, or in Dutch a besloten vennootschap (B.V.), is a business structure with legal personality. This means that the B. V. is liable

for any debts, rather than the individual. As a director, you are an employee of the B.V. and you act on its behalf. A Dutch B. V. can be set up by having oneself as the only director/major shareholder (DGA) or with other individuals and/or legal entities (Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, KVK, n.d.).

Medisol started selling AEDs in the Netherlands in 2004. The founders of Medisol, Pieter Jozaisse and Edwin Roelse, had worked for many years as counsellors in the ambulance service department so a lot of experience with AED's was gained, which came in very handy when starting up this company. Currently, there are Medisol web shops in 20 countries both within and outside Europe. As well as that, their sales consultants and product specialists are always ready to provide their customers with expert advice and long-term support both before and after a purchase has been made. Their customer base consists of resellers and end-user consumers who often make international orders. Products are delivered from the distribution centre, located in Vlissingen, the Netherlands, and are delivered to the desired address. Their head office is also located in Vlissingen (Medisol, 2019).

Their main goal is for everyone in world to have easy access to an AED by 2030. To be more specific, they aim to have everyone in the world to be able to have an AED at their disposal within 6 minutes. Their interconnected network of colleagues and partners contribute to achieving this goal and without high motivation and efforts from all parties involved, this would not be possible (Medisol B.V., n.d.). This goal relates to sustainable development goal number 3; Good health & Well-being, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (United Nations, n.d.). Medisol and its employees understand and share the same passion for increasing the accessibility of AEDs all over the globe. They work not only for profit, but also for a positive impact in the world.

In relation to the company's organisational structure, as described in figure 1 (Hollaers, 2020), The organisation is as follows:

- 2 board members
- 3 managers
- Sales department
- Finance department
- Human resources
- Purchasing department
- Marketing and communications
- Maintenance and aftersales care department

The small number and multicultural staff members make for a very international and personal team. There are also 7 interns carrying out their internships at Medisol.

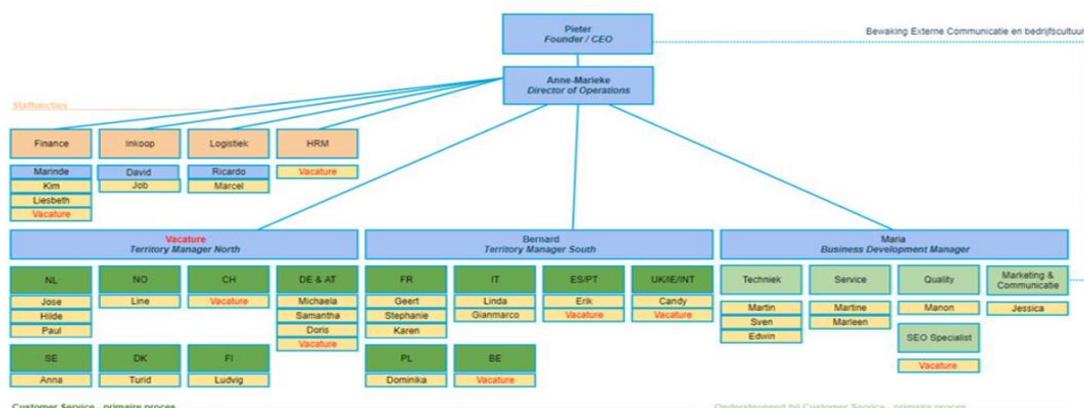


Figure 1: Organisational structure (Hollaers, 2020)

### External environment

When looking at the external environment, the focus will be kept on the customers, the suppliers, and the competitors within the Irish market.

Medisol has 2 types of customers. There is the end-user customer and the reseller. This term, end user, refers to the person that ultimately uses a particular product (End User vs. Customer, 2017), and the term reseller refers to someone that buys goods for resale and makes a profit (Ecommerce Platforms, n.d.). Both customer types are important and valued at Medisol, but the resellers bring in more revenue because they place larger and more expensive orders. There is still around an equal amount of focus towards targeting more end-user customers and finding more resellers.

Medisol has approximately one hundred suppliers. These include larger corporations such as Phillips, Schiller and ZOLL. These suppliers are responsible for delivering the ordered products to Medisol within a given time and to the highest quality standard.

When looking at Medisol's competitors, we will focus on the competitors within the republic of Ireland. This is because this research has been focused on Medisol and the Irish environment. Its largest competitors have been listed below:

- CE Tek Medical (CE Tek Medical, n.d.)
- Hearts Safety Solutions (Hearts Safety Solutions, n.d.)
- Hunt Office (Hunt Office, n.d.)
- Flashpoint (Flashpoint, n.d.)
- The Defibshop (Defibshop, n.d.)
- Eiremed (Eiremed, n.d.)
- Medguard (Medguard, n.d.)
- SP Services (SP Services, n.d.)

The aforementioned are Medisol's largest competitors because they have similar product ranges and carry out their business operations in the Republic of Ireland.

Overall, when looking at the business environment of Medisol, they are a growing small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) that is also currently transitioning so that it can expand and experience further growth.

### 1.2 Problem analysis

To have a clearer understanding of the problem, the problem will be analysed using the 5 W's and 1 H. The Five Ws, Five Ws and one H, or the Six Ws are questions whose answers are considered basic in information-gathering. They include Who, What, When Where, Why and How. The 5 Ws are often mentioned in journalism (cf. news style), research, and police investigations. They constitute a formula for getting the complete story on a subject (Adobe Experience Cloud, 2018).

**Who:** Medisol B.V. is the organisation that is currently facing a problem.

**What:** The problem at hand is that Medisol B.V is a rapidly growing company and would like to further their growth by expanding their sales operations but do not have the resources and knowledge needed to expand to new countries and markets. Medisol currently has designated personnel that is working on the research and development of Irish market but they are working with many other markets at the same time so there is no single employee dedicated purely to research and expansion possibilities for Medisol in Ireland.

**When:** They would like to solve this problem and expand in several countries as soon as possible.

**Where:** One of the countries they would like to expand to, and the focus of this research is the Republic of Ireland.

**Why:** Irish consumers are buying good from mainland Europe more than from the United Kingdom, due to Brexit. Brexit's impact on trade is laid bare in new Central Statistics Office (CSO) data, which shows a surge in imports to Ireland of goods from Europe and a sharp fall in goods bought from Britain (Paul, 2021).

**How:** This could be done by hiring another employee that knows the Irish environment to work on that market, for instance, the intern completing this internship and research justification should be considered for employment at Medisol. This could also be done by creating a vacancy for a Sales Consultant for the English-speaking market with a focus on the Republic of Ireland to support the colleague working on this market alone. The person who fits this profile could collect relative information to help the company's expansion.



*Figure 2: Ireland (Flaticon, 2021)*

The Republic of Ireland is a small country situated in the Atlantic Ocean and separated from Great Britain by the Irish Sea. It has a population of about 4.09 million people and a land area of approximately 70 thousand square kilometres. The average life expectancy in Ireland is 80.56 years (Infoplease, n.d.). Ireland is a part of the Eurozone and the 33rd largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP. Its nominal GDP is currently \$388.7 billion. The Irish economy has witnessed massive growth over the years; however, it is a relatively small one compared to other EU nations. It is worth noting that the Irish economy was amongst the first in the European Union to recover from the 2008 recession (The Heritage Foundation, 2019). Ireland imports a wide variety of things such as pharmaceuticals, machinery, vehicles, mineral fuels, and electrical equipment from countries such as the UK, the USA, Germany, China, and France (David, n.d.). Previously, Ireland received most of its imports from the United Kingdom, but due to the current new laws and regulations being implemented, Irish citizens and business are looking more towards mainland European countries to trade with. The qualities of the country and trade opportunities makes it very intriguing and attractive place for Medisol to further extend their sales operations.

In theory, Medisol could deeply establish itself in Ireland but they lack knowledge and staff. They lack knowledge with regards to as medical device laws and regulations in Ireland, how to further penetrate the market and how to appeal to Irish customers. They also lack the staff needed to carry out this research and development needed to expand to this market. There are no native Irish people currently employed at Medisol. It is crucial for an organisation or company to have native people or people who have integrated and resided in a country for a long period of time working for their own markets because they understand the environment of the country and can understand the behaviour and mindset of the people better than their non-native counterparts.

Currently, Medisol makes few sales to customers in the Republic of Ireland but this number could be greatly increased after carrying out extensive research, preparing for development and having designated personnel dedicated to working on this market. Therefore, a solution must be found and hopefully a suitable solution to this issue will be provided by the end of the internship period.

### 1.3 Project aim

The aim of this research was to deliver insightful information to Medisol and provide them with solutions to their problem. The aim was achieved by to providing:

- A newly updated price list with prices for their end user customers and their resellers
- A know-all manual with all the research and information regarding selling lifesaving equipment in the Republic of Ireland

The aim was to present the findings to colleagues at Medisol in the hope that they would take this information, learn from it, and implement it by updating the prices on their website to the suggested prices and hiring another person to work on the Irish market and giving them the know-all guide.

Updating the prices would give them a clearer overview of the margins obtains per product whilst providing prices that match competitor prices to its customers. Hiring another colleague and presenting them with the information found in the know-all manual would help ease their transition into the working culture and guide them with working on the Irish market. There are not a lot of Irish people within the vicinity, so it is quite difficult for Medisol to find a qualified native Irish person. With this guide, any person from an English-speaking background can understand and work on the Irish market.

To carry ensure that objectives are attainable within a certain time frame a brief SMART form is completed below.

**Specific:** Medisol would like to expand its business operations to the Republic of Ireland. To do this, input from the intern is needed to manage the sales operations and research solutions to the problems mentioned in the problem analysis.

**Measurable:** Success will be measured by exceeding the final profit excluding tax of 2020 by July 2021.

**Achievable:** This aim is achievable because the intern is a citizen of the Republic of Ireland and is familiar with the culture and consumer behaviour.

**Relevant:** This aim is relevant because it leads to a higher number of sales obtained and a larger profit for the company.

**Timebound:** The deadline aim is 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

### 1.4 Information gaps

To comprehend the current situation Medisol is in, information gaps were formed to highlight the missing information necessary for this research. To successfully evaluate the decisions necessary for Medisol to penetrate the Irish market, the information gaps must be filled:

1. *What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators?*
2. *What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?*
3. *Would it be worthwhile to Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland? If so, how? If not, what other ways can Medisol further progress their sales?*

These information gaps were formed due to the following:

1. The intern lacked knowledge about the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators? This is because they have never dealt with life-saving equipment in Ireland before and regulations vary from country to country, so they never had the opportunity to learn about the Irish approach towards life-saving equipment.
2. The intern lacked information about Medisol. The intern had never worked at Medisol and was unaware of the company's existence until a year prior to the internship period. Even so, they did not have enough sufficient and relevant information about the company.
3. The intern did not have enough knowledge about Medisol's expansion in the Republic of Ireland and had not considered if it would be a worthwhile transition for the company.

### 1.5 Personal Learning Objectives

As well as having project aims and objectives, it is also beneficial to have personal development during an internship. Therefore, the intern has personal learning objectives alongside their project aim. When carrying out this research, the following personal learning objectives were reached: Business Research (*TWM24*): The intern analysed a complex business problem in an international business setting with use of adequate research design, resulting in an evidence-based feasible solution.

Critical Thinking (*WT1*): The intern used the process of thoughtful evaluation to deliberately formulate a reasonable conclusion.

International Business Awareness (*WT3*): The intern analysed patterns in global macro-economic factors and policies that drive international trade and business development.

Marketing & Sales 2 (*TWM16*): The intern used appropriate sales techniques in support of durable customer relationships.

## 2. Research Approach

In this chapter of the report, the topics of research purpose, research questions, presentation of findings, approach per information gap, data collection, data analysis, operationalization and planning are discussed.

### Research Purpose

Clearly articulating the purpose of the research is crucial to carrying out a successful research project. In most cases, a good research initiative draws from a straightforward and clearly articulated statement of purpose. This purpose should state what is required from the research. In this case, the purpose of this research is to carry out the necessary research needed to fill the information gaps for Medisol to successfully produce a know-all manual that the company can use efficiently.

### Research Questions

Both professional researchers and successful student researchers develop research questions. That is because research questions are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process. By defining exactly what the researcher is trying to find out, these questions influence most of the rest of the steps taken to conduct the research. That is true even if the research is not for academic purposes but for other areas of our lives. The confidence you will have when making such decisions will come from knowing that the information, they are based on was gathered by conscious thought rather than serendipity and whim (Pressbooks, n.d.). The research questions are the similar to the information gaps. The main research question is “*Can Medisol successfully expand to the Republic of Ireland?*” From this main question, the following sub-questions have been defined:

1. *What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding AEDs?*
2. *What are Medisol’s current sales capabilities?*
3. *What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding AEDs?*
4. *Would it be feasible for Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland?*

These research questions should give the research more structure and enables focus on specific topics.

### Presentation of findings

After the completion of the much-needed research, the findings will be presented to the stakeholders, the Southern management team at Medisol and to the internship coach at HZ University of Applied Sciences. Due to the current pandemic, it is no longer possible to have meetings in person so the research findings shall be presented in an innovative and interactive way; a meeting with a summary of all findings will be held with a question-and-answer session afterwards shall take place afterwards to address and answer any questions that have arisen.

### 2.1 Approach per information gap

Different qualitative approaches were taken towards each information gap. They are discussed below:

1. *What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators?*

Due to the nature of this information gap, it was approached using desk research to investigate the following topics:

- Competitors
  - Sectors where AEDs are mandatory & AED statistics in Ireland
2. *What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?*

This information gap was filled by personal observation whilst working within the company, as well as having carried out interviews.

3. *Would it be worthwhile to Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland? If so, how? If not, what other ways can Medisol further progress their sales?*

This information gap was filled by the use of personal observation and interviews from the colleagues at Medisol B.V.

These information gaps are crucial to the research and will guide and ensure that the research is going in the right direction.

## 2.2 Data Collection

The data was be collected through the following methods:

### *Desk research*

There is a lot of valuable information that can be found online. A work laptop with access to company files and documents was provided from Medisol so that will be used that for this research as well as many online tools available such as Google Scholar and HZ Search will be utilized to perform this desk research. The references and sources used were approved by an experienced colleague at Medisol who had examined the sources use and approved them for this research.

### *Interviews*

There are many knowledgeable people at Medisol that could be interviewed so that solely reliable and first-hand information would be obtained. Currently, many of them are working from home so it was to be expected that most of these interviews would be carried out via Microsoft Teams. Trint was the name of the software used to transcribe the interviews. This software was selected because Trint's artificial intelligence audio transcription software makes it easy to tell a story. They make any audio and video searchable, editable, and shareable (Trint, n.d.). This research method was most appropriate and easily accessible given the current global pandemic. Four colleagues were interviewed. These colleagues were selected because of their close relationships with the information gaps and would give me the insight needed to fill the information gaps.

### *Personal observation*

Working first-hand as a sales consultant intern for the Irish market allows for personal observation and experience. The processes and activities of the company can be seen first-hand both online and in person at the office. This provides invaluable knowledge to this research paper as the experiences

are not fabricated, imagined or a shared story, they are in fact lived out and experienced in real time. Data collection through personal observation was gathered by taking note of certain events and documenting them in a notebook. This method of data collection was used because observation provides the most accurate information about people, their tasks, and their needs (Ross, 2018). This method is reliable because it is first-hand information from the intern working at Medisol, so they do not have a biased or one-sided view, they see things exactly as they are.

In this case, qualitative research was more appropriate given the small number of employees at Medisol and considering that these results cannot be measured in quantities.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

To ensure a high level of reliability within this research, the websites selected when carrying out desk research shall only be established websites with honourable reputations and reliable information. Sites with personal opinions shall not be included in this research. Having correct and reliable data will make correct and trustworthy data analysis process.

Another factor that should be kept in consideration is that interviews have been conducted via Microsoft Teams and transcribed using Trint. This is due to their transcription software. The transcription of the conversation was automatically generated, and the only necessary step will be to read through and correct any mistakes and save the transcript. This will ensure a correct recording of the interview because the software ensures that all speech is transcribed and leaves little room for human error.

One of the most important ideas in a research project is the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the major entity that is analysed in the study (Cojoint.ly, n.d.). In this case, the unit of analysis is the intern and the colleague they work alongside with. This is because they are the ones working on the Irish market, hence they are at the heart of the problem and the solution.

### 2.4 Operationalization

Operationalization means turning abstract concepts into measurable observations. Although some concepts, like height or age, are easily measured, others, like spirituality or anxiety, are not. Through operationalization, you can systematically collect data on processes and phenomena that are not directly observable (Bhandari, 2020).

This research will give the employees at Medisol an insight into the Irish market and its opportunities and threats when penetrating this market. It will also give the employees an update on the overview of their current sales capabilities, which would be useful information to know for future market penetration. The research results show revelations on the two main concepts of this research: the workplace and Ireland. The aforementioned concepts have been converted into measurable indicators (Figure 3) with each one kept in consideration as an interview or personal reflection question.

The concepts refer to the topics that are being researched. In this case, the workplace, Medisol, and the Republic of Ireland are the main topics being researched. From these topics, dimensions are derived. The dimensions refer to variables to represent each of the concepts and from this, further sub dimensions are derived as they are variables within the variable. A dimension as broad as the supply chain must be further separated but several variables within this variable. To measure your variables, decide on indicators that can represent them numerically. From these indicators, questions to consider were created and used as interview questions. These questions were asked to some colleagues at Medisol. They were asked to tackle information gap 2: *What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?*

The academic literature referenced to create this operationalisation table was collected from Pritha Bhandari on Scribbr.com (Bhandari, 2020).

| Concept   | Dimension    | Subdimensions          | Indicators   | Questions to consider   |
|-----------|--------------|------------------------|--|---|
| Workplace | Supply chain | Space                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there enough space?</li> <li>Is the space suitable?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How big is the warehouse?</li> <li>Are there any issues regarding space or lack of space?</li> <li>Is the nature of the warehouse suitable for all products?</li> </ul>                      |
|           |              | Lead-times             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the average lead times?</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How long does it take for orders to come in?</li> <li>What is the average delivery time to the Republic of Ireland?</li> <li>What delivery company is used to deliver to Ireland?</li> </ul> |
|           |              | Employees              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there enough employees?</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many warehouse employees are there?</li> <li>Do they often feel stress/ pressure from the workload?</li> </ul>   |
|           | Sales        | Figures                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do the sales figures look like?</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many Irish sales were there in 2020?</li> <li>What was the total sales figure at the end of 2020?</li> <li>What is the current sales figure?</li> </ul>                                  |
|           |              | Products               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What products are popular in Ireland?</li> </ul>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the most purchased products in Ireland?</li> </ul>  |
|           |              | Employees              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of employees</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many employees are working on the Irish market?</li> <li>What is the ideal number of employees needed for the Irish market?</li> </ul>   |
| Ireland   | Market       | Competitors            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there many competitors?</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many competitors are there?</li> <li>Who are the main competitors?</li> </ul>  |
|           |              | Sectors                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What sectors need AEDs</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What sectors make AED's mandatory</li> </ul>   |
|           |              | AED laws & legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laws regarding AEDs in Ireland</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the laws regarding selling AEDs in Ireland?</li> <li>What are laws regarding CPR and AED training in Ireland?</li> </ul>  |

(Figure 3: Operationalisation table (Bhandari, 2020))

## 2.5 Reliability & Validity

To ensure reliability and validity, the interviews were carried out by a process of saturation. In interviews, when the researcher begins to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached. It is then time to stop collecting information and to start analysing what has been collected (Saunders et al., 2017). Since Medisol is a small company and given the current pandemic, there was a limited number of people to interview, so the saturation point was reached quite soon (after 4 interviews).

To further ensure the reliability and validity of the interviews, the interviews were carried out in the same manner, with regards to the length of the interview, the questions asked and the order in which the questions were asked. The same format and sequence of words and questions for each respondent (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) was used when carrying out the interviews. This was to ensure that the respondents received the same questions, and the questions could be understood by all. To ensure internal validity, meaning that interviews actually “[represent] the reality” of what is tried to be measured (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), by “[minimizing] the amount of bias as much as possible” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). To do this, all interviews were conducted within two weeks, around the same time and carried out via Microsoft Teams.

## 2.6 Limitations

Every study has limitations. Study limitations can exist for many reasons, for example, due to constraints on research design or methodology, and these factors may impact the findings of your study (Wordvice, n.d.). In this case, limitations existed due to the number of interviewees. Due to the small, yet growing number of employees at Medisol, even less relevant employees were interviewed for this research. Perhaps at a larger company, there would have been many respondents and a greater level of accuracy could have been achieved.

Another limitation was the fact that the interviews were held via Microsoft Teams. It is believed that if the interviews had been carried out in person, a deeper interpersonal connection may have developed, and more insightful answers may have been reached. This limitation was caused by the current pandemic that instils people to stay home as much as possible.

When considering the internship period, the research was carried over the course of the internship period and ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. Knowing the complexity of this research, having more time available would have been very beneficial. If there had been more time available, more research could have been completed. The research was limited due to the lack of time available and due to the complexity of the research topic.

### 3 Results

The research that was carried out resulted in multiple discoveries regarding the following previously mentioned information gaps:

1. *What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators?*
2. *What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?*
3. *Would it be worthwhile for Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland? If so, how? If not, what other ways can Medisol further progress their sales?*

The research led to the creation of the know-all manual and gave an idea of how the new prices should be estimated and calculated. Operationalizing the research findings brought about a series of questions that were answered during the interviews, thus the results generated during the field research period are presented throughout this chapter.

#### 3.1 What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators?

To understand the findings of the current situation in Ireland lifesaving equipment such as AEDs, the following topics are discussed and explained:

- Competitors
- Sectors where AEDs are mandatory & AED statistics in Ireland

##### Competitors

To understand Medisol's market position in Ireland, its competitors on the island were analysed. Its main competitors are CE-Tek Medical (CE Tek Medical, n.d.), Hearts Safety Solutions (Hearts Safety Solutions, n.d.), Hunt Office (Hunt Office, n.d.), Flashpoint (Flashpoint, n.d.), thedefibshop.ie (Defibshop, n.d.), Eiremed (Eiremed, n.d.), Medguard (Medguard, n.d.), and SP Services (SP Services, n.d.). These competitors are almost on par with Medisol. They are all companies that sell lifesaving equipment, but some, such as Eiremed, specialise in both first aid and lifesaving equipment. Their product portfolio ranges from medical masks and pre-injection swabs to clinical waste bins and emergency shower & eye wash stations. The products that Medisol and their competitors sold were compared and analysed. They differed in product price, services provided and delivery costs. Medisol very often had lower or about the same prices as their competitors as shown in the appendix. Medisol also offers free accessories with AEDs. These accessories often include the first year free AED Safeguard Plan (not for resellers), DefiSign AED solution kit & an AED Wall Sign. These free accessories are beneficial and are used to compliment an AED. The first year free AED Safeguard Plan is a servicing plan offered by Medisol for AED and AED accessory maintenance (AEDexpert, n.d.). The Safeguard Plan and what it offers can be found in the appendix. The competitors do not offer such a service, free of charge or paid, to their customers. According to personal observation regarding the delivery costs, Medisol offers free delivery to Ireland for all products whereas their competitors charge for delivery up to a certain amount (for example, free delivery when you spend €500 or more. These factors give Medisol a hefty advantage over their competitors in Ireland.

## Sectors where AEDs are mandatory & AED statistics in Ireland

To understand the necessity of AEDs in Ireland, the topic regarding sectors where AEDs are mandatory and AED statistics in Ireland were explored. The following facts are highlighted to understand the current situation with AEDs in Ireland. There is no national legislation regarding AED use, installation, and reporting in Ireland (European Emergency Number Association, 2019a). In Ireland, it is not obligatory to report public AEDs to an authority, but it is recommended (European Emergency Number Association, 2019a). Public AEDs are mapped and a register with the locations of the public AEDs is made available for emergency services only (European Emergency Number Association, 2019a). In Ireland, there is an 80% bystander CPR rate. Some of this high response is attributed to training, but the rest is attributed to dispatch-assisted CPR. In a third of cases, defibrillation is done pre- ambulance arrival (European Emergency Number Association, 2019a). AED training is not required to use a public AED in Ireland and there is the Civil Liability Act 2011 protects those who assist in an emergency (European Emergency Number Association, 2019a). Overall, a total of 2,442 out-of-hospital cardiac arrest incidents were recorded by the OHCAR in 2018 and of these, 71% occurred in an urban area. Two-thirds or 67% were male and while the average age was 67, patients ranged in age from less than one to 100 years old. A higher proportion of cases in rural areas received bystander CPR compared to urban areas at 82% versus 71% respectively. In line with previous years the majority or 68% of cardiac arrests that occurred outside a hospital happened in the home and in most cases or 81%, a bystander attempted CPR in an effort to save a life (Shannon, 2019). These facts regarding AED legislation and AED statistics give a deeper insight into the current situation in Ireland.

### 3.2 What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?

Working at Medisol, a personal observation can be made on the sales capabilities and its supply chain of the company. Medisol sells to over 20 countries within and outside the European Union. To do this, there must be the appropriate space and number of personnel. Medisol is currently capable of handling orders coming in and orders being dispatched. The building in which Medisol operates and carries out its supply-chain operations has been optimized and laid out so that all orders and necessary warehouse equipment can be comfortably placed in the warehouse. According to personal observation, Medisol is recently hired 2 more employees to work in the warehouse. The newly hired additions were necessary due to the sudden increase in sales in comparison to the sales in 2020 which decreased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Medisol is also currently looking for native English speakers to work on the Irish, UK and international market. At the moment there is only one colleague and a temporary intern designated to these markets. It is a lot to handle for one person so business processes can sometimes be slow. With the addition of another person, less pressure will be put on the employee, the workload can be shared, and tasks can be done sooner.

Alongside the newly hired employees, supply chain management systems are changing. As the company is growing exponentially, change is necessary and beneficial. Change in an organization leads to many positive aspects – that lead to retaining a competitive edge and remaining relevant in your business area. Change encourages innovation, develops skills, develops staff, and leads to better business opportunities and improves staff morale (McCullough, n.d.). According to personal observation new supply chain systems are being tested and when proved to be successful, will be implemented into the company. As a company grows, it is important to optimize the systems such as supply chain management systems in line with a company's growth. Currently, Medisol has the capabilities to sustain and maintain and influx of sales from the Republic of Ireland.

### 3.3 Would it be worthwhile for Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland? If so, how? If not, what other ways can Medisol further progress their sales?

Working at Medisol and discussions with colleagues has provided clarity on its stance within the Irish market. “Medisol can definitely expand its sales operations in Ireland” (Johnson-Brown, 2021). Medisol has already broken the ice and made the first steps by entering the Irish market. At the end of last year, a total of €115,009 in sales. In comparison with much bigger countries and the larger number of employees working on that country, this is a smaller income for Medisol, but it has to potential to increase. According to personal observation, when looking at how to expand the sales operations, several suggestions arose. Two of them will be discussed below.

#### Pricing

“At the moment, the prices do not make sense, they are random, and we do not know what the margins are” (Hollaers, 2021). A review and update in the prices was necessary, so that was completed as part of the professional product to give a clearer insight into the margins gained from each product. This is important because previously, certain products had a margin of 60% and others had a margin of 2%. There was little correlation between prices and their margins which also made discounts and promotions very difficult to calculate so changing the prices, so that a 30% margin is received from end user prices and a 20% margin is received from resellers makes discounts and promotions easier to calculate.

#### SEO Search

As well as the prices, the Irish website was “a copy-and-pasted version of the UK website” (van der Vliet, 2021). Prior to adjustments and improvements made on the SEO search, it was very difficult to find anything relating to AEDexpert.ie (Medisol’s Irish website) on the internet. It is said that users trust search engines and having a presence in the top positions for the keywords the user is searching, increases the website’s trust (Chris, n.d.). To stand out and increase the website’s trust, the SEO search had to be updated and suited to the Irish market, rather than being a “copy-and-pasted version of the UK website” (van der Vliet, 2021). Now that the SEO search has been optimised, Medisol’s Irish website can be found on the second page on Google. This can of course be further improved but in comparison with where it previously stood, this is a significant improvement.

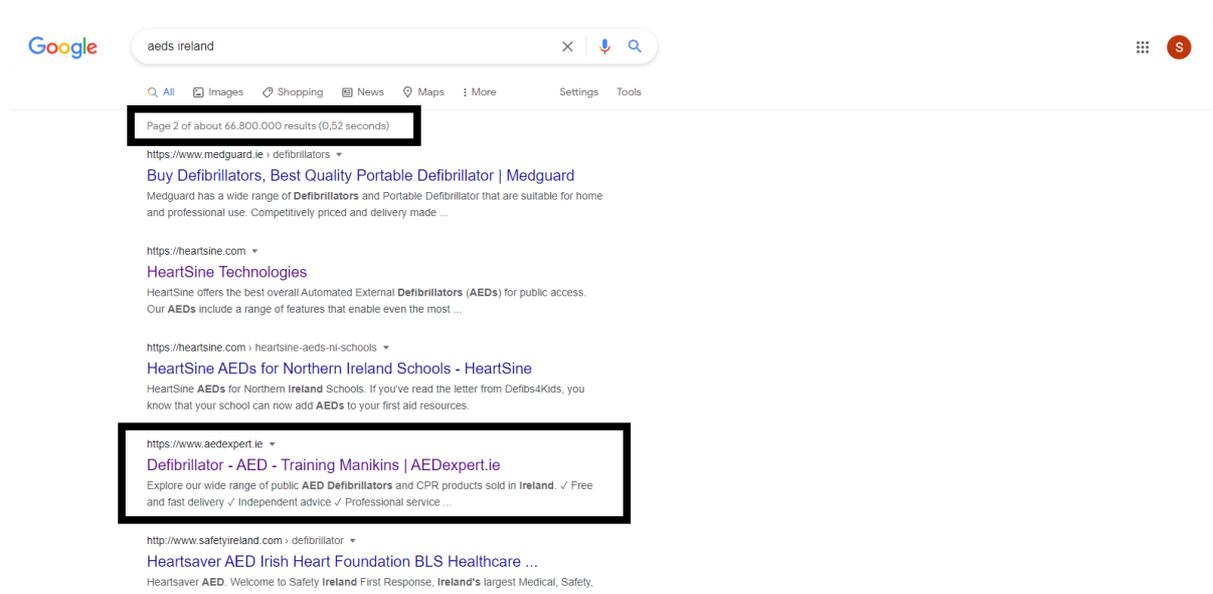


Figure 4: Medisol’s position in a Google search

## 4 Conclusion

Medisol has great potential for growth in Ireland within the next couple of years. After the completion of this extensive research the following conclusions have been conducted.

*What is the current situation in the Republic of Ireland regarding lifesaving equipment such as automated external defibrillators?* The current situation is that there are few restrictions regarding laws and regulations for selling AEDs and AED use in Ireland. This leaves a lot of opportunity for Medisol to expand their sales operations in Ireland since they will have very little restriction the law. There are also opportunities within the market when comparing Medisol to their competitors. They generally offer slightly lower prices for their products, free delivery, and additional accessories to compliment the AED purchased. They offer a high quality of services alongside the AED which gives them an advantage over their competitors on the island. Unfortunately, they lack brand awareness and social media presence which makes the company unknown and less trustworthy to potential new Irish customers.

*What are Medisol's sales capabilities and is its supply chain sustainable enough to also tackle sales to the Republic of Ireland?* Medisol has the sales capabilities but it is quite strenuous for one employee working on the Irish market since they also work on multiple other markets. They are currently in the hiring process to add another native English speaker to the Medisol team. Medisol's supply chain is sustainable enough to tackle sales to the republic of Ireland. This is due to the space available to allow a large influx of incoming and outgoing orders and the newly hired employees to work in the warehouse. New supply chain management systems are being developed to further optimize their supply chain. Critically speaking, the research unit was very small due to the small number of relevant employees available at Medisol and the limited time each employee had for the interviews. It has been a very busy period so they could not make time to lengthen the interviews. If time were not a limitation, more insights could have been reached.

*Would it be worthwhile for Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland? If so, how? If not, what other ways can Medisol further progress their sales?* It would be worthwhile for Medisol to expand its sales operations in Ireland. This can be done by always adjusting the prices to the environment and always keeping a clear overview of the margin percentages. This can also be done by further optimizing and continuously updating their SEO search to improve their websites visibility and trust in Ireland. Looking at the situation from a critical point, it would also be very beneficial to offer the intern a position at Medisol so continue working on the Irish market. This is because the intern has proven themselves as trustworthy and reliable and has a reputation of completing necessary tasks to the best of their ability and has been an asset to the company since they also fit the profile (an educated Irish citizen living in Vlissingen and willing to work at Medisol.).

Now that the information gaps have been filled, the professional products could be created and presented to the company in good faith. The company happily accepted the professional product and has made plans to implement the professional products into the company as a solution to the expansion problem. This proves that the project aim was successfully reached.

## 5 Recommendations

In this chapter, the recommendations suggested for Medisol are discussed. These recommendations are ideas suggested for further improvement of the company and its operations.

### *Stronger Social Media Outreach*

As well as improving SEO search, it is important for Medisol to build and develop a stronger presence through social media. Since Medisol is a Dutch company situated in Vlissingen, The Netherlands, it is hard for them to be well known and established within Ireland. To compensate for this, they must utilize popular social media streams such as Instagram & Facebook. They have many advantages over their competitors, but they lack brand awareness in Ireland. Brand awareness encourages repeat purchases and leads to an increase in market share and incremental sales (Rhodes, 2017). With this added brand awareness, Medisol could further increase their sales and market share within the island of Ireland.

Social Media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can also be used as platforms for customer service. It has almost become the norm for customers to expect companies to handle their requests through social media. A strong investment in customer service can build meaningful relationships between a company and its customers and with social media, the challenge of customer service remains as demanding as it had before. Social media allows for immediate interaction and customer feedback (Dukart, 2018). This solution is feasible for Medisol to continue and compete with its competitors because the company must adapt these modern approaches to coincide with its customers adaptations to modern ways of communicating with businesses.

### *Improved Management Systems*

Medisol has management systems that they use to manage their supply chain, sales, products, and delivery. These systems are essential to managing business processes. Medisol managed the systems well but often the systems have minor mistakes or errors in them that are not often prioritised. These errors lead to the employees spending more time amending the mistakes themselves each time, which decreases time efficiency as more time is spend amending mistakes. Putting emphasis and priority on such things can save time and decrease stress levels for colleagues.

As well as that, updating management systems is also very important. Finding new ways to optimize and modernise management systems is very important. The world is fast-paced and is changing all the time. It is important for companies to adjust to such changes and make provisions for them. This solution is suitable because updates and improvements to management systems will make the employees work lives easier as it will improve their time efficiency and be more convenient for them. "The smoother the processes are, the better" (Blanco, 2021).

### *Hire more employees*

Medisol is a growing company and gradually its staff is growing too. For the Irish market, they do not have nearly enough colleagues to support this market and it has proven difficult to find someone who fits the employee profile needed for this position. The profile consists of the following:

- Being an Irish citizen or having lived in Ireland for at least 10 years
- Having knowledge of the Irish market
- Having knowledge of life-saving and medical equipment
- Native or fluency in the English language
- Works well in a team and alone
- Having knowledge of SEO and SEA

According to personal observation, it has proven difficult to find a suitable person to fit this role. Therefore, hiring the intern is recommended. The intern fits the role and has had experience working at Medisol. This eliminates the initial training period and improves time efficiency for the company. This recommendation is suitable as the intern does not have future plans of moving far away from the vicinity nor has plans of continuing their studies after they have graduated.

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## Appendices

### *1. AED Safeguard plan*

The AED Safeguard Plan guarantees you a functioning AED.

- We will notify you when your AED needs new batteries and electrodes and send you a proforma invoice.
- Shipping is free and you will receive a 10% discount off the price in the aedexpert.co.uk web shop.
- You can contact us for technical support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- You will be notified of any manufacturer releases, such as software updates etc. and receive personally tailored advice.
- After using your AED, we will replace the electrodes and if necessary, the battery, free of charge for the lifetime of your AED.
- You will receive a FREE loan AED if you have to return your AED to us due to a malfunction or emergency deployment, or temporarily if your AED is stolen, to enable you time to arrange things with your insurers. (AEDexpert, n.d.-a).

### *2. One-time Service*

Send your AED to our service centre for servicing, your AED will be returned to you at our cost, this includes:

- Checking the shelf life of the electrodes and the capacity of the battery.
- A functional test to ensure the correct functioning of the AED.
- Installation of any available software updates.
- Following the maintenance, a certified inspection sticker will be placed on your AED confirming that your AED has been serviced.
- The data is recorded in a maintenance protocol, which will be sent to you following the inspection. This protocol is stored for a minimum period of 5 years, during which time you will have access to the information.
- Following emergency deployment of your AED, we will replace the electrodes and if necessary, the battery, as well as providing a replacement rescue kit. (AEDexpert, n.d.-a).

### *3. Interview questions*

- How big is the warehouse?
- Are there any issues regarding space or lack of space in the warehouse?
- Is the nature of the warehouse suitable for all products?
- How long does it take for orders to come into the warehouse?
- What is the average delivery time to the Republic of Ireland?
- What delivery company is used to deliver to Ireland?
- How many warehouse employees are there?
- Do you often feel stress/ pressure from the workload?
- How many Irish sales were there in 2020?
- What was the total sales figure for Ireland at the end of 2020?
- What is the current sales figure for Ireland?
- What are the most purchased products in Ireland?

- How many employees are working on the Irish market?
- What is the ideal number of employees needed for the Irish market?
- How many competitors are there?
- Who are the main competitors?
- What sectors make AED's mandatory
- What are the laws regarding selling AEDs in Ireland?
- What are laws regarding CPR and AED training in Ireland?

#### *4. Interview with Marcel*

An interview between Stephanie Olumba and Marcel Tramper (Tramper, 2021)

Stephanie

Hello, good morning and welcome to this interview.

Stephanie

You know who I am, of course, and Stephanie, and this interview will be carried out to further understand the Irish market, and maybe sales capabilities, related to the Irish market. So, I just want to say thanks again for participating. And I would like to ask if I have your permission to record this interview, publish it in my research justification.

Marcel

Yes of course.

S

Okay, let us begin. So, I was wondering how big exactly is the warehouse?

M

Whoa, I am not too sure, but I will check back, and I will check and get back to you.

S

All right. And are there any issues regarding space, or lack of space in the warehouse.

M

Well, as far as I know, given the current situation with the pandemic. They are having a lack of products in the warehouse. So, for now, we do not have a problem regarding space we would like a space, because there are not as many products, staying in the warehouse so you see.

S

Okay, thank you for that is the nature of the warehouse suitable for all products. Yes, the nature of the warehouse suitable for our product.

M

The warehouse is always at about room temperature, and if it gets too warm, we open the windows, and we open the doors outside, so it is generally quite cool, it is very dry, so none of the products get wet.

M

It is genuinely quite safe to, so I would say the nature of the warehouse is suitable for all the products that come in.

S

And how long does it take for orders to be delivered?

M

Well, that depends on the order and where it is coming from, for example, Philips AEDs from the Netherlands like a day or two, whereas Physio Control products coming from the States will take about two weeks. And now with the pandemic, we have had a lot of COVID related delays. So, we have been waiting for two months for our products from America to arrive so various from products, and the countries they come from.

S

Okay. And what is the average delivery time to the Republic of Ireland? How long will it take for a product to be delivered to Ireland?

M

Well, when orders are placed before 14:30 GMT, the order should arrive at the customer's shipped address within 48 hours, unless of course, there is a weekend or a holiday, but it should arrive within 48 working hours.

S

And what delivery company is used to deliver to Ireland?

M

If I remember correctly UPS is the delivery service used to deliver all orders. So yes, it should be UPS.

S

and how many warehouse employees are there.

M

Well, let us see, there is me, Anas, Jethro, and Ricardo. So around five of us, but we also have sometimes we have the colleagues, the SAS consultants for example, come down and spend the day with us if it is very busy here. So, that changes, and sometimes the interns come and help us for the day or for the week. So, it varies but the official number should be. The five of us.

S

And do you often feel stress or pressure from the worker.

M

Well, there are ups and downs there are stressful periods, busy periods of their quiet periods, of course, during the stressful periods, it is a lot more pressure on all of us here to warehouse, especially when mistakes are made, we have to go through a longer project process to fix these mistakes. But yeah, it is, it fluctuates, so it changes from week to week.

S

I was wondering if you know how many sales to Ireland ever in 2020

M

I do not remember the exact amount, But, I believe, around 100,000 In sales, probably the violence, but I am not sure you should check shop control, to be sure.

S

Oh, okay, well you have answered the next question for me, what was the total sales figure at the end of 2020?

M

As I said, it should be around €100,000 Or maybe a few €1000s more.

S

All right, and what is the current sales figure for the Republic of Ireland

M

I think you are at about 97,000 so, you are almost reaching the total profit of last year. But yeah, as I said before, check shop control to make sure.

S

Okay, will do. And what are the most purchased products in Ireland?

M

Wow, I deal with so many products on a day-to-day basis, so I can tell you off the top of my head. I know that the Philips AEDs are quite popular in the Republic of Ireland and I believe Heartsine 350 is also quite popular among the buyers, but I cannot tell you for sure. What I can recommend is for you to check the SharePoint because we have an A product list that shows the top 40 purchased products per country so if you take a look there, you will probably find that.

S

Oh, thanks for the tip. I recently updated the A product list for the Republic of Ireland, but I will have to take a look at it once again. All right, that is all the questions I have for now. Do you have any questions for me?

M

Um, no, I cannot think of anything as far as the situation goes. I cannot think of any question right now.

S

All right, well thank you for participating in this interview, your input was very important and is very necessary, and I really appreciate it. And I would love to wish you a good day.

M

Yes, thank you. Good luck with your thesis and your graduation and too soon, in the office.

## 5. *Interview with Ricardo*

Interview with Stephanie Olumba and Ricardo (Aggelen, 2021)

Stephanie

Hello, good morning and welcome to this interview. This interview will be carried out to further understand the Irish market, and maybe sales capabilities, related to the Irish market. So, I just want to say thank you again for participating and I would like to request your permission to record this interview and publish it in my research justification.

Ricardo

Go ahead, I do not mind.

S

Okay, let us begin. How big is the warehouse?

R

I am not sure, but I am sure one of the other colleagues can tell you.

S

Alright, I will take note of that. Are there any issues regarding space, or lack of space in the warehouse?

R

I do not believe there is a problem with space, especially not nowadays. This time around, the warehouse is quickly shipping products out and orders take a while to come in so space is not really a problem.

S

Okay, thank you for that. Is the warehouse suitable for all products?

R

I do not understand. Do you mean is the warehouse spacious and the right temperature for the products?

S

Yes, that is what I meant.

R

Like I said before, the warehouse is big enough and if it gets too hot, we open the doors and when it is too cold, we turn up the heating. The temperature is always fine in the warehouse.

S

How long does it take for orders to be delivered to the warehouse?

R

It usually takes about two weeks for the orders to be delivered to our warehouse.

S

And what is the average delivery time to the Republic of Ireland? So, how long will it take for a product to be delivered to Ireland?

R

Orders to Ireland usually take about 3 days for UPS to deliver to the Irish customer.

S

And what delivery company is used to deliver to Ireland?

R

Medisol has a contract with UPS so we use UPS to deliver to all of the customers.

S

How many warehouse employees are there?

R

For now, there are five people, but this number is always changing.

S

And do you often feel stress or pressure from working?

R

I do. I think that stress and pressure are normal when you have a job. Not everything is perfect all the time so sometimes there are stressful times and sometimes it feels like you have no work to do. I like the balance.

S

I was wondering if you know how many sales were made in Ireland in 2020

R

I am sorry, I do not know the number. I do not really check those things often, but that information should be on the Analytics on shop control.

S

Oh, okay, well do you know what was the total sales figure for Ireland at the end of 2020?

R

Yes, I think I remember this because it was very surprising but surprising in a good way ha-ha. It was around 115,000, I think. You can check shop control for the correct amount.

S

All right, and what is the current sales figure for the Republic of Ireland?

R

I heard that you are almost reaching last years end sales, but I do not know the exact number. You should be telling me that ha-ha.

S

Ha-ha I will check after this interview and let you know. What are the most purchased products in Ireland?

R

I do not know but I think the most popular products for the Irish market are the Philips FRx AED and Defibtech AEDs.

S

Alright, I was told to take a look at the A product list again so I will do that and let you know which products are most popular later if you are still interested. Those are all the questions I have for now. Do you have any questions to ask me?

R

When will you hand in your thesis?

S

Well as soon as possible because the deadline is coming up in a few weeks. I am feeling the pressure ha-ha. Anyway, thank you for your participation and have a great afternoon.

R

Thank you, the same to you.