

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN A SPORT ENVIRONMENT:

Improving management and policymaking of Dutch professional football clubs



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Centrum voor Onderzoek & Kennismanagement Betaald Voetbal

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**Organizational learning in a sport environment:
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Management Summary

The main mission of KNVB Expertise is to improve management quality of Dutch professional football clubs and to strengthen the national and international position of Dutch professional football over time. Clubs are challenged in translating potentially beneficial knowledge into actual organizational change. This research focuses on two levels of study; first, the knowledge dissemination process by KNVB Expertise to clubs is studied and second, knowledge management styles of Dutch professional football organizations are studied. Managerial implications are provided that can be used by KNVB Expertise to better adapt their knowledge dissemination process to different knowledge management styles of Dutch professional football clubs. Secondly, this study contributes to the literature on intra-organizational learning in service organizations and inter-organizational learning between service organizations. The following problem statement is used in this study:

How can KNVB Expertise adapt the process of disseminating useful knowledge to clubs that vary in their knowledge management style?

Clubs acquire knowledge from different parties, both international and national. Overall, clubs have no strategy for knowledge management and often knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom up. Most football clubs have a non-hierarchical organization with short communication lines where knowledge is shared frequently and in an informal manner. Time and financial resources are often mentioned as constraints in knowledge management. Knowledge transfer between clubs happens regularly, the majority of clubs is transparent and willing to share knowledge with KNVB Expertise and other clubs. All clubs are positive about KNVB Expertise, but brand awareness is limited.

The main conclusions drawn from this study are the large impact of firm size in knowledge management styles. Large clubs from the *Eredivisie* have the capacity to deal with data from research and see KNVB Expertise as a great source of information. Clubs in the sub top of the *Eredivisie* (clusters B and C) like best practices and analyze club specific data. For clubs in clusters D and E data are used passively as a starting point in policymaking. KNVB Expertise should be more visible to these clubs and proactively disseminate knowledge, but also take a role as consultant. The bottom clubs in the *Jupiler League* (clusters E and F) need more human resources in order to implement potential useful knowledge. At the moment KNVB Expertise uses the same strategy for all firms. In order to support all clubs multiple strategies should be developed.

Preface

After finishing my bachelor study in Sport Economics in 2011 I started the pre-master and master programme Strategic Management at Tilburg University. During the past two years my interest in sport business did not decline and I when the opportunity came to write a Master Thesis in Organization and Strategy for the Royal Dutch Football Association I started formulating the topic of this research with great enthusiasm.

This master thesis is the result of an extensive study of knowledge management in Dutch Professional Football clubs and interconnects two personal interests: sports and strategy. I would like to thank Jurrie Groenendijk, my company supervisor, and Giel Kirkels for giving me the chance to conduct this study and their support throughout the thesis process and the chance to work on interesting projects of KNVB Expertise.

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Tal Simons, my principal Thesis Supervisor who showed sincere interest in the subject matter and supported me throughout the thesis process with constructive feedback and comments on this thesis.

I also would like to thank my colleagues at KNVB Expertise, Liset Schrijvers, Marijke Onwezen and Niels Wigbold for their support and pleasant stay at the KNVB during the past five months.

This thesis wouldn't be completed without the support of family and friends, especially my parents who showed me love, trust and support every day. Thank you.

Table of contents

Chapter 1	Introduction.....	10
1.1	KNVB Expertise	10
1.2	Problem indication	12
1.2.1	Knowledge dissemination by KNVB Expertise	12
1.3	Problem statement.....	14
1.4	Research questions	14
1.5	Research design.....	15
1.6	Structure of the thesis.....	16
Chapter 2	Literature review.....	17
2.1	Organizational learning.....	17
2.2	Knowledge management in organizations	17
2.3	Context of the study	19
2.3.1	Fans and sponsors	20
2.4	Inter-organizational learning versus intra-organizational learning.....	24
2.5	A conceptual model for inter-organizational knowledge transfer	26
2.5.1	KNVB Expertise	27
2.5.2	Dutch football clubs.....	27
2.5.3	Nature of knowledge.....	28
2.5.4	Inter-organizational dynamics	28
2.5.5	Trust and willingness to collaborate	28
2.5.6	Dissemination of knowledge	29
Chapter 3	Methodology.....	32
3.1	Research design.....	32
3.2	Data collection	33
3.2.1	Sample	33
3.2.2	Primary data collection	34

3.3	Summary	35
Chapter 4	Results.....	36
4.1	KNVB Expertise	36
4.1.1	Intra-organizational learning	36
4.1.2	Inter-organizational dynamics	37
4.1.3	Process of knowledge dissemination	37
4.1.4	Knowledge management styles of clubs.....	37
4.2	Knowledge management styles of professional football clubs	38
4.2.1	Knowledge acquisition	38
4.2.2	Intra-organizational learning	39
4.2.3	Inter-organizational learning	39
4.2.4	Constraints in knowledge management	40
4.2.5	Services KNVB Expertise	40
4.3	Summary	42
Chapter 5	Conclusions and recommendations	43
5.1	Discussion	43
5.2	Conclusion and managerial implications	45
5.3	Summary	47
5.4	Limitations and recommendations for future research	48
5.4.1	Personal point of view on conducted research	49
	Literature references	50
	Appendix 1: Services KNVB Expertise	54
	Appendix 2: Topic list interview football clubs	55
	Appendix 3: Topic list interview KNVB Expertise	57
	Appendix 4: Summary sheets interviews	59

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to KNVB Expertise and the services it delivers to professional football clubs in the Netherlands. Reason for this introduction to KNVB Expertise is the fact that its mission differs from the KNVB as a whole and the complexity in the origin of this organization. After this introduction the problem indication and the problem statement and research questions are formulated. A description of the research design is given and this chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 KNVB Expertise

KNVB Expertise is the centre of research and knowledge management for professional football clubs in the Netherlands and is initiated by the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB), the Dutch Eredivisie CV (ECV), Coöperatie Eerste Divisie (CED) and the Federation of Professional football organizations (FBO). To have a clear understanding of the organizational structure of KNVB Expertise it is important to know what the core business of the four initiators is. Founded in 1997, main goal of the ECV is to exploit the media rights and sponsor rights for the benefit of the eighteen Dutch premier league clubs (*Eredivisie*). Next to that, ECV represents the interests of the clubs on a national and international level (ECV, 2013). Every premier league club is a partner in this limited partnership. The CED, founded in 1999, exploits the media rights and sponsor rights for the benefit of the clubs in the Dutch first division (*Eerste divisie* or *Jupiler League*) (CED, 2013). The FBO is the employer organization for Dutch professional football organizations and supports clubs on economic, juridical, human resources and organizational issues (FBO, 2013).

Over the past decade KNVB, ECV, CED and FBO indicated a need for knowledge on different topics relevant to further professionalize management in football organizations active in both the Dutch premier league and the First division. For example, financial benchmarks, research on customer satisfaction and research on customer potential. This indicated need for knowledge is in line with Lane and Lubatkin (1998), who argue that the way in which firms use alliances has changed. Knowledge has become an important factor in competition and firms strive to attract, develop and implement knowledge ahead of their competitors. As a result of the demand for more knowledge sharing opportunities and educational programs KNVB Expertise was founded in 2007. The main mission of KNVB Expertise differs from the KNVB as a whole. The main mission of the KNVB is to improve the active and passive football experience of every person in the Netherlands by following a socially responsible strategy, where as KNVB Expertise only focuses on professional football clubs (KNVB, 2013). Their main mission is to improve management quality of Dutch professional football clubs and to strengthen the national and international position of Dutch professional

football over time (KNVB Expertise, 2013). Every product or service offered by KNVB Expertise is a result of deliberation by clubs, ECV, CED, FBO and KNVB. An overview of the services provided by KNVB Expertise to clubs can be found in appendix 1.

Organizations can learn from external knowledge through different methods, passive, active and interactive, all providing organizations with different types of knowledge (Lane and Lubatkin, 1998). Passive learning occurs when seminars, consultants and journals are used and more active learning occurs when forms like benchmarks and competitor intelligence are used. Lane and Lubatkin (1998) argue that these forms of learning are limited in providing unique valuable new capabilities since the knowledge shared is no longer rare, costly to imitate or imperfectly traded. Interactive learning between firms can have a positive effect by focusing not only on the observable and objective components (explicit) of capabilities, but also on more tacit knowledge to discover the reasoning behind choices and as a result more complex information can be adopted (Spender, 1996). KNVB Expertise uses all these methods in the development of professional football clubs in the Netherlands by providing them with information services such as financial benchmarks, studies on fan engagement and studies on customer potential. Seminars focused on specific topics such as economic, juridical, human resources and organizational issues are organized to create knowledge sharing opportunities for professionals working at football clubs. Educational programs are developed to give managers at football clubs an opportunity to get more in depth education in their field of work. Strategic advice is given to clubs during workshops where results from research on different topics such as finance, fan engagement and sponsorships are discussed.

KNVB Expertise's strategy of supporting professional football clubs in organizational development by executing different projects focused on acquisition and implementation of knowledge can be beneficial. In practice some problems occur during the implementation of this strategy. In order to have a clear understanding of the topics this first section of the study gave an overview of the organizations involved in this study, the origin and structure of KNVB Expertise and a broad overview of the services KNVB Expertise provides to Dutch professional football clubs. The next section provides a description of the problem that is solved in this research.

1.2 Problem indication

At the moment much information is available to clubs, but experience teaches KNVB Expertise that clubs are challenged in translating the information into actual change. For example, research done by KNVB Expertise could indicate that a club provides low quality catering to fans on match days and has an inefficient ticketing system but the club does not show improvements on these aspects over time. This example indicates that not every club uses the available knowledge to improve their services to customers and other stakeholders. Several aspects could influence this lack of improvement in organizational learning, for example the size of the organization, club facilities and financial capabilities, individual capabilities of knowledge interpretation, organizational memory and size of the fan base (Huber, 1991). This research describes possible challenges that clubs face in implementing knowledge acquired through research done by KNVB Expertise or through participation in seminars or educational programs organized by KNVB Expertise. Focus in this study is therefore the process of organizational learning, by investigating the dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs and intra-organizational learning processes in football organizations. The conceptual framework used to study these processes is described in the literature review.

1.2.1 Knowledge dissemination by KNVB Expertise

Focus is on external knowledge acquired by Dutch professional football clubs through the services provided by KNVB Expertise such as mentioned above; information services, knowledge sharing opportunities, educational programs and strategic advice. The purpose of this research is to describe the structure of services provided to clubs by KNVB Expertise and the knowledge management styles of Dutch professional football clubs. In order to get the best possible results in supporting clubs in organizational development and organizational learning, services of KNVB Expertise and knowledge management styles of football clubs should fit together. Eventually, this study could give useful managerial implications to KNVB Expertise to organize their services in a way that is more useful for every single club in the Netherlands.

The introduction to the research question indicates two different levels of study on this topic. First, there is the dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs and second, the dissemination of knowledge within the organization of the club. Both topics are important to obtain a broad view on the possible bottlenecks or obstacles in organizational learning. Darr, Argote and Epple (1995) argue that an important factor which contributes to successful knowledge transfers across different organizations is the relationship between the organizations involved in the transfer. Knowledge transfer can occur between independent organizations or between business units of a single organization. In this study, knowledge is transferred between independent service organizations and could give clear managerial implications on knowledge

dissemination in the setting of independent organizations. Easterby-Smith, Lyles and Tsang (2008) argue that the transfer of knowledge between organizations is a complex issue because of multifaceted nature of boundaries, cultures and the process involved and is therefore an interesting topic for further theoretical research. The level of knowledge implementation in organizations is affected by variables such as difficulty to transfer, but also the level of effort put in by the recipient to successfully use external knowledge (Jensen and Szulanski, 2007). The success of organizational learning depends on the absorptive capacity of an organization (Cohen and Levinthal, 1989). Absorptive capacity is the extent to which an organization recognizes the value of new knowledge (external), handles it, and implements it to exploit commercial opportunities (Cohen and Levinthal, 1989, 1990).

Literature shows that knowledge sharing between organizations can be an important factor in improvement of performance. Organizations that have access to, and are active in finding external sources and knowledge increase performance and are more productive than organizations which are more inwardly focused (Tsai, 2001; Cummings, 2004; Jensen and Szulanski, 2007). An important factor that could influence this increase in performance is the way in which knowledge is embedded in the organization (Walsh and Ungson, 1991). Organizational learning generally occurs through individual members who have to store their knowledge in the organization in order to anchor their knowledge for other members, even after the individual leaves the organization. Knowledge can be stored by making use of knowledge reservoirs, including tools, social networks, routines, and transactive memory systems (Argote and Ingram, 2000). An important factor that could affect the extent to which knowledge is transferred and the embeddedness of knowledge in an organization is the rate of knowledge depreciation. Knowledge depreciation indicates that knowledge may not persist indefinitely. Knowledge could, for example, be lost due to misplaced manuals, individual forgetting or personnel turnover (Darr, Argote and Epple, 1995).

In summary, this study focuses on two levels of study; first, the knowledge dissemination process by KNVB Expertise to clubs is studied and second, knowledge management styles of Dutch professional football organizations are studied. Goal is to find managerial implications that can be used by KNVB Expertise to better adapt their knowledge dissemination process to different knowledge management styles of Dutch professional football clubs. Secondly, this study contributes to the literature on intra-organizational learning in service organizations and inter-organizational learning between service organizations.

1.3 Problem statement

As mentioned in the problem indication KNVB Expertise is searching for a strategy which results in more effective use of the services provided by KNVB Expertise to clubs. The research question is constructed around a very pragmatic problem, but links to organizational learning in service organizations:

How can KNVB Expertise adapt the process of disseminating useful knowledge to clubs that vary in their knowledge management style?

1.4 Research questions

1. What are the differences in knowledge management style between Dutch professional football clubs?
2. How is the dissemination of knowledge to Dutch professional football clubs organized by KNVB Expertise?
3. What challenges do Dutch professional football clubs face during the implementation of potential useful knowledge?

1.5 Research design

The purpose of this thesis is to design a solution for a practical problem, namely how to adapt the service provision of KNVB Expertise to clubs that differ in knowledge management style. To find a solution to this problem and to understand the causes of the problem both a literature review and empirical research are carried out. In this case, research aims to seek new insights, ask new questions and assess topics in a new light (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Not only does this research generate knowledge on knowledge management in Dutch professional football, but it contributes to academic research in knowledge management in service firms and inter-organizational learning. Figure 1 shows the research design for this study.

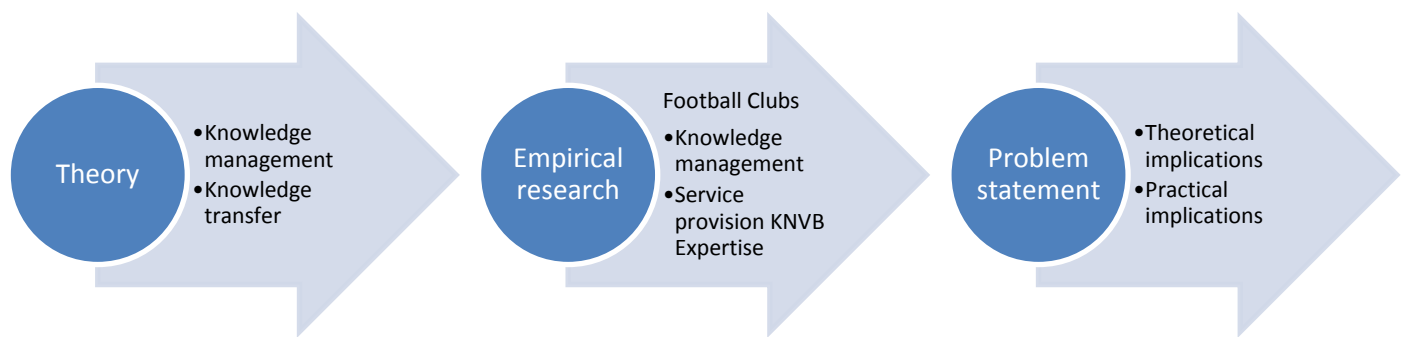


Figure 1: Research design

To explore the characteristics of knowledge management in service organizations and factors influencing inter-organizational knowledge transfer chapter two provides a literature review. Theoretical findings were used to construct semi-structured interviews. Interviews are used to collect empirical data for this study which give insight in the main characteristics of knowledge management in Dutch professional football clubs, the strengths and weaknesses of the dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs. These data are fundamental in finding a solution for the problem statement. This study is based on qualitative research formed by text data and obtained results are not arrived by any quantification methods. This research is about interpretations, individual knowledge and attitude and aims to develop useful new understandings on knowledge management in service organizations, especially organizations in a sport environment. Theoretical goal is to describe different opinions on knowledge management and use these data to give strategic advice to KNVB Expertise.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter two describes the existing literature on inter-organizational and intra-organizational learning, the context in which this study takes place, namely a sport environment and assumptions that are made in this particular research as a result of reviewing the existing literature. Chapter three explains the research methodology and the methods used to cluster football clubs based on different variables. Chapter four contains the results of the data obtained from empirical research. In this chapter differences in knowledge management between clubs are discussed based on input from interview and archival data and from KNVB Expertise. The last chapter, chapter five, provides a conclusion following from the results and also contains a discussion, managerial implications and the limitations of this research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

In this study on knowledge management and organizational learning in professional football organizations some key concepts are important. The first three sections of this chapter give a description of organizational learning, knowledge management in organizations and the context of this study. The last part of this chapter gives an overview of inter-organizational learning versus intra-organizational learning and the conceptual model that is used to clarify the setting of this research.

2.1 Organizational learning

Researchers have defined organizational learning in different ways, but the key aspect that comes forward in most definitions is that organizational learning is a change in the organization that occurs when experience is acquired by the organization. Researchers acknowledge that organizational change can both manifest itself in changes in cognition/beliefs or behavior/actions, but a debate has occurred whether organizational learning should be defined as a change in cognition or a change in behavior (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Most researchers agree that organizational learning is a change in the organization's knowledge that occurs as a function of experience and this knowledge is revealed in changes in routines, behavior or cognitions which both include explicit and tacit components (Kogut and Zander, 1992; Argote and Miro-Spektor, 2011; Argote, 2011). In order to successfully exploit available knowledge it can be stored or embedded in the organization using a variety of storage possibilities, including routines, transactive memory systems and individuals (Argote and Miro-Spektor, 2011). For example, computer databases and experienced employees who share knowledge with colleagues. To summarize, organizational learning can be defined as a change in the organizations knowledge that occurs as a function of experience (Argote, 2011).

2.2 Knowledge management in organizations

Experience teaches KNVB Expertise that some professional football organizations learn better than others. These clubs learn better in a sense that they possess the capabilities to translate research data and knowledge gathered from different meetings, courses or seminars into action. Many researchers argue that the assumption of differences in learning capabilities between organizations is a valid assumption. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) argue that the benefits which could be derived from sharing knowledge between two firms are often asymmetric as a result of differences in the capabilities of these firms to learn. For example, a large club from the *Eredivisie* has more knowledge on fan engagement than a small club from the *Jupiler League*. Therefore, the club from the *Jupiler League* can attract more knowledge from the *Eredivisie* club than the other way around. Steensma (1996) supports this assumption in his study of inter-organizational

collaboration by arguing that some firms simply learn better than others. Reason for this difference between firms is the capability to deal with forms of learning ranging from simplistic to sophisticated. A simple form of learning can be described as small adjustments to existing systems in an organization, while sophisticated adjustments have more impact on an organization and can require a substantial change in existing norms and systems (Steensma, 1996; Meyers, 1990). Not every firm has the capabilities to renew when sophisticated adjustments are needed. This capacity to learn can be influenced by human resources, managerial behavior, structural characteristics and strategic perspective of the organization (McKee, 1992). Between football clubs, differences are seen in turnover and firm size. Both firm size and turnover increase if more people visit the club and pay for tickets. With an increase in turnover better players can be attracted which increases the performance of the club in the league table. Better performance means that the club is more attractive to potential customers and the possibility to grow increases. This example indicates a vicious circle; more fans equals more turnover equals better players equals better performance equals more fans. Clubs that know how to fully exploit this circle outperform other clubs and differences between clubs could arise. The question is whether these differences influence the capability to learn or if the capability to learn is a cause of these differences.

In existing literature, a basic assumption is that intra-organizational learning processes focus on exploitation of knowledge while inter-organizational learning processes are more focused on exploration of knowledge (Holmqvist, 2003). Hamel (1991) argues that successful exploration in inter-organizational learning depends on the receptive ability and transparency of firms in collaboration. To develop the business of professional football in the Netherlands, KNVB Expertise needs input from clubs to get started with studies of for example financial benchmarks or fan engagement. This study shows the willingness of clubs to share experiences with KNVB Expertise and with each other (Hamel, 1991). Receptive ability, on the other hand, refers in this case to the willingness to learn from experiences of other clubs and from data of KNVB Expertise (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Holmqvist, 2003). A description of the willingness to learn from best practices and the experience of other clubs is part of this research. To optimize the process of knowledge dissemination by KNVB Expertise to football clubs, but also knowledge sharing between clubs, some preconditions matter; clubs have to be transparent and share their knowledge and in order to use potential beneficial experiences from other clubs the organization needs a certain receptive ability.

Hardy, Philips and Lawrence (2003) argue that the primary reason for collaboration between organizations is the acquirement of resources that cannot be developed internally, but are needed to survive in a highly competitive environment. The next section will discuss the competitive environment in this study, but when applying the statement of Hardy, Philips and Lawrence (2003) to this study it indicates that being transparent as an organization and sharing knowledge with other firms in an inter-organizational collaboration can be beneficial to collective learning. With collective learning the positive effect of inter-organizational learning on the whole business is meant. For example, clubs learn from benchmarks made based on club characteristics, financial structures or fan engagement. Benchmarking creates the opportunity to learn from best practices and build on these best practices. As a result every club learns from one another and collective learning occurs. Problems could arise in learning collectively when there are large differences in experience (Czarniawska and Sévon, 1996). Experiences of large clubs are different from experiences of small clubs. For example, every football club has a number of companies from different businesses which invest in the club. These companies are called sponsors. In exchange for investing in a football club, these sponsors get for example luxury seats during football matches or exposure opportunities by advertising on boarding around the pitch. Small clubs have to deal with fewer sponsors who visit football matches at the club than large clubs which have a larger number of sponsors. For large football clubs, the capabilities and activities needed to satisfy sponsors could be very different from small football clubs. For example, sponsors of small football clubs could be satisfied with high contact frequency with an account manager of the club while sponsors of large football clubs demand high contact frequency, enough networking possibilities on match days and events where all sponsors of the club come together.

2.3 Context of the study

Organizations which are active in professional sport leagues have to deal with a very specific environment that differs from traditional business sectors in a number of ways (Dietl, Duschl and Lang, 2011). There is a difference in economic and athletic competition. Clubs are competitors from an athletic point of view, but from an economic point of view clubs are, to some extent, complementary to each other. In the economic sense clubs are competitors in attracting as many fans and sponsors as possible. Next to that, athletic performance influences revenues so good athletic performance increases financial performance. Clubs are complementary in a sense that every single club needs an opponent to offer a marketable product. Fans appreciate attending matches of their favorite club with an uncertain outcome and fans enjoy the tension of a close championship race between different clubs (Szymanski, 2001). To maximize profits professional football organizations need strong competitors.

On the other hand, a high position in the league table also increases profits since attention of fans increases, which means more revenues from gate receipts, revenues from broadcasting increase and revenues from sponsorships increase. Taking the need for strong competition and the need for a top position in the league table into consideration, a paradox occurs. If a club wants to improve its position in the league table the position of at least one other team has to be worsened, this is referred to as a zero sum game. When one team in the league performs much better than the rest and as a result wins almost every league match, the thrill of having a close championship race declines for all football fans. This has a negative effect on gate receipts, and eventually on broadcasting revenues and sponsorship deals (Dietl, Duschl and Lang, 2011; Deloitte & Touche, 2010). These aspects of professional football indicate the operating issues for clubs and these issues will always be part of major sport leagues.

2.3.1 Fans and sponsors

The dependency on athletic aspects of football and the issues that occur as a result of the position in the league table have an effect on the way in which football clubs are managed, but there are also other issues which influence management of football clubs that differ from most traditional businesses like manufacturing, trading and banking. In sport business, fans and sponsors are important stakeholders of a club. Fans buy match tickets, merchandise and/or follow their favorite football club in different media. In the Netherlands, fans often live in the same geographical area as where the club is located. To get an overview of the allocation of football fans figure 2 shows a map of the Netherlands with the logos of professional football clubs placed at their geographical location. The colored areas around the logos show the region where fans of the club are located. The shaded areas indicate an overlap in geographical range of fan base between different clubs.

Next to fans, sponsors are an important source of revenues for football clubs. Often sponsors invest in a football club in order to generate more business as a result of exposure or extension of their business network. In some cases sponsors invest in a club without having a business motive (KNVB Expertise, 2013). In traditional businesses investors require a return on their investment that increases if the company they invested in makes more profit. In professional football sponsors get a return on their investment by making use of the business club and taking customers to a football match or extending their business network by talking to other entrepreneurs. Some sponsors invest in players for the club and receive a return on their investment from a future transfer fee. A business club is a club of, often regional, entrepreneurs who provide financial support to a football club. In exchange for financial support entrepreneurs get the opportunity to

visit football matches and other gatherings of entrepreneurs organized by the football club which creates the opportunity to extend their own business network.

A large part of total revenues at football clubs are revenues from sponsorships, therefore the performance of football clubs depends for some part on sponsors and every club strives to close a significant amount of sponsor deals (KNVB Expertise, 2012). A football club with a large amount of sponsors is beneficial to both the performance of the club and the return on investment for sponsors. A good business club with a large amount of members is attractive to potential sponsors, as a result total club revenues increase which creates an opportunity to improve the quality of the team. If the team ends on top of the league table revenues increase and broadcasting revenues and media attention increases, which is interesting to potential sponsors. When more sponsors invest in the club the size of the business club increases and the virtuous circle continues.

To get an overview of the allocation of football club sponsors figure 3 shows a map of the Netherlands with the logos of professional football clubs shown at their geographical location. The colored areas around the logos show the region where sponsors of the club are located.

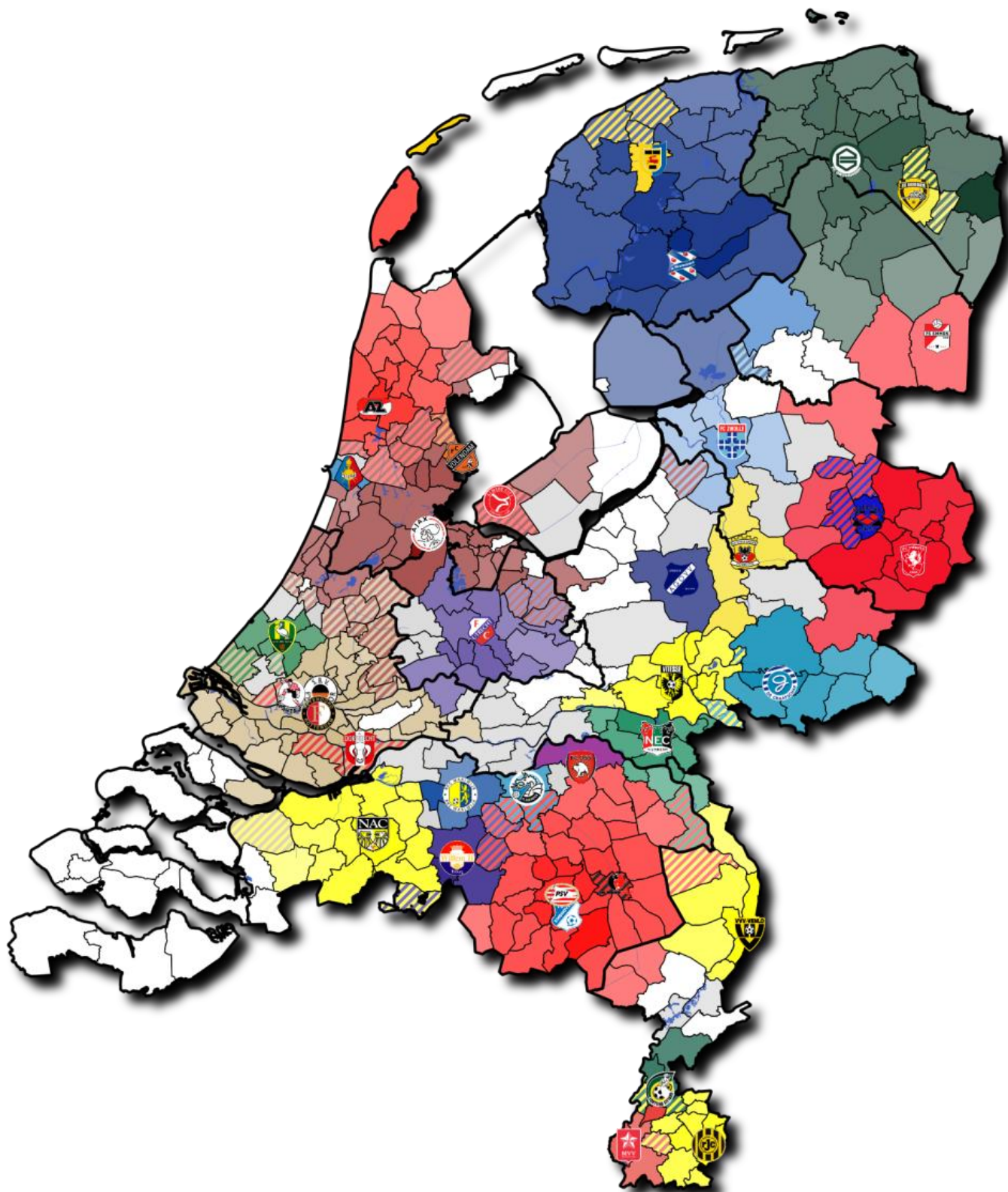


Figure 2: Allocation of football fans per club* (KNVB Expertise, 2012)

**AGOVV Apeldoorn and SC Veendam went bankrupt in 2013, but are still present in these figures.*

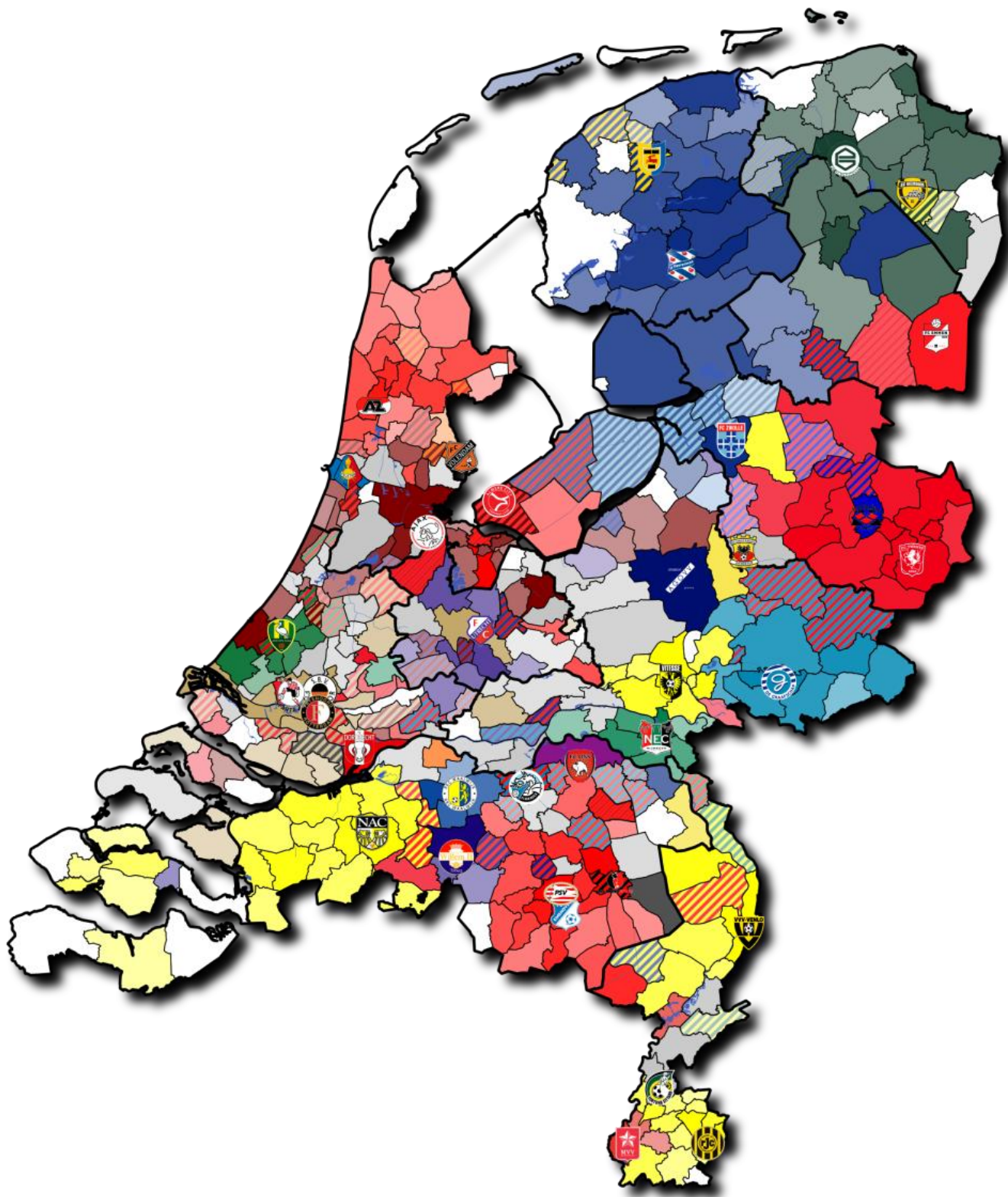


Figure 3: Allocation of sponsor deals per club* (KNVB Expertise, 2012)

* See comment figure 2.

The geographical areas in which football clubs attract fans or sponsors vary, some clubs are in a high populated area and focus on a small geographical area whereas other clubs focus on a large geographical area with a small population size. The question is whether these differences in geographical location and the number of fans and sponsors reduce the need of collective exploitation of knowledge. Since football clubs all offer the same products to fans and sponsors, experience could be seen as similar. But large differences are seen in the amount and the allocation of fans and sponsors. Holmqvist (2003) argues that experiences play an important role in integration of knowledge in inter-organizational learning; knowledge integration by meshing different specialized experience of football organizations benefits an organization, but when experience of two organizations is very similar there is no gain from integration. When experience differs too much between clubs integration of knowledge can't take place beyond a primitive level, which means that no fundamental changes are made in an organization but only small changes in routines and processes (Holmqvist, 2003). Since there is no difference in the core business of football clubs, but large differences in organizational structure, geographical range, culture and athletic experience there is enough potential for clubs to learn from each other and integrate best practices of other Dutch professional football clubs.

To summarize, there are differences between professional football clubs in fan base and sponsor base as a result of geographical location and athletic performance which could influence the process of intra-organizational learning and inter-organizational learning. The next paragraph describes these two concepts of organizational learning and links it to the context of this research.

2.4 Inter-organizational learning versus intra-organizational learning

Given the two levels of knowledge dissemination in this research both inter-organizational learning and intra-organizational learning are important concepts to discuss. Inter-organizational learning is described by Greve (2005) as “a form of learning in which an organization learns from the experience of others rather than from its own experience” (p.1026). Intra-organizational learning refers to processes that generate internal knowledge in an organization (Holmqvist, 2003). Holmqvist (2003) argues that intra-organizational learning processes result in more exploitative learning whereas inter-organizational learning processes create a more explorative learning effect. Exploitative learning creates reliability in experiences and explorative learning maintains variety in experience. Reliability in experience entails that difficult situations with similar characteristics that are encountered multiple times create the possibility to exploit the experience from previous situations (Holmqvist, 2003). In football this experience occurs in organization of matches, attracting sponsors and communication with different media. For example, experience can teach a club that, in case of a football match between them and a rival club, more employees at the cash registers are needed at

the stadium on a match day since more people would like to visit the match. Previous years can show that if the club makes use of a standard number of people at the cash registers visitors will queue up at the entrance of the stadium and could, as a result, miss the start of the match. A club will schedule more employees since it is more certain that a football match against a rival team attracts more people. Explorative learning in inter-organizational learning processes creates more variety in experience since a firm learns from situations at other firms that took place in a different setting. For example, the marketing department of club A uses different campaigns during the year than club B. By talking to each other and having an inter-organizational relationship or collaboration clubs can learn which campaigns are available and what concepts are successful. This doesn't create reliability on the success of different concepts, but more variety in experience is maintained since a club knows which concepts are available and successful.

Both concepts of learning are intertwined with each other, inter-organizational learning is supported by intra-organizational processes of knowledge creation and retention (Argote and Ophir, 2002). When firms have an inter-organizational relationship and exchange experiences with each other, the experiences firms have from intra-organizational processes are taken into account when exchanging knowledge with other firms and therefore both concepts influence each other. Easterby-Smith, Lyles and Tsang (2008) support the statement that intra-organizational learning and inter-organizational learning are intertwined with each other, but argue that inter-organizational knowledge transfer is more difficult than intra-organizational knowledge transfer. If a firm does not have the appropriate integrative mechanisms, knowledge which is obtained from external organizations will not be utilized (Zahra and George, 2002). Holmqvist (2003) argues that the learning process of single organizations is the main driver of the learning of inter-organizational collaborations. This dynamic indicates that exchange of experiences creates positive development in every firm that takes part in collaborations. By using inter-organizational collaborations firms don't have to figure out all business aspects themselves and can build on existing knowledge. Knowledge sharing creates the opportunity for all firms to develop existing knowledge. Next to this, learning from inter-organizational collaborations can have a positive effect on the learning of single organizations and is therefore the primary reason to collaborate. This last statement can be applied to the professional football industry where knowledge sharing became important when smaller clubs got into trouble, primarily on financial issues. This is an important discussion in football since clubs are competitors and want to outperform other clubs on athletic aspects and financial aspects, but without competitors football clubs cannot exist so there is a common incentive to develop organizations and increase organizational learning.

2.5 A conceptual model for inter-organizational knowledge transfer

Dissemination of potential useful knowledge from KNVB Expertise to clubs can be seen as an inter-organizational knowledge transfer process. The success of knowledge transfer depends on a number of attributes which have to be present in both the donor firm, which is in this research KNVB Expertise, and the recipient firm, which in this case are the different professional football clubs in the Netherlands. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) describe these attributes as the absorptive capacity, intra-organizational transfer capability and the motivation to teach or learn. The success of knowledge transfer depends on the nature of the knowledge and the inter-organizational dynamics. This framework used by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) covers an important part of the framework that can be used in this study.

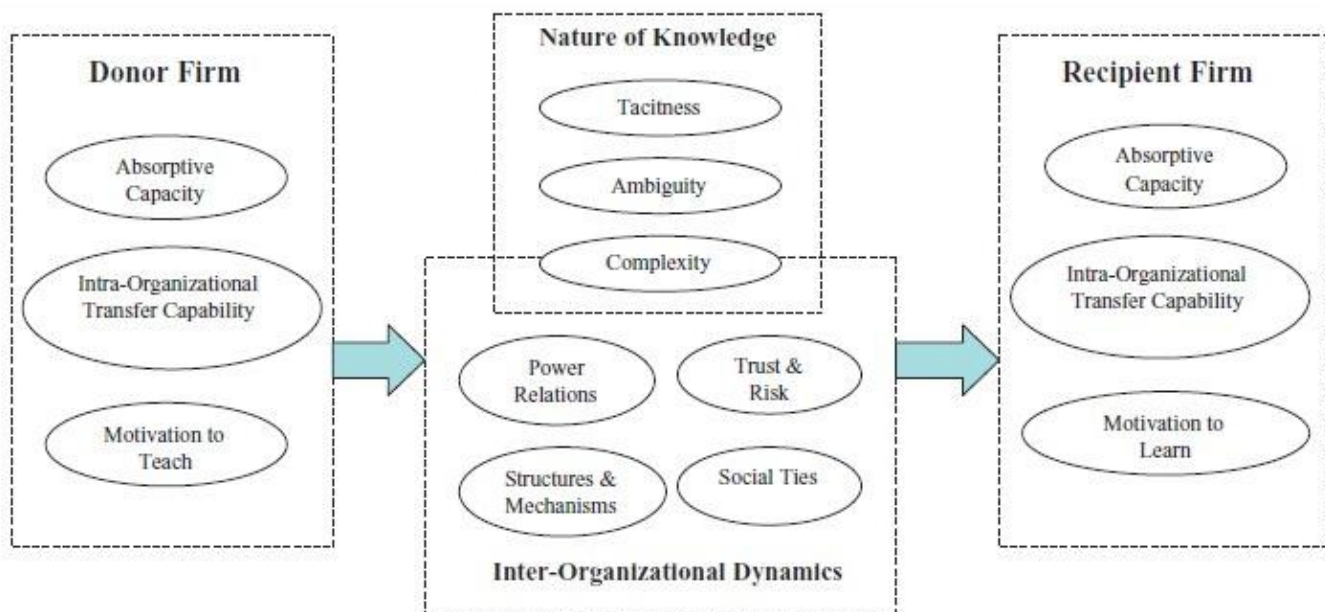


Figure 4: Factors influencing inter-organizational knowledge transfer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008)

In this case, KNVB Expertise is the donor firm which was founded to develop potential useful knowledge that can be beneficial to the management of football clubs. The recipient firms are Dutch professional football clubs that have the opportunity to make use of potentially beneficial knowledge from KNVB Expertise. In this study the one-way traffic of knowledge between the donor firm and the recipient firm shown in the framework of Easterby-smith et al. (2008) is not appropriate for the knowledge transfer process between KNVB Expertise and Dutch professional football clubs. KNVB Expertise strives to adapt the products and services that it offers to the needs of professional football clubs. To do this, input from clubs is needed as a starting point for organizing research projects, knowledge sharing opportunities and educational programs. Due to constant interaction between KNVB Expertise and Dutch professional football clubs a

small adjustment has to be made in the framework of Easterby-Smith et al. (2008). Figure 5 shows the framework that is appropriate in this research.

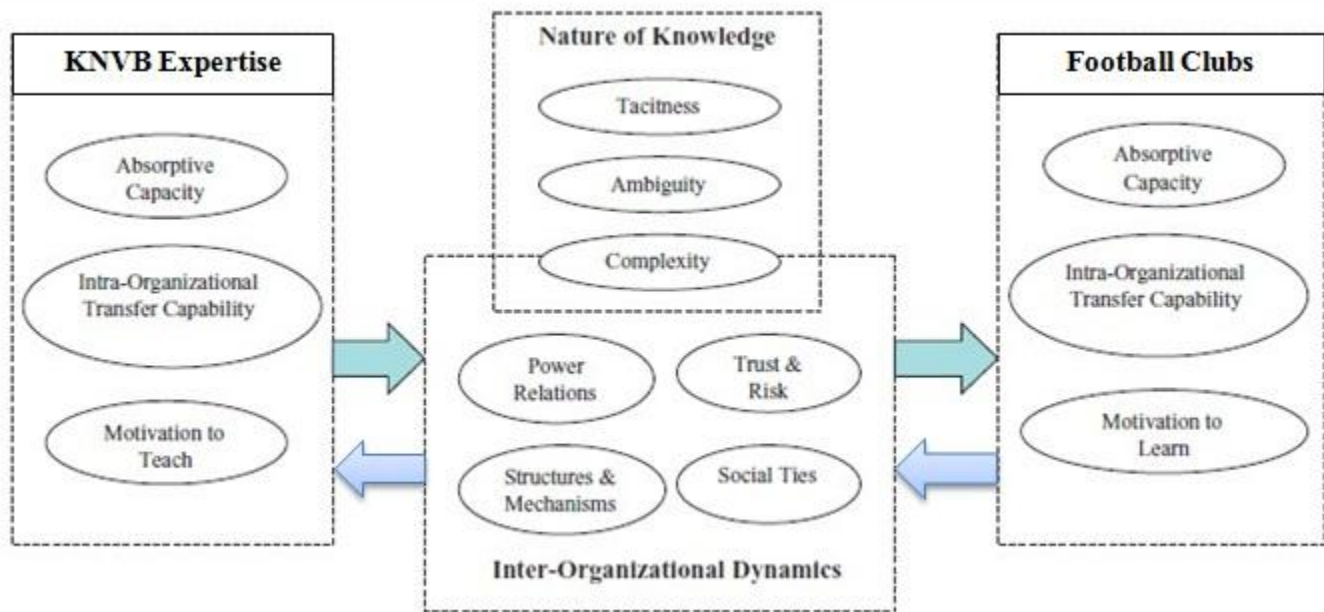


Figure 5: Inter-organizational knowledge transfer between KNVB Expertise and Dutch professional football clubs based on the framework by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008).

2.5.1 KNVB Expertise

This framework shows the knowledge sharing process between KNVB Expertise (donor firm) and football clubs (recipient firms). As the framework shows the donor firm needs some characteristics to successfully disseminate knowledge to a recipient firm. Absorptive capacity in case of KNVB Expertise indicates the capability to deal with existing knowledge from football clubs which can be used as a starting point in developing more useful knowledge. This means that frequent interaction between KNVB Expertise and football clubs is important. The framework shows an intra-organizational transfer capability of KNVB Expertise. Knowledge gathered by KNVB Expertise from football clubs has to be absorbed and stored by KNVB Expertise. Since KNVB Expertise is founded to develop useful knowledge for football management, motivation to teach must be high in order to fulfill their objectives.

2.5.2 Dutch football clubs

The recipient firm, in this study a football club, also needs to have some characteristics in order to make use of potential beneficial knowledge: absorptive capacity, intra-organizational transfer capabilities and motivation to learn. Absorptive capacity is needed to deal with knowledge accessed through services of KNVB Expertise. If a football club has the capacity to deal with useful external knowledge from KNVB Expertise intra-organizational transfer capability is needed to spread useful knowledge in the organization. If

a club has sufficient absorptive capacity and intra-organizational transfer capability, motivation to learn is important in order to successfully implement useful knowledge. This motivation to learn can be oppressed by different priorities in day to day work. For example, selling tickets and organizing the next match, or deal with contract negotiations of sponsors.

2.5.3 Nature of knowledge

There are a number of factors that influence the process of inter-organizational learning of KNVB Expertise and football clubs which can be divided in two aspects namely, the nature of knowledge and the inter-organizational dynamics (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The nature of knowledge is an important aspect in inter-organizational knowledge transfer between KNVB Expertise and football clubs. Tacit knowledge is hard to transfer between organizations since it is hard to record it in standard processes and procedures (Hamel, 1990). Ambiguity and complexity can make it hard for a recipient firm to deal with knowledge, in this case provided by KNVB Expertise that can be beneficial to the club.

2.5.4 Inter-organizational dynamics

The framework shows a number of factors that are important in having successful inter-organizational knowledge transfer: power relations, trust and risk, structures and mechanisms and social ties. In order to have a clear understanding of these aspects in the context of this study each item is discussed, although all four are intertwined with each other. Having standardized structures and mechanisms to contact football clubs and providing them with knowledge has a positive effect on the success of knowledge dissemination by KNVB Expertise. Social ties and trust and risk can be improved as a result of clear structures and mechanisms of dissemination knowledge. There is a good balance in power relations between KNVB Expertise and football clubs. KNVB Expertise provides its services to all football clubs which are free to use any knowledge that can be beneficial. Also clubs have the freedom to participate in projects where input from the club is needed.

2.5.5 Trust and willingness to collaborate

Inter-organizational dynamics are an important part of the inter-organizational framework by Easterby-smith et al. (2008) as discussed in the previous paragraph. The willingness of the recipient firm (football clubs) to share knowledge with the donor firm (KNVB Expertise) is an important aspect of creating potential useful knowledge. Most studies focus on cases in which one firm possesses useful knowledge which is disseminated to a recipient firm, but in this case the donor firm, KNVB Expertise, needs input from clubs to start their research projects and develop potential useful knowledge for all professional football clubs in the Netherlands. The data submitted by clubs needs to be correct in order for KNVB Expertise to obtain useful

knowledge. For example, if a club provides KNVB with incorrect financial data, benchmarks made between clubs based on these data result in a false impression of financial differences between clubs. So success of knowledge creation and dissemination by KNVB Expertise depends on an intensive collaboration between clubs and KNVB Expertise. Inter-organizational dynamics are therefore important; especially trust is an important aspect of the relationship between KNVB Expertise and football clubs.

An important question that arises here is how to manage a possible tension between facilitating KNVB Expertise with useful input which eventually delivers new knowledge to all clubs in the Netherlands, while preventing that unique firm knowledge which creates a competitive advantage leaks outside the organization (Kogut and Zander, 1992). Earlier the economic competitiveness between football clubs was discussed. Clubs are competitors in attracting as many fans and sponsors as possible. Next to that, athletic performance influences revenues so good athletic performance increases financial performance. For football clubs active in a geographical area with many professional football clubs, having access to a larger amount of beneficial knowledge than other professional football clubs in the same area can create a competitive advantage. For example, a club that makes use of a method to attract sponsors which is unique in the Netherlands and appears to be successful can be reluctant to share this knowledge with competitors active in the same geographical area.

For-profit firms, in this case Dutch football clubs, need to balance the transfer of knowledge to other clubs with keeping knowledge in a form that is hard for other clubs to imitate (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). Providing other clubs with large amounts of useful knowledge on specific topics, like sponsor deals, clubs could harm their own organization. As a result of knowledge sharing between all professional football clubs some clubs could outperform rival clubs in generating revenues. As mentioned earlier, higher revenues equals better players equals a higher position in the league table and an improvement in competitive position. This risk could decrease the willingness to share knowledge by professional football clubs and increase the incentive to learn from best practices first before giving input for new knowledge development.

2.5.6 Dissemination of knowledge

Many scholars describe knowledge dissemination as a process of transferring knowledge from one firm to another in a sense that one firm provides another firm with knowledge that is developed internally without collaboration or input from other firms. As a result knowledge transfer can be successful without one firm being dependent on input from another firm. Like mentioned in the previous paragraph the collaboration between clubs and KNVB Expertise is important for KNVB Expertise in order to provide football clubs with

potential useful knowledge. Grandori (1997) describes this process as inter-firm reciprocal interdependences. In this study for example, transactions of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs are specific and tailored for a football club. In order to create specific and tailored knowledge, clubs need to give KNVB Expertise an indication which knowledge is important. Knowledge disseminated by KNVB Expertise is more useful when clubs give input based on their experience and current knowledge in the organization.

The dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs is an important part of this study, so mechanisms for transferring knowledge from existing literature could provide useful lessons to improve the knowledge dissemination process of KNVB Expertise to all clubs. Darr, Argote and Epple (1995) indicate that there are three mechanisms particularly relevant for knowledge sharing between service organizations: personal acquaintances, regular communication and meetings. Personal acquaintances can have a positive effect on knowledge sharing since people can interact easier and share more knowledge with each other. Regular communication is relevant since it is easier to share a small amount of knowledge on a regular basis than a large amount of knowledge on an incidental basis. Meetings create the opportunity to discuss topics in a face to face setting during a fixed timeframe. In a meeting all participants can give an opinion on different topics, as a result every participant acquires knowledge from other participants. Although these mechanisms are indeed relevant for KNVB Expertise, there are more mechanisms that could be used to transfer knowledge to clubs successfully. Examples described by Easterby-smith et al. (2008) are training members of the recipient firm, transferring experienced personnel, planned socializing activities and provide documents, blueprints or hardware that embody the knowledge transferred to the recipient firm. Training members of football clubs in this case would mean organizing educational programs and seminars where club employees can develop competencies in their field of work. Transfer of experienced personnel could mean that KNVB Expertise facilitates an increase in workforce of football clubs (temporary) in order to implement knowledge or disseminate knowledge to football clubs more effectively. Socializing activities organized by KNVB Expertise could be meetings where members of different clubs come together and interact with each other on an informal manner, talking about topics in their field of work. Documents, blueprints or hardware that embodies knowledge of KNVB Expertise can be transferred to football clubs in online procedures or in meetings between KNVB Expertise and a football club.

KNVB Expertise uses many of these mechanisms to transfer knowledge to clubs. Members of professional football clubs are trained in educational programs, events are organized where people can interact with each other and share knowledge and research data is provided to clubs in documents, presentations and online tools which can be used to analyze research data. Personnel capacity is limited for KNVB Expertise, which

reduces the possibilities to develop more data or organize more events, but more important is the fact that KNVB Expertise would like to train people internally to become active in professional football business in the future. Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) argue that the effectiveness of personnel movement, the transfer of templates and routines and other mechanism for transferring knowledge is an important issue in organizational learning theory. The effectiveness of transferring documents, templates and routines in this case seems to be high for clubs that do use new knowledge provided by KNVB Expertise. For example, football clubs that use input from fan surveys on customer satisfaction transferred through documents and templates often perform better on customer satisfaction in the long run compared to other clubs. The question is why the effectiveness of knowledge transfer is not the same for all clubs. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) argue that when many mechanisms that support both formal and informal interactions between groups and individuals of organizations are used transferring multiple types of knowledge becomes easier. These interactions between individuals and groups of organizations assist firms in developing an internal knowledge structure and the development of new know-how and competencies.

Often researchers argue that, regardless of the structure of a inter-organizational relationship, informal ties are very strong channels for transferring knowledge and keeping a constant knowledge flow within organizations or between different organizations (Bell and Zaheer, 2007; Easterby-smith et al., 2008). Experience of KNVB Expertise confirms this view on inter-organizational relationships. Clubs often start asking for more in-depth knowledge on for example financial benchmarks after having spoken to members of KNVB Expertise or with members of other clubs which encounter the same problems in daily business.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter provides the overview of the research methodology that is used. Paragraph 3.1 describes the research design, paragraph 3.2 describes the data collection and this chapter concludes with a brief summary of the methodology.

3.1 Research design

The purpose of this study will be exploratory. There could be a change in preferences about services provided by KNVB Expertise or a change in the capacity of football clubs to deal with new external knowledge. In this case, research can aim to seek new insights, ask new questions and assess topics in a new light (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

First a literature review is carried out to provide an overview of the main topics in organizational learning and inter- and intra-organizational learning. Based on the literature an overview of the context of the study is described and provides broad input for the empirical part of this research. Primary data are used to identify the differences between football clubs in knowledge management styles and to evaluate the dissemination of knowledge from KNVB Expertise to these football clubs. A case study strategy is used, this research focuses on a contemporary topic within its real-life context, knowledge management styles in professional football clubs, and multiple sources of evidence are used (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

The time horizon for this study is cross-sectional; it focuses on intra-organizational learning and inter-organizational learning of KNVB Expertise and professional football clubs at this moment in time. Data collected through semi-structured interviews are audio recorded. These audio recordings are transcribed and word-processed and then analyzed as text data. These interview transcripts contain both the questions asked by the interviewer and the participant's answers. Coding and analysis of interview transcripts provided input to describe the needs and requirements of different types of football clubs (based on clusters).

Ultimately, an advice regarding the current strategy of KNVB Expertise is formulated in the conclusion of the thesis. This conclusion also constitutes a contribution to inter-organizational and intra-organizational learning literature.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Sample

The sampling frame consists of 34 professional football clubs in the Netherlands; eighteen premier league (*Eredivisie*) clubs and sixteen *Jupiler League* clubs. Every club has different characteristics which could influence the process of organizational learning. As a result of these heterogeneous characteristics clubs are divided in different clusters based on the league in which a club is currently active (season 2012/'13), firm size, turnover, facilities and fan base. From every cluster clubs are approached to participate in this study. Two clubs from cluster G are interviewed in order to get a broader view on knowledge management styles of clubs in this cluster. During the past season two clubs from cluster G went bankrupt, namely AGOVV Apeldoorn and SC Veendam. This indicates a struggle for survival for clubs in this cluster. By interviewing two clubs a broader view on knowledge management styles is obtained and managerial implications are beneficial to survival and development of clubs in this cluster. A purposive sampling method is used since sample members are selected based on a range of reasons (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). In this case league, firm size, turnover, facilities and fan base. From every cluster of clubs members are selected randomly for the sample.

In total, eight clubs are approached. At four clubs one manager is interviewed and at four clubs two managers are interviewed. Interviews were held with members of the board and middle management employees. Next to interviewing employees from clubs, a manager of KNVB Expertise is interviewed. In total, this creates a sample of 11 semi-structured interviews with a total of 13 interviewees. Composition of clusters:

Eredivisie (Premier League)

<i>Cluster A</i>	<i>Cluster B</i>	<i>Cluster C</i>	<i>Cluster D</i>
Ajax	FC Groningen	FC Utrecht	RKC Waalwijk
PSV	Sc Heerenveen	NAC Breda	Willem II
FC Twente	AZ	N.E.C.	VVV-Venlo
Feyenoord	Vitesse	Roda JC	FC Zwolle
		Heracles Almelo	
		ADO Den Haag	

Jupiler League (First division)

<i>Cluster E</i>	<i>Cluster F</i>	<i>Cluster G</i>
De Graafschap	FC Volendam	FC Emmen
Sparta Rotterdam	FC Den Bosch	FC Dordrecht
SC Cambuur Leeuwarden	Excelsior	FC Eindhoven
MVV	Helmond Sport	Telstar
Go Ahead Eagles	Fortuna Sittard	Almere City
		FC Oss

3.2.2 Primary data collection

Qualitative research is conducted by using semi-structured interviews and focused on several main topics. These topics addressed in interviews are knowledge management style of a football club, the needs of clubs in attracting useful knowledge, evaluation of the current knowledge dissemination process by KNVB Expertise to clubs, knowledge sharing between clubs and the impact of new external knowledge provided by KNVB Expertise on professional football clubs. The topic list used in interviews can be found in appendix 2. Interviews were held with members of professional football clubs and a manager of KNVB Expertise who provides clubs with new knowledge and educational services. Interviewees were people from the board of directors and from middle management who were able to talk about the strategy of the club and had a clear view on knowledge management in their own organization. For example, interviews were held with managing directors, marketing managers, product managers or sponsor managers. At two clubs two people were interviewed in separate sessions, in two cases interviews were held in pairs and at three clubs interviews were held with one person. The average length of an interview was approximately one hour. Since this study is about interpretations, individual knowledge and attitude, qualitative research is used. Data from qualitative research will show whether there are differences between football clubs in human resources, managerial behavior, structural characteristics and strategic perspective of the organization. With these data a conclusion can be drawn about knowledge management styles in different football clubs and the fit with products of KNVB Expertise. Interviews were audio-recorded and word-processed into interview transcripts. These transcripts are coded in order to obtain a proper qualitative analysis. Transcripts are made using the steps described by Saunders and Lewis (2012). For summary data sheets of the interview data, see appendix 4.

3.3 Summary

This thesis concentrates on a practical solution for disseminating potential useful knowledge to professional football clubs by KNVB Expertise. To formulate an answer to the problem statement three research questions are used which are answered using both secondary and primary data. The conclusion of the thesis will provide KNVB Expertise with an advice regarding adjustment of the process of disseminating knowledge to clubs. Managerial implications are given to use the results of this study in a proper manner.

Chapter 4 Results

This chapter describes the results from data collected in this research. First knowledge management and the process of knowledge dissemination of KNVB Expertise to clubs, followed by results from the different clusters discussed in the methodology chapter. This chapter concludes with a summary of the main results of this study.

4.1 KNVB Expertise

A number of relevant topics are used to describe the process of inter-organizational learning between KNVB Expertise and all professional football clubs in the Netherlands. First, KNVB Expertise is studied to collect data on its characteristics as a donor firm in an inter-organizational knowledge transfer framework. Therefore, some topics are discussed: the knowledge management style of KNVB Expertise, the inter-organizational dynamics between KNVB Expertise and clubs, the nature of knowledge that is transferred, knowledge management styles of professional football clubs and possible improvements on the strategy of KNVB Expertise are studied.

4.1.1 Intra-organizational learning

KNVB Expertise is managed by two professionals who discuss all relevant issues on a daily basis and define the strategy of the organization. All projects carried out by KNVB Expertise have to be beneficial to Dutch professional football and in all projects KNVB Expertise is supported by the entities KNVB, ECV, CED and FBO. Every year all projects of KNVB Expertise are presented to the four initiators, KNVB, ECV, CED and FBO, in an annual plan. The management of KNVB Expertise strives to achieve two particular goals in their strategy: improvement of policymaking of the Dutch professional football business and increase knowledge transfer between clubs. All four initiators of KNVB Expertise have to approve the strategy and projects. During the rest of the year contact between the KNVB Expertise and the four initiators depends on the needs to interact with each other.

KNVB Expertise is a young organization in a sense that it was founded in 2008. Also it is a small and flexible organization. There is no structural plan for development of processes, only a few arrangements on strategy are made so managers of KNVB Expertise have room to develop new projects. At the moment, KNVB Expertise spends more time on execution of projects than on the acquisition of information from the football market, other professional sport markets and entertainment businesses. The number of projects also influences the intra organizational knowledge sharing process of KNVB Expertise since it becomes harder to discuss all issues on a regular basis.

4.1.2 Inter-organizational dynamics

Goal of KNVB Expertise is to help clubs with all aspects of business besides athletic and medical issues. To do this it strives to have informal social ties with clubs, but on an executive level in the organization. KNVB Expertise has to deal with a rapid turnover in personnel at football clubs at all management levels. Goal is to contact new board members of football clubs during the first few weeks after a person starts working at a club. KNVB Expertise tries to avoid having too much contact with operational levels of management in football clubs since the goal of KNVB Expertise is to contribute to the strategic development of football clubs. No customer relationship management system is used by KNVB Expertise which makes it hard to have an overview of clubs and people that are spoken to during the year.

4.1.3 Process of knowledge dissemination

Knowledge is disseminated from KNVB Expertise to clubs in various manners. Public reports are used to show market trends, facts and figures, reports with tailored data are provided to all clubs and presentations are given to the board and management of football clubs to discuss important research data. Only KNVB Expertise has access to a database with data of all football clubs in the Netherlands. Clubs can ask for benchmarks in which data of that particular club is compared with a cluster of clubs. A benchmark group of comparable clubs can be chosen by the club that asks for information, but KNVB Expertise doesn't provide one-on-one comparisons with other clubs.

4.1.4 Knowledge management styles of clubs

For a football club it is hard to develop a long-term strategy since athletic performance and organizational performance are intertwined with each other. Bad athletic performance has a negative impact on organizational performance. The board of directors of a football club has a large influence on the knowledge management style of the organization. The success of knowledge management also depends on the quality of employees and organizational culture. Many clubs that had to reorganize due to near bankruptcy are more motivated to learn and gather knowledge from KNVB Expertise.

4.2 Knowledge management styles of professional football clubs

As described in the methodology chapter the population for this study is divided into seven clusters of comparable clubs in order to get a wide range of data on knowledge management in Dutch professional football. To get a clear overview of differences in knowledge management styles between clusters, results on each topic of knowledge management are discussed separately. These results are structured in a number of topics: knowledge acquisition, intra-organizational knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing between clubs, constraints in knowledge management, needs in knowledge development and use of KNVB Expertise and possible improvements for KNVB Expertise.

4.2.1 Knowledge acquisition

There are large differences in firm size between professional football clubs. The amount of fulltime employees working at different clubs, players and staff excluded, varies from 6 FTE to 137 FTE per club (KNVB Expertise, 2012). Clubs in the top cluster of the Dutch professional football market have good quality employees who are eager to learn and strive to develop personal and company capabilities. Innovation is an important theme in the strategy of these football clubs, both innovation in athletic performance and innovation in business performance is important. Different organizations are used to acquire knowledge, both national and international. Also personal networks are used in knowledge acquisition.

Clubs from clusters B and C have no standard process for knowledge acquisition, but are motivated to learn from external knowledge and give employees the opportunity to develop personal capabilities. Employees individually pursue knowledge acquisition. Knowledge on different topics is acquired from different organizations, but this is done ad hoc and from the bottom up. At the bottom cluster (D) of the *Eredivisie* and the top cluster of the *Jupiler League* (E), knowledge acquisition is done by focusing on comparable clubs and copying best practices from other football clubs. Clubs in these clusters also have no strategy on knowledge management and acquisition of knowledge is done bottom up.

Clubs from clusters F and G are in a constant struggle to survive as an organization. These clubs have to make choices between implementation of new ideas and daily working activities. For example, organizing the sale of tickets for a next football match has more priority than new ideas to improve fan engagement or sponsor satisfaction. Only essential knowledge needed for business is acquired from different parties. Most external knowledge is acquired via personal networks of managers and members of the board of directors.

4.2.2 Intra-organizational learning

The top two clusters of the Dutch football market, A and B, are clubs with different departments and a strong separation between the board of directors and lower management levels. Within different departments of clubs knowledge is shared in meetings and through personal knowledge transfer. All employees in a department can give input on projects and are often involved in project groups to obtain widespread support and create a wide range of ideas on different topics. The lower two cluster in de *Eredivisie*, C and D, have a much smaller firm size where departments interact more. Often, departments consist of one or two employees and managerial issues are discussed with the whole organization. Knowledge is shared based on personal interests, for example when a person acquires knowledge at a meeting the process of intra-organizational knowledge transfer depends on that particular person.

All clubs in the *Jupiler League* show similar strategies in intra-organizational learning. Organizations are small and employees discuss different issues with the whole organization. All members in the organization are involved in discussions on managerial issues.

4.2.3 Inter-organizational learning

Overall, all clubs share knowledge with other professional football clubs in the Netherlands. Clubs from cluster A also share knowledge with large international clubs and only a small amount of knowledge is shared with clubs from clusters C till G. The ECV initiates many knowledge sharing opportunities in which the majority of clubs from the *Eredivisie* participates. Clubs from cluster A are hesitant to share all their knowledge with other professional football clubs in the Netherlands. The benefits of collective business development are known but these clubs are market leaders and have fewer needs to share their knowledge with clubs in lower clusters. Cluster A clubs think other clubs are no competitors in a sense that fans will not transfer between clubs, but hesitation to share knowledge comes from the fact that there is a chance that other clubs improve their organizational performance and increase revenues which in the end could result in a better athletic performance.

The rest of the clubs from clusters B, C, D, E, F and G would like to improve inter-organizational learning and strive to collective development of professional football in the Netherlands. Clubs are transparent and are willing to share organizational data with other clubs. Many clubs try to copy best practices of other clubs and follow market trends.

4.2.4 Constraints in knowledge management

Clubs face a number of constraints during the process of organizational learning. Overall, time and money are the most important constraints in knowledge management. A lack of time is mentioned by every club in this study with a small difference in the definition of this constraint between clubs from clusters A, B, C, D and clubs from clusters E, F, G. Namely, knowledge management is no structural part of daily work at any club and employees from clubs in the first four clusters (A-D) do not take time to focus on knowledge management in their daily working activities. There is a larger tendency to work on operational issues instead of strategic issues which focus on innovation. In the last three clusters, E, F and G, the choice between knowledge management and operational activities is more difficult due to a smaller organization than clubs in other clusters, but a similar quantity of working activities.

Another aspect that is intertwined with the aspect of time and money is the choice between athletic performance and organizational performance. The core business of professional football clubs is to perform well in a football competition and sell tickets to people who would like to see this athletic performance. In that sense, the performance of management and the organization as a whole has less priority than athletic performance. Many clubs choose to invest in athletic performance instead of organizational development. A rapid personnel turnover is another constraint where many clubs have to deal with. More specifically, clubs from clusters B, C and D indicate that there is only a small number of employees working at the club for multiple years.

4.2.5 Services KNVB Expertise

All clubs are satisfied with the services offered by KNVB Expertise. Most tangible projects of KNVB Expertise are the Fan Survey and the Benchmark professional football which are conducted every year over the past couple of years. The Fan Survey is conducted since 2009 and the Benchmark professional football since 2007 (KNVB Expertise, 2013). All clubs in this study are familiar with these projects and are aware of the potential benefits for their organization. Clubs from the clusters A, B and C know where to find all data from the Fan Survey and analyze this data to see where fan engagement can be improved. Clubs from clusters D, E and F use data from the fan survey as support for choices in policymaking. Clubs from cluster G are aware of the existence of the fan survey, but do not use data for policymaking. In this cluster data is mainly used in communication towards different stakeholders. Benchmarks made between different clubs in research or during meetings are a good method for clubs to compare their organizational performance with other clubs. All clubs would like to receive the benchmark professional football in the upcoming years.

Social ties between KNVB Expertise and clubs from clusters C till G are superficial at the moment. Members of these clubs are not fully aware of all services offered by KNVB Expertise. The clubs that are aware of projects and available data seldom contact KNVB Expertise for explanation of data or answers to questions arising from existing data. All clubs in this study are not completely aware of the full potential of data analysis done by KNVB Expertise. Respondents in this study who are familiar with the course management professional football acknowledge that it is a very useful course. For clubs from cluster C till G money is an important constraint of participation in the course. The online knowledge centre of KNVB Expertise is used by a minority of the respondents. According to the majority of respondents who do use it, the completeness, lay-out and functionality can be improved.

Need for knowledge

The need for knowledge varies between clubs. Clubs from cluster A have the need to acquire data that can be analyzed by the club. Data and trends from international football leagues and contacts with large clubs in Europe are important aspects in their need for knowledge. Next to this, clubs would like to have more research of scenario planning. For example, the impact of having a connected stadium on turnover in catering and merchandise is an unsolved question. Clusters B, C and D have the needs to learn from best practices in the market and application of existing knowledge in the market. Overall, clubs from the *Jupiler League* have the needs to get more knowledge on communication and media topics. Knowledge is needed on brand management in order to rebuild the image of the whole *Jupiler League*. For clubs from cluster G, financial data and research are very important.

Recommendations KNVB Expertise

There are two recommendations mentioned often by clubs, namely improving brand awareness of KNVB Expertise and focusing more on consultancy instead of only observing the market. Besides cluster A, all clubs would like to learn from best practices of other Dutch professional football clubs. Clubs from cluster B and C would like to have more opportunities to make analyses on their own without the need to ask KNVB Expertise.

4.3 Summary

The management of KNVB Expertise strives to achieve two particular goals in their strategy: improvement of policymaking of the Dutch professional football business and increase knowledge transfer between clubs. At the moment, KNVB Expertise spends more time on execution of projects than following trends from the Dutch professional football market, other professional sport markets and entertainment businesses. Dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise to clubs is done by using different methods:

- Public reports
- Tailored data reports for clubs
- Presentations and workshops
- Solutions to questions of clubs on different business topics.

According to KNVB Expertise, some characteristics of Dutch professional football clubs are important in knowledge management styles:

- A rapid turnover in personnel
- Influence of the board of directors
- Quality of employees working at football clubs
- Organizational culture of football clubs

The topics discussed with different professional football clubs show a number of remarkable results. The number of fulltime employees working at different clubs varies a lot. Knowledge is acquired from different parties, both international and national. Overall, clubs have no strategy to acquire knowledge and often knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom up. Most football clubs have a non-hierarchical organization with short communication lines where knowledge is shared frequently and in an informal manner. Time and money are often mentioned as constraints in knowledge management. Knowledge transfer between clubs happens regularly, the majority of clubs is transparent and willing to share knowledge. All clubs are positive about KNVB Expertise, but brand awareness is limited. The next chapter provides a discussion of these results and an answer to the problem statement and research questions of this study.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and recommendations

In chapter four the results are described based on the broad topics addressed during the interviews. This chapter provides a discussion and interpretation of these topics in which the most remarkable results are discussed. Both a theoretical interpretation and a practical interpretation are described. The theoretical interpretation describes the link with literature discussed in chapter two. These interpretations in combination with the results from chapter four are the building blocks for the conclusion and managerial implications. The last section of this chapter will discuss the limitations in this research and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Discussion

The conceptual framework of Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) describes a number of attributes that influence the process of inter-organizational knowledge transfer. Parts of this process are the intra-organizational learning capabilities of both the donor firm and the recipient firm. This research shows that KNVB Expertise lacks absorptive capacity to attract all potentially useful knowledge from the football business. The primary reason for this is lack in absorptive capacity is lack of resources, time and money. Also three external entities, ECV, CED and FBO show limited involvement in projects. Product of KNVB Expertise are not the core business of these entities and therefore the motivation contribute to projects becomes lower.

The management of KNVB Expertise strives to achieve two particular goals in their strategy: improvement of policymaking of the Dutch professional football business and increase knowledge transfer between clubs. There is a high motivation to teach and KNVB Expertise wants to be seen as an organization that is easily accessible and always willing to help clubs with managerial issues that can be solved with knowledge available at KNVB Expertise. Results show that brand awareness of KNVB Expertise can be improved. Primarily, clubs are not aware of the possibilities of existing knowledge. If clubs are not aware of the available knowledge the chance that KNVB Expertise will be asked for support decreases.

At the moment, the process of transferring knowledge from KNVB Expertise to clubs is done in a similar manner for every club. For KNVB Expertise this is the most effective method of dissemination knowledge to clubs. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) argue that tacitness, ambiguity and complexity influence inter-organizational transfer of knowledge. None of the clubs in this research indicated that the nature of knowledge has a negative influence on their capabilities of intra-organizational learning. Clubs do indicate that it is hard to be compared with other clubs and copy best practices due to firm structure, geographical

area and culture, facilities and financial capabilities. All clubs are content with the initiative of having a knowledge centre for professional football and appreciate the projects carried out by Expertise. During the past four years trust increased in the relationship between clubs and KNVB Expertise. Clubs are willing to share knowledge and are eager to learn. Since there are no real structures & mechanisms in dissemination of knowledge by KNVB Expertise brand awareness is limited. Also the rapid personnel turnover in football clubs creates superficial social ties with clubs and limited brand awareness of KNVB Expertise. Power relations have no influence in the relationship between KNVB Expertise and clubs. Both parties are not obligated to collaborate with each other, although KNVB Expertise has the mission to support all football clubs there is no hierarchy between clubs and KNVB Expertise.

Differences in knowledge management styles between professional football clubs are primarily a result of firm size and financial capabilities. Large clubs have enough employees to create sufficient absorptive capacity and motivation to learn. Organizational culture and managerial behavior have an important impact on the motivation to learn. All clubs have sufficient intra-organizational transfer capabilities. Knowledge is shared between members of football clubs during meetings other personal contact. At clubs from clusters C till G almost all available knowledge is shared with the whole organization due to a small firm size. Intra-organizational knowledge transfer at clubs from clusters A and B is done within departments instead of the whole organization. In that case firm size limits the intra-organizational transfer capability. In order to obtain positive results of knowledge transfer to clubs new dissemination methods could be used. Knowledge dissemination should be adapted to the limited availability of time and increasing the contact frequency will increase brand awareness.

The conceptual model of Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) appeared to be applicable to this case study. To summarize, intra-organizational learning of both KNVB Expertise and all professional football clubs is limited by lack of resources, time and money. The nature of knowledge shouldn't be a problem in inter-organizational knowledge transfer, but inter-organizational dynamics influence the effectiveness of knowledge transfer between KNVB Expertise and football clubs. Also inter-organizational dynamics between different football clubs could be better organized. Every club in both divisions is eager to learn from other clubs, but everyone is following instead of taking the lead and invest in innovation.

5.2 Conclusion and managerial implications

In the problem statement several research questions were described that contribute to the answer on the central research question in this study. First an answer to the research questions will be provided before the problem statement is answered.

1. What are the differences in knowledge management style between Dutch professional football clubs?

Differences in management style are provided by describing the differences in knowledge management style between clusters. Clubs in cluster A and B are large organizations which possess intelligent employees with a high motivation to learn. These employees are eager to learn and use many different organizations to acquire knowledge relevant for their field of work. In these clubs knowledge acquisition is actively stimulated by managers and members of the board. These characteristics differ from clubs of other clusters in this study where knowledge acquisition is done from bottom-up and management and the board of directors take a passive role. Clubs from clusters A, B and C actively analyze data from research projects and try to get the maximum amount of knowledge out of data. Clubs from clusters D, E, F, and G gather data from KNVB Expertise, but without further analysis. Also intra-organizational knowledge sharing of football clubs from clusters A and B differs from the remaining clusters. These clubs have multiple departments which are larger than departments of clubs from clusters C, D, E, F, G. In clusters A and B intra-organizational learning is done in departments whereas in the rest of the clusters intra-organizational learning is done with the whole organization. In cluster G organizational memory depends on a few persons in the organization, which is a very vulnerable situation to be in.

2. How is the dissemination of knowledge to Dutch professional football clubs organized by KNVB Expertise?

At the moment knowledge dissemination to all football clubs is very similar. When research is conducted public reports are used to show business trends, tailored data per club is digitally transferred with a short explanation, when clubs want more explanation workshops are organized and after these workshops specific extra analyses are made. KNVB Expertise communicates with member of the board or operational managers in an informal manner in order to be transparent and show willingness to support clubs in policymaking. These personal and informal contacts often results in a more intensive use of products from KNVB Expertise by the clubs.

3. *What challenges do Dutch professional football clubs face during the implementation of potential useful knowledge?*

The most common challenge in knowledge management is lack of resources, time and money. Clubs from clusters A, B and C primarily indicate having a lack of time, whereas the rest of the clubs primarily indicated having a lack of financial capabilities and a lack of time. The size of the firm influences the challenges that clubs face during the implementation of knowledge. When a club has a small organization, the problems of implementation of knowledge are higher. A lack of time is a result of having insufficient human resources. Many clubs, more specifically clusters B till G, strive to have a minimal amount of people needed to manage a football club in order to invest as much as possible in the athletic performance of the club.

These research questions provide a solid base to draw a conclusion on the problem statement:

How can KNVB Expertise adapt the process of disseminating useful knowledge to clubs that vary in their knowledge management style?

This question cannot be answered without mentioning the different clusters in this research. Each cluster has its own specific needs of knowledge and its own specific needs of the role that KNVB Expertise has in the football business. Next to this specific knowledge, also general implications are provided.

First of all, KNVB Expertise should create more awareness of its products among all clubs. All clubs are aware of the benefits from learning and the benefits of having a knowledge centre in the football business. KNVB Expertise should position itself more as the most important knowledge centre in the business. At the moment, clubs often use external knowledge from other parties which have more social ties with a club. To start with, an annual communication plan would be helpful in building more awareness. Key concepts in communication should be the broad range of knowledge available on different topics and trends, the benchmarking opportunities between clubs and the benefits of developing the football business as a whole. One part of the communication process, the online knowledge centre, should be improved in completeness, functionality and lay-out.

Secondly, KNVB Expertise should take the role of consultant more often in contact with clubs. This could be done in presenting practical tips during workshops, build cases around a current theme where all clubs discuss about in gatherings initiated by the ECV or CED. For clubs that face difficulties in absorbing data

from KNVB Expertise this could give useful practical implications. For clubs that have the ability to absorb knowledge from KNVB Expertise, consultancy will contribute to own ideas about organizational issues.

Next to these general conclusions, specific conclusions are drawn per cluster. Clubs in cluster A are well connected with KNVB Expertise and use many services of KNVB Expertise, but there is a need for a more international oriented process of acquiring knowledge. Clubs can be supported with knowledge on European trends from different sport sectors and with best practices from large international football clubs. Clubs in clusters B, C and D have the needs to make their own analyses from data which currently can only be done by KNVB Expertise. Developing an online database with club specific knowledge can support these clubs in organizational development. Clubs from cluster E and F are more focused on best practices on different topics in the Netherlands. Showing best practices of clubs from the *Eredivisie* supports these clubs, but the specific conditions per club have to be monitored. All clubs argue that a one-on-one comparison between clubs is difficult. Clubs in cluster E and F have a much smaller organization than other clubs in the Netherlands and simply do not have enough resources to acquire and implement knowledge. If KNVB Expertise wants to support these clubs operational resources should be provided. For example, an employee of KNVB Expertise or external organization who works temporary at a club with the main objective to implement useful knowledge in the club.

5.3 Summary

The main conclusions drawn from this study are the large impact of firm size in knowledge management styles. Large clubs from the *Eredivisie* have the capacity to deal with data from research and see KNVB Expertise as a great source of information. Clubs in clusters B and C like to see best practices and the opportunities to analyze data. For clubs in clusters D and E data is used passively as a starting point in policymaking. KNVB Expertise should be more visible to these clubs and proactively disseminate knowledge. The bottom two clusters, E and F, just need more human resources in order to implement potential useful knowledge. At the moment KNVB Expertise uses the same strategy for all firms. In order to support all clubs multiple strategies should be developed.

5.4 Limitations and recommendations for future research

The methods used to find a solution to the problem statement show some limitations. First of all validity and reliability are important attributes of a meaningful research. This section describes how validity and reliability are influenced by choices made in the previous sections.

Saunders and Lewis (2012) define validity as “the extent to which (a) data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure and (b) the research findings are really about what they profess to be about” (p.127). There are two types of validity; internal validity and external validity. Data is collected under the supervision of KNVB Expertise. Therefore football clubs can be influenced in their input on questions. It could be that clubs link knowledge management in their organization only to KNVB Expertise instead of knowledge management of the club in general.

External validity refers to the extent to which conclusions are generalisable to other research settings (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). This research is focused on a very specific population and conducted for one organization, therefore the question is to what extent conclusions are generalisable to other service organizations. The goal of this study is not to provide a theory that is generalisable to all populations, but this particular research setting provides useful insights in the environment of professional sport organizations. It can be hard to generalize conclusions since the environment is not the same for every sport if you take into consideration for example media attention, nationwide popularity of the sport and the attractiveness to sponsors. But the goal for every professional sport organization is the same, win the next game and finish at the top of the league table at the end of the season.

Saunders and Lewis (2012) define reliability as “the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings” (p. 128). Data collection in this research focused on qualitative data provided by executives and managers working in Dutch professional football clubs. Two principal factors could threaten the reliability of the findings and conclusions in this study; subject bias and observer bias. Subject bias could occur if multiple clubs in the data sample have a significantly different management style than the majority of clubs in their cluster. Observer bias could threaten the reliability of the findings and conclusions since the interpretation of qualitative data collected could differ from other researchers. Since clubs indicate the complexity of comparing different clubs with each other the number of clubs spoken to could be insufficient to generalize results. Next to this, athletic performance is taken into account in the development of clusters. When clusters were constructed around organizational characteristics the grouping

could have been different. Also differences in culture and geographical characteristics are noticed in this study. These limitations provide some recommendations for future research.

The impact of organizational culture on knowledge management could be a nice addition to this research in which organizational structure is taken into account. Proximity in organizational learning seems to have an important role in inter-organizational learning between football clubs. Knobens and Oerlemans (2006) argue that there are many forms of proximity which influence inter-organizational learning. This could be a nice starting point in future research on knowledge transfer between sport organizations.

5.4.1 Personal point of view on conducted research

During this study I noticed some remarkable aspects of the professional football business. Being a professional football club in the *Jupiler League* is not the most comfortable place to be in. Much respect to the members of small football clubs who are able to organize an athletic event every two weeks and gather enough revenues during the year in order to survive as an organization. Especially in a sport environment where many people have a strong opinion about a club which increases the pressure to perform well. As a result of this uncertain environment it becomes hard for all football clubs to develop a multiannual strategy. These short-term strategies have a direct effect on knowledge management since good knowledge management is beneficial in the long run, while good athletic performance has to be realized in the short run. Therefore rational thinking becomes harder and often emotions take over in management and policymaking. In order to successfully support football clubs in policy making tailor made advice is needed based not only on quantitative data but also with a clear understanding of the current environment or situation where a club has to deal with.

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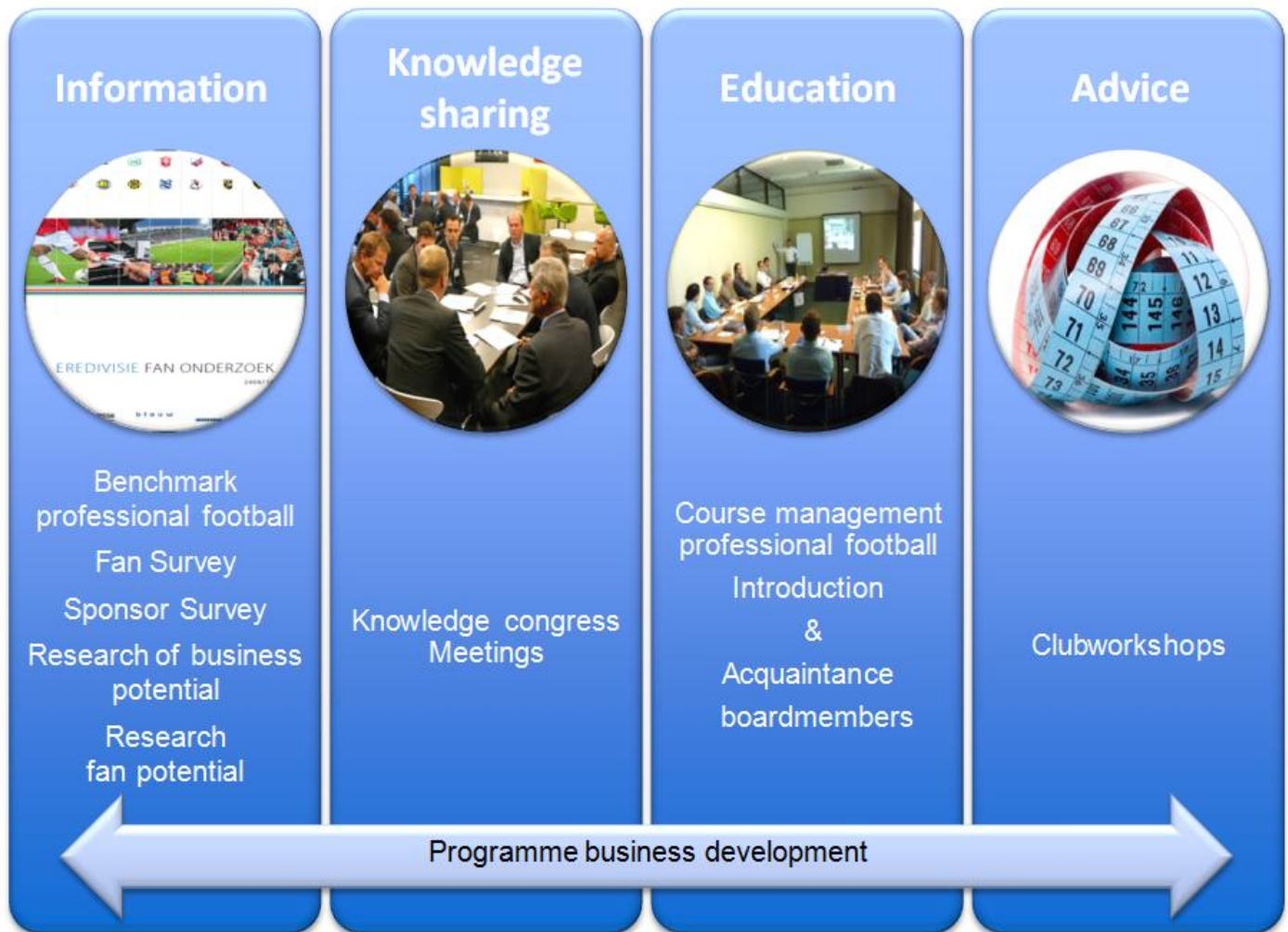
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Appendix 1: Services KNVB Expertise



Source: KNVB Expertise (2013).

Appendix 2: Topic list interview football clubs

Introduction

- Introduction of the topic
- The purpose of the interview
- Selection procedure interviewees
- Themes that will be discussed
- Length and style of the interview
- The possibility for the interviewee to stop the interview when necessary
- Audio-recording interview
- Guarantee anonymity
- Introduction of interviewer and work/study
- Ask whether interviewee wants to read the manuscript
- Ask whether interviewee wants to receive a summary of study

Topics

- Size of the firm
- Firm structure
- Knowledge management in the organization
 - o Awareness and participation services KNVB Expertise
 - o Acquiring knowledge
 - o Sharing knowledge
 - o Interpretation of knowledge
 - o Organizational memory

Possible questions

- What actions are undertaken to keep learning and developing as an organization?

Acquiring knowledge

- Is the acquirement of knowledge a standardized procedure in the firm?
- What methods are used to acquire possible useful knowledge?

Knowledge sharing

- How is useful knowledge shared in the organization?
 - o Communication methods
 - o Knowledge sharing systems used
 - o What method of sharing knowledge works best for the organization?
- What are the bottlenecks of knowledge sharing in the organization?

Knowledge interpretation

- What methods are used to make sure people use new knowledge in the right way?
- What bottlenecks can be seen?

Knowledge memory

- What methods are used to store potential useful knowledge in the organization?
- To what extent does the organization learn from knowledge which is embedded in the organization?
- What effect does personnel turnover have on organizational memory?

Areas for improvement and bottlenecks

- What limitations to effective knowledge management can be seen in the organization?

Evaluation of services provided by KNVB Expertise

- Research
 - o Fan surveys
 - o Sponsor surveys
 - o Customer potential research
 - o Season in numbers
 - o Benchmark professional football
 - o Online knowledge centre
- Knowledge events
 - o Knowledge congress
- Educational programs
 - o Course management professional football
 - o Introduction managers professional football
 - o Acquaintance board members professional football clubs
- Strategic advice
 - o Workshops
- Are you familiar with the services of KNVB Expertise?
- Which services of KNVB Expertise do you use?
- Are events/projects easy accessible?
- Which services are fine and which could be organized differently?
- What are the reasons to participate? (or not)
- What are the reasons to actively analyze research data? (or not)
- What are the possibilities for KNVB Expertise to make their services fit with your organization?

Communication KNVB Expertise to clubs

- What is your opinion about communication to clubs by KNVB Expertise around different services provided to clubs?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the communication process of KNVB Expertise to clubs?

Depending on the extent to which a club uses knowledge management or services provided by KNVB Expertise

- Do you remember a situation in which the organization learned something that had a positive effect on operations?
 - o Context of the situation
 - o What is learned?
 - o In what way did the organization learn?
 - o Describe the importance of this event
 - o What changes can be seen?
 - o What actions were undertaken?
 - o What made these actions took place?
 - o What were the bottlenecks?

Appendix 3: Topic list interview KNVB Expertise

Introduction

- Introduction of the topic
- The purpose of the interview
- Selection procedure interviewees
- Themes that will be discussed
- Length and style of the interview
- The possibility for the interviewee to stop the interview when necessary
- Audio-recording interview

KNVB Expertise

- What is the goal of KNVB Expertise in business development at Dutch football clubs?
- Does KNVB Expertise have enough absorptive capacity to deal with all knowledge available at football clubs?
- What is the strength of KNVB Expertise?
- Which constraints do occur in intra-organizational knowledge transfer?

Contact clubs

- How would you describe the contact between KNVB Expertise and the clubs?
 - o Different management levels?
 - o Intensity/frequency
- What are the constraints in contact between Expertise and clubs?
- What methods are used to stimulate the quality and frequency of contact between KNVB Expertise and clubs?
- Are there standardized procedures or plans?

Delen van kennis

- What are the constraints in knowledge transfer between KNVB Expertise and football clubs?
 - o Brand awareness of Expertise and awareness of available knowledge
 - o Complexity of knowledge
 - o Interpretation of knowledge by football clubs
 - o Power relations
 - o Relationships between football clubs
 - o Structure/mechanisms in knowledge transfer

Professional football clubs

What are the differences in knowledge development and knowledge sharing between football clubs?

- Motivation to learn
- Absorptive capacity
 - o Knowledge acquisition
 - o Intra-organizational transfer capability.

Adjustments to KNVB Expertise

- What services of KNVB Expertise could be improved?
 - Which projects can be continued and which project shouldn't be continued?
 - How should new projects be formed?

Appendix 4: Summary sheets interviews¹

	Characteristics Expertise	Contact clubs	Knowledge dissemination	Characteristics football clubs	Strategy KNVB Expertise
KNVB Expertise	<p>1. Spending a small amount of time on trend watching and gathering market information.</p> <p>2. Four different levels of knowledge dissemination to clubs.</p> <p>3. Knowledge sharing within KNVB Expertise becomes increasingly harder due to the amount of projects.</p>	<p>1. Informal contact between Expertise and clubs.</p> <p>2. Clubs deal with a high personnel turnover.</p> <p>3. Clubs can ask questions at any moment.</p> <p>4. Trying to contact new board members of clubs during the first month of their job.</p>	<p>1. Knowledge is disseminated in reports, meetings and personal contact.</p> <p>2. Limited involvement of CED, ECV and FBO.</p> <p>3. Services are more or less luxury products.</p> <p>4. No customer relationship management.</p>	<p>1. No long-term strategy at football clubs.</p> <p>2. Success of disseminating knowledge depends on board of directors at club.</p> <p>3. Also quality of employees and organizational culture are important.</p> <p>4. Clubs that had to reorganize in the past know how to deal with knowledge.</p> <p>5. Athletic performance and organizational performance are intertwined with each other.</p>	<p>1. Strategy is defined by the four initiators of KNVB Expertise.</p> <p>2. Goal is to be the most important knowledge centre in the market.</p> <p>3. Increase knowledge transfer between clubs.</p> <p>4. Provide clubs with a basic amount of services and paid extra services.</p> <p>5. Educational programs don't necessarily have to be organized by KNVB Expertise.</p>

¹ Full interview transcripts are available. Please contact M.Vreuls@uvt.nl
Master Thesis Organization and Strategy – M. Vreuls

	Acquisition of knowledge	Intra-organizational knowledge sharing	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster A	<p>1. Good quality employees who are eager to learn</p> <p>2. Use different organizations to acquire knowledge (National and international)</p> <p>3. Innovation is important</p>	<p>1. Departments have individual meetings</p> <p>2. Use of project groups</p> <p>3. All employees have input on projects to create wide consensus.</p>	<p>1. Market leaders. Often knowledge is shared to less developed clubs.</p> <p>2. The ECV initiates knowledge sharing a lot, but clubs are hesitant. Club provides more knowledge to competitors than it acquires.</p> <p>3. Clubs show more transparency on an operational level than at executive level.</p>	<p>1. Often operational daily work has priority. Time is limited.</p> <p>2. Knowledge management is not core business so money is spend on different aspects of the organization.</p>	<p>1. Brand awareness of Expertise increased over the past few years, but can still be improved.</p> <p>2. People that need data from Expertise know how to find it and how to deal with it.</p> <p>3. Total potential of data is hard to see. Data is not defining policy, but very useful.</p>	<p>1. Clubs know what to do with data from research. Correct data is always very useful.</p> <p>2. European trends are important. Focus on scenario planning.</p>	<p>1. Increase brand awareness.</p> <p>2. More consultancy instead of only observing the market.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Intra-organizational knowledge sharing	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster B	<p>1. No standardized procedure in acquiring knowledge.</p> <p>2. High motivation to learn</p> <p>3. Courses from other companies than Expertise are used to develop employees.</p>	<p>1. Knowledge sharing is done between employees in a department.</p> <p>2. Knowledge sharing is done on personal interests.</p> <p>3. Many employees have input on projects to create a broad spectrum of ideas.</p>	<p>1. Knowledge sharing happens in meeting organized by the ECV.</p> <p>2. Clubs in this cluster are transparent and want to develop their organization.</p> <p>3. Knowledge sharing could be done more often, but firm size and job descriptions differ a lot.</p>	<p>1. High personnel turnover.</p> <p>2. One person can overrule the strategy of the firm. Results in short term strategies.</p>	<p>1. Not many people participate in meetings or use knowledge from KNVB Expertise.</p> <p>2. Course professional football is very useful.</p> <p>3. Data are always discussed with the board of directors.</p>	<p>1. More qualitative data following quantitative data.</p> <p>2. Conditions per club need to be monitored .</p>	<p>1. Qualitative research following quantitative research.</p> <p>2. Create the possibility for clubs to work with data on their own.</p> <p>3. Show best practices.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Intra-organizational knowledge sharing	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster C	<p>1. No structural plan is done ad hoc.</p> <p>2. Knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom-up.</p> <p>3. No trendsetters but followers</p>	<p>1. Knowledge sharing is done on personal interests.</p> <p>2. No procedures. Sharing based on personal interaction.</p>	<p>1. Clubs are aware of importance of developing collectively.</p> <p>2. High transparency and willingness to share knowledge.</p>	<p>1. Choices have to be made in the organization between athletic performance and organizational performance.</p> <p>2. Money is always a constraint.</p>	<p>1. All services are very useful.</p> <p>2. There is a small threshold to contact Expertise more often due to superficial social ties.</p>	<p>1. Apply knowledge which is available.</p> <p>2. Learn from best practices (also other sports)</p> <p>3. More knowledge on development of players.</p>	<p>1. Communicate with board of directors to build awareness.</p> <p>2. Build awareness of the need for collectively developing.</p> <p>3. Show best practices.</p> <p>4. Improve online knowledge centre.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Intra-organizational knowledge sharing	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster D	<p>1. Knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom-up.</p> <p>2. Club can choose from a wide range of good quality employees.</p>	<p>1. Less need to share knowledge between employees since everyone has its own department.</p> <p>2. Regular meetings between board and employees to discuss relevant topics.</p>	<p>1. It is hard to share knowledge with large clubs. Hard to compare clubs. All clubs have different characteristics.</p> <p>2. High frequent contact with comparable clubs.</p> <p>3. More knowledge acquisition from other clubs than knowledge sharing.</p>	<p>1. High personnel turnover.</p> <p>2. Limited financial capabilities.</p> <p>3. Choice between athletic performance and organizational performance.</p>	<p>1. Limited awareness of services provided.</p> <p>2. All services very useful, but hard to implement knowledge.</p> <p>3. Workshops are a great way of transferring knowledge between Expertise and the club.</p>	<p>1. Best practices from other clubs.</p> <p>2. More research on geographical area (e.g. image of club)</p>	<p>1. More consultancy</p> <p>2. More knowledge sharing opportunities between comparable clubs.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Knowledge sharing within the club	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster E	<p>1. Knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom-up.</p> <p>2. Focus is on football related knowledge. No knowledge from other businesses.</p>	<p>1. Very small organization with short lines.</p> <p>2. Different issues are discussed on a regular basis with whole organization.</p>	<p>1. Trying to copy knowledge from other clubs.</p> <p>2. Following other clubs.</p>	<p>1. Financial constraints.</p> <p>2. Athletic performance before organizational performance.</p> <p>3. Club facilities can create boundaries in development.</p>	<p>1. All services are very useful and used to see were company growth can be accomplished.</p> <p>2. Time horizon of research has large impact on results.</p>	<p>1. Overview of all rules that differ between divisions. In the <i>Eredivisie</i> different rules apply than in the <i>Jupiler League</i>.</p> <p>2. More knowledge on media/communication skills.</p>	<p>1. More communication about products/services.</p> <p>2. More handles to work with instead of data.</p> <p>3. Cluster clubs in meetings in order to create more knowledge transfer between clubs.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Knowledge sharing within the club	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster F	<p>1. Use of external parties and internships.</p> <p>2. During meetings of the CED.</p> <p>3. Marketing and communication concepts of other clubs (national and international) and other sport businesses.</p> <p>4. Small organization = many different working activities.</p>	<p>1. Informal contact with whole organization</p> <p>2. Formal meeting every week.</p> <p>3. Employees working at the club for a long time.</p>	<p>1. Informal contact. Lot of protectionism. Often contact with the same clubs.</p> <p>2. Lots of ideas, no action. Not enough intellect in the football business.</p> <p>3. Clubs are no competitors due to culture and geographical region.</p>	<p>1. Daily business.</p> <p>2. Small organization means informational knowledge sharing and less formal meetings.</p> <p>3. Long term strategy hard to define due to emotions.</p> <p>4. Costs, resources, time and culture.</p> <p>5. Cutting costs causes a negative circle in organizational development.</p>	<p>1. All research project are known.</p> <p>2. Plans are used in 3 month action plans and other presentations.</p> <p>3. No use online knowledge centre.</p> <p>4. No resources to follow the course management professional football.</p>	<p>1. Marketing concepts on fan engagement. Athletic performance excluded.</p> <p>2. Improvement of organizational processes.</p> <p>3. Trends on sponsorships, CSR sponsorships, exploitation of stadium facilities.</p> <p>4. Practical implementation by extra employee.</p>	<p>1. Knowledge sharing between small number of clubs. Take the lead in organization.</p> <p>2. Fan Survey multiple execution dates to see impact of athletic performance.</p> <p>3. Research of safety. Best practices.</p> <p>4. More interaction in meetings.</p>

	Acquisition of knowledge	Knowledge sharing within the club	knowledge sharing between clubs	Constraints in knowledge management	KNVB Expertise	Need for knowledge	Improvement KNVB Expertise
Cluster G	1. Only essential acquirement of knowledge. 2. Knowledge acquisition is done from the bottom-up. 3. Intensive use of personal network.	1. Personal knowledge sharing on a daily basis due to small firm size. 2. All members of the organization are informed about managerial issues. 3. Sharing knowledge is easy due to an unchanging environment.	1. High transparency and willingness to share knowledge. 2. Sharing knowledge between comparable clubs is done often.	1. Very small organizations. Time and money are main constraints. 2. Clubs have to choose between athletic performance and organizational performance. 3. People get stuck in routines.	1. Limited awareness of services. 2. No social ties between Expertise and clubs. 3. Often Fan Survey and benchmark professional football are used.	1. Need to create a better image for the whole league. 2. Knowledge on financial issues is important. 3. The amount of knowledge available is hard to absorb.	1. Use data that is available to get more in-depth knowledge on implementation. 2. Participate in meetings between clubs. 3. Collective thinking has to be improved.