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The Challenges of Global Talent Management

How does the football industry overcome the GTM challenges and how can their experiences inspire MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries?

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Abstract

The personnel of MNCs is becoming increasingly important for a firm's success. At the same time the competition for the best or highly skilled employees, also referred as talents, are increasing for several reasons, such as globalisation and demographic changes. This competitive environment requires a more specific set of IHRM activities compared to traditional IHRM, which deals more deeply with issues like attracting, developing and retaining talents. This particular subset of IHRM activities is called Global Talent Management. However, many managers lack the knowledge about how to address these challenges. Looking at previous studies, there is a lack of clear suggestions on methods used to overcome GTM challenges. To find inspiration of efficient GTM, we have through a case study investigated into the football industry which is a less traditional industry, but yet it is an industry with a long presence and with a significant global reach. Moreover, it is an industry aware of the importance of their talents and where the competition for the best talent always has been present. Our research shows that the football industry does, in fact, have some methods to overcome the GTM challenges, which could be of inspiration for MNCs operating in the knowledge-intensive industry. Examples of learnings include split management roles and more customised development plans. Another key finding is that retention is not of as high importance as attraction and development.

Keywords: Global talent management, International Human Resources Management, Attract, Develop, Retain

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Addverbiation

GTM - Global Talent Management

IHRM - International Human Resource Management

HRM - Human Resource Management

HR - Human Resources

MNC - Multinational Corporation

FIFA - International Federation of Football Associations

UEFA - The Union of European Football Associations

US - The United States

GT - Grounded Theory

FIC - Football Industry Case

KIC - Knowledge-intensive Case

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1. Introduction

The introductory chapter to this thesis begins with a background of Global Talent Management, which is followed by a problem discussion about the research area. This will lead to our purpose statement and the presentation of our research question.

1.1 Background

The success of a company is a well-discussed area in literature, and many have tried to make their contribution to the literature, describing successful phenomena on how firms can acquire sustainable competitive advantage (Hall, 1993; Reed & DeFillippi, 1990; Aaker, 1990). Wernerfelt (1984) distinguishes that the company's resources rather than the output of the company are what, in the long run, affect the success of the enterprise and are what create a sustainable competitive advantage. Personnel could be considered to be such a resource within the firm if they are being used and recruited correctly (Ashton & Morton, 2005). Particularly important, in regards to creating a sustainable advantage, are those employees having a critical position within the company, meaning either a strategic managerial role or who obtains a specific knowledge (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

One way of dealing with resources regarding people is through Global Talent Management (GTM). There is a certain unclarity of what the concept includes but according to Tarique and Schuler (2010:124) GTM includes International Human Resource Management (IHRM) activities to attract, develop and retain people with much capacity. These activities should be in line with the strategic directions of the multinational corporations (MNC) competing in a dynamic and global environment (ibid). Our focus will further on be on MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries, that is, MNCs obtaining a high degree of specialised knowledge.

GTM is a new, steadily developing approach to make the effectiveness within the organisation increase, aiming to improve the performance of the company through its

employees (Ashton & Morton, 2005). Today, the majority of CEOs have people agenda as a top priority, however, as stated by Tarique and Schuler (2010:124), it is not just about hiring employees, but it is fundamentally necessary to develop and retain the employees as well (Scullion & Collings, 2011). Successful GTM leads to improved business performance due to increased creativity, innovation and value creation in a dynamic environment (ibid).

An industry where the personnel is of significant importance to the success of the firm is the football industry, where the coaches¹ can be compared to having the same strategic importance as an operating officer (Hughes et al., 2009) and players are considered to be personnel with knowledge-intensive characteristics². We, therefore, assume that the industry has more developed strategies for handling potential issues that stem from being a talent intensive industry. The football industry is also interesting from an international business perspective since it is a sport with a broad global reach where most countries have a national league with players representing many nationalities.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Tarique and Schuler (2010) categorise three challenges of GTM: attracting, retaining and developing employees.

According to Tarique and Schuler (2010), the first GTM challenge for knowledge-intensive MNCs is to attract people to the firm. Firms are facing serious challenges in attracting people, as competition to get the best employees is fierce (ibid). The challenge to attract people is in accordance with Christensen Hughes et al. (2008), arguing that many executives find it hard to spotlight the right employees. The authors further claim that the personnel issues stem from a shortness of people entering the labour markets with the demanded knowledge and resources. Even though the number of labours is increasing, the people obtaining the necessary knowledge are few. The demographic issue of a diminishing workforce is hard to come by but nevertheless the more important it becomes for MNCs to find ways to recruit the best possible employees (ibid). The difficulties of finding the right people for specific

¹ In Sweden there are two different words for the manager of a national team and the manager for a club in a national league. Therefore we use the term *manager* for the manager of a national team and *coach* for the manager for a club in a national league.

² We are grateful for this insight which we received from an industry specialist

positions are also getting publicity in the daily media, which emphasise that even though low unemployment rates are positive for the countries, it is to some extent negative for the business owners (Wang, 2015).

Especially hard for MNCs is the competition for top talents and high-quality recruits such as management positions, knowledge-intensive positions and other strategic roles within the MNC (Treadway et al., 2014; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). A key role often requires specific knowledge, leadership skills and other characteristics (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Firms find it difficult to locate people with the right amount of work experience within the right field (ibid). Individuals with the right experience and required knowledge could also be unevenly spread over the world making the issue larger in some geographical areas or within certain industries (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Thus, the uneven supply and demand of people suitable for key positions create a large gap, which require companies to develop a proper method of handling GTM challenges to be able to diminish that gap (ibid).

Recent researchers (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; King, 2015; Marjan, 2017; Tarique & Schuler, 2010) have argued that many firms use a talent pool strategy, meaning that the firm recruits the best people and then place them on positions rather than selecting specific people for specific positions. Talent pools do in turn result in MNCs being highly selective in their recruitment process (ibid). However, to use a talent pool is not applicable for critical positions such as management roles or executive positions or for positions that require a particular skill or knowledge (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). For those positions, a much more incubating method must be used which to an even larger extent complicates the recruitment process (ibid).

The second GTM challenge mentioned by Tarique and Schuler (2010) is development. Research in this field has examined activities related to developing executive managers for global leadership responsibilities. Others have looked into the competencies one needs to be able to work effectively in a global environment, and have studied processes involved in designing, delivering and evaluating developmental activities (ibid). The increased need to develop personnel in-house also stems from the fact that the competition of the talented and experienced staff is increasing (Schuler, 2011).

The third and final challenge of GTM is retention (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Employee engagement is one issue according to the authors. It includes how and why increased levels of engagement in MNCs promotes retention of talents, fosters customer loyalty and improves organisational performance (ibid).

The football industry is, as mentioned, one example of industry, which has handled GTM challenges for decades to fill positions with a high importance for the competitive advantage of the club (Treadway et al., 2014). Certain leagues and international sports, in general, have used different methods to create a competitive balance for attracting top talents among the various clubs (Stewart et al., 2014). Examples of such methods are draft systems and salary caps. The football industry does not have any of the mentioned methods to create a competitive market of talent recruitment, and the clubs, therefore, need to use other methods to attract and recruit the best talent (Treadway et al., 2014; Allsvenskan, 2017). Thus, the need for appropriate methods and processes to attract the best talents are important and well known within the industry of football, and due to its long experience with handling talents, it could potentially have processes that other industries could benefit from as well.

The football industry has extensive experience of developing talents in-house (Sæther & Solberg, 2015). International football associations such as the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) encourage clubs around the world to take on the responsibility of developing new talents. In England and Premier League, only 2.28 percent of the players in the starting line was younger than 21 years old. However, even though in-house talent currently is weak, it is increasing in all European leagues (ibid). With that stated, the football industry emphasises on the development of top talent, in accordance with Tarique and Schuler's (2010) recommendation. Since the industry has worked with the development of talents for an extended period, it might have methods and solutions from which more traditional knowledge-intensive MNCs could benefit.

As with the other GTM challenges, the football industry provides us with a potential industry for learnings regarding retaining as well. Hughes et al. (2009) have shown that a football club changing coaches more often than others have a loss of performance in the short-term period

(ibid). A higher accumulated team experience have shown to give higher economic outputs for football clubs in the top European leagues (McNamara et al., 2013). Moreover, it is important for coaches to realise the value of a player on an external market and, after that, be able to integrate that specific talent into the team (bid). Also here we suggest that the football industry might present solutions or ideas on how to retain employees within the firm as well as how to deal with a talent leaving for a competitor.

As illustrated above, all three GTM challenges present themselves as problems within the football industry (McNamara et al., 2013). The industry has dealt with the “*Talent War*” (McNamara et al., 2013:477) longer than any other industry since a football club’s success always has been highly dependent on the employee’s/player’s talent. This implies that the players have always been considered to be the most important resource of a football club. Therefore, the football industry might have more established solutions for dealing with these challenges and bring potential learnings to other industries, especially concerning management positions and positions requiring extensive knowledge. These positions have a large impact on the strategic success of the firms equal to the one a football player has on the club’s success. By looking into the football industry, we hope to broaden the GTM framework and find inspirational solutions for MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries.

As it is today, there are few qualitative studies done in the area of possible solutions for GTM challenges that could be applied by MNCs, and even fewer case studies have been done on the subject (e.g., Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2011; Ariss et al., 2013). Thus, our thesis aims to fill that gap of research by conducting a qualitative study of how the football industry handle GTM challenges in Sweden, which has an international reach and is ranked number 20 among the world’s leagues (Allsvenskan, 2015). Moreover, the industry also has clear goals regarding what is considered a success and most clubs have a similar organisational structure, which simplifies the possibility to make general assumptions of how they operate. (Hughes et al., 2009).

1.3 Purpose

By using the experiences from the football industry as a source of inspiration or de-inspiration, this thesis aims to propose practical solutions of how MNCs could cope with GTM challenges.

1.4 Research Question

The problem discussion above proves a need of an in-depth investigation of the three GTM challenges, leading to the following research question:

How does the football industry overcome the GTM challenges and how can their experiences inspire MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries?

1.5 Disposition of thesis

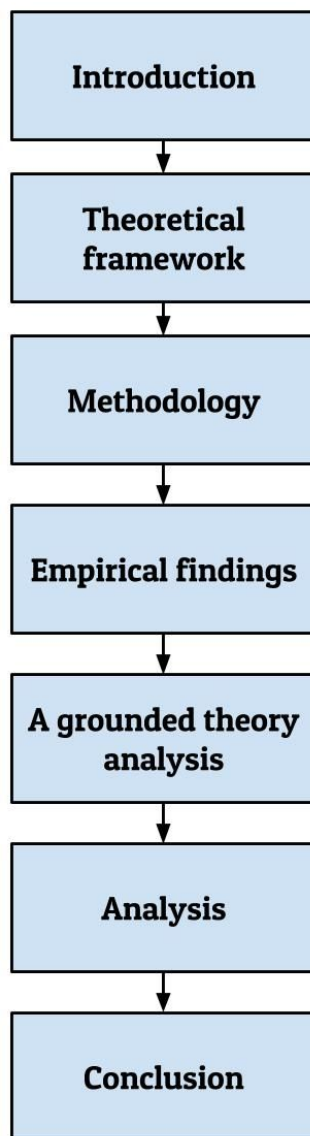


Figure 1. Disposition of thesis

Figure 1 above illustrates how we have outlined the thesis. First, we introduce the topic in an introduction to elaborate it further in our theoretical framework. In the methodology we describe how we have conducted our work. This is followed by our empirical findings, where we present the key issues put forward in the interviews. After, a presentation of our analysis method is described; namely a grounded theory analysis. The last two chapters include an analysis of the empirical findings and the theoretical framework, and a conclusion where we answer our research question.

2. Theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework aims to give the reader an insight into previous theories regarding the factors influencing GTM, and it also provides the reader with a screening of discussed GTM theories. Moreover, this chapter includes which parts we found particularly relevant in regards to our empirical finding and our analysis. We will present key concepts to build a framework for the reader.

2.1 War of talent

According to Michaels et al. (2001) talent is equal to the best and the brightest people. Many firms have adopted the term to refer to their absolute best employees and normally refer to executive managers (Michaels et al., 2001) or personnel with a specific skill, also called a knowledge-intensive person (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). In many firms, the term talent has included the entire workforce (The Economist, 2006) because it is the individuals of the firm who obtain the knowledge and skills that are necessary for today and the future (Ulrich, 2006). In 1998 McKinsey consultants argued that factors like globalisation and demographic changes (each element is described in more detail in 2.4 Drivers behind GTM challenges) have led to a war of talent (Michaels et al., 2001; Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The consulting firm pointed out that a declining supply of executive managers has led to a shortage of executive talent, which means organisations need to put forward competitive strategies to win the best talent (Chambers et al., 1998). The need to emphasise on the matter of talent shortage is because people are becoming more important for firms, thus without talents, the firm's growth may impede (Michaels et al., 2001; Nilsson & Ellström, 2012). During the last decade there has been a change in what organisations value (Chambers et al., 1998); today, companies need people and not the other way around (Ulrich, 2006). People have become the new source of competitive advantage replacing machines, geography or capital as the primary driver of competitive advantage of a firm (ibid). However, despite the importance of people, many companies have difficulties in attracting talents as well as retaining them (Michaels et al., 2001). Somaya and Williamson (2011) argue that the war of talent now is won by the talents. They state that some companies which heavily rely on their employees would not survive if the top 20 talents within the firm would leave. Minbaeva and

Collings (2013) do however oppose this, claiming that some of the firms that Somaya and Williamson (2011) thought were in this situation have today lost their 20 top talents, but they still achieve good results and perform well. Thus, according to many authors (Michaels et al., 2001; Somaya & Williamson, 2011; Chambers et al., 1998; Beechler & Woodward, 2009), the war of talent is an increasing threat to the success of firms. However, there are voices heard regarding the decreased importance of the issue as well (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013)

2.1.1 Business environmental changes

Businesses are shifting focus from product-oriented environments to service-oriented environments, which means there is an increasing investment towards intangible human assets (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). This investment reinforces the need for efficient employee management within the firm (Tarique & Schuler, 2011). Beechler and Woodward (2009) specify that intangible human assets can be both particularly skilled people as well as specific know-how essential for the specific work. The United States (US) illustrates one example, where intangible assets such as know-how account for more than half of the market capitalisation of US's public companies (ibid). Beechler and Woodward (2009) further state that corporations are becoming more dependent on their staff, particularly on their top talents, due to an increasing number and importance of high-value decision makers. Since many work assignments today require a great cognitive ability, firms must organise themselves in a way which allows them to hire, retain and increase the productivity of their top know-how talents (ibid). Moreover, cross-functional and cross-level networks require different skills and abilities to work effectively in the new business environment, which puts relationship building in focus as well as sustaining that relationship (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Today, firms are considered to be more unpredictable, and employees are assumed to be responsible for their own learning and career development (Pink, 2001).

2.1.2 Knowledge-intensive workforce & key positions

There is a difference between key people and key positions within a firm, and to successfully employ correctly according to Marjan (2017), firm's must be aware of this difference. Key people are talents who have significant knowledge which makes them valuable to the firm. Key positions, on the other hand, are roles that independently of who has the role today, are important for the firm. These roles could be either leadership roles or knowledge-intensive roles (ibid). Collings and Mellahi (2009) define key positions as those positions within a firm

that are important for a firm's strategic development and competitive advantage. They further state that these positions may concern both top level management but also positions further down the hierarchy, which obtain a specific knowledge. Depending on how the MNC is dependent on the position and what its characteristics are, managers can deal with the GTM challenges differently (ibid). Collings and Mellahi (2009) argue that for low-level roles, MNCs could use a talent pool strategy. However, if the role requires very specific or very unusual characteristics one might need to use a more incubating method (ibid). When looking at the GTM challenges from the perspective of key positions, Collings and Mellahi (2009) emphasise that there are key positions within the MNC which are important to identify rather than key personnel that currently might occupy a particular position within the MNC (ibid). The focus of GTM should, therefore, be on finding those key positions (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). Marjan (2017) also enforces this argument and further states that MNCs have troubles with identifying these key positions, which contributes to difficulties in handling the GTM challenges.

Besides managerial positions, some industries gain their competitive advantage through knowledge-intensive workers who are considered a key resource for the firm (Shuler et al., 2011; Marjan, 2017). A knowledge-intensive industry is an industry where the majority of the positions needs to be filled with a high skilled worker (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). One example of such an industry is the pharmaceutical industry (Shuler et al., 2011).

A critique put forward by Pfeffer (2001) is that to only focus on key talents could be harmful to the MNC. Pfeffer (2001) argues it could harm teamwork and create destructive internal competition to put too much emphasis on individual performance, which the War of talent implies managers to do. Pfeffer (2001) furthermore states that the focus on key positions might de-motivate other employees in the firm and diminish their development opportunities since they are being excluded (ibid).

2.2 International human resource management

IHRM is related to issues concerning management policy and practice, strategic planning and business processes (Boxall et al., 2007). This includes everything from hiring employees to

development and employee relations (ibid). IHRM has been evolved to meet the demands of a global economy and a constant changing work environment; more flexible forms of work organisation and a stronger emphasis on managing human resources (HR) (Alvesson et al., 2009). Generally speaking, personnel has gone from being collectivised to being seen as individuals (ibid). However, it should be clarified that the dispersion of the discussion of IHRM mainly is relevant for MNC's where cultural diversities must be taken into consideration (Brewster & Mayrhofer., 2007). MNCs account for two-thirds of all world trade, and the need for coordinated HRM policies is vital (Brewster & Mayrhofer, 2007). Guest (1987) has put forward an IHRM model, which has been used broadly when discussing the IHRM phenomena: *"HRM comprises a set of policies designed to maximise organisational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work"* (Guest, 1987, p. 503). Whilst Guest's (1987) study was focused on different hypothesis to test the impact of HRM, Storey (1995) was one of the first conducting an empirical study, which led to the following definition: *"HRM was an approach to employment management seeking to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce..."* (Storey, 1995, p. 5). Regarding MNCs both of these definitions become complex because firms need to find a way to integrate HRM practices into subsidiary units across borders and handle staff transfers (Tung, 1981; Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

2.3 Global talent management

2.3.1 Definition of global talent management

GTM is a term, which has shown to be rather hard to get a grip on and previous authors have put forward many various definitions of the GTM concept (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). What all authors have in common is that GTM is a mechanism which takes advantage of HR policies such as attracting, screening and developing people to enhance the business and upgrade resources (Schweyer, 2004). The widest of the GTM definitions is to use the term as a substitute for IHRM (Scullion and Collings, 2006; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to Iles et al. (2010), GTM is not necessarily different from IHRM, but rather it is integrated in IHRM with a specific focus. A somewhat more defined definition of GTM is put forward by Michaels et al. (2014) who define talent as those who help the firm achieve its strategic goals, which is in agreement with Guest (1987) and Storey (1995). GTM is through Michaels et

al.'s (2014) definition defined as the management of those who have strategically important positions in the company. Collings and Mellahi (2009) emphasise on the fact that GTM is a process or many processes that include identification of critical roles that contribute to the competitive advantages of the firm. Firms then try to fill those positions via either a talent pool or through a diversified approach to each role, which enables the firm to find the right talent for each post (ibid). GTM can also be defined as the organisational process of selecting, recruiting, developing and maintaining the persons who are considered as key employees on a global level (Scullion et al., 2010).

One definition that often is referred to is the one put forward by Tarique and Schuler (2010) which also is the one that we will use as our definition. First, it clearly touches upon the three GTM challenges we wish to study further in our paper. Second, the existing confusion and the many definitions of what the GTM concept means led to us choosing an already existing definition instead of creating another one. Tarique and Schuler's (2010) definition of GTM is as follows:

“GTM includes systematically utilizing international human resource management activities to attract, develop and retain individuals with high levels of human capital in consistency with the strategic directions of the multinational enterprise in a dynamic, highly competitive and global environment” (p. 124).

2.3.2 Differences between GTM and IHRM

Briscoe et al. (2009) argue that the difference between IHRM and GTM is that IHRM involves more stakeholders including customers, investors, suppliers, society and employees. While it can be discussed that GTM can affect those stakeholders as well, it primarily impacts employees and the organisation itself. As a result of many stakeholders, IHRM has broader concerns than those of attracting, developing and retaining employees from MNCs. Since the key stakeholders from a GTM perspective are the employees, MNC actions are being taken accordingly (ibid). HR actions are therefore more related to issues like employee morale and motivation, and organisational innovation and productivity (Briscoe et al., 2009). Lastly, in the IHRM field, more HR policies and practices are included (ibid). Within each policy and practice activity such as planning, staffing and compensating, there are many more choices,

and topics practitioners can select (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). GTM on the other hand only focuses on a subset of chosen topics. For example, the focus may be solely on the HR policy, and practice activities of staffing, compensating and training (ibid). Collings and Mellahi (2009) add that one differentiation between IHRM and GTM is that GTM to a larger extent than IHRM focuses on human capital as a competitive advantage. Tarique and Schuler (2010) argue that the differentiation between IHRM and GTM lays in the definition of the terms and state that for the sake of the research field it is important to differentiate the two, which they criticise Scullion and Collings of not doing (2006). In later scholars from Scullions and Collings (2011) they do however make adjustments according to the critics from Tarique and Schuler (2010) by differentiating GTM and IHRM. Lewis and Heckman (2006) state in their research paper that there is a disturbing lack of clarity regarding GTM and how it differs from IHRM, even if the distinction might have been somewhat clarified in more recent scholars (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). However, in a survey made in the United Kingdom, 51% of the participants claimed to be working with GTM methods, and only 20% thought that a clarification of the difference was necessary, which implicates that the concept of GTM might have become clearer for more people in recent years (ibid). The next sections will describe the drivers behind GTM and the challenges the concept includes.

2.4 Drivers behind GTM challenges

2.4.1 Economic globalisation

The global economy has changed the business environment (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). The workforce has become larger, more diversified and more educated (ibid). Due to the globalisation and inexpensive technologies, 1.5 billion workers have entered the global labour market, and the number is expected to increase by one million over the next ten years (Schuler et al., 2011). As a result, competition has increased, and firms must be more aware of their core competencies than ever before (Marjan, 2017). This also implies that companies must learn how to manage their workforce effectively (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Today, competition is complex; it is developing fast and is widespread across the globe (Schuler et al., 2011). The intense competition has forced firms to improve quality and be

more innovative (ibid) due to shorter product cycles (Marjan, 2017). Furthermore, the fact that competition is reaching out across borders has resulted in increased compensation demands, both from local workers as well as workers operating in a global labour market (Schuler et al., 2011).

With globalisation comes a diverse pool of employees depending on where the company operates (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Cultures, the number of employees with the right skill set, modes of work and markets may differ enormously. Both migration and globalisation of customers, suppliers and investors bring diversity into a domestic company, and as a result diversity within a single company is increasing. Another source of diversity is the change of work mode. Instead of working full-time more people are working part-time or are contract workers, hence not regular employees. Moreover, instead of the traditional path education, work and retirement, these events are overlapping each other over a lifetime, which challenges traditional career paths and development programs. Skilled experienced workers are well aware of their opportunities, options and markets, which intensifies competition of top talents (ibid).

2.4.2 Global mobility

According to Tarique and Schuler (2010), the flow of migration and the increased mobility of people are common topics among researchers discussing GTM and globalisation. The increased mobility has allowed people to more easily move between countries to get valuable work or study experience abroad. Based on the statements by Beechler and Woodward (2009) the increasing mobility of the workforce is one of the major drivers for the war of talent, but they also argue that there recently has been a reverse migration. This means that people who previously left their home countries to seek for work opportunities, now move back to their origin country. For some developing countries, such as India and China who used to have a significant drain of the best talent, this shift is important and might decrease the effects that globalisation has had in the war of talent in those countries. However, this does not mean that the war of talent has disappeared but rather that the issue of global mobility has moved to other parts of the world (ibid).

2.4.3 Demographic changes

Demographics is another force and shaper of GTM (Schuler et al., 2011) since it directly affects the labour pool supply (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). First, the baby boom generation is ageing leading to an enormous generational shift (ibid). When senior staff retire from their positions, the problem of finding a suitable replacement is evident and is increasing every year (Marjan, 2017). Firms find that younger employees are not talented enough, which makes them look outside the firm for suitable recruits (ibid). Until today, we have seen an increasing amount of people in all countries, but by 2025 we are expecting to see declining figures in some countries which in the future can contribute even more to the challenges of GTM (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The life expectancy of the people born today is, however, higher than for those born in the post-war period, the baby boom generation, which potentially could reverse the implications demographic changes have on GTM today (ibid). Tarique and Schuler (2010) also mentioned that some researchers have a somewhat stereotypical approach towards older and younger employees, which might do the research regarding the effects of demographic changes biased. Another driver, making GTM of importance, is the diversity between generations. People born in the same period share the same history and thereby also share common experiences and develop similar attitudes, behaviours and work style. This might create conflicts between two generations at work, where one example is when younger employees manage older more experienced co-workers. It could however also bring positive effects on learning, development and innovation (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

2.4.4 Increased demand for skilled people

Today, workers are often working in teams crossing geographic borders, which makes knowledge increasingly important for MNCs (Schuler et al., 2011). There is a rising demand for basic and advanced skills concerning skilled knowledge-intensive jobs, including consultants, managers, leaders and information specialists. Moreover, the growing need for talented managers is likely to remain strong well into the future (ibid). This statement is enforced by a report conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, stating that GTM was the one challenge facing HR that executive managers felt least prepared to take on (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). Beecher and Woodward (2009) also state that the shift from a product based to a knowledge-based industry is of large importance for the growing issues of the war of

talent. There is an increasing demand for both high-skilled decision makers as well as talents with other abilities such as a good cognitive skill (ibid).

2.5 GTM challenges

2.5.1 GTM - the overall challenges

The concept of GTM has since the 21st century been considered a key strategic issue on management level, where associations between GTM and superior performance is the main perspective (Mellahi & Collings, 2010). Studies have shown that MNCs are having troubles with implementing effective GTM systems across the entire organisation (Farndale, 2014). Even though the awareness of the importance of GTM, and the issue of attracting and retaining talents has increased, significant concerns still exist (Mellahi & Collings, 2010). A research study of 40 MNCs has shown that there is an existing gap regarding filling strategic positions within the firm where many managers find it difficult to attract and retain talents on a global scale (Mellahi & Collings, 2010). Even though managers understand the critical need for GTM, they are having troubles with finding effective deployment strategies of their key talents (ibid). Similarly, Guttridge et al. (2006) claim that according to a McKinsey study of 50 CEOs, the majority of the interviewees found it difficult to find the right talents with the right skill set. However, in a later research study made by Vaiman and Collings (2013), they stress out that in post-communist countries, the management practices and work relationships are less known and less studies have been done, thus what CEOs operating in these countries find difficult needs to be investigated further.

The shortage of GTM has proven to be a significant constraint on the implementation of global strategies (Farndale et al., 2014). Taking China as an example, even though they have 10 million young professional graduates only 10 percent of them hold sufficient language skills and interpersonal competencies to work for MNCs in China (ibid). According to Farndale et al. (2014), many employees are also unable to move to other regions and provinces. The mobility issue also affects organisation's attempt to develop local managers since it takes a much longer time or fails completely. They further state that to tackle this problem organisations have tried to influence the creation of skills through involvements in the education systems. Another example is India, where they have troubles with a high

turnover, 45 percent, among top talents in key industries such as the ICT sector. While the MNCs intend to create in-house talents via programs such as management trainee programs, they have troubles with delivering enough supply due to the examples mentioned above (ibid).

Hence, companies have clearly stated they are facing challenges regarding the attraction, development and retention of employees obtaining the right competencies (Farndale et al. 2014; Vaiman and Collings 2013; Mellahi & Collings, 2010). In the following sections, we will discuss which issues that are connected to each challenge.

2.5.2 Attracting

Opportunity to choose jobs

As previously described there are currently many factors contributing to the increasing difficulties of attracting, developing and retaining the most talented employees. Harvey (2013) argues that in comparison to a decade ago, the working environment of today enables talented people a great possibility to choose between jobs due to an easiness to move across borders, which in some regions constitutes an issue for the employers. The labour market is not national or country specific anymore, which means people can seek an opportunity to work anywhere in the world. The purpose of going abroad could be both due to job specific reasons or to gain work experience in a different culture, which is seen as a valuable skill for a talent's career (ibid). Harvey (2013) continues with arguing that one solution to attract the right talents could be to place more focus on social factors since today, people demand more than just the work task itself from their employers. This incentive could potentially be promoted by the company itself or by governments wishing to increase the success of its nation's industries (ibid).

Structure and planning

However, to attract the right employees firms must first find them (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009). A case study of a firm operating in a developing economy has shown that careful planning has helped the company to locate the best employees within the industry. To think ahead and have a developed succession plan have minimised turbulence when talents leave the firm because the risk of having a vacant position disappears. The succession plan can be based on either talents outside or within the firm (ibid). Capelli (2008) argues, however, that

when a firm gets a vacancy, it could be that the planned successor no longer meets the requirements for the position, indicating that a succession plan not always is an effective approach. Furthermore, this could create conflicts since the candidate might feel betrayed, and the resources and investments placed on the candidate go to waste. Moreover, nowadays succession plans require an annual update as jobs change and people leave, which leads to a huge waste of time and energy (ibid). Thus, even though a structured plan for how to attract employees is recommended by Sharma and Bhatnagar (2009), firms must sometimes have a more flexible approach to the issue (Capelli, 2008).

Apart from succession plans, Sharma and Bhatnagar (2009) claim that firms should clearly state which career opportunities are available within the firm. If the potential applicant beforehand knows how he or she can advance, it might act as an incentive to apply to the firm. By these practices, firms may manage to attract ambitious employees (ibid). This is per agreement with Tower Watson (2014), claiming that organisations must offer a competitive employment package that is formally articulated, tailored to various employee segments and that is different from its competitors (Towers Watson, 2014). These deals are proven to be more effective when it comes to attracting talents, than employment deals that are not formally articulated and do not include an integrated strategy for GTM (ibid).

Employer branding

Tarique and Schuler (2010) emphasise on the possibility to attract people by working on the organisational brand building and reputation of the HR department. Activities related to brand building and HR reputation include the HR philosophies, policies and how it is practised (Hannon & Milkovich, 1996). These factors are to a large extent judged by existing and potential employees (Ferris et al., 2007). It has become a popular topic for the press where magazines such as Fortune and Forbes regularly make studies of the best place to work. By being exposed to the media, potential applicants also get an enhanced knowledge of the firm, which may influence their decision to apply for a position or not (ibid). Hannon and Milkovich (1996) do however criticise that few studies have been made between HR reputation and the actual performance of the firm. Koys (1997) does in a similar manner claim that even though factors such as proper treatment of employees lead to a good

reputation, there is no correlation between a firm's reputation and organisational performance.

Differentiated recruitment processes

Meister (2010) argues that there is an increasing need to use a differentiated recruitment process since the workforce is becoming more diversified. An example enforces this statement; it has been shown in the IT-industry that the applicants differ significantly regarding values, career aspiration and expectation (Keim & Weitzel, 2006). They also apply for the job via different types of media. These factors indicate a complex recruitment process, where companies must differ the recruitment process to meet the applicant's various needs (ibid). Another example of a differentiated hiring process is put forward by The UK company Tesco. They have started to use a differentiated process depending if the applicant comes straight out of school or has previous work experience (Schuler et al., 2011). One reason behind the differentiated approaches is because there might be different job attributes that speaks to two different target groups. Another reason is that each applicant can be interesting in various ways, which means that interview questions must be adjusted and asked accordingly (ibid).

Moreover, Meister (2010) argues for the usage of social media as a tool for locating the right applicants for the job. In the future, we might need to look for employees on different sites than those used today but the importance of social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, speaks for the change (ibid). Other methods used to find the right people are psychometric tests measuring either the intelligence, analytic ability, personality characteristics or other attributes of the applicants (Page, 2016). These tests are usually used to easily screen a large number of applicants, and to find out whether or not it is a good fit for the company (ibid). However, side effects with these tests are that they only work if the recruiter knows what he or she is looking for (Osborne, 2014). Many recruiters fail since they try to assess non-measurable things such as leadership. To measure this in a correct manner, one first needs to determine which personal traits make a person a good leader (ibid).

Another important change is the shift from traditional paper-based recruitment to e-recruitment. According to Holm (2012), e-recruitment reduces costs and increases a firm's

efficiency; e-recruitment pre-screening is occurred automatically through a well-developed online system. Moreover, while traditional paper-based recruitment is performed sequentially, e-recruitment activities can be performed in parallel where the company can keep the applicant informed along the way through forums such as the company career website (ibid). Holm (2012) furthermore exemplifies that recruitment professionals can spend less time to go through numbers of applications manually and instead focus on more value-added tasks such as communication and employer branding.

2.5.3 Developing

In-house development

While the international labour market for the best employees is hardening, it is increasingly important for MNCs to develop internal talents (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009). Career paths are not as planned and predicted as before; instead, talents are focusing on self-reliance, and ambitious, hardworking knowledge-workers constantly look for challenges and personal development (Nilsson & Ellström, 2012). However, to develop talents and increase their knowledge is a long-term process (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009). Since development requires time it is important to, throughout the development process, have a clear strategy for how managers should follow up the development of the talent (ibid). Since each and every talent holds different skills and qualities MNCs might have to use a nuanced approach to GTM strategies, thus the “one fits all” approach no longer works (King, 2015). Unilever provides an example where they separate the identification of High Potentials from High Performers. Instead of offering the employees a promotion they provide increased salary. This way they reduce the drive to move on to the next level solely for salary purposes (ibid).

Feedback

Sharma and Bhatnagar (2009) emphasise development through a development plan, and by regularly measuring the results firms can easily identify if the talent is ready for a position with more responsibility or if the company needs to look for talents outside the firm. Marjan (2017) and Goldberg (2007) do however argue that managers are lacking efforts in giving feedback to their employees on how they are progressing and developing. According to Marjan (2017), the lack of efforts placed into feedback and development stems from the insufficient alignment between the GTM strategies and the overall business strategy. Another issue is that even though senior management might wish to have a long-term GTM focus, in

practice, this focus often becomes short-termed (ibid). Thus, it is not only important to follow up the development of an individual employee but also for an MNC to follow up its work with development. Sharma and Bhatnagar (2009) suggest that this could be done through the following metrics:

- a) How many of the important positions are filled with internal candidates?
- b) Are there succession plans ready internally? Do we have ready now candidates?

However, as mentioned in 2.5.2 *Attracting - Structure and planning*, succession plans are not always the best approach (Cappelli, 2008). To have something to follow up, the MNC must have a strategy for how to develop the personnel.

Structure and planning

Development can be either of skills or of behavioural characteristics that are essential for the job in question (Ghosh et al., 2011). By training and developing employees, the firm optimises the utilisation of its HR. In turn, this enables talents to achieve organisational as well as individual goals (ibid). Four factors have been mentioned as factors promoting development (Ivarsson et al., 2015). The first one is to use methods aiming to increase the long-term development. The second factor is to use a broad range of support that has a coherent message, which from different angles work against the same goal. Thirdly, it has been shown that one most often achieves more successful development when focusing on adaptability and development rather than selecting early in the career paths. Fourth and last, the focus should be on individually adopted development plans (ibid). One tool to achieve development could be through training programs which historically have been viewed as one of the most powerful tools for development and training of one's employees (Ivarsson et al., 2015). A training program is most often developed by one specific organisation and aims to give the employee the skills and characteristics necessary to achieve the goals set by the organisation at the same time as the employee is given a practical experience of how the skills are used in the day-to-day business (ibid). Even though ideas of what should be included in GTM regarding development exist, there is yet no consensus on what a firm could do to effectively manage and develop its talents (McDonnell et al., 2010). The authors keep

on with arguing that there has been a lack of understanding of what a differentiated HR architecture truly means and includes (ibid).

2.5.4 Retaining

Awareness

Regarding employees with specific know-how skills that directly affect the company's strategic objectives and results, the ability to retain them is of increased importance (Tower Watson, 2014). Employee retention is considered to be of strategic benefit for firms to maintain a competitive workforce (Schramm, 2006). One approach to handling the retention issue is a well-developed employment deal which decreases the risk of not finding a suitable replacement when a key person leaves the organisation. These problems are remarkable both in developing as well as developed economies. A huge problem for many companies is that even if they have the ambition to have a well-developed employment deal (32% of employers claim to have an evolved employment deal), according to employees not even half of the employer's lives up to the deal (Towers Watson, 2014). One reason for this failure is the lack of understanding of the required tools to attract and retain talents. Looking at figure 2 below one clearly views that what are the most important factors for employees in comparison to the ones of employers (ibid).



Figure 2. Top reasons to retain. Our own figure based on Towers Watson, 2014. Countries include Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Economical factors

Matthew and Lambert (2003) state that the cost of salaries are for most firms substantial, but the cost of turnover is often higher if looked at the individual case. According to King (2015), a high turnover can occur if MNCs overlook the fact that employees are an important GTM stakeholder and that the GTM goals may differ from the organisational goals. If this is not taken into consideration when handling talents of the firm, the outcome could be increased turnover. A company that succeeds to decrease the staff turnover can benefit from a positive financial return (Matthew & Lambert, 2003). Offering high salary is one way to motivate employees to stay, but other values need to be taken into consideration as well (Matthew & Lambert, 2003) such as social factors (Harvey, 2013). The authors argue that organisational understanding of the importance of staff is the first step to retaining the staff (Harvey, 2013).

Organisational values

According to Bhatnagar (2007), employer branding plays an important factor to retain key employees. The firm's employer brand must be strong as well as positive and is today on the agenda for many HR executives in multinational firms.

One method to strengthen a firm's brand and at the same time decrease employee turnover is by employee engagement. One must make sure that the employees are engaged at all levels of the organisation and that they are interested in learning and to be challenged. One should also introduce peer partners and mentors to nurture relationships and take care of emotional needs of the employees. Last, Bhatnagar (2007) concludes that employees should be seen as partners in the business and one should give them a hand in achieving satisfaction and in creating new success for the firm (ibid).

These statements are in accordance with Hanif and Yunfei (2013) who state that for employee retention, and thereby also GTM to be effective, those processes must be part of the organisation's culture. In the banking sector in Pakistan they emphasise employee's opinions as a major factor for retention, and in China, they focus on retaining their top talents to achieve greater success. GTM is a function of many HR practices comprised such as recruitment, selection, career development and retention. Ways to achieve the wanted outcomes could be through employer branding, performance appraisal, reward incentives, and developing career planning for the employee. Hanif and Yunfei (2013) claim however that HR people find it challenging to implement working processes and that the question of attracting, developing and retaining top talents are considered to be major issues for organisations. Many firms realise the importance of an effective GTM approach and are trying to improve internal firm policies when it comes to the recruitment of key employees by looking at successful organisation's approach to GTM and learn from them. The authors argue that drivers to retention of quality employees are beside an excellent salary package, capacity building with required skills, to train and develop managers, so they learn how to most effectively manage subordinates, to keep employees satisfied and motivated, to build up trust and integrity and the work task itself (ibid). Farley (2005) argues that firms should view retention as a strategic issue. To look at it from a strategic point of view means that the firm's

resources such as HR, PR and line management should work together toward retaining talents. Organisations should have clear plans, and they should also prioritise which skills they highlight the most and wish to retain within the firm (ibid).

2.6 Experiences from the football industry

2.6.1 The football industry

The European football industry stands out from other sports industries since there are sub-industries in all countries competing for the same talent (Palomino & Sákovics, 2004). If one This is different if one compares with the North American football industry, which to a larger extent is sub-categorized into different sports rather than many leagues within the same sport (ibid). A result of this competition is according to Palomino and Sákovics (2004) that clubs use performance-based reward schemes to attract the best talent.

Moreover, the industry has handled GTM challenges for decades (Treadway et al., 2015). The industry is constantly being exposed to GTM challenges when filling positions with an impact of the competitive advantage of the club (ibid). To create a competitive balance, certain sports in the sports industry as a whole have used several methods such as draft systems, salary caps and to split revenues from media revenues to attract, develop and retain talents (Stewart et al., 2014). If the league does not use any of the mentioned methods to create a competitive market of talent recruitment, the clubs need to use other methods to attract and recruit the best talent (Treadway et al., 2014). One important method according to both FIFA and UEFA is the emphasis on the development of talents within the clubs across the world (Sæther & Solberg, 2015).

The starting point of GTM within the football industry is how clubs early on manage to identify talents to recruit and develop (Höner et al., 2014). Once the talent has been defined and identified it is up to the talent scout of the club to attract the talent to the club (ibid). According to Treadway (2102), the personal attributes of the scout and the network in which the scout operates is essential to attract the best talents. Therefore, a football club's ability to attract the right talents does much depend on the characteristics of the recruiter (ibid).

Moreover, several attempts have been made to design evaluation programs that enable clubs to screen employee potential (Höner et al., 2014). The authors have for example tested the validity and reliability of talent assessment tests in the German football league, and the study showed a quite satisfying result even though it has its limitations. These evaluation programs have however not been flawless since many different factors influence the potential and capability of a player and to take all of them into consideration is hard. Clubs must, for example, take both physical and psychological factors into account as well as they need to have in mind the local environment of which the player derives from and the context in which the talent currently operates. To exemplify the author argues that the fact that a talent performs well in one club not automatically mean he will live up to his full potential if he moves to a different club (ibid). This statement is in agreement with Ivarsson et al., (2015) who also argues that the coaching environment is one of the most influencing factors regarding the development of a talent.

The development of players is a well-discussed area within the literature (Höner et al., 2014; Li et al., 2015; Ivarsson et al., 2015; Sæther & Solberg, 2015). One discussion regards how much time and effort that should be placed into the development of young talents, especially how early on in a talent's career one can decide whether or not that talent has potential to become one of the best (Sæther & Solberg, 2015). Another discussion is stated by Ivarsson et al. (2015) who emphasise that the surrounding environment is important for the talent's possibility to develop.

2.7 Summary of theoretical framework

A shortage of skilled talents (Chambers et al., 1998) and an increasingly global business environment has led to a need for differentiated IHRM activities (Schuler et al., 2011). These activities have in turn resulted in the creation of GTM (Briscoe et al., 2009). While traditional IHRM practices are spread across many activities including some sub-topics, GTM is focused only on a subset of chosen topics (ibid). These topics are often related to the employees of an MNC (Briscoe et al., 2009), and includes practices such as attracting, developing and retaining talents (Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Schweyer, 2004). Despite several studies of the

GTM phenomena, it is still a quite young field of research, which many authors find hard to grasp (Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Marjan, 2017).

While MNC managers point out that they have troubles with attracting, developing and retaining talents (Mellahi & Collings, 2010; Farndale et al., 2014), studies have shown that the football industry has a long experience of handling these issue (Treadway et al.,2015). It is a well-established industry which, more often than not, operates in an international sphere when it comes to the highest leagues (ibid). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that research focusing solely on the GTM challenges in the football industry is also limited. However, with the collective knowledge that it is an international industry where the individuals are considered to be the primary resource, together with the enforcement from previous studies, we have reasons to believe that the football industry has practices, which may inspire MNCs and their future practices towards the GTM challenges.

2.7.1 A summarising model of the theoretical framework

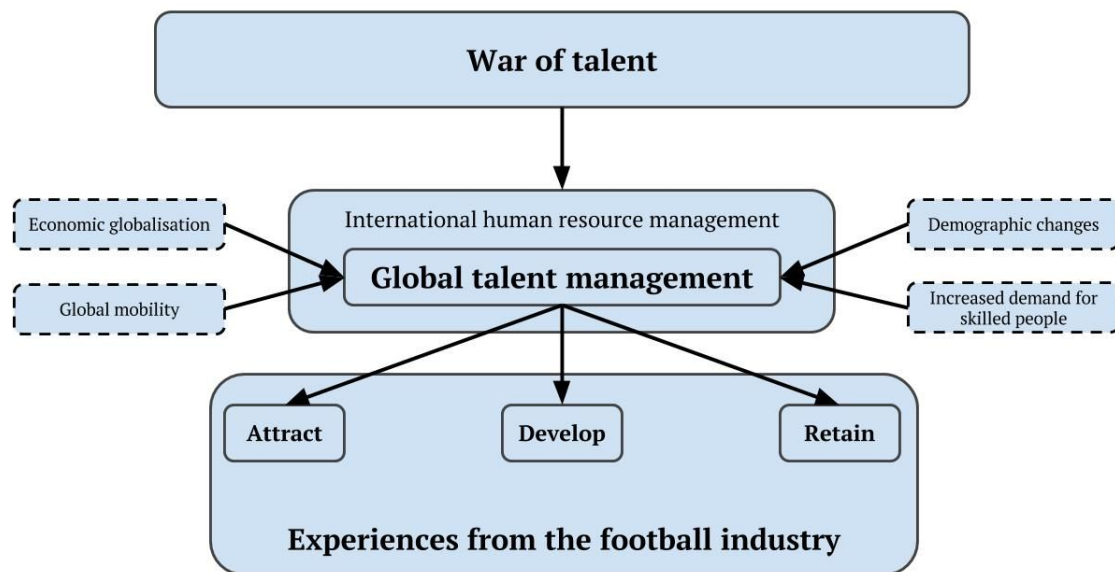


Figure 3. A summary of the theoretical framework.

3. Methodology

This chapter will describe which methodologies we have used and why we have used them. First, we will describe our research strategy and approach, followed by our research design. After this, we will describe how we collected our data, and what kinds of ethical considerations which affected our research. Later on, we will describe our data analysis method and how we have strived to keep a high research quality, to finally give the reader a summary insight on what limitations our chosen method present.

3.1 Research strategy and approach

This thesis aims to present potential solutions for the GTM challenges to MNCs through inspiration from the football industry. To learn about the processes used by the football industry, we have chosen to use a qualitative study in line with previous author's suggestions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2011; Ariss et al., 2013). Since we are looking for answers in one industry, which potentially could be applicable to other industries, we came to the conclusion that a qualitative approach to the research would be beneficial. It allowed us to focus on spoken words and to easily ask for deeper descriptions or explanations of the processes when needed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since we were interested in *how* and *which methods* football clubs use rather than the *number of clubs* using a particular method, a qualitative approach suited us well. We wrote this thesis with the assumption that what one football club uses as a practical solution could be equally inspiring as the practical solution of two other football clubs. Therefore, a qualitative approach was applicable since it allowed us to be flexible when we later interpreted the empirical findings (ibid). With the perspective of a smaller number of research objects, a grounded theory (GT) analysis approach with an explorative focus to our qualitative study was also a beneficial choice for us. It allowed us to freely interpret the empirical findings without an emphasis on the theoretical framework until a later stage (Brytting, 1991), which will be elaborated further later on in this chapter.

A common critique of qualitative research is that it might be difficult to generalise the result (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This critique stems from the fact that the interviewed population is relatively small and thus might not be representative of the bigger picture. We do however

argue that since we aim to inspire through examples, we do not claim to represent a large group of people. Neither do we believe that all suggestions could apply to all situations, but that some of the results are possible to apply to more than the football industry and hence be generalisable for a larger group. We argue that it is not possible to set a limit on what can be inspirational and for whom. We also strive to not be subjective by having dual empirics with MNCs. By doing so, we can compare the answers more objectively and in turn, more easily determine what a new idea is and what is an already known idea.

A qualitative research strategy is most commonly associated with an inductive research approach. We have however used an abductive approach where we began by reading existing theories to create an idea of how the GTM theory could be used in practice in order to understand the empirical findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Throughout our work, we have allowed ourselves to make adjustments in the theoretical framework to better understand the empirics we found. One example of this is the development part, which we added when doing the literature review the first time. Later on, we thought it might not be relevant in a comparison between the football industry and other industries since the football industry most likely would have a unique approach to development. However, during our interviews, we saw possible alignments between the industries, which led to us researching more about the specific area of development and decided to keep it in our theoretical framework. Brytting (1991) argues that when one does not find the answers in previous theories and empirical studies, an inductive approach is most applicable so we strived to follow those recommendations. However, we did to some extent, as mentioned, use an abductive method since we had to do a literature review to learn whether or not this subject was suitable for a thesis. The fact that we wrote the theoretical framework before the empirical chapter, and later revised the theoretical framework based on our empirical findings, makes our research less inductive and more abductive.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Comparative multiple case study

Our research design is a comparative multiple case study and consists of two cases, which are illustrated in figure 4. The first case includes a study of Swedish football clubs, and the other

one is a case study of MNCs that are active within a knowledge-intensive sphere. The interviewees within each case category come from the same industry but different companies and with different roles. We have not made the typical comparison of cultural differences, which multiple case studies often imply; instead, we have compared how different industries cope with the same issues (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We decided to use a comparative study since we sought to understand differences and similarities in how different industries practically handle GTM challenges in the hope of finding inspirational solutions. The comparison between the two industries is appropriate since MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries claim to be experiencing difficulties to find solutions for the GTM challenges (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Since the football industry is similar to knowledge-intensive industries in the sense that most people are of strategic importance, it presents a good comparison (Hughes et al., 2009)³.

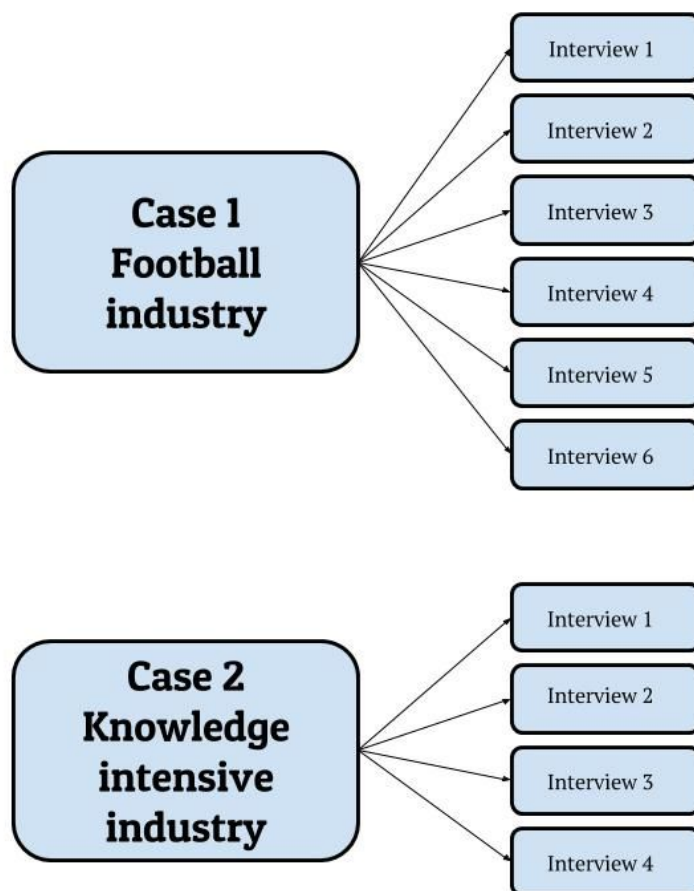


Figure 4. Illustration of the research design.

³ We thank an industry representative for this insight.

A comparative study is often used in combination with a multiple case study (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and as described we use two industries as the cases of our study. Since there is more than one case researched it counts as a multiple case study (ibid). A case study is beneficial to use when one is researching a how-question, which made it an appropriate method for us to use (Yin, 2014). A multiple case study presents an opportunity to relatively easy analyse if the theory is applicable in different situations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Hence, the need for us to use two cases was significant since we aimed to present practical ideas for solutions to the GTM challenges from the football industry, applicable in other industries.

3.2.2 The research units - sampling

Sampling business units are usually made on different levels. First, a broad sampling is done, which is followed by a smaller sampling (Yin, 2010). For us, the wide sampling included deciding which industries to look at and why we wanted to look at them. For this, we used what Yin (2010) defines as purposive sampling. Hence, we looked at the purpose of our study and found an appropriate industry for it. We did not strive to have random sampling since the validity of our thesis required interview objects with a certain insight into the subject (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We decided that the football industry presented an interesting case since our purpose was to widen the theoretical framework of GTM and to find practical solutions adaptable for other industries. It had not been done before and would, therefore, widen the theoretical framework as well as potentially present inspirational solutions. The Swedish football industry is ranked as number 20 among the world's leagues (Allsvenskan, (2015). Moreover, the industry has clear goals regarding what is considered a success, and most clubs have a similar organisational structure, which simplifies the possibility to make general assumptions of how they operate (Hughes et al., 2009) The second case was also selected with a purposive sampling method. To make our two industries comparable, we wanted to look at an industry where the personnel was the primary resource, which led to us choosing an industry with a high degree of specialised knowledge required. We consider the differences between the two industries as both a strength and a weakness. The fact that the football industry is rather unaffected by, for example, employee unions does affect the way talents are treated. There is also a risk that regulations and unions would hinder what potentially could be an inspiring idea for the MNC. The benefits do however present themselves as many in our opinion. The football industry is well known for having dealt with

talents for a very long period and might thus have more advanced ideas of how to attract, develop and retain the talents within the clubs. Since inspiration by its definition does not mean that it should be copied straight off, but rather be interpreted and adapted to the particular industry's environment, we argue that the reliability will not be affected.

As previously stated, we did a more narrow sampling as well. This was also done according to a purposive sampling method (Yin, 2010) but as Bryman and Bell (2015) state, it is common that a structured sampling method is used in combination with the sources that are most easily available for the authors. Therefore, we reached out to people who were in our reach but who would be likely to have the insight needed for us to answer our research question and to fill our purpose. To increase the validity of the empirical findings we developed three criteria for sampling. The criteria were different depending on if the interview were supposed to be a part of the football industry case or the knowledge-intensive industry case. The criteria are illustrated in figure 5 and figure 6.

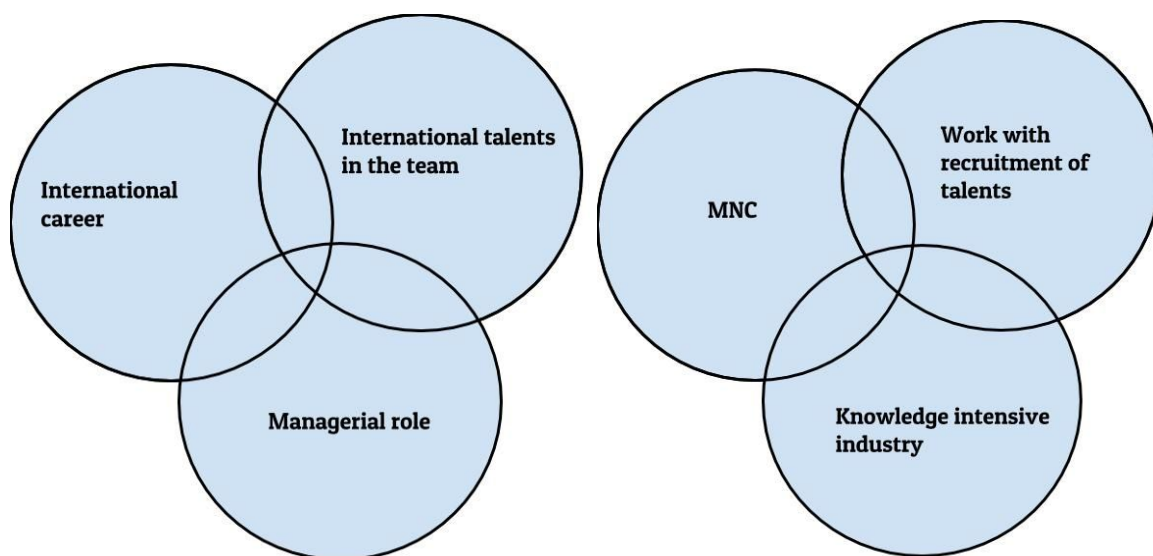


Figure 5 (to the left). Criteria for selection of interviewees for the football industry case.

Figure 6 (to the right). Criteria for selection of interview subjects for the knowledge-intensive industry case.

In figure 5 the criteria were that the person should have had an international career, either as a player, trainer or consultant. The second requirement was that the person currently or recently should have worked for a team with international players. The third requirement to get a suitable interview for our football case was to have or recently have had some managerial role. The criteria for the football case were quite straightforward while two of the criteria

concerning the knowledge-intensive industry case might need to be defined. As illustrated in figure 6, the first criterion is that the interviewee works for an MNC, that is, a company with entities in multiple countries or nations or/ and that do business across borders (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1998). The second criterion was that the interviewee had to be involved in the recruitment process of talents. The last and third criteria was that they had to be active in a firm in a knowledge-intensive industry, such as a consultancy firm. Starbuck (1992) identifies a knowledge-intensive industry as one where the personnel and human capital is the most valuable input for the firm. Starbuck (1992) further states that while most industries require some extent of general knowledge, knowledge-intensive industries require a higher degree of specialised and specific knowledge.

Reach out to potential interview subjects

Our first round of attempt to find appropriate people to interview was through a convenience method. We asked people in our surroundings if they knew of people in the football or knowledge-intensive industry. Through this approach, we found football industry interview subjects one, two, three and four. Interview five and six were found via a reach out on social media with a snowball effect. Unknown people in a group for women on Facebook gave us ideas and recommendations on whom to contact. We posted an add in the group asking if someone knew of potential people for us to interview for our thesis, stating the essential characteristics of the people we were interested in interviewing. Through that ad we got seven responds, where one respond led directly to a telephone interview with the subject, which was followed by a meeting in person. A benefit of convenience sampling that we experienced was a high degree of responses from the people we reached out to (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, not all people we reached out to responded to our request, nonetheless, out of the 14 people we contacted six responded and were able to meet us for an interview. All the interviews for the knowledge-intensive industry case were reached out to through a convenience method based on our social network. Through our social network, we were able to get an e-mail address or a phone number for three out of our four interviews. The last interview was booked once the request had been passed on to the organisation.

Before we contacted the interviewees, we did a background check on the search engine Google to validate that they met our previously mentioned criteria. For our interviewees in

the knowledge-intensive industry, we looked at their LinkedIn profile to spot their current job and previous experiences. Regarding the football industry, we looked at news articles as well as Svenska Fotbollsförbundet to learn about their past experiences. By doing so we could eliminate the risk of the most common critique put forward to studies using a convenience sampling method; that the interviewees we reached out to would not be representative for the group they aimed to represent.

Number of research units

Also here a decision had to be made in the broader view as well as on a more narrow view (Yin, 2010). The broader view regards how many cases that should be studied. Since we decided to conduct our research on an industry level, we concluded that two cases should be sufficient for us to achieve the comparison for which we strived. Regarding the more narrow selection of a sample size, a thumb rule is that the more things which are expected to be compared, the more interviewees are required. We aimed to compare two industries regarding GTM challenges, which we broke down into three categories (attract, develop and retain) (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To be able to make these mentioned comparisons we decided that we at least needed four interviews in each category. We wanted a sample size big enough for us to get the information needed to make our empirical findings sufficient in order to be able to answer our research question with confidence. However, as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015), we did not want too many interviews either, as it may impede the quality of the analysis. For us to achieve the necessary quantity of interview subjects, we reached out to more people than needed since we feared that not all would have the possibility to take part in our interview. When more people than expected from the football industry case sample agreed upon an interview, we decided to increase the number of interviews from four to six. However, we kept in mind the potential quality issue in the analysis. In line with what Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest, the number of interviews for each case is illustrated in Table 1. Yin (2010) argues that the outcome and relevance of those interviewed is more important than a large number of participants, which also was our focus.

Table of interviewees

Industry	Name	Role	Place of interview	Time of interview
Football	Alpa	Head of	Office of the	1 hour

		scouting	interviewee	
Football	Beta	Sports chief	Office of the interviewee	1 hour
Football	Gamma	Coach	Cafe	1 hour
Football	Delta	Former coach & manager	Office of the interviewee	1 hour
Football	Epsilon	Scout	Office of the interviewee	30 min
Football	Zeta	Coach	Office of the interviewee and tour at the training facilities	3 hours
Knowledge-intensive	Eta	Partner, Responsible for HR & talent	Videoconference	1 hour
Knowledge-intensive	Theta	HR Generalist	Phone interview	30 min
Knowledge-intensive	Jota	Graduate Recruitment Leader	Phone interview	30 min
Knowledge-intensive	Kappa	HR talent management partner	Office of the interviewee	30 min

Table 1. Interview participants

3.3 Data collection method

3.3.1 Secondary data

The secondary data of this thesis was collected through scientific journals or e-journals with academic content gathered from databases such as Elsevier, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis Online and Routledge. Some of the secondary data derive from textbooks and other electronic websites. We have used multiple sources for the purpose of achieving a high validity as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015). Moreover, we have used multiple search engines for our literature reviews such as Google Scholar, Google and public libraries. Mostly, we have done our searching through the electronic databases provided by the

University of Gothenburg. Our search began with wide concepts as *IHRM*, *GTM* and *GTM challenges*. From this, we moved on to a deeper search of the specific challenges and then used search words like *attract*, *develop* and *retain*. We also searched for industry specific information for the football industry using *football*, *football industry* and the combination of words as *football + GTM*.

Like Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest we have strived to use theories that previously have been reviewed by other academics or by consulting firms that have made an impression in the theory such as the McKinsey report where the term *war of talent* was presented. We have also used the method of triangulation to assure the credibility of the thesis (ibid).

3.3.2 Primary data

Semi-structured interviews

For our primary data, we have used semi-structured interviews; this, to let the interviewees speak freely, allowing us to get more information than if asking direct questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, we did have an interview guide with four themes with underlying questions to steer the conversation to make sure the research would be valid (ibid). The structure and the questions were in some interviews used more than in others, depending on the need to steer back the conversation to our topics. However, not all questions that were asked can be found in the guide, and not all questions from the guide were asked in accordance with how Yin (2010) suggests one uses the guide. It is quite common that structure is needed more in a multiple case study and thus, it was important for us to sometimes bring back our subject by using the guide. Another purpose with steering the conversation is to make the interviewees comparable (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

When we constructed the interview guide, we started according to the recommendations from Bryman and Bell (2015) to formulate the most important topics. "Tell us about yourself" was our first chosen topic. It was mostly chosen to increase the validity in the research. By asking the interviewees to tell us about themselves, we could once more make sure that they were appropriate persons to ask certain questions to, and thus control our sampling method. The three other topics were based on the theoretical chapter, and the three mentioned GTM challenges: attract, retain and develop. The interview guide looked the same for both

industries with the exception that we added one topic in the interview guide for the knowledge-intensive industry, which was “new ideas”, where we asked questions related to what we had been told during the football industry interviews. Concerning each topic, we formulated questions we thought could benefit our analysis and that would enable us to answer the research question. We avoided asking leading question to not affect the result. Instead, we preferred to ask the interviewee to give concrete examples of different situations regarding certain topics (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The interviews were performed in different locations, as well as through Skype or over the phone. Instead of methodological methods, we prioritised flexibility towards our interviewees. We focused on being aware of how the surrounding environment could affect the interview. However, most interviews were conducted locally, either at the football club’s HQ or the MNC’s. These places were most interviewee’s first choice of location, and therefore, we tried to accept their requests if possible. When preparing for an interview that will be located at the interviewee's office Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that one should think extra about potential distractions and how to handle them if they occurred. Also here we wanted to show flexibility and tolerance towards the persons we interviewed and did thus decide to allow the interviewee to take as much time as needed. This way, our interviewee could, if necessary, take a phone call and then come back to us. No disturbances did however occur during any of the interviews. The method of visiting them turned out well, and we were able to see part of the training facilities, which to some extent helped us to understand the explanations and answers they gave us. Five interviews were conducted on site, two interviews were carried out over the phone, one interview was done at a café, and one interview was conducted via a Skype video conference. To have an interview at a café still have the benefit of being face-to-face, which allowed us to see facial expressions and body language but did just as Bryman and Bell (2015) warn about, create some issues with noise on the recordings. This is, however, something we will discuss deeper in the next section.

It is recommended that there are two or more people attending the interview, and we did both participate in all interviews but one. According to Bryman and Bell (2015) being two conducting an interview both help to create a more relaxed atmosphere and simplify the notetaking. We experienced both benefits where we evaluated the atmosphere as relaxed, and

were able to take thorough notes, which we will describe further in the next part. Before doing the interviews, we also looked at the list by Kvale (1996) to know what to keep in mind during the interviews to maintain a high quality. We focused on being knowledgeable on the subject by doing a thorough research about whom we were meeting, our topic and about the company. We also strived to be structured and clear, as well as steering the course of the interview. Furthermore, we tried to be gentle, sensitive and open to hear what they had to say without rushing them. Since we were two people doing the interviews we could have one person completely focused on the conversation to remember what already had been said, and to quickly react and adopt supplementary questions, while the other one took notes.

Notes and recordings

Almost all interviews were recorded in agreement with the interviewees since it provides a valuable tool for triangulating and confirming our primary data (Yin, 2010). Since one interview included getting a tour, we chose not to record it due to practical reasons. Instead, we focused on taking notes during the conversation and added information straight after our meeting while it was fresh in memory. We only used one recording device even though Bryman and Bell (2015) described technical issues as one of the major issues during interviews. To ensure the sound quality, we did test recordings before the interview. We also took notes during all recorded interviews and later on added missed information based on the recordings. In accordance with Kvale (1996), we did not write down word by word in order to pay more attention to what was being said.

Language

To make the interviewees feel comfortable (Bryman & Bell, 2015), we chose to have the interviews in Swedish since all interviewees were from Sweden. The notes were taken in Swedish as well. Since translating notes presents issues of subjectifying the words (Bryman & Bell, 2015), we decided to keep the notes in the original language and base our empirical chapter on our Swedish notes. Since our thesis is in English and our audience does not necessarily speak Swedish, our quotes in the empirical chapter will be translated into English. Another reason to keep the notes in the original language is presented by Filep (2009), who states that cultural differences have to be taken into consideration when translating an interview. Such cultural aspects can be pronouns, catch phrases or similar (ibid). During our

interviews, we experienced such cultural expressions, which would have made translation difficult and it might also have had an effect on the result.

3.4 Ethics

3.4.1 Anonymity

When doing research with the assistance of organisations, it is common to offer them anonymity according to Bryman and Bell (2015). Therefore, we offered all interviewees full anonymity, which most of them appreciated and accepted. The anonymity also hindered the interviewee from having to get acceptance from senior management, which helped to create a relaxed atmosphere (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since our thesis's focus is on practical solutions and processes, the company name or the interviewee's name would not offer a deeper purpose or knowledge insight.

3.4.2 Sensitive information

Since our interviews concerned the treatment of employees, as well as business strategies the subject could be seen as sensitive (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It could potentially not be desirable for the football clubs to share business secrets if it would reach competitors and potential recruits. The anonymity of the interviewees does, however, hinder competition and potential recruits from using it against them. Many of the interviewees we spoke to had experience from more than one football club or organisation, which also gave them the possibility to share information that might not be a business secret in their current club or organisation. One way for us to ethically not be hindered by this was to be open with what we did. By being open, the representatives had the possibility to decide what they wanted to share or not share.

3.5 Data analysis method

The usage of grounded theory (GT) in this thesis can be motivated by several factors; according to Brytting (1991), a GT approach is beneficial to use when trying to explain a practical application or predicting how the behaviour might affect the business. A GT can also guide and provide a base for how one can conduct the research method. We have, however, used a research method that is *inspired* from GT, where our main takings from GT

are the analysis chapter and the creation of categories. Thus, we do not claim to use a strict GT research approach all throughout the thesis.

All throughout the interview process, we reflected on how our data would be relatable to our theory and how it would be used in our analysis. This approach is coherent with what Bryman and Bell (2015) specify as a GT analysis method. In accordance with the theory, we coded our data into different categories and subcategories. Since we wrote the theoretical chapter before conducting the interviews, we later had to go back to make sure that the two sections could relate to each other. As Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest, we made a constant comparison of the two sections throughout the thesis project; see figure 7 for illustration of the GT data analysis method.

When the interview notes had been conducted, we started to arrange the notes into various categories. Once this was done, we began to group the categories into themes based on the theoretical chapter, which is a selective coding method according to Bryman and Bell (2015). Apart from being a criterion when using the GT (Bryman & Bell, 2015), it also is a supporting tool to create a systematic common thread throughout the thesis.

Brytting (1991) has discussed the usage of GT to a larger extent than many other authors. First, he suggests that you divide your notes into different categories with A-categories as the first one. This step should be followed by finding links between A-categories to form B-Categories. Brytting (1991) emphasises the importance of dividing the notes into A-categories independently from the the theoretical chapter while the B-categories should be influenced by the theory. We did so in accordance with Brytting's suggestion. The last step is to create C-categories, which should be based on common themes found in the B-categories. On this step, we chose to use Attract, Develop and Retain since it was in accordance with the GT method and since we, by doing so, maintained a common thread of headlines throughout the thesis. See chapter 5 for the coding.

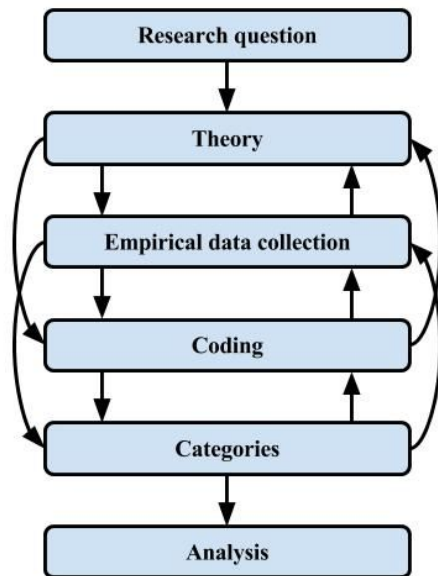


Figure 7. Illustration of our Grounded Theory data analysis method

3.6 Research quality

According to Brytting (1991) validity and reliability might be insufficient means to determine the quality of a research. This statement is also supported by Bryman and Bell (2015) who instead suggest that one should use the following four measurements of quality.

3.6.1 Credibility

The empirical material should be as accurate as possible (Brytting, 1991). To ensure the accuracy, we took notes during the interviews and recorded them as previously described. Afterwards, we sent our notes to the interviewees for approval. No significant changes were requested, which allowed us to confirm that our material was accurately interpreted. The information we received during the interviews was controlled since we conducted several interviews revolving around the same topics.

3.6.2 Transferability

Since a qualitative study usually focuses on a small group of interviewees who share characteristics, the research is most likely not transferable to any person in any other environment (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The transferability should traditionally be achieved by making the study “*hold in the same other context, or even in the same context at some other time*” (pp 398). However, this could due to empirical decisions also be achieved by giving an extensive description (Bryman and Bell, 2015). We have chosen to go with Bryman and

Bell's (2015) second suggestion, and have strived to achieve transferability by thoroughly describe how we have done our research and the context of where it has been performed. Hence, one could more easily copy the context in which our study has been conducted to test the transferability or make comparable studies.

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is achieved by having a high degree of trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To make our thesis trustworthy, we have, apart from taking notes and recording our interviews, had feedback seminars at our university with our peers and several supervisors. Another factor indicating high dependability is that we conducted several interviews independently from each other. Since none of the interviews contradicted each other, we argue that the trustworthiness in the empirical findings are high.

3.6.4 Confirmability

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), confirmability can only be achieved with a limited amount since no one can achieve total objectivity. We have, however, done our best to be as objective as possible by not letting our values affect the empirical findings or our reading of previous theories. Moreover, with a high number of participants in our study, a transparent data collection, and the fact that the area of research is not personal to us or in any way affects our emotions, we believe that the objectivity can be deemed high.

3.7 Limitations of chosen method

All throughout the process, we have made choices of what method to use based on what we consider to be the most appropriate approach for our thesis. With that in mind, we came to the conclusion that a qualitative multiple case study including semi-structured interviews was the most suitable way to go. We, later on, used the GT method to make our analysis. Our choice to conduct a qualitative study might lead to us as authors being less objective, but as Bryman and Bell (2015) state, as long as we are aware of the risk of being too subjective it is more likely we overcome the issue as well. A similar critique is put forward regarding case studies with interviews. However, as explained in *3.2 Research design* and *3.3 Data collection method*, our chosen method is suitable when comparing two cases with the purpose to answer a How-research question, and how our method contributes to answering the question. Another issue is that our research can be hard to generalise, but we argue that there

should be no limit to what can be inspirational and that our research therefore is generalisable.

A critique which has been put forward regarding the GT method is whether or not the authors can ignore their knowledge about other theories until a quite late stage in the analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To exemplify, students or researchers often need to put forward a research suggestion, which should be based on previous findings in the area. The authors of the research must thus learn established theories before beginning their study, which contradicts the purpose of a GT method, arguing that the theory should not be involved until later in the study. However, despite difficulties to neglect previous theories, there are large benefits with GT when it comes to bringing life to a research field by using practical examples (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

4. Empirical findings

Our empirical findings will start with a description of our participants and will be followed by a presentation of the results thematically. We will first present the results associated with attracting, followed by our development and retention results. Each section first presents the football industry case data, followed by our collected data from the knowledge-intensive industry case. We have chosen to present our empirical findings in a dichotomous way in order for the reader to clearly see the different methods used in the two industries. The football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry share all numbered headlines, while the unnumbered headlines are adapted to the approaches used in each industry. We will later in the analysis chapter discuss how these approaches could be transferrable from the football industry to the knowledge-intensive industry.

4.1 Presentation of participants

4.1.1 Selection group 1 - Football Clubs

Our interviewees are representatives from Swedish football clubs operating in Allsvenskan, the highest football league in Sweden, and in Superettan, the second highest league. Six persons have been interviewed, and they have all had careers nationally as well as internationally. Moreover, all six have been involved with GTM in one way or another. They have either been sports scouts or sport chiefs with a direct involvement with the finding and recruiting of talents, or they have been in the industry for an extended period with various key positions throughout the years such as football manager and football coach. These experiences have given them a great insight of how the different processes work and how the GTM challenges are being handled. Moreover, all involved football clubs are international to some extent with international players and with scouting occurring outside the Swedish borders. They focus on getting national and international talents to their respective club. Thus, the Swedish market is the priority.

4.1.2 Selection group 2 - MNC's

The companies represented in this study operate in the consulting industry and in the bank sector, both of which are knowledge-intensive industries. The persons we have interviewed

are part of HR, and recruit either senior talents with existing know-how about the profession or junior talents with the aim to achieve the requiring know-how by development. With this said, they are all in one way or another involved in the recruitment of talents that either directly or in the future will fill knowledge-intensive positions. All firms operate on a global level, however, the persons we spoke to are similarly to the football industry focusing on the Swedish market and the recruitment of talents to Sweden. This recruitment can nonetheless take an international approach by taking inspiration from partners in other countries, and recruiting international talents to the Swedish offices.

Findings

4.2 Attraction

Football clubs

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from the football industry.

4.2.1 Locate

Agents

An agent is a representative for the football player regarding for example transfer negotiations between football clubs. All of our interviewees argued that the most common way to hear about a potential recruit is through the talent's agents. Two interviewees also claimed that they checked every tip they received from agents if those potentially could lead to a recruit. The agent can according to our interviewees be both a benefit and a drawback. There are multiple agents around the world and while most are decent coming with decent tips some are not. The drawback is that agent's sometimes play with the truth and that they tend to demand very high compensation since they also need to get payed. However, overall all representatives emphasised on the importance for a talent to have an agent. If a talent did not have an agent it is hard for him to get noticed by the clubs. Most clubs get more than 100 tips per week through agents, players themselves sending them their play record or through a contact giving the clubs a tip. While two of the clubs had as ambition to quickly screen all tips, the other four deleted a large quantity based on who the tip was sent from.

A scout we spoke to informed that there are loose plans on creating a portal for selling and buying players without involvement from the agents to avoid an intermediary. Such an idea is far from reality today since the industry is very affected by its balance between transparency and secrecy when it comes to recruits according to another interviewees. Through agents the risk of leaking out that a talent is available diminishes, which allows the interested club to finalise the transfer in peace. This depends of course on the agent as well and that he/she does not leak out the information.

Football academy

To be in a football academy means being part of a football development program where they get individual training programs with the aim to be good enough to step up and reach the A-team.

The football academy is a well used tool within all football clubs we spoke to and will be a recurring theme throughout our empirical findings. The academy is a tool for internal recruitment within the football clubs. Most clubs have due to their financial situation, which in some cases is not the best, quite high goals for the recruitment from their own academy. Some example of these targets are:

1. To promote two players each year to the a-team.
2. To have 50 percent of the starting line to originate from the academy.
3. One or two players should each year move to the a-team where they should play 50 percent of the games.

These goals represent the strive to work with internal recruitment within the football clubs even though all football clubs also admit that the goals are hard to meet and they are becoming harder by the day.

“Previously up to seven of the eleven players could originate from the academy, today we have about a third deriving from the academy.” - Alpha, Head of Scouting (Our own translation⁴

⁴ All the following quotes are translated by us from Swedish to English

According to our interviewees some of the clubs collaborate with schools in the surrounding area. The club provides the school with their time and material to teach football and in turn the school presents them to a large number of students, which in the future could be potential talents for the team.

4.2.2 Select

Trial practise

To determine whether or not the potential recruit is a good fit for the football club, they have trial practices. Sometimes the talent gets to practice with the team for a longer period of time in order for the manager to see the development. The same goes for talents from the academy when they try out for the A-team. The younger the potential recruit is, the closer the geographical distance between the player and the club tends to be, which according to all the interviewees simplifies the trial practise period. However, if the players come from across borders trial practices might not take place. One interviewee said that a trial practice could take the form of a loan with a buyout clause. According to our interviewees this method was especially common for clubs with less financial means.

Personality

During the selection phase of the recruitment the football clubs emphasise on the importance of finding a player with the right personality and state of mind. In one interview this is explained by the following quote:

“The easiest part for a player to develop is the technique. Almost anyone can learn that by doing the same practice over and over. The second easiest part to learn is the understanding of the game, which is to learn the big picture of football. The third part is the personality of the player, the player’s drive and ability to push himself.” - Delta, former manager

To confirm that the player has the preferred personality clubs do extensive reference taking. This is done both in secrecy and openly to learn as much as possible about the player. One interviewee states:

“We take references both on pitch and off pitch” - Alpha, Head of Scouting

In four interviews it was emphasised that it is important to take references outside the current club as well because the behaviour of the talent could be affected by the environment in which he currently is. If he is in an environment where he does not get to play he might not show a thrive but he might show a whole other personality off pitch. This is why all clubs take references from current and previous clubs as well as friends, family or other people who might have insight about the player. Besides having a personality fitting the team the talent's driving force is equally important. The clubs never purchase a talent who is unwilling to be purchased or have no development potential.

Digital tools

All the interviewed clubs work in one way or another with digital working tools when they are recruiting new talents. This becomes especially useful when they recruit international talents and are not present in the talent's local environment. One of the programs is called Why Scout and is an extensive database, which allows you as a recruiter to see, among other things, a specific talent's games, strengths and weaknesses and injury history. With other words, clubs can get very detailed information about a certain talent from all over the world, and thereafter make an analysis whether the talent fits the missing position and the rest of the team skill wise. The only thing they cannot see in this program is the personality.

A part of the selection phase of most larger clubs today is a body scan. The purpose of the body scan is to confirm that the talent is in good condition but also to prepare a training schedule for the talent. The body scan is described as a tool to prevent injuries due to changes of environment, both climate and practice wise, as well as a confirmation of the current quality of the physics. This is according to one of our interviewees extra important when it comes to international recruits since the training usually is quite different abroad and the Swedish climate could also affect the body.

International talents

All clubs we interviewed had international players in their A-teams. Personality and culture is a key factor when recruiting international talents, which all interviewees agree upon. The talent might not speak the language but must still be able to adapt to the Swedish environment. Most football clubs had countries where they preferred to attract players from which was done for several reasons. Some examples are that some clubs prefer talents from

Brazil due to high quality and a relatively low price, while some clubs deliberately choose countries where the people have a decent English knowledge. All interviewees agree that if the talent speaks English, he easier adapts to the Swedish environment. The choice of preferred country to collaborate with was also argued to be because of the shared culture between the countries. With similar cultures, the integration of new talents would become easier. When selecting international players it is important to have some sort of support system in the club to handle cultural differences and make sure the talent manages to adjust himself to the life in Sweden. To be able for the club to be supportive they try to put themselves into the talent's feet and identify the potential difficulties he might have when coming to Sweden. The most basic needs, such as accommodation and food, must be satisfied and most clubs offer a solution for this both concerning international players and national players that might have to move to be a part of the football club.

Scouting

It is normally the scout who is part of the locating and selecting process of a new talent. The scout is responsible for all new recruits except the ones promoted from the academy. The scout do a lot of travelling to watch potential recruits play in their current environment. They also take references and make suggestions to the manager and the sport chief regarding new recruits. It is often the manager and the sport chief who specify what the scout should look for. It could concern a specific playing style or a specific position the club is after but the scout should also keep his eyes open for unexpected opportunities.

Most clubs have a limited budget for talents and does therefore only recruit to replace empty positions. All positions have a backup, thus a team could consist of more than 20 players. Therefore, the scout focuses on finding the missing parts of the team. An industry specific factor is that in the football industry there are transfer windows. The transfer windows are the only periods when talents can come and leave the clubs. There is one window in the end of the summer and one in the beginning of the year. These windows are more appropriate outside of Sweden, where the football season is played during the winter season. In sweden the transfer window and its timing presents an issue, which makes the scouting extra important. A player could become interesting for another football club mid-season and if that is the case, the scout must quickly be able to present an option to the manger and the sport

chief. Even though a club only hires for empty positions they always need a list of potential back-ups.

Potential

All clubs are in accordance with potential being the most important criterion when selecting talents. They also agree that sometimes it is hard to define whether or not a talent has potential. One interviewee claimed that just because a 12 year old is great with the ball at the time, he might not be the best in the future. Potential is also important to spot since talents grow physically in different rates they show potential at different times.

“If a player is good at a young age, maybe 12 years old, it is most often depending on his physics” - Delta, former manager

One way to look for potential is by ignoring past results and focus on the development today and the effort the talent is willing to put in. This especially regards young talents.

“For me, a talent is someone who has a certain aptitude along side with a big driving force”
- Delta, former manager

Incentives to attract talents

A part of the selection phase is the negotiations regarding the talent's salary and other benefits he might get if joining the club. Usually, the club has a guideline regarding the salary to avoid injustice between the talents. However, the salary is also affected by what the other clubs offer. All our interviewees claimed that in the end salary plays a big role, but they also mention that they attract talents for development purposes and that the Swedish league is a good starting point for a career on the European market. The Swedish league is ranked number 23 in the world with a close geographical distance to better leagues and can thus attract talents as the first step to other better clubs. The incentives to play football in Sweden are therefore a little higher for international talents outside of Europe wishing to enter the European market. This is why many talents come from Africa and South America. Other parts that usually are discussed during the negotiations are things such as accommodation and access to training facilities.

“In Sweden we do not primarily attract with money, but with the possibility to further down the career earn big money elsewhere” - Beta, Sports chief

Another incentive to attract players is to offer long contracts. A long contract indicates that the club is willing to invest in the talent. For young talents with high potential clubs might offer a 4-5 year long contract. The standard contract in Sweden otherwise lasts approximately three years. At the same time a long contract could be stand in the way of a transfer. Therefore another incentive could according to one interviewee be:

“If you are presented with a better opportunity we will not stand in your way” - Alpha, Head of Scouting

MNC's

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from MNC's in the knowledge-intensive industry.

4.2.3 Locate

Employer branding

One interviewee claimed that by the time the talent applies for a position at the interviewed company, they should know exactly why they want to work there. The company tries to assure this by being part of young talent's academic years and build up a picture of how the company operates and what their values are. The presence in the academic environment of the student increases the closer the student comes to his/her graduation.

Employer branding is mentioned in all four interviews as the most important step to make candidates aware of their existence and apply for an opportunity at their firm. The firm's presence includes guest lectures, showcases at work fairs and similar activities. But the employer branding is not limited only to young talents and the firms constantly try to promote themselves as the best employer within the industry for more senior applicants as well. During all interviews we are told that employer branding to a large extent is about

spreading the values of the organisation as well as to present their vision and what opportunities one might gain from starting working for them.

The knowledge-intensive interviewees focused their discussion on location applications to making the applications find them. It is rare that they search for applicants and offer them a position without the person having applied for a job.

Talent programs

During one interview, talent programs are mentioned as a source to locate talents within the firm. The firm organises a yearly calibration with all employees. During these calibrations the company selects persons who are extra talented and divides them into two categories; next generation and key talents. Next generations are the talents ready to take the next career step, while key talents are those who might not be ready yet but have shown to have potential. They measure the talent of the employees based on previous results and they search for talents who show ability, aspiration and engagement. During the interview it was however stated that these talent programs are decreasing because choosing certain people also means that some people are left out. If the firm engage in some talents more than others, the others may feel demotivated, which prevents them to flourish and become better.

Staffing agencies

One MNC mentioned the usage of staffing agencies to locate talent. This as a method to locate talents without having to use its own resources to do so. The staffing agency finds employees but the company are then the ones who hier the talents.

4.2.4 Select

The recruitment process

All companies have individual screening processes and all of them follow a clear structure even if the structure differs between companies. The firms claim to receive a large number of applications so the first part of the recruitment processes usually starts with a screening of all applications, which quickly leads to many being automatically removed from the process. Two of the interviewees describe the first part of the recruitment processes as a screening of CV, personal letter and grades while the other two use online tests to choose the applications to proceed with.

Even though the standard is to follow a given structure, one interviewee said that it happens they meet a talent who they know they want straight away. Sometimes it also happens that candidates tend to grow along with the process and turn out to be a great fit at the end.

“We have a general recruitment process which we can twist a little depending on the seniority of the person applying and regarding which division he/she is up for”. - Eta, Partner

“In the HR department the strive is to have a homogenous process. We have a very structured process for junior level positions but it tend to be less structured if the seniority of the position increases” - Theta, Hr Generalist

Digital tools

All companies use digital tools in their selection process of new recruits. The digital tools used are online tests as part of their selection process. Through these online tests companies can highlight different attributes of the applicants including analytical ability, logical reasoning and personality. One interviewee especially emphasised the importance of analytical ability, which applicants must have to do a good job. Since this attribute is difficult to spot through an interview the online tests provide an important assisting tool.

The results of the tests are used differently in our interviewed firms. Some firms require a minimum amount of correct answers for the applicant to be eligible to proceed in the process while others just use it as one of many factors in the decision making process.

Interviews

Interviews was also a step all firms have in their recruitment process. The interviews focus on the talent's personality to see if it is a good fit for a firm. The most prominent personality factor is the driving force of the talent. The talent has to be able to motivate his/her choice to apply for the company. Passion for the main business of the company is also of importance, as well as the ability to work in teams.

“We need people who like to work with others and who are good team players, but we also need people who dare to go their own way. Someone who is a team member but who does not compare themselves to others.” - Eta, Partner

Incentives to attract talents

As mentioned a genuine interest in working for the company is important for all firms and also that the talent share the organisation's values. As a result, the companies use their brand and their values as an incentive to get people to apply for a job. For junior positions the organisation's values is what is supposed to attract talents but also the possibility to have a prospering career at the company. Moreover, to be able to offer international opportunities is a strong selling point to young talents and all firms offer this to some extent.

During two of the interviews other incentives like wellness grants, lunch coupons and vacation days are mentioned. At the same time the interviewees argued that these things mostly are an indication of what values the organisations stand for. The industry salary is overall quite standardised and thus not the primary incentive to attract talents.

“We have a gentlemen's agreement regarding salaries for junior positions” - Theta, HR Generalist

Probationary period

All companies uses a six month probationary period before the new talent becomes permanently employed. This is according to the union agreement and opens up an opportunity to see whether or not the employee will be a good fit for the company in the long run. All representatives do however say that the probationary period most often leads to a permanent employment since all MNCs have a rather thought-out screening and recruitment process.

4.3 Develop

Football Clubs

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from the football industry.

4.3.1 Leadership

The coach

The coach⁵ works closely with other support functions of the club to get the best result. There is often a whole team involved in taking care of the talent's personal needs where the coach just is one of many. The team could for example consist of physicians and school personnel. The biggest challenge for many of the coaches we interviewed was to see all the team members. This requires them to time manage in order for every member to be seen and to be given feedback and appreciation.

As previously mentioned, the potential of a talent is sometimes more important than the current performance quality of that talent. A good coach should thus be able to see that potential and foster it accordingly. It is quite common that the team members compare themselves with each other and rank each other. A coach could however have a different view on who the best talent is. The coach has an important role in fostering a healthy environment where all talents develop their individual skills for personal development but also to increase the team's performance as a whole.

Back-ups

At least half of the talents in a football team are backups. The size of a complete team in Sweden is usually around 20-25 talents whereas in higher ranked international leagues the number could be even higher. The competition is high among the talents since only 11 can start in the starting line. It could therefore be very psychologically demanding to be a backup since you never know when you get to play. In turn, they require more attention from leaders than talents who are in the starting line.

"You need to see their progress even if it does not take them to the starting line" - Delta, former coach & manager

The backups are equally important to the team and if they do not feel appreciated of the club they might wish to leave the team. Therefore coaches must focus extensively on these talents

⁵ In Sweden there are two different words for the manager of a national team and the manager for a club in a national league. Therefore we use the term *manager* for the manager of a national team and *coach* for the manager for a club in a national league.

to prevent them from losing their motivation. This requires many conversations, attention and the ability to see advancements even if they are not playing.

4.3.2 Training

Individual plans

All our interviewees claimed that individual plans are being made for each talent. Normally a development plan starts its course from a young age. The need for individual plans is important to identify and utilise each talent's strengths in the best way, which in turn improves the team's development as well. The Swedish football academies have well organised development systems since they put so much effort on their academy talents due to a low budget for purchasing pre-developed talents from the outside.

“I have always tried to develop the individual talent and by that lift the whole team. We always work with individual development plans including many conversations.” - Delta, former coach & manager

Collaboration with educational institutions

Specific characteristics such as physical requirements opens up for the opportunity to have a career at young age but also for the possibility of having the career ending early. Therefore, the football career often goes hand in hand with studies. As mentioned before some football clubs are cooperating with schools regarding supply of talents and football training in the schedule of the students. One of the football clubs have a close relation to two high schools in the area as well as with several secondary schools in the county. Two interviewees put a lot of emphasis on the importance of studies and that it was a requirement for young talents to finish high school with decent grades if they want to play football. This is an example of how the collaboration between schools and clubs can be for the benefit of the talent's personal and professional development.

Feedback

Regular feedback sessions are conducted, which includes planned face-to-face meetings and informal chats on the pitch. One coach described that some of the most important conversations take place between the locker room and the football pitch. To get feedback is much appreciated among the talents.

Digital tools

All our interviewed clubs utilise digital tools during their practices. It is for example common to videotape the games to later watch the game to see what can be improved. This is done both to develop the team as a whole and to develop the individual talent.

MNCs

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from MNC's in the knowledge-intensive industry.

4.3.3 Leadership

The manager

Common for all of our interviewees is their emphasis on the manager's role regarding employee development. In order to develop you must work for leaders who sees your potential and who encourages you to become better. Therefore, the expectations of managers in these companies are high. When looking for talents the manager must have a broad approach and believe that everyone has the potential to develop because people develop at different rates. One way of fostering a developing environment is through delegating responsibility. All four interviewees discussed the importance of letting talents get responsibility as early as possible.

“Our starting point is to make sure everyone has the same opportunity to develop.”

- Eta, Partner

Self-development

Within knowledge-intensive firms, the driving force and self involvement of the development is of very high importance according to the interviewees. While the manager is responsible for fostering the environment, they are more eager to help talents who show interest in wanting to develop.

4.3.4 Training

Individual development plans

One interviewee describes that when new talents start at the company they all get a personal coach, which often is a bit more experienced employee working in the same department who has developed his or her leadership skills. This is of importance to both the more senior employees and the talent since in order to succeed in the consulting industry one must know how to lead people and to be able to act as a sounding board. The interviewee furthermore explains that once a year a structural evaluation conversation is taking place where the manager and the talent discuss what has been done over the year and how to look forward.

“One develop in different rates. Some become better on technical parts and others become better to understand the bigger picture. One has different talents and we need to, to an as long extent as possible, make sure everyone has the same opportunity to develop. This is our starting point”. - Eta, Partner

However, even if the manager is responsible for the development plan it is much up to the talent to be honest to him/herself and realise his/hers strengths and weaknesses and to thrive towards his/her own development.

Talent programs

Talent programs can as mentioned be a tool to locate and select talents within the company, it is mostly a development program for employees. During the interviews a talent program is described as a “fast track” upwards the company career ladder. However, all interviewees claim it is a decreasingly used tool, which is more described under “Attract: talent programs”.

Feedback

Three of the four companies we interviewed described that the talent is appointed a mentor who can either be a superior or a person in the same department but with more experience. They further described how the talent and the mentor have feedback sessions one to two times per year. The fourth company does not work with a mentorship but does instead on a yearly base conduct a calibration where all superiors evaluate internal talents. However, this process is likely to change due to the millennial generation entering the labour market. The

new system should focus more on future potential and the talent's driving force rather than historical performance.

4.4 Retain

Football Clubs

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from the football industry.

4.4.1 Work Conditions

Basic needs

Relocation is a common part of the football industry and many talents have to move either from another city in Sweden or from abroad. Some transfer alone and some with their entire families. If the talent moves alone, especially young ones, many Allsvenskan teams offer accommodation, which could be in the same house as other talents from distant places. Such a solution does both fulfill basic needs such as having a roof over one's head but it does also contribute to the social life. If the talents live close to each other they can more easily get to know each other. By making the talent feel safe and happy both on the pitch and off pitch, the talent will more likely want to stay in the club and he will also more likely perform better on the field. Two of the clubs we spoke to had hired personnel to take care of basic needs whilst two clubs had volunteers helping the club. The other two clubs were unsure on how their club approached this issue.

“We want to create a feeling of belonging, like a family” - Zeta, coach

Mentor systems

To greet new members to the team all football clubs utilises a mentoring system. Some have official buddies, which could be older members of the team. Others have more informal systems, where the coach could ask on in the team to pay extra attention to the new talent. Cultural similarities is taken into account when choosing a buddy. If no one else is from the talent's country, there might be someone who speaks the same language, is the same age or shares the same interests. Even though Swedish and/or English is the main language during practice, the team consists with talents with often more than one national background, which

gives the team a quite broad availability of languages and culture. Since most clubs consists of teams in different age groups, some interviewees say they have mentors between different age groups. For younger talents it is stated to be very inspiring to have a talent playing in the A-team as a mentor. To have an older talent as a mentor helps building the team spirit, it is motivational and might prevent talents from switching clubs.

Back-ups and development

As mentioned before a large part of the team are backups. This group strives very hard to reach the starting line and if another club offers them the possibility to play more, they might want to transfer to that club. It is therefore important the club puts a lot of effort in making the backups feel as a part of the team and still give them feedback for their progress even if it is not enough to start the game. This is an important step to retain the talents because backups is of high value for all clubs.

Contract

Regarding the youth team only the older talents and the best ones are engaged in a contract. The contract is on one hand a reward to the talent and on the other hand it is a way to retain the talent and to work with him in the long term. Otherwise, the talents can come and go as they please. However, once they have reached the age of 15 they become licensed and does therefore need to have some sort of contract, this also means they are only allowed to leave the club during one month in the fall. The interviewee emphasises on the fact that the most important factor is that the talent enjoys playing football and that he thinks it is fun. If they are having fun it will enhance the chance of them staying in the club. During the talent's time in the club they should be well and get the best education possible.

4.4.2 Opportunities

To be on loan

The football club can both borrow players from other clubs and send their own players on loan. In some cases a loan is a step towards acquiring a new talent, without needing to invest a lot of money. In other cases it is a way to keep the talent within the club; he might not be needed today but who could be valuable for the team in the future. All our interviewees argue that they prefer owning their talents and that they would rather lend a talent to another club than lending a talent from another club to their own team. The interviewees also claim that it

is more common to loan players if it regards a small club with a low budget. but they are still open for loans to the team as well as lending out their own talents to other clubs. Also, as previously mentioned, loans are common when it comes to international recruits from example African countries, due to the limited possibilities for trial practices.

To let the talent go

Most of the football clubs we spoke to claim to have a high turnover in the teams. Talents come and go, and it is seen as a part of the natural cycle of the industry. The representatives we spoke to explained that even though they want the talent to stay, they do not prevent the talent to go if they wish to do so.

“We have our place in the nutritional chain and we have thus to accept that our players move on” - Beta, Sports chief

The fact that talents within the football industry rotate among clubs is well known, which is also why the backups and the scouting role are so important. Rather than focusing on retaining talents, most clubs put in large efforts in finding new talents and develop the existing talents in the teams. Some clubs are even focusing on increasing the turnover since it is a way for the club to make money and make room for new talents. Since they primarily hire for empty positions it happens they have to sell talents that do not necessarily want to be sold. Hence, in accordance with many representatives we spoke to, retaining is not the first priority.

MNC's

The following sections are based on interviews with representatives from MNC's in the knowledge-intensive industry.

4.4.3 Work Conditions

Union agreements

All MNCs we spoke to are connected to a union agreement. However, one company has a secondary option for its employees and decision mostly depends on what pension program the employees wish to take part of. To be joint to a union agreement presents both a solution

for retaining its employees as well as improving the working conditions they offer their employees. In accordance with most union agreements, a three month notice is required from both the talent's and the MNC's side, which prevents the flexibility to leave. None of the MNCs uses contract employment since it is not inline with the union agreements.

Mentor system

By a mentorship the aspiration is, besides developing, to create a creative work atmosphere, which hopefully gets the talents to stay in the firm. Mentorship is especially important for the younger category of talents. According to one of the representatives the younger generation is often referred to as millennials, and they are now entering the labour market with a new demand on mentorship. The millennials are familiar with having a mentor guiding them and will most likely therefore wish for a mentor in their professional career as well.

Organisational values

During all of our interviews, values is mentioned as a tool to create a feeling of belonging, which should help the MNC retain its employees. All organisations strive to be value driven with the hope that their employees share the same values.

4.4.4 Opportunities

Career opportunities

Our interviewed MNCs take great pride in offering extensive career opportunities, and sees this as a key factor for people to stay in the organisation. They are all aware that many young talents consider them as a good career start, but the MNCs would prefer if they were seen as THE career and not just a part of it. To have an impact on employee's career ambitions they try from an early start to show what opportunities that lay ahead and they also use the individual development plans. To give the talent a clear career plan, the talent always has a "next goal" to work towards and does hence not feel the need to look for opportunities elsewhere.

"We see our employees and make sure they constantly get challenged...but it should not be a burden. They should feel they are going somewhere and think: next year I will be able to do this and then I will be promoted to a senior..." - Eta, Partner

To be on loan

The organisation does at times loan employees from subcontractors when they need a very rare, it might be unexisting, that companies borrow employees from direct competitors or lend their employees to competitors.

To let talents go

All MNCs want employees who share the same value as the organisation and if this is not the case they are not a good fit for the company. But they strive to keep their employees to as large extent as possible and are keen on letting them have a prosperous career within the organisation. They do however stress that there are no hard feelings if a talent wants to leave and try something else. Many employees do actually come back later in their career and in those cases they are very welcome to rejoin.

“It is always sad when someone leaves but at the same time we are realists. If someone chooses us as their first employer it is not weird if they want to try something else after a couple of years...you should want to come here everyday and if that is not the case anymore maybe it is best if they leave. But that does not mean we want them to leave, we want them to stay as long as possible”. - Eta, Partner

4.5 Summary of empirical findings

We have now presented our empirical findings from both the football and the knowledge-intensive industry. Both industries work with issues such as Locating and Selecting talents as well as Leadership and Training. The industries also have Work Conditions and Opportunities in mind when it comes to handling talents. Similarities between the industries include development plans, feedback and mentor systems, the acknowledgement of the importance of the manager and the acceptance of letting talents go. Despite these similarities the two industries work with these activities to different extent, where the football industry has worked with many of the issues in more detail. The knowledge-intensive industry understand the need to tackle these issues but are still in the working process to find the best approaches toward them. Moreover, the football industry has a different view of what a talent is, where they consider everyone in the team a talent, whilst we, based on our interviews, interpreted it as the MNCs only consider the top performers as

talents. In the next two chapters we discuss how we have determined our empirical finding headlines and common themes, and we will also analyse which methods used in the football industry could be inspirational for MNCs. We refer to figure 12 and 13 for a more illustrated summary of the empirical findings.

5. A grounded theory analysis

This chapter presents how we have coded our data into categories, based on a Grounded Theory Analysis. The data has been placed into categories to find common themes. First, we describe how we bring forth our A-categories. Following this, we present our B-categories and how we chose them, and last we introduce our C-categories.

5.1 Category A

First, we coded the interviews from the football industry case (FIC) and the knowledge-intensive industry case (KIC) separately. The notes from the FIC were divided into 21 categories, which are displayed in figure 8. In the same manner, the notes from the KIC were separated into 19 categories, which are shown in figure 9. The categorisation was based on words used in quotes, as well as on the context of the quote. Hence, when we divided the quotes into categories, we were first and most interested in the purpose of the quote.

All categories are based on interview quotes. More specifically, the FIC-categorisation is based on 250 quotes while the KIC-categorisation is based on 180 quotes. It is worth noting that some quotes are repeated multiple times in more than one category, while others are just used once. This is because the quotes could be applicable to different topic areas. Since our focus was on the purpose the quote tried to fulfill, we had no particular words in mind that were more interesting than others. Furthermore, since we specifically asked our interviewees to describe and exemplify how they managed different GTM challenges, most answers were descriptions of processes. Each representative had their own vocabulary, which often is affected by terms used in their respective organisation or football club, and we did therefore strive to focus on the whole picture rather than specific words. Words can have different meanings depending on who says them, and in which context it is being said. Moreover, as shown in figures 8 and 9 below, some categories share the same name. Taking the “*Digital tools*”-categories for the FIC as example, they are named based on what *methods* the football clubs uses regarding certain challenges. However, if one looks at the categories as a whole, they are based on the *purpose*, that is, to either develop talents or to select talents.

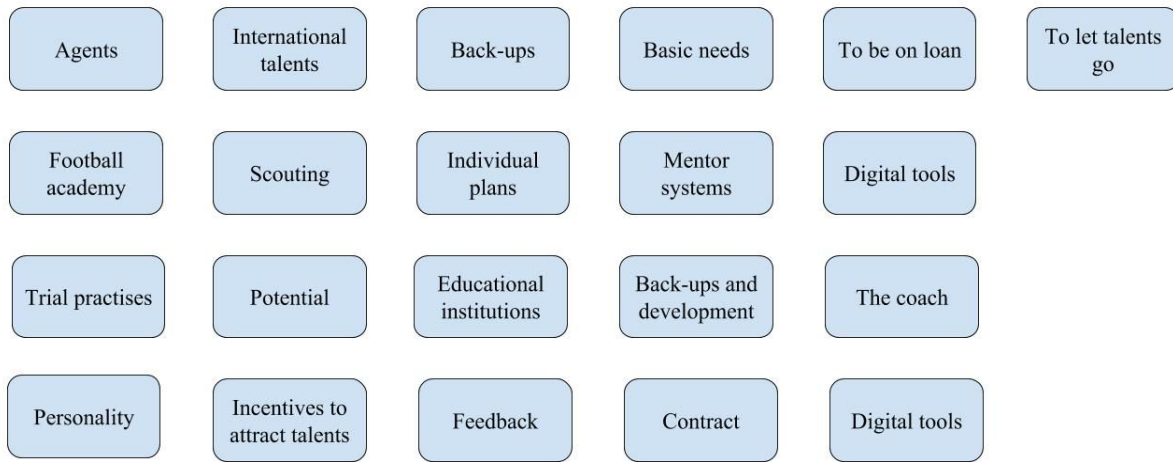


Figure 8. Coding of football industry interviews into A-categories



Figure 9. Coding of knowledge-intensive industries into A categories.

5.1.1 Description of the A-categories

Here a short description of each category will follow (F=football industry, K= knowledge-intensive industry):

F1. Agents: Quotes that in one way or another revolved around how football clubs receive tips and learn about potential recruits.

F2. Football academy: Sentences that describes how the football clubs use their own football academy to locate recruits.

F3. Trial practises: Descriptions of how football clubs use trial practises or similar to ensure the quality of new recruits.

F4. Personality: Quotes of how the the football clubs prioritise the personality of the talent when evaluating potential recruits.

F5. Digital tools: Descriptions of how football clubs utilises digital tools to ensure the quality of the new talents.

F6. International talents: Quotes regarding special adjustments which are done to the recruitment process if the new talent is from abroad.

F7. Scouting: Descriptions of the usage of scouts and the term scouting.

F8. Potential: Illustrative sentences of the importance of looking at the potential in new recruits.

F9. Incentives to attract talents: Sentences about the incentives clubs use to attract a talent to that specific club.

F10. The coach: Statements of how the role of the coach and other leading figures in the team matter.

F11. Back-ups: Explanations of how being a backup affects the development of talents and how.

F12. Individual development plans: Descriptions of how and why the football club use individual development plans.

F13. Collaboration with educational institutes: Statements of how football clubs collaborate with schools in order to develop talents.

F14. Feedback: Explanations of how football clubs emphasise feedback

F15. Digital tools: Sentences about how digital tools are used in the development process of talents.

F16. Basic needs: Quotes of the basic needs which affect the wellbeing of talents.

F17. Mentor systems: Descriptions of the usage of mentor systems to enhance the wellbeing of the talents.

F18. Backups and development: Statements of how the likelihood that the talent will stay in the club is dependent of the position in the team, and the development the talent have shown and might get from staying.

F19. Contracts: Descriptions of how the terms of the conditions affect the willingness to stay in the club as well as how contracts can be used to make talents stay.

F20. To be on a loan: Explanations of how in-loan and out-loan can affect the retaining of talents.

F21. To let the talents go: Statements about the need to sometimes not retain the talents.

K1. Employer branding: Descriptions of how MNCs use employer branding to get talents to apply for positions at their company.

K2. Talent programs: Explanations regarding how MNCs can use talent programs to find talents within the organisation.

K3. Staffing agencies: Quotes about how MNCs can use staffing agencies as a helping tool in the recruitment process.

K4. The recruitment process: Descriptions of how the recruitment process looks like, from start to finish.

K5. Digital tools: Sentences about how digital tools provide a support when deciding whom to recruit.

K6. Interviews: Statements about what the MNCs try to achieve by conducting interviews.

K7. Incentives to attract: Sentences about what the MNCs use as incentives to attract talents to apply for a position at that specific company.

K8. Probationary period: How the MNCs may use probationary periods to ensure the right fit between the company and the new acquired talent.

K9. The manager: Descriptions of how the MNCs believe that the role of the managers should be used to develop the employees.

K10. Self development: Statements regarding the talent's own responsibility regarding development

K11. Individual development plans: Descriptions regarding the usage of individual development plans.

K12. Talent programs: Explanations of how the MNCs use talent programs to develop the employees.

K13. Feedback: Statements of how the MNCs use and provide feedback.

K14. Union agreements: Quotes about how the work conditions are affected by union agreements.

K15. Mentor systems: Descriptions of how mentor systems are used in MNCs.

K16. Organisational values: Statements of the importance of the organisational values in the purpose of retaining employees in the company.

K17. Career opportunities: Sentences about how internal career opportunities are used to retain the employees.

K18. To let talent go: Descriptions of the MNCs reflections on letting employees go.

K19. To be on loan: Explanations about how MNCs might loan or lend their employees to other companies.

5.2 Category B

We chose the B categories based on both the football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry. As with the A-categories, we focused on the highlights of what was being said during the interviews. In this step, we also focused on finding purpose similarities. To exemplify, when the football industry spoke about *agents* and *football academies*, we saw similarities with the purpose which was aimed to be achieved, with MNCs when they discussed *Employer branding*, *Talent programs* and *Staffing agencies*. In one way or another these topics were all related to *locating* employees and thus, our first B-category took shape and was named *Locate*. The same method was used for choosing *Select* as our second B-category. To ensure the relevance for this category, we screened through our theoretical framework and found that the topic of locating employees was repeatedly brought up there as well.

Besides finding purpose similarities, we also focused on finding method differences in *how* to approach the specific purpose. The two following categories were chosen as *Leadership* and *Training*. Both categories have A-categories which in some way concern the development of talents. For example, the A-categories to Leadership are among others *The coach* and *Back-ups*, and some A-categories to Training are *Individual development plans* and *Feedback*. The differences between the two categories is that Leadership discuss motivational factors for development while Training brings up more concrete methods used to develop talents. There is hence a distinctive difference in *how* to reach the purpose, where in this case the purpose is referred to *development*.

The two final categories are *Work conditions* and *Opportunities*. The A-categories belonging to Work conditions regard which factors that affect the way a company choose to treat their

employees or are forced to treat them, for example *Basic needs* and *Union agreements*. Both of these A-categories are conditions that aim to retain the employees/players. Below *Opportunities* we have among others *To be on loan* and *Career opportunities*, which discuss how opportunities within a company or a club affect the willingness of employees to either stay or leave. The overall purpose for both Work conditions and Opportunities is Retention of employees. In figure 10 and 11 we show which A-categories belong to each B-category.

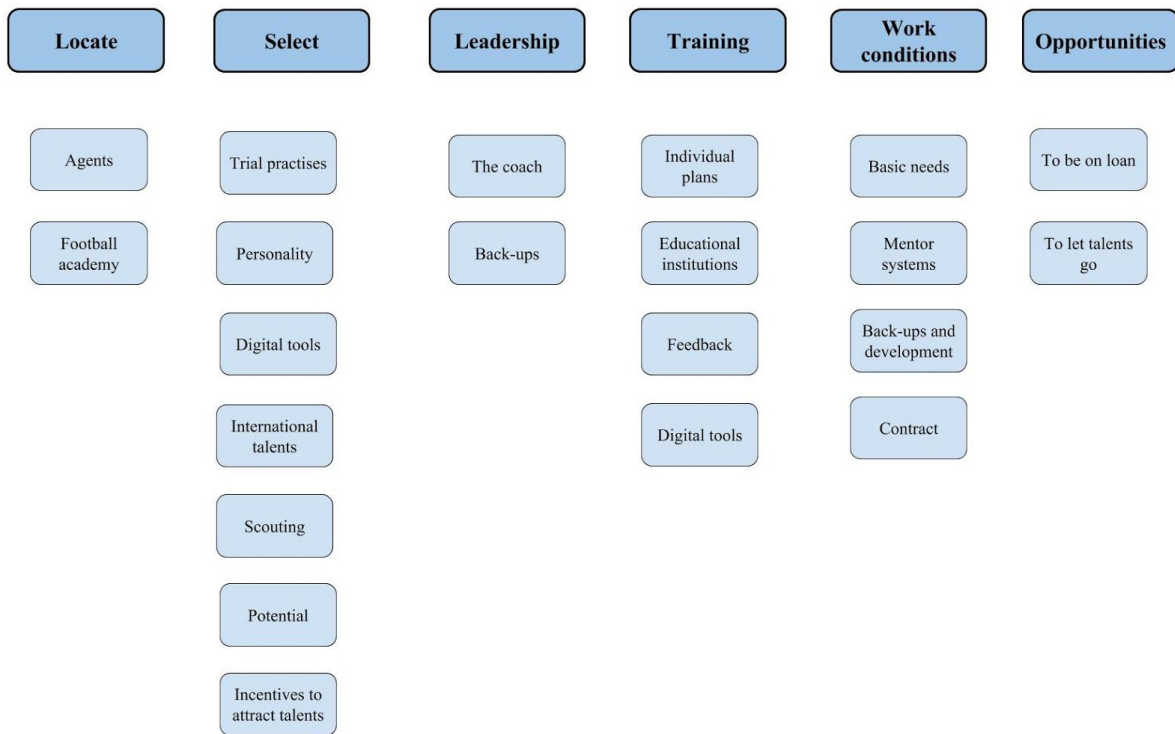


Figure 10. Coding of interviews in the football industry.

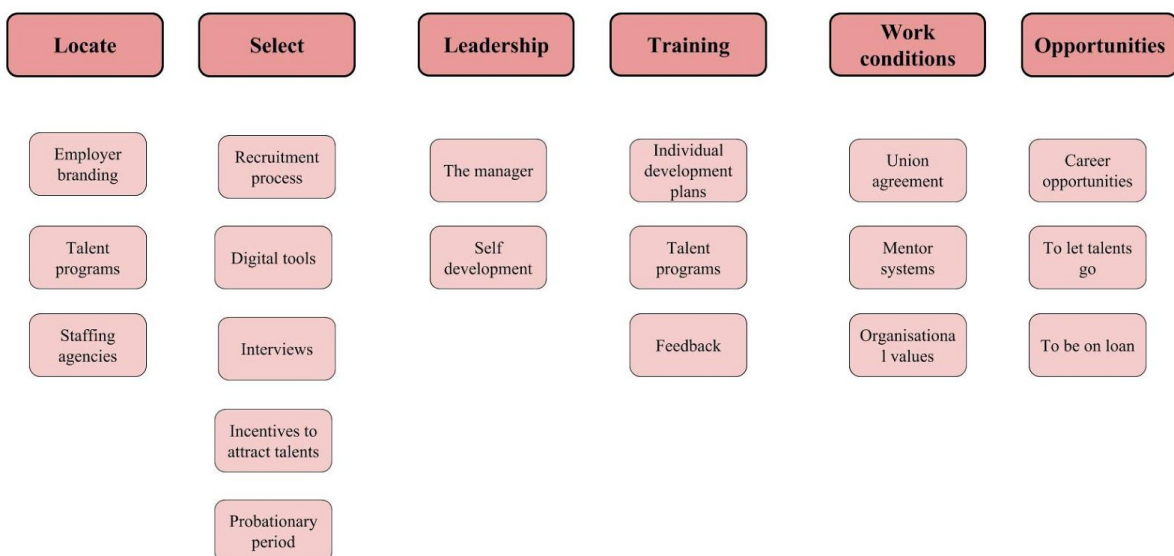


Figure 11. Coding of interviews in the knowledge-intensive industry.

5.3 Category C

The last level of categories was based on themes that could be found in our A and B-categories, as well as in our theoretical framework. We have in our theoretical framework defined the three GTM challenge areas as *Attract*, *Develop* and *Retain*. To explain in more detail our previously mentioned B-categories *Locate* and *Select* are according to our empirical findings as well as the theoretical chapter two methods on how to approach the issue of attracting employees. Therefore, *Attract* was chosen as our first C-category.

In the same manner, *Leadership* and *Training* are, as described under the B-categories, related to development since both are methods on *how* to reach the purpose of developing talents. *Development* is also one of the challenges regarding our theoretical framework and was therefore chosen as our second C-category.

Work conditions and *Opportunities* are two tracks we found in our empirical work which are related to the retention of talents and both tracks are also challenges described in the theory. Therefore, *Retain* became our third and last C-category.

Our three C-Categories is hence, *Attract*, *Develop* and *Retain*. The complete coding and categorisation of the interviews can be found in figure 12 och figure 13,

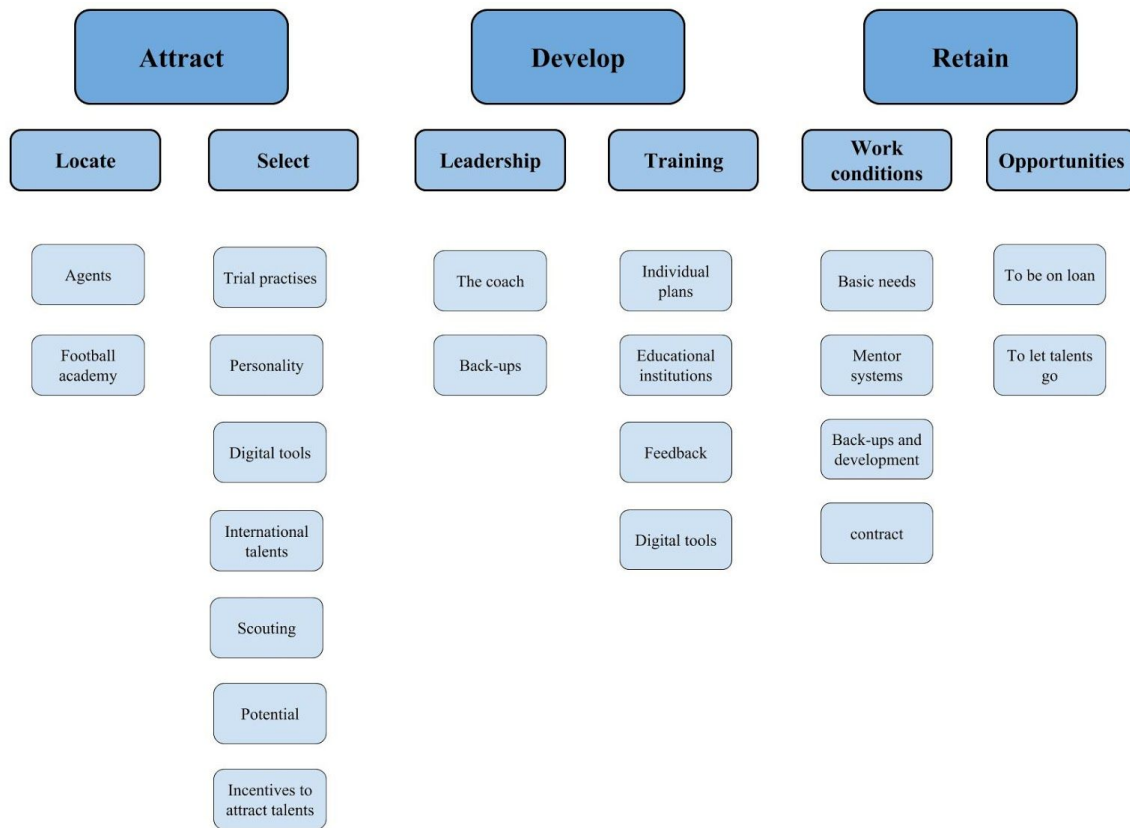


Figure 12. Coding of the football industry interviews.



Figure 13. Coding of the knowledge-intensive industry interviews.

6. Analysis

The analysis include how the football industry manages various GTM challenges in accordance with our empirical findings, via the grounded theory method. We will also analyse how the methods used by the football industry could be translated to MNCs.

6.1 Attract

6.1.1 Locate

Locate internally

Both representatives from the football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry mentioned methods to locate talents. These methods can be divided into two tracks, where one is about finding internal talent and one is to find external talent. In the football industry, the internal part is done through the academy, while MNCs use talent programs to a less extent than the football industry. The football academy is a well planned out system to internally find and develop talents, which is in line with Sharma and Bhatnagar's (2009) suggestion that firms should use their own youth talent pool to strategically plan out a succession of the current talent. The MNC talent programs can also be considered to be a strategic plan for succession but since only one of the four representatives claimed to use such methods, we see indications that the football industry have more developed strategies for locating talents within the firm. Hence, we argue that many MNCs are not following Sharma and Bhatnagar's recommendation and could therefore possibly be inspired by the solutions found in the football industry. It is also emphasised in Tower Watson's report (2014) that strategic plans for locating talents are important in order to find them, but they are also important to get talents to apply for their first job at the specific MNC, that is to attract them.

Locate externally

The external location of the MNC is mostly done through employer branding. Just as Tarique and Schuler (2010) argue, there are two types of employer branding: the one concerning the MNC's rumour as an employer and the other one concerning the overall perception of the

company. We state that MNCs have more developed strategies for employer branding than the football industry. The football industry basically only market their academy and if they are in any international tournaments. Very little focus is put on the football club's policies towards its talents, which the MNCs put much focus on. The main employer branding from the football industry concerns their ability to develop talents, and the international opportunities the clubs can offer. MNCs on the other hand focus more on aspects such as the corporate culture, the internal opportunities and what values the organisations has, as well as the international career opportunities and development opportunities. According to Tarique and Schuler (2010) employer branding should focus on the company itself, which makes it interesting to see that both the football industry representatives and the MNC representatives mentioned career opportunities outside the club/MNC as an employer branding method, when this essentially focuses on what could happen when a talent leaves the company. The employer branding performed by MNCs include presence at fairs at universities, which according to Farndale et al. (2010) is a good approach in order to make talents understand which skills they need to have to work for the MNC. To be innovative regarding locating new talents is in line with the recommendations from Meister (2010) who argues that firms, for example, should use social media more to locate talents. Football clubs rarely use digital platforms or social media for employer branding but they do however use databases with talent cards as a part of locating talent. Once they receive a tip they find interesting they start to look into such a database to learn more about the talent. Equally, the MNCs could use social media to headhunt talents themselves, however none of the representatives claimed to use this method today. Neither do any of the MNCs mention a self-created database for talents, which thus could be an inspiration from the football industry for MNCs to take into consideration.

Instead of waiting for talents to apply for positions in their team, clubs actively look up and find talents themselves or receive tips from agents. This is done through a complex network of agents and scouts. Agents work directly for the talents with the aim to find them the best possible positions. Just as Beechler and Woodward (2009) claim, relationship building is highly essential today in such a service-oriented business environment and the club's relationship with agents is equally essential regarding if a tip will be further checked or not. This network system is not used in any of the MNCs we spoke to. However, one company

used a staffing agency to find talents, which in one way can be compared to agents since both aim to locate talents for a specific organisation and both get compensation if they make a deal. The football clubs use agents to actively give them suggestions on who to hire even if that talent currently plays for another club. To look for talents at the company's competitors could hence be a strategy for the MNCs to duplicate.

6.1.2 Select

Focus on potential talents and personality

All clubs we interviewed argued that when looking for talents they try to focus on finding development potential and not necessarily talents that already have developed their skill set to the fullest. However, this approach is still quite rare (Farndale et al., 2010). It is more common to focus on talents delivering results, which can stare you blind as a recruiter. A thrive to succeed can sometimes be considered more important than having a natural aptitude for something. Both the football industry and the MNCs are aware of the neglectance of potential talents, but the MNCs in particular, still focus to a large extent on historical achievements to determine the future potential of the talents. While the football industry uses methods such as references from the talent's personal life, MNCs only use professional references. Instead, MNCs use extensive personality tests (Page, 2016) to find the most suitable fit but like it was said during the interviews, these tests should not be taken too seriously. The method of taking off-the-field references used by the football industry could be an inspiration for MNCs when the purpose is to find the right talent with the right potential and personality. This could help MNCs to find people with a genuine thrive to succeed within the company. However, this approach could also be difficult to implement since MNCs tend to depend on work unions and it could be considered to intrude a talent's personal life.

Scouting and trial practises

Scouting is a well used term within the football industry and it is used to select talents based on tips from agents, but also to scout the market to find talents by themselves. Scouting is the overall process, which starts from the identification of a talent and ends with a closed deal. Shurler et al. (2011) describe how one can differentiate the recruitment processes depending on the person applying for the position and exactly this is done when a football club scouts for a new potential talent. Depending on where the talent currently is located and the terms of his contract the scouting can look very differently but one common ingredient is that there

always is watching of past performances and reference taking. If the talent has had an extensive career, more data is available, which makes the talent easier to screen. If it is a younger more inexperienced talent the scout most often puts more effort in traveling to see the talent play in his current team, but it is also more likely that more trial practices take place. Similarly, it is easier to look at a talent which is geographically close than a talent that comes from another continent. The football clubs use the trial practises as an assurance that the talent coming to the team will fit in. Similarly, MNCs use a six month probationary period to ensure the same. Thus, both industries already use similar methods to ensure a right fit.

The MNCs do not have any methods in place that are comparable to the scouting processes, but they do have other ways to test whether the talent would fit into the organisation or not. All of the MNCs that we spoke to uses standardised method for recruitment, unless it regards senior positions, where all applicants go through the same process. The process used by MNCs is mostly consistent of interviews with HR departments and leaders in the organisation and is mostly a tool to ensure a good personality fit as well to ensure the talent obtains the required attributes. While the all MNC recruitment processes are similar to each other, the order on which the psychometric tests are done differ between the companies. This difference could according to Björkman and Welch (2015) be explained by local adoption methods.

Since the MNC recruitment processes are not as personalised as the one of the football industry, they may miss out on great potential due to standardised processes. Even though authors like Meister (2010) and Farndale et al. (2010) claim that due to a diversified workforce diversified recruitment processes are needed, many MNCs still choose to go the traditional way. However, one reason for the homogenous processes is due to the high amount of applications, which means it could be the most effective way for MNCs to handle this issue, but the cost might be the loss of potential talents. It should therefore be stated that the homogeneous methods not necessarily are bad according to Collings (2016) who argues that to implement HR strategies over the entire organisation normally is a GTM challenge. If considering both what Meister (2010), Farndale et al. (2010) and Collings (2016) state, the most desirable approach seems to be to have a strategy which is implemented in the entire organisation and that emphasises diversification on an individual basis.

Incentives

The football clubs mainly use economic incentives to attract the talents to come to their club but they also use career opportunities as an important incentive. Especially the last factor becomes important regarding talents from other continents who want to gain a foothold in the European football industry. MNCs do however claim that for junior positions the salary is not the primary incentive to attract talents but instead the possibility to develop within the firm is seen as the strongest incentive. The more senior the position is, the more important the salary incentive becomes. Moreover, Towers Watson (2014) has found it to be important that companies offer a complete package with a clear statement of what is included if one starts at the firm. Harvey (2013) also argues that social factors are becoming more important than the actual work task. The social factor is to some extent touched upon in both the football industry and in MNCs, but based on our empirical findings, it is not considered to be the most important incentive. Although our interviewed MNCs and football clubs state that they offer a complete package, were the football industry for example at times offer accommodation and social support while the MNCs offer wellness grants, it has in their experience never been the decisive factor.

6.2 Develop

6.2.1 Leadership

The management

Boxall et al. (2007) argue that IHRM activities may include issues such as development and employee relations, but according to some executive managers GTM is outside their comfort zone (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). In the football industry the IHRM activities are complex and each activity is often connected to one role, where for example the coach is responsible for the development while the scout is responsible for the recruitment. MNCs on the other hand often have one role to handle all of these issues, even if they have a HR team taking care of these processes together. According to the MNCs it is the manager who is responsible for the overall development of the talent, but the willingness to help bring out the full potential of the talent is also much dependent on the talent him/herself. This statement is in accordance with Pink (2001) who argues that employees are assumed to be responsible for their own learning and career development. It also goes hand in hand with what was

discussed in the attract-section of this chapter, that football coaches focus a lot on talent's thrive to succeed and not only of their current set of skills. To have a clear division of the leadership as in the football industry, could potentially be beneficial for the MNCs since it is mentioned during the MNC interviews that it is hard for the managers to find time to support the development of talents due to the fact that a lot of time is spent on for example recruitment. If MNCs more clearly would divide those functions into more than one role the managers could possibly be able to both support and recruit talents better.

6.2.2 Training

Individual development plan

As mentioned in 5.1.1 *Locate*, the football industry uses academies while MNCs sometimes have internal talent programs to spot talents. A significant difference between the usage of the academy and the usage of talent programs is that in the academy all members of the club are considered to be talents. Independently of the talent's success, he still gets an individual training program and gets regular individual feedback. For MNCs on the other hand, they touch upon the fact that while some talents may get extra focus, other talents are excluded. With this said we argue that, by looking at the football industry, there is still potential to include all MNC talents into such a program. One inspirational solution could therefore be to create a talent program, which includes all employees of the organisation, where an individual approach is used and adapted to the level of that specific employee. This way, no one should feel left out.

The football industry put a lot of effort in creating individual development plans for all their talents. This means that even talents sitting on the bench and who gets no play time still gets a training and development plan to keep up the motivation and to not stop learning. During the interviews it was known that to see *everyone* in the team is essential for the team spirit as well as for the the talent's development and wellness. Thus, the clubs have learned how to manage their workforce effectively, which is in accordance with Beechler and Woodward (2009) and Collings and Mellahi (2009). Some MNCs we spoke to state that even though all talents joining the company gets an individual development plan, it can, as previously mentioned, sometimes be hard to highlight everyone, which might make some talents feel left out.

Feedback

Goldberg (2007) states that most managers do not know how to provide feedback. However, based on our MNC interviews, they seem to have a very clear idea on how to give feedback and also stresses out the importance of feedback. A new generation is entering the labour market. Namely the millennials (Schuler et al., 2011; Marjan, 2017) and based on our interviews the millennial generation requires a mentor or someone who can guide them to develop and become better. According to Beechler and Woodward (2009), people born in the same period also share common attitudes and preferences, which is clearly shown in this case. It is also in accordance with Harvey (2013) and the fact that employees value other factors than just the work task itself. However, we can see that MNCs put too much focus on previous results during their feedback conversations and less focus on how the talents should approach future achievements. This is according to both the MNCs themselves and the football industry an issue, and both industries claim that feedback talks need to include individual future development potential, which the football industry at this state is better at.

Another significant difference in the approach to feedback between the football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry is how often feedback is given. In the interviews with MNCs, they talk about structured meetings that occur once or twice every year, while the football industry describes feedback as an ongoing conversation. The football industry emphasises that feedback does not have to be provided through formal meetings but could instead be a part of the daily conversation. To use the football industry approach to when and how the feedback is given could potentially de-dramatise the feedback situation, which in turn could lead to a more open relationship between the management and the talent.

6.3 Retain

6.3.1 Work conditions

Contracts and union agreements

The characteristics of employment are rather different when you compare the football industry with the knowledge-intensive industry. The football industry uses contracts as the standard for employment which means that the talents never become permanently employed. Among the MNCs we spoke to it is instead standard to use a probationary period which after

six months automatically turns into permanent employment. A reason for this existing difference could be union agreements. The football industry is comparably very unaffected by union agreements, while all MNCs we spoke to had to follow union agreement regulations. One of the MNCs we talked to had the option of not being involved in a union agreement, which mostly concerned, as Marjan (2017) specifies it, key positions within the firm. According to the MNC, this option existed to show flexibility towards pension systems, but it could also be other underlying factors like being more adaptable when it comes to the firm's top talents (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The contract system that the football industry use is quite flexible. The terms and conditions can be adjusted to each talent depending on what that talent wants and what the football club is prepared to offer. The contracts might seem harsh since they are binding and to not fulfil the terms of the contract could be costly. However, our representatives state that despite well-formed contracts, they are rarely used as a forcing method. Even though this type of contract may not be the best approach for MNCs, they could still take inspiration regarding the flexibility of the contract. According to Beechler and Woodward (2009) knowledge-intensive industries, where all, or a majority of the talents in the organisation are important resources for the success of the firm (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) need to show flexibility towards the traditional work conditions. Bleecher and Woodward (2009) argue that the talents are becoming more aware of their opportunities and more talents request a non-traditional career path, where for example part-time work is seen as a benefit and not an insecurity. This implies that, as in the football industry, MNCs might need to have a more flexible approach towards their employment contracts. However, it is also acknowledged that they yet have a far way to go before they are ready to change the system.

Mentor systems

In our interviews with representatives from the football industry, we can see three types of mentors. First, some mentors appear as role models. These could, for example, be talents from the first team mentoring young academy talents. The second type of mentor visible in the football industry is the Buddy mentor, which is a teammate who has been in the team for a longer period, who is chosen as a mentor to a new team member. The third and final type of mentor is an off-field person who supports the talent with his social needs and other essential needs as food and accommodation.

As far as our MNC interviews tell, they only have one type of mentor, which often is a more experienced colleague or a person holding a manager position. They aim to inspire and to support the talent in their professional career. With this said, both industries use mentors to encourage development. However, the football industry is the only of the two industries who follows the recommendations from Harvey (2013) and Bhatnagar (2007), who argue that it is important to nurture the talent's social and emotional needs. According to the football industry representatives, mentors become increasingly important when talents transfer from a different region or country. At those situations, the mentor system is adapted based on the talent's origin, while the MNCs use the same system or non-system of mentors independently of where the talent is from. If MNCs were to inspire from the football industry and create a social and emotional support system for their employees, they could potentially lower their turnover, which according to Matthew and Lambert (2003) could lead to increased profit.

6.3.2 Opportunities

Internal opportunities

Many authors claim the importance of being aware of the company's key positions (Marjan, 2007; Minbaeva & Collings, 2013; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to the football industry, their key positions include both the starting positions and the back-ups. They do however stress out that talents with a back-up position tend to feel less appreciated. At the same time, they argue it is highly essential to let the back-ups know that they are equally important for the team. To go from a back-up position to a starting position can be considered being an internal opportunity at a football club. Another internal opportunity concerns youth talents in the Academy, who naturally strive to progress to the first team. To understand the value of one's employees is the first step to retaining them, according to Matthew and Lambert (2003), and even if the recognition does not lead to an opportunity, the football industry still focuses on appreciating each talent representing the club.

The MNCs offer more extensive internal career opportunities than the football industry. Therefore, the most important lesson from the football industry regarding the retention of talents is the recognition and the appreciation of each talent. However, we also argue that development can be considered an internal opportunity. In this area, the football industry

seems to be on the forefront when it comes to offering everyone an individual development plan, even if the talent is not being offered an internal opportunity. Another internal opportunity which should be mentioned in regards to football clubs is the team's conjoint effort to win titles. If a club succeeds well in Sweden, the team can qualify for European leagues. This does, in turn, lead to an internal opportunity for the entire team since the status of the team increases, which affects the whole team positively and increases the talent's willingness to keep playing for that club. Hanif and Yunfei (2013) state that even though the salary is important, it is equally important to have an individual learning curve for the talent to be motivated to stay in the firm. Looking at the MNCs, they all offer a structured career ladder, while the football industry focuses on developing the talent to take a step forward but not necessarily to take a step up the ladder. As a complement to the traditional career ladder, MNCs could have in mind to help their talents to move forward in their professional and personal development, even though they might stay on the same "career-step".

External opportunities

As Beechler and Woodward (2009) mentioned, skilled, experienced talents have more opportunities and options, and can be active in more markets than ever before. This is something that both the MNC and the football representatives are well aware of, but how they face this issue slightly differs. While the MNCs accept the fact that talents might want to leave, they prefer if they choose to have a career at their organisation. The football industry, on the other hand, has to a larger extent accepted that talents move on to another team and that it is a natural part of the cycle. This difference in acceptance could be due to a limited amount of internal opportunities within a football club in comparison to MNCs, which have multiple clearly formulated career steps. The openness the football industry shows when it comes to letting their talents explore external opportunities is that they can, in a more efficient way, prepare for a talent's absence by having a succession in mind. This way, they avoid being left in the open when someone decides to leave the club. Another benefit the openness contributes with is that it could be used as a way to attract the best talent, even if it regards a short-term period. If the talent knows he can leave the club if a better opportunity appears, he might be more willing to transfer to the football club. Even though it has shown to be more economically beneficial to retain current employees compared to attracting new talents (Matthew & Lambert, 2003), it could be inspirational for the MNC to adjust their

mindset and be more open to the discussion about letting talents go. If talents felt more comfortable to say to their managers they wish to explore outside opportunities, the MNCs could get more time and thus find better ways to find a suitable replacement.

6.4 Summary of the analysis

The empirical findings from both the football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry share the same B and C-categories, which implicates that there are common themes regarding their solutions for the GTM challenges. To determine which GTM practices the football industry might transfer to the knowledge-intensive industry, or that could be inspirational for these MNCs, we compared our findings to existing theories. According to us, some methods, such as commonality and frequency of feedback, could more or less be copied, while others need to be customised in regards to the industry and that specific environment. Parted leadership, for example, could be an inspiration for MNCs but is an area which needs to be adapted to the MNCs since they require a different type of leader than in the football industry. It is rather the idea to have multiple managers in charge of different parts of the IHRM activities handling the GTM challenges, which could be transferred from the football industry to the knowledge-intensive industry.

7. Conclusion

The conclusion aims to answer our research question which is as the following: How does the football industry overcome the GTM challenges and how can their experiences inspire MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries?

This study has found that currently, the football industry uses different methods to overcome the GTM challenges by constantly reviewing its practices regarding the attraction and development of talents. While the industry places considerable efforts into attracting talents, it places even greater efforts in developing talents within the football club. Evidently, investing resources into retaining talents is not a priority for football clubs, even though exceptions exist. Examples of solutions the football industry uses to address the GTM challenges include that football clubs place a major focus on the potential of prospected talents as well as current talent. Importantly to note is the fact that the football clubs view all current players as possessing talent. The focus on new recruits is, however, not on how well the player currently is performing, but rather on how he potentially could develop in the. The industry also has multiple agents who provide the football clubs regularly with tips of potential recruits. Moreover, the management always places the individual in focus when developing plans, which is being done in a customised manner. This method aims to ensure that the talents maintain motivation and develop as expected. Apart from individual development plans, the football clubs have formal and informal feedback sessions with their talents, where they discuss expectations and future progress. While the retention of talents is not of significant focus within the football industry, the football clubs utilise a mentor system, which aims to improve the wellbeing of their talents and in turn, make them feel comfortable within the organisation. Another method seen in the football industry in regards to handling GTM challenges is the split leadership role. In football clubs the leaders have different areas of responsibility concerning new and existing talents, rather than an overall management role. This structure gives the managers an opportunity to lead more efficiently in each individual area; the person responsible for development can focus solely on that, without having to deal with other GTM challenges such as to attract talents to the club.

7.1 Implications to practice

The MNCs seem to be aware of the GTM challenges and are addressing these issues in a similar manner as the football industry. The football industry, however, seems to be one step ahead regarding action plans. The industry emphasises on the importance of dealing with the GTM challenges, which could be inspirational for the MNCs operating in knowledge-intensive industries. MNCs could be better at giving recognition to all employees in their organisations regardless of position or previous contributions, and in turn, view them as potential talents. MNCs should place more effort in customising individual development plans and emphasise more on feedback sessions, both formal and informal ones. Another key inspiration could be the division of management roles that has been illustrated by the football industry. Having parted leadership, where people are responsible for different segments of the recruitment process and the development stage, these processes will become specialised and enhance the market screen. This increases the chance of finding a suitable talent and to assist with the development within the company. Finally, when recruiting new talents, the plan or act of future retainment is not to be placed in focus. Today employees are shifting companies as a natural part of their career path, which companies need to take into consideration when creating their GTM strategies. Lastly, due to the differences between the football industry and the knowledge-intensive industry, we want to emphasise on the importance of adapting the implications to the local firm environment.

7.2 Implications to research

Our recommendation for future research is to continue the search for potential solutions that MNCs can use to minimise the damage which might occur due to the GTM challenges. More qualitative research needs to be done to locate specific solutions to all problems. Since we only were looking for inspirational solutions for all MNC, we did not narrow down the research to a particular issue, which potentially could be a good subject for further studies. There is also need to try the suggested methods in other environments to see whether or not it is transferable between different industries. Moreover, most studies related to GTM concern MNCs but there might be a need also to include small- and medium-sized enterprises that are being exposed to the global world of today.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Interview guide in Swedish - the football industry

På vilket sätt är du involverad i hanteringen av era talanger?

Jämförelser har gjorts där en tränares strategiska inflytande kan jämföras med en operating officer (operativ chef). Hur skulle du då vilja rubricera motsvarande jämförelse för en spelare om du tänker på strategiskt inflytande över företagets framgång?

Hur pass internationell skulle du säga att de nationella ligan i sverige är? Sett till talang hanteringen.

Vad skulle du beskriva som de största "challenges" ni har gällande hanteringen av talanger?

Har ni en process som ni alltid följer när ni vill värva en ny talang?

Hur ser er process ut för internationell rekrytering? Skiljer den sig från nationell rekrytering?

Hur påverkar de att sverige inte har samma säsong som internationella klubbar?

Hur lång tid tar det från att man gjort ett förvärv tills den är spelbar? Finns det någon typ av utveckling eller anpassning ni vill se först?

Hur ser arbetet ut med unga talanger?

Hur jobbar ni med utveckling av era talanger? Har ni någon förutbestämd rutin/plan för hur era talanger ska utvecklas i er klubb?

Har ni specifika processer/metoder för att få talanger att stanna hos er?

Använder ni en kulturellt anpassad metod för utveckling, attracting och retaining?

Appendix 2

Interview guide in Swedish - the knowledge-intensive industry

På vilket sätt är du involverad i hanteringen av era talanger?

Vad skulle du beskriva som de största "challenges" ni har gällande hanteringen av personal?

Har ni en process som ni alltid följer när ni vill anställa en ny talang?

Hur ser er process ut för internationell rekrytering? Skiljer den sig från nationell rekrytering?

Vad använder man för incitament till anställning hos er?

Har ni specifika processer/metoder för att få personal att stanna hos er?

Hur jobbar ni med utveckling av era personal?

Har ni någon förutbestämd rutin/plan för hur era talanger ska utvecklas hos er?

Appendix 3

Translation of interview questions from Swedish to English

How are you involved in the work with talents?

Comparisons have been made where one have compared the managers strategical importance to the one of an operating chief. How would you label a football player regarding strategical importance, if making a similar comparison?

How international would you consider the Swedish national league to be from a talent management perspective?

What do you consider to be the biggest challenges regarding handling your talents?

Do you have a process which you follow when you want to recruit a new talent?

Do you have a specific process for international recruitment? How does it differ from national recruitment?

How does the various seasons between the Swedish league and the international league affect the talent management?

How long is the process between the purchase of a player until that player is expected to be able to start playing?. Is there some development or adaption you want to see first?

How does the work with youth talents look like?

How do you work with talents? Do you have a specific routine/plan for how you want the talents to develop in your club?

Do you have specific methods to get the talents to stay in your club?

Do you use a culturally adopted method for attracting, development and retaining talents?

Appendix 4

Interview guide - The knowledge-intensive industry. Translation of interview questions from Swedish to English

How are you involved in the work with talents?

What would you describe as your biggest challenges regarding how to handle personnel?

Do you have a specific plan that you follow when you want to recruit a new talent?

How does the process for international recruitment look like?

Which incentives do you use to get people to apply to your firm?

How do you work with retention?

How do you work with development of the employees?

Do you have a predetermined plan/routine for how the talents should develop within the firm?

