

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Diploma Thesis

Strategic Management in football:

Vietnamese Football Club Competitive Advantages Acquisition Via Player Recruitment

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Bc. Ngoc An Nguyen, BBA

Economics and Management

Economics and Management

Thesis title

Vietnamese Football Club Competitive Advantages Acquisition Via Player Recruitment

Objectives of thesis

The diploma thesis aims to analyze relevant secondary data on strategies and competitive advantages development and defense. Relevant secondary data will be combined with primary data analysis aiming to monitor current situation in Vietnamese football clubs competitive advantages development and defense through players recruitment. The diploma thesis will result in manual of concrete steps, which shall be undertaken by Vietnamese football club, in order to develop and defense competitive advantage through players recruitment.

Methodology

“Literature Review” part will be elaborated based on relevant secondary data analysis and synthesis.

“Analysis” part will result from relevant secondary data and original primary reconnaissance combination.

Recommended structure:

1. Introduction
2. Goals and Methodology
3. Literature Review
4. Analysis
5. Results and Discussion
6. Conclusions
7. References
8. Appendices

The proposed extent of the thesis

60 – 80 pages

Keywords

competitive advantage, recruitment, football, strategy

Recommended information sources

IACOBUCCI, D. – CHURCHILL, G A. *Marketing research : methodological foundations*. Mason: 2010. ISBN 978-0-538-74377-8.

Ian Lawrence. *Football Club Management: Insights from the Field*, Routledge; 1st Edition, 2019, ISBN 978-0367894146

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Michael E. Porter, Joan Magretta, Mark R. Kramer. *Strategy and Competition: The Porter Collection*, Boston, Massachusetts, Harvard Business Review Press, 2014, ISBN 978-1-62527-794-7

Expected date of thesis defence

2020/21 SS – FEM

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my diploma thesis titled " Strategic Management in football: Competitive advantages achievement of Vietnamese football club via recruitment" by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the diploma thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights. I also declare that there is no further change in the new version of my thesis other than the supplemented abstract in Czech language.

In Prague on March, 31th, 2021

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my Supervisor, Ing. Michal Chocholousek for the assertive guidance for the thesis completion. The gratitude must be sent to the coaching staffs that have provided the author with data from the interviews; CEO and coach of Pho Hien FC were a wonderful help having given the author the analysis of the team's seasons.

I would like to thank the Provozně ekonomická fakulta ČZU v Praze for the knowledge I have gained for th two-year master program in Economics and Management.

I would like to thank my good friend Dung Le for the intensive insight of football environment in Vietnam and the extensive analysis of Pho Hien football. Special thanks to my life partner and my family for the support during the completion of this thesis.

An Nguyen
Prague, 2021

**Strategic Management in football:
Vietnamese Football Club Competitive Advantages Acquisition Via Player Recruitment**

Abstract

This paper will focus on the backbone aspect of professional football: player recruitment. Every professional football club needs to create the best network of players to make them winners both on the pitch and off the pitch. Recruitment process has been proven to be a double-edged sword in terms of gaining competitive advantages due to the various risks that can come from a transfer decision. Therefore, the study will attempt to discuss the variety of different methods to minimize these uncertainties. Moreover, this paper attempts to employ qualitative methods to explain how professional football clubs in Vietnam can gain competitive advantages through the recruitment strategy. Strategic human resources management would be used as an analytical tool to create a link between the governance of the club and the recruitment strategy. At the end of the study, the author will try to propose a recruitment strategy for a specific football club, Pho Hien.

Keywords: football management, strategic human management, human management in football, competitive advantage, competitive advantage in football, football recruitment, recruitment strategy in football.

**Strategický management ve fotbalu:
Konkurenční výhody vietnamského fotbalového klubu při získávání hráčů**

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zaměří hlavní aspekt profesionálního fotbalu: nábor hráčů. Každý profesionální fotbalový klub musí vytvořit nejlepší síť hráčů, aby se z nich stali vítězi na hřišti i mimo něj. Bylo prokázáno, že náborový proces je dvojsečný meč, pokud jde o získání konkurenčních výhod, a to kvůli různým rizikům, která mohou vyplývat z rozhodnutí o převodu. Tato práce se proto zabývá diskuzí nad různými metodami minimalizujícími tyto nejistoty. Navíc jsou zde používány kvalitativní metody k vysvětlení, jak mohou profesionální fotbalové kluby ve Vietnamu získat konkurenční výhody prostřednictvím náborové strategie. Strategické řízení lidských zdrojů se používá jako analytický nástroj k tvorbě vztahu mezi klubovou politikou a náborovou strategií. Na závěr se autor pokusí o návrh náborové strategie pro konkrétní fotbalový klub Pho Hien.

Klíčová slova: fotbalový management, strategické řízení lidí, řízení lidí ve fotbalu, konkurenční výhoda, konkurenční výhoda ve fotbalu, fotbalový nábor, náborová strategie ve fotbalu.

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1 Introduction

Ever since the 19th century, when the English man started playing football, the alleged “King of Sports” is no longer only about passion and entertainment. Yet, it has transformed into a multi-million-euro business. The core that drives it forward is nothing but the human resources, and in plain words, it is about the players who perform on the pitch week in week out. Therefore, the strategy to recruit the very best football players has never been more crucial for the clubs. The recruitment strategy and make or break a football club in both sporting and financial aspects. These two aspects are inevitable when it comes to a club’s quest to gain advantages over other competitors locally and regionally. Proper recruitment strategy poses a real challenge for football clubs' success; therefore, it requires an additional skill set from those in charge of administrating the club to find the players who fit in financially and sportingly. This set of skills to assess and determine the “real” talent in a massive pool of players worldwide is a highly sought-after quality that can deliver competitive advantages against rivals as well as limit the financial risks of wrong investments (Kelly, 2017).

In general, football clubs can look into two primary sources for players: youngsters who graduate from their own academies or pursue talents from the external labor market. Each source has its own perks and purgatories that the managers must consider to select the most suitable players with specific qualities and characteristics that can bolster the club's current squad. To achieve this, the football club administrators have to consider multiple questions, for example: “Which are the qualities that the squad is lacking?”; “How to evaluate and assess the qualities of the players?”; “If the player possesses desired qualities, can his characteristics motivate the rest of the squad, or will he be the dark horse that drags down everyone’s morale?”. Those are only a few of hundreds of questions that the administrators must go through before reaching the final decision. Nonetheless, they are required to decide in quite a short period of time because rivals and competitors could be scouting those players at the same moment of the consideration. According to (Kelly, 2017), there are times that club managers are forced to trust their “instinct and gut feeling” or mutual trust with players’ agents when assessing and recruiting players, which could hamper the overall quality of the scouting process leading to improper recruitment decisions.

It can not be forgotten that each recruitment represents a crucial investment for any football club. This investment bears the financial risk that comes from the transfer fees and the costs of player wages, which are constant problems for almost every professional football club.

The risk not only lies in the financial aspect but also in the sporting counterpart. A wrong recruitment decision can lead to poor results in the competitions and hamper the clubs' reputation. The players who fail to perform to expectation can also become a burden due to their wages and bonuses. Because of this unpredictability, recruitment decisions possess an uncertainty considering the return of investment.

Professional football clubs nowadays are in various shapes and sizes considering the capital and human resources, which massively influence the strategies to be adopted when it comes to recruitment. Capital could be a non-issue with the wealthy clubs on the top of the competitions; therefore, these clubs' objectives mainly center around bolstering the current squad in order to maintain their front-runner status and further dominate the game. Their challenges do not stress money issues but lie on the specialized strategy to compete with their rivals, who are at least equal in terms of capital. The real challenges in recruitment are felt kindly by the clubs who are further down the ladder. Disadvantages in finance create significant difficulties for them to pursue a specific player in the market as the clubs could be unable to cope with the transfer fees and the players' wage demand. As such, (Pifer, 2017) emphasizes that these small clubs need innovative methods to gain success in the players market to achieve competitive advantages up to par with football elites. The major question is: how can the clubs maximize the efficiencies in the transfer market and which strategy can bring the clubs competitive advantages.

This study will attempt to find answers for these two questions under the light of the Vietnamese professional football environment. The South East Asian country has only been developing its professional football league since 2000; thus, there are plenty of challenges and dilemmas that need to be considered in player recruitment. The main objective is through the qualitative method to bring out an overview on the recruitment progress of Vietnamese elite football clubs.

2 Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to explore and determine the strategies which Vietnamese football clubs can employ to gain advantages in the transfer market. The first aim is to identify the challenges Vietnamese clubs must face every season and the flaws in recruitment strategies requiring proper amendments. Each club needs to base on their own financial and sporting

condition in order to design a suitable strategy to exploit their in-house source and the player market. They need to consider the related characteristics, principles, and practices of the strategies that can bring them favorable conditions for competitive advantages. The study further explores the methods that are being applied to assess players to minimize the potential risks and losses in the transfer market. Relevant risk indicators of a player, such as age, culture, playing style, characteristics, will be considered throughout. Finally, the study aims to design a recruitment strategy for a specific football club with the goal of exploiting the transfer market and through that gain a massive competitive advantage.

2.2 Methodology

The purpose of the thesis is to study the recruitment strategies that are being adopted by Vietnamese football clubs and clarify the methods to achieve competitive advantages through recruitment. The primary data collection is via the interviews conducted with the clubs' coaches and administrators. The main research method in the study is qualitative, however, there are data collected from secondary data to analyze and determine the reasons from the results of previous researches, which are in line with the purpose of the study.

Secondary data in this study is collected from the literature in journal articles, the reports from relevant football organizations such as European Club Association (ECA), results from previous studies and books, which include the secondary data related to football player recruitment, human resource management, football management and competitive advantages in football. Since there are merely enough academic researches on football, non-academic sources such as newspapers reports, articles from the official sources websites that is related to football recruitment and clubs' reports.

The primary data collection method is interview, which is conducted with football clubs' administrators and coaches. In this study, the semi-structured interviews were carried out through online discussion and questionnaires due to the restrictions in geography and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to the fact that there is approximately little knowledge regarding the subject of player recruitment strategies in Vietnam football, at the beginning of the study, the researcher started off with the inductive approach in order to reach an in-depth description, especially with the subject that is relatively unknown (Veal & Darcy, 2014). The additional analysis that will be applied in the study is the Thematic analysis, which is the standard for qualitative methods in various researches.

3 **Literature Review**

This part of the study aims to review the academic literature which mainly focused on recruitment strategies and how these processes can bring competitive advantage for the football clubs. The major discussions will consider the relevant subjects to recruitment, such as player assessment, club strategies, and practices.

3.1 **Competitive Advantages in Professional Football Clubs**

The competitive advantages belong to a company when the firm can use the strategies and from that improve the process of value creation while able to earn a higher rate of economic profits in comparison to other companies in the same market. These valuable resources and capabilities come in different forms of assets, such as physical, human or organizational which put the company in an advantageous position against the competitors of the same industry (Thompson, et al., 2009).

The main objective of business is to maximize profits and bring as much value to the shareholders. In order to do this, a business needs to maximize the revenues and minimize the costs. The traditional success indicators of the football world are the positions within the league, the number of points achieved and the trophies won, which can reflect through increased revenue streams (Michie & Oughton, 2004). Additionally, the financial objectives of the football clubs can be achieved through revenues generating from merchandising, tickets selling and branding, from which the owners can have financial return to reinvest in acquiring new talents and further impact sporting performance (van der Heijden, 2012).

In the current world of football, in order to achieve success at the highest level, the clubs must have competitive advantages in raking in money, which in the long run assists the clubs to further invest in all aspects of the club to maximize sporting performance. A unique situation has been created which the clubs face the challenge of generating profitability because of significant expenditure, along with the clubs that are in need of investments to strengthen the squad to keep up with the competitors. Evidently, it is impossible to separate the sporting and financial performance due to the fact that these performance indicators are often correlated.

Discussion from several authors has stated the utmost importance for football clubs to achieve advantages in a highly competitive industry. (Szymanski, 2001) discussed that players and coaches are the core of competencies for football clubs; hence the ability to find and develop talents are proven to be important strategic actions. Accordingly, the club can achieve short-

term sporting competitiveness from the purchase of high-profile players, who could require a massive amount of financial resources invested in wages and transfer fees. However, these players can instantly bring positive impacts in both finance and competitive achievements. To acquire such players, clubs must create large amount of additional profits, along with strengthening their financial position (Grass, et al., 2002).

The achievement of competitive advantages has been a topic of multiple discussions over the years within the Strategic Management field (Barney, 1991). The study conducted by (Amis, Pant & Slack, 1997) pointed out that the focus of Strategic Management was on the relationship between external environment and strategy in order to assess the opportunities of an organization, and the threats it has to face within the competitive environment. The firm can attempt to explore the environment to find out the favorable conditions to outweigh their competitors (Porter & Miller, 1985; Lado, Boyd, & Wright, 1992). From that notion, (Porter, 1985) stated that there are two determinants that are included in the selection of competitive strategy to obtain the competitive advantage over the competitors, which according to (Gartner, 1985) are the development of study on industry attractiveness and the competitive positioning in the industry.

On the other hand, (Barney, 1986, 1991, 1997) have examined the resources and capabilities of an individual firm; therefore, the study determines the strengths and weaknessess of the firm, estimates the sources of competitve advantages, consequently directs the study to the resource-based perspective. Furthermore, (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993) highlighted the role of internal resources and capabilities to be the sources for the organization to achieve superior performances. However, it is up to the organization to leverage their resources within a competitive strategy which allows them to reach the superior performances. (Barney, 1986, 1991, 1997) suggested that to reach such superior performances, the organization need to consider the combination of organization, resources and ambiguity, which still remains an uncertainty of how theses factors can be combined to come up with a certain result. Therefore, the performance of the ogranization has to be the combination of the interaction between the resources and capabilities using the strategies and the organization's mode of operation to create competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Lado et al., 1992).

(Porter, 1980, 1985) stated that the selection of competitive strategy of a sporting organization is strictly associated with its market positioning, the combination of strategies that the organization are implementing to create competitive advantage over its competitors within the industry. Altogether, the club needs to achieve effective operations that reduce the costs

(Porter, 2001; Banker, Mashruwala & Tripathy, 2015), or by making the club stand out that persuade the customers to open their purses to purchase a product or service (Porter & Miller, 1985). Alternatively, the sporting organization can make alterations to its competitive scope and focus or adjust its business to a specialized market in which it can operate in a wider scope.

3.2 **The Role of Player Recruitment in Professional football**

The primary objective when it comes to recruitment is to locate, select, acquire and place the human resources that are necessary to deliver in the organizational plans as defined by (Katou, 2008). Basically, the recruitment process represents a risk for the organization because the outcome relies heavily on the decision. If the right choice was made and the selected personnel possesses the appropriate skills for the job, the result can be extremely productive. In contrast to this, unsuitable personnel who joined the team can deliver poor results that can end up in the repetition of recruitment.

In the world of professional football, the decisions from recruitment can literally make or break a club. There are two methods of acquiring new players, one of them is to assess and promote young players, who performs well in the youth team, to train and play with the first team. This approach allows the youngsters to learn and develop skills, mentality and physicality. According to (UEFA 2017), a young player can be considered home-grown when that player spends at least three consecutive seasons at the club between the age of 15 to 21 years old. In the case of Vietnam, a player can sign a professional contract when he turns 18; since this moment, he is eligible for registration in an official match of the competition as well as available for local and international transfer (Vietnam professional football regulation 2015). If the football club has a successful academy, they have the higher possibility to produce good players who can potentially bring a positive impact to the financial and sporting performance of the club. However, in order to have a successful and efficient football academy, clubs are required to make considerable investments in multiple aspects. (Schokkaert, 2016) stated that the costs for establishing a football academy include investment and operating costs. Investments costs are fixed, whether it comes from buying a share from an existing academy or setting up the facilities that are suitable for training and running an academy. Running alongside the investment costs are the operating costs, which include wages for the academy's employees, recruitment costs of selecting young trainees to join the academy, and the

administrational cost. (Tomkins, 2013) has quoted: *“the academy could really be seen as a ‘value factory’ where value is made rather than bought.”*

The second way to acquire players is from external sources such as the transfer market, free agents who are players without contracts, or by loan, which means a club is able to utilize a player for the time stated in loan contract while paying all or a portion of the loaned player’s wages (Pifer, 2017). Players' acquisition from the transfer market requires different types of costs. (Schokkaert, 2016) has divided the recruitment cost from the transfer market into four transaction costs: search costs, contracting costs, monitoring costs, and enforcement costs. Search costs include the wage costs of the scouts from the club and the agents who are in search of good players on the transfer market as well as the arrangement of the process. The highest from the costs is the transfer fee, which is dependent upon the length of the player’s current contract and his status within the club. A star player who has a long duration left in his contract tends to cost a massive amount if any club would have the transfer interest in him. This can result in two kinds of compensation in economic aspect for the club who is selling: the productivity for the time of the player’s contract is lost, and the capital which was invested in buying or the training cost of the player (Havran, 2017). This transaction can make profit or loss for the selling club; therefore, transfer fees involved with exporting players can potentially bring positive and negative impact on the revenues of the club.

3.3 Player Assessment in Transfer Market

The professional world can be stated that is built on the identification of players. Therefore, the system for identifying players, scouting in particular, is the crucial mechanism to recruit the best players/performers for professional clubs (Vaeyens, et al., 2008; Radicchi & Mozzachiodi, 2016). Definition from (Kelly, 2017:85) stated that player assessment is *“an ongoing process of evaluating players, current and prospective who demonstrate appropriate levels of performance for inclusion in the team.”* The traditional way of assessment is the personnel of a sports team, such as managers observed and made reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the players, along with the strategies adopted by the opposing team and at the end gathered additional useful information which can deliver a competitive advantage (Kelly 2017). Taking this into consideration, football clubs in present times have built a systematic network of local, regional and international levels to identify and recruit players. The competitive advantage in this regard is gained by the clubs that can identify better athletes and

execute those earlier than other competitors. These clubs can operate with lower investments for development and training, but they possess a huge scouting network that allows them to acquire talents at a cheap price then sell for high profits after nurturing them. The undisputed “King” of this is FC Porto. The Portuguese club has remarkably achieved success with a relatively small budget by utilizing their excellent scouting network to purchase young talents, especially from South American countries to the European top five leagues (Salgado and Ruao 2013). Not only through scouting network, FC Porto also has a top academy that can produce home-grown talents, and when these players have made their name noticed, Porto can let them go and collect a considerably high profit.

Figure 1: The top value transfer from Porto (Transfermarkt)

























































#	player	Age ↓	Nat.	Season	Joined	Fee ↓
1	 Eder Militão Centre-Back	21		19/20	 Real Madrid 	€50.00m
2	 Eliaquim Mangala Centre-Back	23		14/15	 Man City 	€45.00m
3	 James Rodríguez Attacking Midfield	21		13/14	 Monaco 	€45.00m
4	 Hulk Right Winger	26		12/13	 Zenit S-Pb 	€40.00m
5	 Falcao Centre-Forward	25		11/12	 Atlético Madrid 	€40.00m
6	 Fábio Silva Centre-Forward	18		20/21	 Wolves 	€40.00m
7	 André Silva Centre-Forward	21		17/18	 AC Milan 	€38.00m
8	 Jackson Martínez Centre-Forward	28		15/16	 Atlético Madrid 	€35.00m
9	 Anderson Central Midfield	19		07/08	 Man Utd 	€31.50m
10	 Danilo Right-Back	23		15/16	 Real Madrid 	€31.50m
11	 Pepe Centre-Back	24		07/08	 Real Madrid 	€30.00m
12	 Ricardo Carvalho Centre-Back	26		04/05	 Chelsea 	€30.00m
13	 Alex Sandro Left-Back	24		15/16	 Juventus 	€26.00m
14	 João Moutinho Central Midfield	26		13/14	 Monaco 	€25.00m

Figure 1: FC Porto's most expensive players sales (Transfermarkt)

The publication of Moneyball in 2003 has made a significant change in the assessment process. Sport science techniques have begun to play a massive role in the assessment, development, and recruitment of players and the researchers and club officials have been acknowledging the importance of analytics in sport (Kelly 2017; Pifer, 2017). The results from data analytics have allowed decision-makers to monitor and assess the performance of the current players in squad, as well as scouting and recruiting players. In football, Dietmar Hopp, owner of German Bundesliga club TSG Hoffenheim, has invested in the utilization of statistical models to evaluate teams and players (Müller, et al., 2017). The latest indicator, which is described as “the new revolutionary football metric” that is being adopted in the European top five leagues, is the Expected goals (xG) and Expected Assists (xA). This indicator can measure and determine clearer the performance of players and teams. Even in the matches that end up with few goals, these metrics can point out the quality of the players on the pitch. These should be powerful tools for managers to determine the quality of the squad so they can make a suitable recruitment strategy. Nevertheless, in spite of the increasing rate of digital tools applied in the identification of football talents, most likely it can not replace the traditional scouting considering the uncertainty in future performances of players (Kelly 2017).

3.4 Value of professional football players

The value of professional football players is influenced by multiple variables that were pointed out from various research in the literature of sports economics. Observation from (Dobson & Gerrard, 1999) has shown that most of the research, which attempted to explain the transfer fee between players, have focused on four kinds of variables: control variables, player characteristics, buyer and seller characteristics. The bargaining position between clubs highly influences the determining factors of transfer prices in football. In general, the selling clubs hold a higher bargaining power than the one from buying clubs (Carmichael & Thomas, 1993). However, the smaller clubs do not hold such power against bigger counterparts because the transfer fees in smaller competitions outside European top five leagues can sometimes exceed a club’s annual budget (van den Berg, 2011). Akgündüz & van den Berg (2013) also argued that Dutch clubs find it difficult to keep a successful squad together after certain achievement due to the fact that their best players are tempted to join top-level competitions such as English Premier League and Serie A. Evidently in the 2018-2019 season, Ajax Amsterdam reached the semi-finals of UEFA Champions League, and the next season, two of their best players,

Matthijs De Ligt and Frenkie De Jong have joined Juventus and Barcelona. Indirect proxies were used by researchers to determine the relationship between player performance, player characteristics, and their transfer prices. Van den Berg (2011) identified the link between the number of goals a player scores for a club and the value he brings to the club. Moreover, Anderson & Sally (2013) found out that attacking players carry much higher values than that of goalkeepers and defenders. Football clubs tend to open their purse generously when it comes to acquiring forwards since matches are won by goals, and talented attackers will bring goals. A player's performance and valuation can be determined further from the number of games he plays for a club or the total of games throughout his career. The reason that game numbers contribute to determining the value of players is that amount reflects in added experience (Frick, 2007). The research on top 75 European clubs from 2008-2012 by Ruijg & van Ophem (2014) showed that age and experience have a positive influence on players' transfer value until the age of 26, and it declines thereafter. Van den Berg (2011) also supported this theory as his research indicated a U-shaped connection between the player's age and value as he suggested that the value of players increases until the age of 24 or 25 and decreases afterward. The suitable explanation lies in the peak of a player is between the age of 24 and 29 (Gleave 2015). After reaching 29, the physical ability of a player slowly declines after each season but in exchange, his experience and understanding of the game are of a surplus. Therefore, an older and more experienced player is supposed to be able to perform well in the short-term in contrast to investments made in younger players with high potential who can massively improve their skills when exposed to more playing time.

Another factor that influences the value of a player is his injury proneness. According to the study done by (Drawer & Fuller, 2002) on English championship data between 2003 and 2008, it can be concluded that the injuries of players negatively influence the efficiency and performance of clubs' finance as well as players' value. National squad selection also proved to positively impact the transfer fees since only the top players get called up to represent their national teams. Participation in big competitions such as the FIFA World Cup, European Championship, Copa America, and African Cup of Nations shows the positive correlation between the change in value and number of minutes played during a match and the number of goals scored. Furthermore, after such competitions as FIFA World Cup, players can be overvalued due to the timing factor (Dobson, et al., 2000).

The factor of nationality is also needed to be considered as an influence towards the value and transfer fees of players. For instance, Garcia-del-Barrio & Pujol (2007) have found out that

European players who are not Spanish were systematically overvalued, yet players who are not from Europe were undervalued. Therefore, the players from traditional football countries carry higher value in comparison with those who come from countries that do not have football traditions. The study from (Poli, 2006) on African footballers in European competitions concluded that players from Africa are well sought after by clubs in lower divisions due to their affordable commercial value. However, because of economic, historical, and social reasons, these deals are considered to be valuable export for both sending countries and the receiving ones. The buying clubs yet are able to make a profit from these purchases when the players move to bigger clubs. The similar patterns are found in 1211 transfers in Bundesliga between 1983 and 2000 seasons (Frick & Lehmann, 2001). The study showed that players from Western Europe and South America countries were purchased with high fees, while their counterparts from Asia and North America came with considerably lower prices.

In a traditional manner, the market value for players has been estimated by the football clubs themselves, sports journalists, or websites such as Transfermarkt, which provides the estimation of players' market values (Müller, et al., 2017). Evidently, football doesn't possess an agreed method of evaluating players and talents as these are under the influence of human bias, thus represents the inefficiencies in the players' transfer market (Wilson 2016). If the clubs are able to exploit these, they can find their way to identify the true value of talents, which can bring opportunities to succeed in the transfer market for clubs that have smaller budgets. Statistical analysis has become a crucial tool for the smaller teams to efficiently exploit the market with knowledge-based strategies (Gerrard, 2007). However, the success of knowledge-based strategies is not simply achieved by gathering players' data but rather relies on the analysis and interpretation of such data in a suitable manner. In comparison with the biggest clubs, the smaller ones consider player transfers as an excellent way to generate income by re-transferring those who are overvalued in the markets while looking for the players who are undervalued (Ahtiainen, 2018). By applying proper methods of player valuation and development, football clubs can achieve sporting success without having to overspend. There have been multiple examples when smaller clubs fell into ruins after spending far too generously after achieving positions in higher divisions. (Graph?)

3.5 Human resource management in football

The term human resource management (HRM), as defined by (Bolesie, 2006) is the combination of thoughtfully designed practices, which are applied to the management of employees to improve organizational effectiveness, from which increase the performance outcome for the organization. These practices consist of multiple different human resource (HR) activities that focus on managing the human capital that allows the organization to achieve the business tasks, activities, and goals (Wright, et al., 1994). The HR activities can be divided into two sections: initial steps, which are focused on human resource acquisition, thus related to planning, selecting, and recruiting; the second section is HR maintenance via training and rewards (Hoye, et al., 2012).

In a study conducted by (Mesmer-Magnus, et al., 2012), the organizational identity is a significant factor that influence the team cooperative behavior and team performance. The organization identity, along with the team identity have the positive and significant impact on the team's performance. Carry on this notion, the football teams need to develop a positive atmosphere, create cooperative and cohesive tactics. The reason to build such an environment is the nature of the objective is interdependent and it requires the efforts of every member together. Football operation is a collective activity, not an individual one. The members of the club are the ones who clearly reflect the unique identity and reputation of an organization. If the team perform well, win matches and trophies, the members would show loyalty and pride to be a part of such organization and make efforts in a cooperative manner to maintain the competitive advantages of the team.

During the selection process of the team members, the decision-makers would make sure that they select the suitable players who would benefit the current squad. Moreover, they need to be cooperative and share the similar attributes in personality, and the same level of experience in both playing quality and competition before joining the team. For instance, the study on baseball team from (Taylor & Giannantonio, 1993) suggested that the baseball teams require highly distinguished players, who have demonstrated their potential to contribute to the performance of the team; therefore, baseball rely heavily on external sources of recruitment. This concept emphasized that the sports organizations are different from the usual firms due to the reliance on external human resource, rather than internal labor promotion. It is the observed reality in football teams, especially the superior ones, are more interested in the top quality players, who are deemed to have the capabilities of high-level performance that contributes to

the sustainability of the team. However, when these big players can not perform on a consistent level, the team can succumb in terms of sporting and financial performance.

The adaptability has a crucial role to help the player after he joined the team. According to (Taylor & Giannantonio, 1993), the adaptation is defined as the process which the individual understands the essential factors such as values, abilities, expected behaviors and social knowledge, which aid the member to take the role at the organization and participate as a member. The individual's abilities are depended on the personality and social skills; however, the adaptation can be carried out successfully when the participants have already picked up the information of the team, team members; have built certain connections with members of the team and gained experience from previous team. The adaptability is the utmost factor that the clubs take into consideration when selecting a player alongside the certain set of skills the club requires to make up to the vacancy of the team.

A study from (Bell, 2007) stated that the teams with diversity deliver better performance thanks to the abundance of information collected from various skills and talents to solve the problems and exploit the resources. In football context, statistics from (Marcos et al., 2010; Perciballi, 2011) have shown that the dominating team in terms of winning titles and trophies are the ones who have the diverse squad of players. Carry on this notion, the decision-makers in football clubs should consider recruiting the players with various backgrounds from around the world in order to diversify the team with the aim of strengthen the squad. However, the diversity ultimately leads to a certain homogeneity for the team to be successful, because the best teams in the world somehow share the similar characteristics such as cultural factors, ethnicity, playing style and various other features. These shared traits create the team fit and cohesiveness, which is integral to the success of a football team. Without them, football teams are unable to perform well (Carron et al., 2002; Hogg, 1992; Marcos et al., 2010). Based on this, the teams need to consider the current players in the squad before selecting the new players. The primary method that the teams are utilizing is to build the squad around a few exceptional individuals. For instance, FC Barcelona, the team that dominates European football in the last decade and defines the new winning way, implements the strategy of collective opinions, in which they consider the ideas of their players, or at least their influential players such as Lionel Messi (Best player in the world 4 times in a row from 2010-2016).

According to (Bell and Harrison, 1996; Bell, 2007; Hoch et al., 2010; Morales and Marquina, 2009; Streufert et al., 1990; Timmerman, 2000), there two factors that are considered to have different impacts on team performance are age and race. Regarding the age factor, some science

scholars have addressed this issue in the European environment. The study of Ashworth and Heyndels (2007) researched the influence of age grouping in football education programs to the distribution of wages at a professional level in Germany and found out that the younger players have higher wages than the older ones. A bias was found in the study of Romann and Fuchslocher (2013) which lies in the selection of young players in Switzerland. The age is influential for the selection process, especially for the goalkeepers and defenders, which are the positions that require certain amount of experience that needs years to develop. The selection mentioned in the study is not from the Human resource standpoint but rather the selection of 11 players on the pitch. Franck and Nüesch, (2010) suggested that the disparity of talents is proven to be beneficial for the team not only in a single match but on seasonal level. The homogeneity of the team can develop through time and thus, improves the performance of the team through the increased level of interaction within the members.

The process of selection in football teams was studied by Tavana et al. (2013), from which the author pointed out how the success of the team can be determined by the team formation. Before reaching the final selection of the team, the coaches need to collect the information to determine the best choices within the squad. The factors which are put into consideration are the positions and playing styles of the players on the pitch, and the possibilities of harmony between the existing squad and the incoming players. The availabilities of the players in transfer market is also considered, and whether there is a young player from the club's academy that has the potential to fill in the vacancy of the squad. Another factor that influences the selection process is whether the potential players share have sufficient experience, similar playing style as the team and the playing statistics are persuasive enough for recruitment. Above all, these standards have to be based on the financial conditions of the club. There are certain teams that can spend big amount of transfer fees to acquire high-profile players with top quality; however, the same condition is not available for every football team. Consequently, this influences the selection and outcome of the teams.

The study conducted by Timmerman (2000) have shown that the performance of the team has nothing to do with the age diversity if there is no interdependence between them. However, when interdependence is required, the age diversity actually has a negative influence on the performance of the team. In football clubs, the cooperation and mutual understanding between members are crucial towards the success; therefore, the need of interdependence within such organization is absolute.

Nevertheless, race diversity may not present a negative impact on the performance of the teams due to various reasons. Firstly, the races may be different but they can share the similar culture and language such as the players that come from Latin America have some similarity to their counterparts from Spain or Portugal. Secondly, the football depends on the technical and operational strategies which are applied by the technical managers. If the players can get a grasp at the overall strategies, it should limit the race diversity. Last but not least, in this digital age, the access to information about the teams, players, playing styles and personalities is not too difficult to get; therefore, the new players can understand what to expect when moving to join a new team.

3.5.1 Human resource management Strategic Aspect

Organizational human resource management is in the process of becoming a strategic component, since the effective management of its people, can deliver the competitive advantage. In an organization, especially a football-related one, the people are the most valuable resources that represent the significant investments to help to generate higher financial returns (Wright, et al., 1994). The predecessors have focused more on the operational aspect of human relations when it comes to researching HRM. They include people management and reinforcement of the relationship between employers and employees but do not focus on HRM as strategic resources in an organization (Boxall, 1992; Ramona & Anca, 2013). The concept of strategic human resource management is considered to be the mixture of strategic management and HRM, based on the tenet that human assets of the organization are the source of competitive advantage. (Armstrong & Taylor, 2009) stated that human capital is the main source for competitive advantage. It is the force that drives the organization to its goals via the application of HR strategies, policies, and practices. There is a similarity between strategic HRM and strategic management, though it concerns more of the integration between the organization's business strategy and HR strategy than the general HRM. Strategic HRM focuses mostly around the approaches that are applied to manage individuals within an organization to assist in the process of competitive advantage (Purcell, 1999).

3.5.2 The resource-based perspective of strategy

The resource-based theory has been originated and expanded by (Wernerfelt, 1984) but later achieved its breakthrough from the study of (Barney, 1991). His work has made a significant

contribution to the subsequent development of a resource-based approach and further stated that competitive advantage depends on the utilization of valuable, inimitable, and non-substitutable organizational resources. The resource-based perspective emphasizes that via examination of characteristics and performance in the organization, the internal strength can be exploited, and the weaknesses can also be overcome. In order to achieve a competitive advantage, the organization needs to consider whether to direct its concentration towards internal resources or exploitation of resources from the external market. (Barney, 1991) suggested that the resources within an organization are not precisely the same; therefore, each company in the industry possesses distinctive resources.

(Grant, 2008) have categorized the resource of an organization into three types: tangible resource, intangible resource, and human resource. The tangible resource can be understood as the financial and physical assets of the company, for example, the properties, financial resources, raw materials, and equipment. In the context of football clubs, the tangible resources are the stadium, training pitches, sporting facilities, and the most important, financial capability (Grass, et al., 2002). The primary resource for football clubs is the stadium, which generates income from matchday tickets and merchandise sales, while training facilities contribute to building the foundation for future development of the sporting section. However, tangible resources are able to be observed and easily quantified; thus, they can only bring a small part of a competitive advantage for an organization. Moreover, these are not the factors that distinguish themselves from other organizations since any rival could acquire the same (Grant, 2010).

The second type of resource is the intangible one, which can be included in resources or capabilities. They can be broken down into reputation, structure, technology, organizational systems, and culture (Grant, 2008). Within the mentioned resources, organizational culture has been highlighted as an important factor that can act as a source of sustainable competitive advantage if nurtured suitably (Barney, 1991; Barney, 1986). In the world of football, strong organizational culture, which is built from the history and tradition of the club, can strengthen and complement the symbolic value and create a social and cultural effect that can bring the club members, including fans, players, and employees the identity that is unique and hard to imitate anywhere (Barney, 1991; Rikardsson & Rikardsson, 2013). An example can be observed in the slogan “Mes que un club” (more than a club) of FC Barcelona, which is recognizable anywhere for their unique youth development of La Masia academy. In Vietnam, “The pride of Hanoi” is the slogan used by the champion Hanoi FC, which indicated the core

value that is shared by every player who plays for the club and the young players who are fighting for a chance of promotion to the first team.

In football, the human resources to be said in plain words are the coaches and players, whose competence is proven to be the decisive factor in determining the success of the clubs (Szymanski, 2001). Their value towards the club correlates with the quality of their ability and the better they are, the more likely they can bring competitive advantages, both on-pitch and off-pitch (Barney, 1991; McIlroy, 2010). Furthermore, the management members of the clubs are valuable resources that can supply the club with abilities and competencies to operate a successful business.

3.5.3 Application of VRIO Framework

To efficiently determine whether the resources are the potential contributor towards competitive advantage or not, Barney (1991) has introduced “VRIO,” an analysis framework for the business which had been modified from the original resource-based version. The proposal from Barney (1991) provides the organizations the abilities to analyze and evaluate their resources’ potential and capabilities which can be strategically relevant for achieving competitive advantage. Furthermore, the firms need to analyze the resources to determine and exploit the factors which pose difficulties for the opponents to replicate. Barney (1991) suggested that the resources have to possess certain characteristics such as rarity, organization and inability for imitation in order for a company to create or apply the strategies for efficiency and effectiveness improvement. The resources are limited in availability and unable to be transferred between company and company without time and cost. In a competitive environment between firms, if multiple firms have a similar resource, then that one is not considered to be capable of delivering advantages. Therefore, if the resource is possessed by a small number of firms, it is considered to be rare and competitive advantages are achievable (Barney, 1997).

The resource inimitability from competitors under no questions is the goal of every firm when it comes to resource management. In order to achieve this goal, a barrier should be created to prevent the competitors from replication such resources, and in other words, if the resource is considered to be the source for competitive advantage sustainability, there must be no equivalents. Barney (1991) has followed the idea of resource’s rarity and inimitability by the inability for substitution, which the resource can not be easily replaced by either competitor’s

or internal strategy. The idea is better represented from the following graphs, which indicated the system's theory.

Figure :The Indicators for Sustainable Competitive Advantage

(Graph pg 39/90)

The graphs have shown that the empirical indicators from (Barney 1991) could have the possibility to create sustainable competitive advantage from a rare, valuable, inimitable resource, yet without proper organization, this would be impossible to achieve. In summary, an organization needs to have the resources that meet the unique criteria and said resources have to be managed properly. The VRIO framework contains a set of questions that are able to assess the capabilities of resources in achieving/maintaining competitive advantages (Barney 1991)

Table 2: The VRIO framework and Competitive Advantage

VRIO Application					
Valuable?	Rare?	Constly to imitate?	Exploited by organization?	Strength or Weakness	Competitive Implications/ Economic Profit
No	-	-	No	Strength	Disadvantage/ Below Normal
Yes	No	-		Weakness	Parity/Normal
Yes	Yes	No		Strength and Distinctive Competence	Temporary Advantage/ Temporary Above Normal
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Strength & Sustainable Distinctive Competence	Sustained Advantage/ Above Normal

Table 1: The VRIO framework and Competitive Advantage (Source: Barney 1997)

According to the organization of questions in the VRIO framework, Barney (1991) provides a set of criteria for assessment: the resource or capability is considered to be a weakness when it does not hold value; if it holds value but not a rarity, the firm can at least gain competitive parity through it. When the resource has both attributes, as mentioned, the firm is able to have competitive advantages but only temporarily. In order to reach sustainability, the resource needs to be inimitable as well.

3.5.4 Resource selection and Capability construction

In accordance with the VRIO framework, multiple scholars of Strategic Human resource management (SHRM) have paid increasing attention towards the resource-based perspective of the company to further explain the potential sources to achieve the competitive advantage,

which is powered from the human capital resources (Wright, et al., 1994); Barney, 1991). (Makadok, 2001) has introduced two mechanisms to generate economic revenue and achieve competitive advantage: the firm can choose between two strategies based on resource-selecting or capability building. Resource selection indicates the ways that a company can exploit the acquired resource to create superiority. However, Barney (1986) suggested that this method is only available when the firm has remarkable depth of information about the value of the resource, which makes it possible for the firm to acquire it with a lower value in comparison to its marginal productivity and combine with internal resources to generate a superb rate of return (Makadok, 2001).

Amidst selecting the best resource, the firm can also avoid acquiring inferior ones if it possesses considerable selection skills. Ultimately, the avoidance of bad resources can even have a bigger impact on the economic profit of the firm, and in some manners, its significance can be larger than the good selections (Makadok, 2001). This theory is also proven to be true in the football world. The entire core competencies of a football club can be drastically changed through the process of identification, selection, and development of talents; therefore, it is a tremendously important strategic decision for the club. The value of players and staff towards the organization increases in correlation with their abilities, from which they are able to create not only on-field performances but also off-field contributions under the forms of reputation and finance (Barney, 1991; McIlroy, 2010).

Regardless of value from the resource, it is not able to create economic profits if the firm can not acquire the resource that can enhance its productivity with its capabilities (Makadok, 2001). Both the resource-selection and capability-building mechanisms are important, but the substantial difference between them is the timing. According to Makadok (2001), the resource-selection mechanism already generated economic profit before the acquisition from the identification of good and inadequate resources. In contradiction, the capability-building mechanism concentrates on improving the productivity of other resources in possession of the firm. Such contribution is mainly made via designing and building the internal policies aiming to strengthen the performance. Moreover, these skills are able to be developed through investments in the training of the employees on performing the specific procedures which are applied in the company (Barney, 2001). These specific skills have the greater capabilities to produce sustainable competitive advantages since it is much more difficult to replicate such skills that belong to only a small number of employees within a company.

Regarding resource-selection and capability building, previous researches have tried to implement the Resource-based perspective concepts and their related mechanisms into practical business context. The study conducted by Gerrard (2007) have shown the application of RBV in professional sport, particularly the Major League Baseball (MLB), and found out that there is a certain uniformity in professional sports leagues that can clearly highlight the players who can provide competitive advantage and make them potentially tradable in the labor market.

In the business context, Pifer (2017) suggested that the teams that have the financial resource-based advantage are the more successful. Lechner & Gudmundsson (2012) also supported the idea and further argued that there is a circular relationship between sporting performance and wage demands because the clubs who are able to access more significant financial resources not only can effectively revamp their sporting portfolios but also capable of acquiring and keeping a higher level of key players. However, not every club is able to access such substantial financial resources; hence the organization that is not equipped with a big-budget must look for innovative ways in order to efficiently operate and compete with wealthy rivals via the proper selection of resources (Makadok, 2001). It is further noted that player recruitment is representative of the resource-selection process of management when the sporting directors can execute the recruitment and retention of high-level players, who possess high productivity in relation to their salary and transfer fee.

In order to properly executive the recruitment and retention of players, the clubs need to go through a significant assessment process, which is presently done through the implementation of statistical data and metrics. Drawing on the notion of baseball, “Moneyball” is an apparent example of efficient application of statistics and metrics into the performance of professional sports. The Oakland Athletics have been underperforming for many seasons, which came to the point that their general manager, Billy Beane, created and utilized a unique Human Resource Management (HRM) that focused on resource-selection mechanisms, which allowed the club to compete in a fair manner with a considerably smaller budget (Lewis, 2004; Gerrard, 2007). Based on the statistical analysis and the systematic use of data gathered from the players, Mr. Beane had applied that into player recruitment, evaluation, and tactics, thus deliver more accuracy towards scouting and understanding the performance of baseball players. Oakland Athletics then recruited the players who are considered to be inferior in abilities, rejected and college players, basically who are generally determined to be not good enough; however, they

excelled in specific statistics. The team saved a considerable transfer budget but, in the end, could compete fairly with any other high-caliber team, even the famous Boston Red Sox.

3.6 Club Governance and Strategies

In the sports world, strategic thinking is crucial to achieving competitive advantage, which basically is executing differently from what the competitors are implementing. Each sports organization has its specific goals and objectives, with its role in competencies and capabilities attempting to intensify its position in the football industry (Grant et al 2007). Therefore, the club strategies prove to be the most important and most comprehensive objectives of a football club. The strategies are in turn driven by its identity, culture, and philosophy. The most specific observable element of any professional football management structure is the decision involved in recruiting or selling players. Nesti & Sulley (2015) have noted that if a club is lacking proper governance and vision, will find itself struggling, even if they possess a talented squad of players and access to a vast amount of financial resources. According to the study, the best clubs are the ones that possess the finest of governance alongside the well-resourced, well-planned system of recruitment.

The studies from (Harris, 2009) has emphasized that the traditional football governance structure, particularly in the United Kingdom (UK) have given a high level of autonomy and placed trust in the abilities of their coaches to maximize the players' performance in the squad through technical enhancement, which involves training and tactical organization. It is a fact that top-level management does not interfere with the duties of coaches, who are given full authority of tactics, team selection, improvement methods for the team, and players' scouting to recruit for the first team and the youth academy. However, the working environment has an apparent influence on how the coaches operate as the managers in the biggest clubs often focus solely on football, while the counterparts from the smaller team may have to carry more duties (Bridgewater, 2010; Herskedal & Herskedal, 2017). Managers in smaller clubs are usually required to play additional roles in administration or participate in other areas of the club management, which are related to non-football aspects such as marketing, public relations, human resources, and others (Harris, 2009).

In the UK-based governance structure, the newly appointed manager will receive information about the structure that he is expected to work within, for instance, the amount of budget available for transfer, and he will have complete responsibility for players' purchase and sale. In other football countries such as Italy or Spain, it is more common for the model that places

the recruitment responsibility in the hands of sporting directors or club owners with less input from the managers (Kelly, 2017). For the Vietnamese football club, this responsibility is not the same in every club due to the difference in operations, and the position of a sporting director is not utilized in the same manner in every club due to the fact that the sporting director is a fresh position in Vietnam football. This has caused difficulties for the clubs to efficiently determine the responsibility and the scope of work for this position.

The main responsibility of the sporting director is to develop a positive and efficient working relationship between the Board and sporting departments; he also represents the culture, value and long-term stability of the football club. The efficiency of the sporting director's work is evaluated through the completion of short-term and long-term sporting as well as financial performances. Furthermore, the sporting director is often known for the responsibility in the recruitment process and practices to ensure that the club retains its front-runner status in the race for best players' signature. The director often takes part in the process of designing and implementing the recruitment strategies and supervises the progress to ensure that the strategies in use are the most effective and being utilized to the maximum. In order to achieve this, the director must take into consideration the club's current budget, and the potential transfer targets need to be in line with the playing style of the club as well as blend in with the current squad dynamics. Moreover, the potential player needs to possess appropriate characteristics that can satisfy the wills of the owners, board of directors, and more importantly, the supporters. If the sporting director performs well within his responsibility and cooperates peacefully with the coaches, the head coach can have his burden lifted and concentrate fully on managing the squad of players, plans training programs, designs the best tactics, and picks the most in-form players. Consequently, the decision to employ sporting directors needs the considerations around their skill set, knowledge, and experience to perform in the business of professional football.

The biggest clubs in the world consider the sporting directors as an integral part of the organization as a whole. In Germany, Borussia Dortmund has Michael Zorc, RB Leipzig has Ralf Rangnick; in Italy, Giuseppe Marotta has served both Inter Milan and Juventus, while the latter now employs Fabio Paratici, the one who brought Cristiano Ronaldo to Turin; in Spain, Ramon Rodriguez "Monchi" Verdejo has created a mighty Sevilla, while ex-Barcelona director Txiki Begiristain, who is now working with another Barca-born Pep Guardiola, has put significant efforts in creating the most exciting and successful team in Catalan's history. They all have achieved success due to the excellent governance and exceptional player recruitment system. However, this structure is still being doubted in some of English finest clubs, seemingly

from the contradiction in power structure between the sporting director and first-team manager (Edwards, 2014).

There have been multiple examples of the arisen tensions between the manager and sporting director, and the usual conflict is the questions of who possesses the remit and power of the two positions, especially from the control of transfer policy. Normally, the contact between the directors and owners and the club stops at the manager, and they do not have the decision on team selection. However, team selection and player recruitment must stay highly integrated; hence the interference in the role of the managers proves the lack of understanding and trust between managers, sporting directors, and owners (Kelly & Harris, 2010).

As Kelly and Harris (2010) have highlighted the vital role of trust and distrust in professional football by examining the relationship between club managers and administrators, they also identified this distrust as a common occurrence in professional football. More precisely, from head coaches' point of view, the distrust and hostility partly come from the interference of club administrators in the issues which are traditionally under the responsibility of head coaches.

In contradiction with European clubs, which are listed as public limited companies (PLCs), the clubs in Vietnam are owned by an individual or a private organization or partly supported by the local authorities. At some point in their history, the clubs even have the name added with the sponsor's brands after having signed the contract of investments. Other sources of investments come from the local authority or the individual owner. The situation with the individual owner of Vietnamese football clubs is similar to the structure that has been operating in Chelsea football club since billionaire Roman Abramovich took over the team in 2003. The investments for training, operating, and recruiting players mostly come from the budget of the owner, therefore in Vietnam, the tensions between head coaches and administrative staffs, especially the owner at a certain moment are even more hostile than that in Europe.

3.7 The Strategies for Labour Market in Professional Football

The labor market, within the context of standard economy, is considered to be the setting in which the firms contact and interact with the human capital they are considering to recruit via salary offers in return for the efforts and work that have to be performed. However, according to Moorhouse (1999), the rules and regulations within most professional sports organizations regarding labor acquisition are classically not applied in other areas of employment. The transfer system in football represents the perfect example when the labor, in this case, is the footballer, gain relatively none of the benefit generated from the transfer fee.

The labor market in European football contains various differences in comparison to similar markets in many other sports, especially the American sports leagues, where the clubs trade players in a well-organized draft system which limits their wages and clarifies their destination clubs for the upcoming season(s). In Europe, football players have the freedom to be transferred between leagues and clubs when their contracts come to an end, and even the players who still have a certain time left in the contracts are still available for a specific amount of transfer fee agreed by the selling clubs. These movements in the European labour market were completely realized when the Bosman ruling was implemented by the European Court of Justice in 1995. The ruling stated that football clubs are no longer able to demand transfer fee for those players whose contracts have run out, and these players are free to negotiate with other clubs when they have less than six months in the current contracts. The Bosman ruling is most applied in Vietnam football, where most of the transfers that have been done in the last two decades are loan transfers and free transfers.

Table 2: Vietnamese clubs' transfer balance (2010-2020)

Season ↓	Expenditure ↓	Income ↑	Balance ↑
22/23	-	-	+0
21/22	-	-	+0
20/21	-	-	+0
19/20	-	-	+0
18/19	-	€450Th.	€450Th.
17/18	-	-	+0
16/17	-	€400Th.	€400Th.
15/16	-	€265Th.	€265Th.
14/15	-	-	+0
13/14	-	-	+0
12/13	-	-	+0
11/12	€1.43m	-	€-1.43m
10/11	€80Th.	-	€-80Th.
09/10	-	€159Th.	€159Th.
08/09	-	-	+0
07/08	-	-	+0
06/07	-	-	+0

Table 2 : Vietnamese clubs' transfer balance (2010-2020). Source: Transfermarkt

The nature of a globalized sport in football has been increasing the complexity in player development and recruitment markets. The inflow of new capital and commercialization growing trends have also affected the market and youth development approaches by widening

the methods which clubs are employing in development and recruitment (Bullough & Jordan, 2017). The efficiency of capital investments in clubs is measured in multiple different manners depends on the main objectives of the football clubs. If the focus is to generate profits, the club ought to use the financial success indicators to evaluate the investment, and inversely, if the club prioritizes achievements and trophies, they should utilize the sporting success indicators. These conflicts of objectives are making headlines in the researches of sports economics, in which the discussion circles around the club's objectives and the decision can be directed towards profits maximization or sustain sporting success (Sloane, 2015). Yet, these objectives have proven to be the ultimate reasons for club administrators to make decisions regarding player recruitment, whether to spend a big amount of money to buy a "complete" or "finished" player or invest in a player who is young and deemed to have high potential.

The study from Al-Shammari, et al. (2017) has listed four recruitment strategies: young players promotion from the academies, purchase players in the domestic market, recruit players from international sources, and the most appropriate strategy for top-level teams would be the mixture of the mentioned ones. Andras & Havran (2015) tends to agree with the notion that football clubs should develop a mixed strategy and not only stay put in a primary strategy. For instance, if clubs favor the home-grown domestic players, they probably focus the radar on players who have fully developed and clearly defined their playing style to maximize the sporting contribution to the club. According to Schokkaert (2016), most football clubs adopt mixed strategy of both recruiting players from the transfer market and developing young players from academies.

The research from Littlewood, et al. (2011) has suggested that European clubs are relying more heavily on external sources from other nations to acquire football talents. Africa and South America have been determined as main sources for talents and potentials that soon join wealthy European clubs (Darby 2014). The same tendencies have been followed in Asian football clubs, yet the regulations for the number of foreign players allowance have prevented the clubs from leaving the door wide open for the players. In the light of the situation, Asian clubs have deployed a strategy of their own to maximize the use of the players, which is to encourage the players to adopt the nationality to somehow go around the regulations. Therefore, Asian clubs need to develop the appropriate strategy of acquiring players through domestic transfer or the promotion of young players from academies. In developed Asian football countries such as Korea and Japan, the development strategy not only comes from the clubs but also from the government. They have built a system of football competitions throughout the education levels,

from elementary schools to university level. This method has significantly widened the selection for the football clubs to recruit domestic players to bolster the squad. Japan and Korea's development plan has proven to be a solid foundation in the advancement of the football nation as a whole, in contrast with the rapid but unstable development in the Chinese Super League.

Table 3: The transfer balance in the Chinese Super League (2001-2021)

Season ↓	Expenditure ↓	Income ↓	Balance ↓
21/22	-	-	+0
20/21	€54.77m	€49.71m	€-5.06m
19/20	€153.69m	€45.77m	€-107.92m
18/19	€290.10m	€82.24m	€-207.86m
17/18	€194.93m	€71.30m	€-123.62m
16/17	€544.82m	€147.11m	€-397.71m
15/16	€414.43m	€116.26m	€-298.18m
14/15	€146.85m	€43.97m	€-102.88m
13/14	€100.73m	€33.98m	€-66.75m
12/13	€63.87m	€18.94m	€-44.93m
11/12	€47.63m	€10.41m	€-37.22m
10/11	€21.99m	€2.96m	€-19.03m
09/10	€2.68m	€3.64m	€959Th.
08/09	€6.57m	€1.41m	€-5.17m
07/08	€1.14m	€794Th.	€-350Th.
06/07	€510Th.	-	€-510Th.
05/06	€1.91m	€3.33m	€1.42m
04/05	€690Th.	€600Th.	€-90Th.
03/04	€635Th.	-	€-635Th.
02/03	-	€1.30m	€1.30m
01/02	€100Th.	-	€-100Th.

Table 3 :The transfer balance in the Chinese Super League (2001-2021). Source: Transfermark

4 Analysis

4.1 Background of the research

In the football world, Vietnam is considered to be an emerging country that has seen a rapid development in terms of national team's achievement. The young players of Vietnam in the last 5 years have done much better than their predecessors in multiple tournaments. Football has been developing in Vietnam for over a century ever since the first match was played in 1908. However, football in the Southeast Asian country has seen its ups and downs throughout

the two wars that only ended in 1975. In the duration of 1908-1975, there were two national football teams of Vietnam due to the occupation of the French and American in two different regions of the country.

In 1980, the first ever Vietnam football league was established as an encouragement for the people after the devastating impacts of both wars. It was not until 1989 when Vietnam rejoined international sports competition. Young and underdeveloped, it was not surprised that the national team has failed to achieve any success in the big games in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. However, Vietnam has established their names within the Southeast Asian region with the runner-up in Tiger Cup 1998, which later is renamed as AFF Championship. It took Vietnam 10 years to become the champions of AFF Championship in 2008, which marked the first milestone in the development of football for the boys in red. This achievement came in the 8th year since the highest division of Vietnam football league system, the V.League, turned professional. During this period, there is an apparent dependency in the foreign players, especially strikers, from the football clubs in Vietnam. The same trend has not changed until today, when in the last 20 seasons, there were only 3 players with Vietnamese nationality won the Top goalscorer award.

Table 4: Top goalscorers in V.League (2000-2020)

	Top Goalscorer	Nationality	Goals	Goal ratio
2000/01	Đặng Đạo	Vietnam	11	0,61
2001/02	Hồ Văn Lợi	Vietnam	9	0,50
2003	Emeka Achilefu	Nigeria	11	0,50
2004	Amaobi Uzowuru	Nigeria	15	0,68
2005	Kesley Alves	Brazil	21	0,95
2006	Elenildo De Jesus	Brazil	18	0,75
2007	Jose Emidio de Almeida	Brazil	16	0,62
2008	Jose Emidio de Almeida	Brazil	23	0,89
2009	Gaston Merlo	Argentina	15	0,58
	Lazaro de Souza	Brazil		
2010	Gaston Merlo	Argentina	19	0,76
2011	Gaston Merlo	Argentina	22	0,85
2012	Timothy Azembe	Nigeria	17	0,65

2013	Hoàng Vũ Samson	Vietnam/Nigeria	14	0,64
	Gonzalo Marronkle	Argentina		
2014	Hoàng Vũ Samson	Vietnam/Nigeria	23	0,96
2015	Patiyo Tambwe	DR Congo	18	0,69
2016	Gaston Merlo	Argentina	24	0,92
2017	Nguyễn Anh Đức	Vietnam	17	0,65
2018	Ganiyu Oseni	Nigeria	17	0,65
2019	Pape Omar Faye	Senegal	15	0,58
	Bruno Cantanhede	Brazil		
2020	Rimario Gordon	Jamaica	12	0,60
	Pedro Paulo	Brazil		

Table 4 :Top goalscorers in V.League (2000-2020). Source: VPF

For the interest of the clubs, there is no harm to utilize the best abilities of foreign strikers; however, this dependency have seriously hampered the goalscoring capabilities of Vietnam national strikers, which has dealt a blow to the achievements of the national team. Evidently, in the last 20 seasons, the strikers with Vietnamese origin have seen their playing chances reduced; therefore, the number of goals they were able to score has not been great.

Table : Comparison of best Vietnamese strikers and Top goalscorers (2000-2020)

The blistering form of Cong Vinh, Le was the integral factors that brought Vietnam the first ever regional trophy with the AFF Championship in 2008. Cong Vinh, Le was the one that scored the winning goal for the team and began the first golden generation in the country's football. However, the national team have not been able to replicate the same success in the following tournaments which resulted in early elimination from the World Cup and AFC Cup Qualifications. Even for the regional AFF Championship, Vietnam was not able to defend the championship and even failed to perform up to expectation in the next participations.

It was not until 2017 when Vietnam football has seen the light at the end of the tunnel when Park Hang Seo was appointed as Head coach of the national and Under-23 team. The Korean national has brought the excitement back to Vietnam football when the Under-23 national team, under his guidance, have reached the Final of 2018 Asia Championship, which is the best ever achievement of the team. Moreover, in AFC Asian Cup 2019, against all odds, the national team have beaten opponents with big reputation in the region such as Yemen and Jordan to put themselves in the quarter-final for the first time in history. However, against one of the best

teams in Asia, Japan, Vietnam had to stop at the round of the best eight teams. From such achievements, the current squad of players have been considered to be the second golden generation of Vietnam football.

Table 5: The results of Vietnam Under-23 team in AFC U-23 Championship

AFC U-23 Championship	
Year	Results
2013	<i>Did not qualify</i>
2016	Group Stage
2018	Runners-up
2020	Group Stage

Table 5 :The results of Vietnam Under-23 team in AFC U-23 Championship. Source: VFF

Table 6: The results of Vietnam Under-23 team in SEA Games

SEA Games	
Year	Results
2001	Group Stage
2003	Runners-up
2005	Runners-up
2007	4 th place
2009	Runners-up
2011	4 th place
2013	Group Stage
2015	3 rd place
2017	Group Stage
2019	Champion

Table 6 :The results of Vietnam Under-23 team in SEA Games. Source: VFF

Table 7: The results of Vietnam national team in AFC Asian Cup

AFC U-23 Championship	
Year	Results
2000; 2004	<i>Did not qualify</i>
2007	Quarter-finals
2011; 2015	<i>Did not qualify</i>
2019	Quarter-finals

Table 7 :The results of Vietnam national team in AFC Asian Cup. Source: VFF

The success of Vietnam national teams didn't come from accidents, yet it is the results of an invested youth football development of the country. In Vietnam, almost every team has their own youth academy; however, the investment levels vary depends on the financial conditions of the clubs. Hoang Anh Gia Lai, the champions of Vietnam for a few times since 2000, have cooperated with Arsenal to open their HAGL-JMG academy, which have produced the majority of players for the second golden generation. Hanoi FC, the most successful club in Vietnam with 5 championship in the past decade, also invested generously in youth football. The establishment of Promotion Fund for Vietnam Football, a youth academy invested by the biggest corporation in Vietnam, VinGroup, in 2008 has provided the country with another reliable source for young talents. PVF has a distinctive strategy in young players development, which is they will "give away" their players for the professional clubs in V.League once the players reach the age of 18. The vision of PVF is to provide Vietnam football not only with quality players, but also the best conditions for training, medical treatment and development, which was realized when they opened their 30-million-USD facility in Hung Yen. The complex has the highest quality pitches, medical infrastructure and training equipment. Evidently, PVF is the only facility in Vietnam that utilizes the 360 Virtual Training, which at the time PVF installed it, there were only Borussia Dortmund and Benfica that use such an equipment. The academy is at the liberty to support the national football team with its top-of-the-line infrastructure when they signed a partnership with VFF (Vietnam Football Federation) to be the provider of training facilities, accommodations, medical treatments and performance analysis.

The rise of the national team is a welcoming sight for Vietnam football, yet the quality of the country's football league system has not reached the level of professionalism that it should have. For instance, most of Vietnamese clubs do not share the same form of business as the Public Limited Company (PLC) that are applied in the European counterparts. The football clubs in Vietnam are either under the ownership of an individual, an organization or a province's sports department. Therefore, the clubs are not independent in terms of finance because they either depends on the investments from their individual owner or the budget of the province. This dependency forces the club to thrive under whichever conditions they are given, even there are multiple problems in the lack of quality pitches, training facilities and medical treatments. In the last few seasons, there are some clubs that participate in the V.League 1, the highest division in Vietnam football, have not met the requirements of Asian Football Confederation for a professional football club (San, 2020). They can only play in

V.League 1 due to the exception of VFF considering their history and contributions in previous seasons.

In the recent years, the clubs have been attempting to generate extra income from the sales of merchandises. According to the article from (Nhat Duy & Tieu Bao, 2020) published by newspaper Thanh Nien, there are a few clubs in Vietnam that generated a fair amount of profit from players' shirt sales. However, this kind of revenue has not been consistent and depends heavily on the performances of the team and the participation of the main sponsor. When the team's performance declines, the players' shirt sales follow. Another reason lies in the prices of merchandise. The official players' shirts usually come with a considerably high price for the fans to afford. Furthermore, with the popularity of non-official shirts or in another word, fake merchandises that are being sold everywhere with at least half the price, the fans usually go with the cheaper option. To explain this situation, Anh Ngoc Truong, an experienced sports journalist has expressed with (Nhat Duy & Tieu Bao, 2020) that the clubs do not have an efficient campaign to promote the image of the team and its players. There were some attempts in different clubs, but it was rather a one-time move which only incite the curiosity from the fans rather than a well-designed marketing plan.

“It's fair to say that Vietnamese clubs are trying to reach the high level of professionalism through exploiting the clubs' image from shirts and merchandise. However, there was only a few small attempts such as TPHCM FC which made the fans curious, yet it did not succeed because its lack of well-thought plan. Moreover, the clubs have to maintain their competitive level by performing on the pitch in order to encourage the sales in shirts and merchandise. Anh Ngoc, Truong (Nhat Duy & Tieu Bao, 2020)”

Besides the sales of merchandise, one of the primary sources for revenue for the clubs that hasn't been developed on a regular basis is the income from the sale of players. In 20 seasons of development, the majority of transfer deals in V.League has been free transfers and loan moves.

Table 8: Transfer balance in Vietnam football (2006-2020)

Season ↓	Expenditure ↓	Income ↑	Balance ↑
22/23	-	-	+0
21/22	-	-	+0
20/21	-	-	+0
19/20	-	-	+0
18/19	-	€450Th.	€450Th.
17/18	-	-	+0
16/17	-	€400Th.	€400Th.
15/16	-	€265Th.	€265Th.
14/15	-	-	+0
13/14	-	-	+0
12/13	-	-	+0
11/12	€1.43m	-	€-1.43m
10/11	€80Th.	-	€-80Th.
09/10	-	€159Th.	€159Th.
08/09	-	-	+0
07/08	-	-	+0
06/07	-	-	+0

Table 8: Transfer balance in Vietnam football (2006-2020). Source: Transfermarkt

The figures from Transfermarkt have shown that only in the recent seasons, the Vietnamese clubs have received a tiny amount of transfer fees from selling players. The achievements of the national teams have been the proof of quality for football players from Vietnam; therefore, further investments in player development and team building can act as a major contribution to attract other clubs to buy the players. Moreover, the investments in developing players can subsequently increase the quality of Vietnamese players to meet their foreign colleagues in V.League. Achieving this can help the club reduce considerable costs in recruiting foreign players and instead spend reasonably less to acquire a domestic player with the equivalent quality.

The football clubs can count on the domestic academies to recruit the young talents to bolster the squad. In contrast to the various domestic sources, the channels for foreign players are quite limited for the Vietnamese clubs. The teams rely heavily on the players' agents to introduce them with a few names, which the club can take them on trials to investigate their abilities. However, the possibilities of recruiting good foreign players are not so great due to the lack of channels for players' information. The clubs can only base on their observation in the trials, several videos of the players in matches and the information from the agents. That amount of knowledge certainly is not enough to properly assess the capabilities of players. There is even

the existence of shortcuts and unofficial moves from the agents, who aim to have their players signed contract so that they can get the agents' fees.

From multiple negative factors that are existing in Vietnam football, especially the transfer market, the clubs need to carefully consider their recruitment strategy in order to strengthen the team with best players. To do this, firstly, the clubs have to set out their recruitment goals and objectives in a well-thought manner. The study will look to define the objectives of the clubs through the interviews conducted with the management team. The recruitment processes that are applied in the clubs will be examined as well.

Secondly, such unprofessionalism from the football system requires further measures to assess and manage the risks from the transfer markets. The study will investigate the interviews to find out the methods that clubs are currently applying in order to minimize the transfer risks. The data gathered from interviews will be analyzed to find out the way that clubs can achieve competitive advantages through transfer market by highlighting the sporting indicators such as age, origin, culture and playing style.

4.2 Research Approach and Data collection methods

4.2.1 Research Approach

The first step of conducting research is to select an appropriate approach, thus find out effective ways to define and utilize the methodologies to serve the study. There are two major approaches that can contribute to research methodology: inductive and deductive approach. The inductive approach is the method that is based on data collection, and the theory is developed by analyzing the collected data (Saunders, et al., 2009). The researchers who utilize the inductive approach look into the credible sources to identify the information, thus sort, reduce, analyze and ultimately deliver the conclusions that induce valid and reliable result. The character of inductive research is based on a qualitative study, thus leads to more in-depth data results (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The deductive approach has contrast characteristics in comparison with inductive one. The deductive study focuses on hypothesis development based on the existing theories, thus come up with a research strategy in order to examine the proposition (Wilson, 2010). The beginning point of this approach is establishing the suitable hypothesis or theories to find the solutions to the research problem, and after the establishment, the hypothesis or theories will be tested using empirical observation (Burney & Hussain, 2008). The deductive approach is usually used to

find answers for a causal relationship between the variables, which goes hand in hand with quantitative research (Saunders, et al., 2009).

Every research has to be based on the design, which is the plan applied by the researchers to attempt finding the answers or solutions for the study problem. In dependency to the purpose of the research, there are three categories which are explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory research. Explanatory research is the one that attempts to clarify the observed phenomenon or pattern (Veal & Darcy, 2014). The aim of explanatory research is to understand the way and the reason the variables affect each other and give a reason to the causes and effects, thus clarify the actual interpretations of the phenomenon (Saunders, et al., 2000).

The descriptive approach focuses on delivering a detailed depiction of a certain phenomenon, from which recognizes the characteristics of the phenomenon, thus concludes the described data. (Robson, 2002) stated that the descriptive research aims to represent the large-scale portrait of people, events, and situations and from which display the facts about the perceived phenomenon. Last but not least, the explanatory research is beneficial for exploration a relatively unfamiliar area, which barely or not has been researched previously. Therefore it can be considered a contribution towards the determination of further research that should be done in the future (Saunders, et al., 2007).

Football is one of the topics that have not been studied in Vietnam since the sport has just begun to be developed in a professional manner for the last two decades. The competitive advantage within the football clubs is another subject that to a great extent hasn't been explored; thus a part of this study is to determine the factors which can potentially create such advantages in the recruitment process. Carrying on this notion, the researcher is looking to employ the explanatory approach to further investigate the current situation in Vietnam football and find out the facts that can aid in achieving competitive advantage. However, the patterns that are included in the recruitment strategies which clubs are using require the descriptive approach when addressing several key issues.

4.2.2 Data collection methods

Regarding the data collection process, from the documents that have been done regarding the research topic, it is essential to collect data via interviewing the club administrators and coaches. The purpose of this is to understand better the lived experiences and perspectives about the subject, which requires an explorative approach. The participants are chosen based on their positions as club administrators and coaches, among whom the research topic is being

discussed on a daily basis in the football clubs; therefore, by interviewing the administrators and coaches, the researcher can create a space for them to discuss their objectives, challenges, and strategies from their experiences and their perspectives towards the club. Since the study is mainly theoretical, the club administrators and coaches can share their opinions without the restrictions of a framework.

There are three types of interviews, which are Structured, Semi-structured, and Unstructured interviews. This study employs the Semi-structured interview, which is the open method where the interview is based on a specific theme and includes planned questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interview choice allows the researcher to change, update and propose additional or follow-up questions to further explore the topic (Saunders, et al., 2009). According to (Bryman & Bell, 2011), semi-structured interviews are considered suitable for the exploratory approach to gain knowledge via pre-determined themes that the researcher expects the respondents to reply.

The interviews began with a personal introduction, the overall introduction of the study program, and the research's aim and goal. The respondents were asked for permission to use their opinions and answers solely for this research, and their identities are kept under the confidentiality agreement. The second part of the interview concentrated on the recruitment process, including questions about plans, identification of talents, and the criteria that they adopted to evaluate players and their club's methods to minimize the risks coming from player recruitment. Following questions regarding the clubs' philosophy and strategies are also mentioned and the club's financial situation and its impact on the recruitment process. Last but not least, the researcher expressed appreciation for the time and experience shared by respondents.

In this study, the selection of respondents has been made via a purposive sampling approach, which in accordance to (Bryman & Bell, 2011) has the goal of sampling the respondents in a strategic way to receive answers properly. The respondents were selected from pre-determined criteria that are in line with the study's objective, which focuses on the clubs' recruitment process's core factors that can help achieve competitive advantages. Accordingly, the respondents must be the clubs' head coaches or CEO/sporting directors, who have a high level of understanding and knowledge of player recruitment in a professional football club. Moreover, the chosen respondents must be the ones that are in charge or have a major role within the clubs' recruitment process. The reason for the researcher to include head coaches is due to the fact that the traditional way of recruitment in Vietnam football is done by the

coaching team. The participation of administrators, in this case are the managing directors or CEO has created undesirable conflicts within the clubs. Therefore, the researcher only examine one club which utilized the sporting director position to determine the professional relationship within the club.

Table 9: List of Respondents and their Position within the Clubs

	Alias	Position
Respondent 1	Club A1	CEO/Sporting Director
Respondent 2	Club A2	Head Coach
Respondent 3	Club B	Head Coach
Respondent 4	Club C	Head Coach
Respondent 5	Club D	Head Coach

Table 9: List of Respondents and their Position within the Clubs

All of the respondents were contacted through the Messenger system along with the list of questions and consent form as presented in the Appendix to make sure that the respondents were clearly informed and understood the interviews. It was agreed between the researcher and respondents that the interview remains anonymous because the clubs are not convenient when their strategies are being shared, which made the findings more precise and reliable. The respondents also understand that it is optional to participate in the study and there is a possibility for them to withdraw without any explanation. The researchers also assured the respondents of confidentiality and anonymity while confirming that every information being shared only stays within the content of the thesis.

4.2.3 Data analysis methods

The study begins with the inductive approach that is required to reach an in-depth description because there has barely been a research about the subject; therefore the knowledge is considerably little (Veal & Darcy, 2014). In order to further investigate the subject, the author plans to apply thematic analysis, which is one of the regular analyses using for the qualitative method. The thematic analysis describes the qualitative data and conveys it into themes, which often are the transcribed interviews from the determination of themes which are within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The advantage brought by thematic analysis is it can provide such an approach that is robust, systematic, and easy to access, thus develop the relevant themes for discussion. Moreover, the analysis method is flexible enough to be implemented in multiple subjects. The main reason for the researcher to use thematic analysis is this method does not

require huge sample size and barely links with a theoretical framework. Nevertheless, thematic analysis is not entirely a methodology, but it's better to be considered as a method; therefore, this study has the freedom of utilizing unbiased means to analyze a small qualitative data size.

In this chapter, the study discusses the results from the primary data which is gathered from the conducted interviews. The study will also make references to the secondary data, which is the core of the analysis. For discretion and privacy reasons, the quotes and information given by the respondents shall stay anonymous. The analysis will be done based on the questionnaires and the responses from interviews to analyze the main research question.

In the past 40 years of development, Vietnamese football leagues have seen different recruitment strategies in accordance with the changes in the league's structure and transfer regulations. Each period of the competition has seen various approaches to the transfer strategies, and the results also vary. There is a need for higher efficiency in management and usage of resources because of the risks related to player recruitment. However, the actual recruitment process and the assessment and evaluation methods have not been researched for many occasions.

Based on the fact that the Vietnamese football system is yet to reach the professional level equivalent with the current one in the developed leagues around the world, especially in Europe, each club needs to possess certain flexibility when it comes to designing recruitment strategies.

4.3 Definition of club recruitment strategies

4.3.1 The key recruitment objectives

Most businesses require a specific strategy or strategic planning in the organization process. In the football industry, strategy is quite a new concept that has started alongside the transition from a traditional sporting organization model to business enterprises. Suggestion from the ECA (2015) specified that the strategy is not only about the expression of vision and objective to excel in sporting competitions, but it has to focus more on establishing the foundation to build an exceptional club and strengthen the competitive advantages. However, strategy construction and implementation do not ensure that the club is able to reach the objectives, but it needs to take into consideration both internal and external causes, which can be conflicted with the strategy, no matter how well-planned it is. Therefore, keeping up with the changing

speed of the world requires ability and flexibility, which has become the crucial factor in the planning and implementation of strategies. The strategies need to be well defined and considered in order to achieve a competitive advantage, and this responsibility falls onto the shoulders of the club's administrators: the owner, board, chairman, or president. As a consequence, the planning process must be done from the agreement between the club's highest management team and the one in charge of sporting operations to proceed with the strategies. The environment is a crucial factor when a club is considering strategic planning. Each club has a unique surrounding that significantly impacts the decision-making process when it comes to building strategies. The strategies are also the factors that differentiate the clubs in comparison with others. The differences lie within the strategies, which are contributed from their history, management philosophy, playing style, their achievements, and the relationship between them and the environment in which they are operating.

In the interviews conducted with the coaches from top football clubs in Vietnam, they all stated their vision and objective in a general manner. However, the term "vision" is hard to be understood in the strategy discussion. Basically, a football club's vision is focused on sporting performances and winning matches. The vision is the main aim of the club, while strategy is a set of plans and processes that are constructed in accordance with the organization's system in order to achieve the vision that has been set. As mentioned, the basic vision of football clubs has been stated by the respondents from three clubs in Vietnam, and the executive director of club A has confirmed such vision.

"The sporting objective of the club is to achieve promotion in season 2020/21 and become a stable football club that can stay in the top half of Vietnam's highest division in the next 3-5 years, then compete for the championship and reach the continental competitions."

Furthermore, it is stated in the interviews that the strategy of a club is tailor-made in accordance with its current financial and sporting situation. The strategies are different from the interviewed clubs because of the distinction in finance and league positions, and each of them is looking to thrive under the situations to develop a strategy that can bring both sporting and economic success. In the case of Club B, who is the champion of Vietnam's highest division in the previous season, their recruitment strategy has to be carefully considered.

"We're extremely ecstatic with the championship from the last season, which has been expected for so long. However, the next season we're competing in an extra competition: AFC Champions League, therefore, the team has to be thoroughly

prepared from top to bottom, especially with the recruitment. We have a strong squad this season, but there are a few positions that need to be strengthened and replaced. Winning the trophy is hard enough, but defending it is another tough challenge. (Club B)”

It is apparent that the recruitment strategy of the reigning champion has to be created depends on their ambition for the subsequent season due to the additional fixtures from the continental competitions and the pressure of defending their championship. Sharing the same or even more serious pressure as Club B is Club C, the runner-up of last season. They have been the best team in Vietnam during the last decade; however, the slip from the previous season has dealt a great blow to their pride, and the head coach of Club C is well aware of this situation.

“We’re highly motivated in the new season of 2021 because we have not been able to defend the title last season. We’re aiming for an improved and more successful season, and I’m thrilled that the club is willing to invest into the squad to acquire the best players further. Aside from the national competitions, the club is also competing in AFC Cup; therefore, we have to make sure that the squad is strong and deep enough to perform at a certain level across every competition. (Club C)”

Financial backing is the decisive factor that contributed to the lengthy success of Club C. In contrast, not every club in Vietnam is fortunate enough to have such backing. Club A is clearly aware of the limitations which come from their current division.

“The club is currently in the second division of Vietnam football league system, and therefore if we can not achieve high league positions, it creates many obstacles to recruit players. The club is in the second division is also one thing that is less attractive for the new players. Moreover, the club is a bit short on transfer budget, so we need to take that into consideration when recruiting players. (Club A)”

It is possible to see that Club A has considered its current environment to assess the difficulties that can arise during the recruitment process and derive a certain strategy to deal with the obstacles and achieve the aims of the club. The first respondent from Club A, being the CEO, has clearly defined the club’s approach to player recruitment based on the current environment. Furthermore, the interview conducted with the second respondent from Club A has confirmed the transfer strategy consideration process in the club.

“When it comes to transferring discussion, firstly, the head coach states the transfer request for certain positions in the squad. Then the head coach, assistant coach, and

executive director will discuss the players' abilities and financial demands, and finally, they come to a conclusion whether to recruit or not. (Club A)''

Interestingly, the second respondent from Club A is the head coach who is responsible for the first team's performance and training. He is the closest person who can observe and determine the inferior positions, both in players and team management staffs and propose the solutions to the administrators. Communication is the key that determines whether the strategy has been successfully implemented at the club or not. Drawing on such notion, evidently, Club A has overcome the usual struggle of communication gap between the administrators and sporting management team and joined hands to deliver an appropriate strategy to help the club achieve their goals. The CEO of Club A further supports the response from the head coach:

''Based on the orientation indicators such as vision and objectives, we assess the current squad to determine the strengths and weaknesses in medium and long-term. Thus, from the transfer market observation, we can select the potential target and add them to the shortlist of players to further discuss with the coaching team. The discussion needs to consider both sporting performance and financial condition factors then the final recruitment decision has to be mutually agreed between all personnel. (Club A)''

The cooperation between the club's administrators and the sporting management team is the absolute key to organize and execute the strategy. The process must be considered as a chain of decisions, in which each of them is independent, but they are perfectly integrated to efficiently run the football club's engine as stated by the director respondent from Club A.

''In the transfer planning process, the head coach's opinion is crucial in terms of sporting performances, but to reach the final decision, besides what happens on the pitch, the club needs to consider various aspects of the player recruitment, such as financial condition. Each department needs to fulfill their player assessment responsibilities to ensure the club makes a correct decision. (Club A)''

However, Club B, Club C, and Club D don't share the same model as the previous respondent. In these clubs, the head coach is the one who makes the decision regarding recruitment. Nevertheless, the decision is reached through the discussion between the coaching team and the administration board. However, the recruitment decision is still based on the major vision, objectives, and philosophy of the club.

''The general vision of the team is to prioritize the young players, especially the ones who come from the same region as the club. From the tight relationship with Promotion fund for Vietnam Football (PVF), each season we're expecting a number of youngsters

from them, combining with the players from our own youth system, we can field a good mixture of young and experienced players. However, the priority for our team is still the local youngsters because we can develop them from our system; therefore, there is no reason not to include them in the squad. (Club D)”

All of the four clubs that were interviewed seem to acknowledge the self-assessment process, which determines their strengths and weaknesses, both in sporting performances and financial condition. Even there are two different methods of operation within the clubs, their working relationship seems to be intact, and there is no sign of disagreements, especially between the CEO and coaching team. Nevertheless, all clubs are trying to thrive under the current financial conditions and put the sporting performances to be the overall objectives of recruitment strategies.

4.3.2 The Process of Recruitment

In Vietnamese football league system, each club uses a unique recruitment strategy which was carefully designed in accordance with their respective environment and philosophy, yet there is somehow a similarity in term of trends and comparisons between the clubs’ strategies. Most of the strategies contain short, medium, and long-term objectives, and among them, player recruitment and sporting performance are placed in the short-term goals. It is undeniable that there are several factors that can affect both player recruitment and sporting achievements. In the case of player recruitment, most of the Vietnamese clubs are aware of the types of players who meet all of their requirements. Club A has clearly stated these transfer processes through the responses of the head coach and CEO.

“When the season almost reaches the end, the head coach determines the strengths and weaknesses of the current squad and makes a proposal of which area requires reinforcement. Then the proposal will be put in discussion between the coaching team, analyst, and administrators to create a shortlist of players. The list will be narrowed down to 3-4 candidates. The administrator will try to contact the players and the clubs to find out if they are available. We also need to consider the financial demands since some players are financially impossible to acquire. Hence, we’ll need to consider the rest of the list for the available ones.(Club A)”

The other respondents have returned with similar recruitment procedures. However, the planning process depends on various factors of the football club, including objective,

philosophy, playing style, and financial situation of the club. This view is mutually shared from the other respondents, such as Club B.

“From the military background of the club, we have a very straightforward and disciplined approach towards the recruitment. We have begun the identification and assessment process throughout the last season, and the potential transfer targets are discussed between the management board, head coach, and assistants in the coaching team. We narrowed down the best candidates, both local and foreign, to a few names which are suitable with the disciplined approach of the club and affordable in case of financial situation. Last season we already spent a considerable amount to acquire a few of the national team’s players, so we have to take finance into serious consideration. (Club B)”

Financial factor is one of the most crucial factors that affects the recruitment strategy for every football club in the world, and Vietnam’s clubs are no different. Club D is experiencing multiple difficulties due to the lack of financial power from the club during recruiting for the first team.

“In Vietnam, it is hard to say a head coach prefers building towards a certain playing style because the coach has to utilize the players in the current squad. I would love to be capable of purchasing suitable for the preferred playing style as Pep Guardiola or Jose Mourinho, but it is not possible. A national player such as Joe Hart of England can be offloaded from Manchester City in a blink of an eye because he doesn’t fit Guardiola’s tactics, yet in Vietnam, I’m unable to do this because of the limited budget as well as the quality of players. (Club D)”

In contrary to their counterparts, Club C has not experienced problems regarding money. While the other clubs in V.League are struggling to find the best players for the squad, Club C currently has at least three squads for the first team with a similarity in quality.

Figure 2: The squad depths of Club C (2020)



Figure 2: The squad depth of Club C (2020). Source: Vietnam Professional Football (VPF)

Generally, the clubs who are more proactive during the planning process can place themselves in a more advantageous position, which allows them to further investigate the players' market to identify the true talents and optimize spending and maximize possible return. However, football is an unpredictable sport, in which a player can suddenly get injured even during training; the sale of a player and the substitution in the managerial role can make the club change their recruitment strategy to react, at times it leads to some unintentional “panic buy.”

4.4 Risks assessment and management

It is undeniable that every recruitment decision from football clubs represents a significant risk, which can be broken down into sporting risk and financial losses. The wrong player recruitment can dampen the on-pitch performance of the club, accordingly, worsen the reputation of both the club and the player. In addition, the club has to bear the costs from transfer fees and wages when signing the contract with talents from the market. Each club needs to develop a certain measure to minimize such risks from the transfer market through proper utilization of the roles of scouts, football intermediaries, and player trials. When considering a transfer deal, there are certain indicators that the club needs to take into account, such as age, culture, playing styles, characteristics, and potential sale value. Therefore, the fundamental question that the club needs to answer is what are the proper measures they can establish in the recruitment strategies that can minimize the aforementioned risks and increase the efficiency from the transfer market.

4.4.1 The Significance of player assessment

Player assessment is the very first and crucial step in the recruitment process that is carried out by any football club in the industry. Assessment is the procedure in which the clubs gather knowledge and information about the potential new players then evaluate the gathered data. From the evaluation, a decision will be reached whether the potential players meet the requirements of the club and have the capabilities to enhance the current squad. In order to make the risks minimum from the recruitment, the club is required to set up specific criteria and actions to identify and assess some of the players' characteristics and qualities to find out if they are in line with the club's playing style and philosophy. As discussed in the literature review, the club can improve its possibility of identifying and picking the players with the best skillset and the highest potential by widening the scouting network and ultimately achieve competitive success both on and off the pitch. One of the methods to widen the scouting network is to appoint professional scouts. However, this position is not being utilized in Vietnam football because of some specific reasons, even when the coaches understand the advantages that professional scouts can bring to their clubs.

“Appointing scout can be a lot of help to provide detailed information about the players' performance and playing history, thus makes it easier for the head coaches to observe, evaluate and make a selection. Scouts can provide not only information about the first team players but also the youngsters who have the skills, and there is a lot of room for development. (Club A)”

“Looking at the scouts in Europe or Latin America, we understand their responsibilities and knowledge they can bring to our club. However, the market for local quality players in Vietnam is not really vast; therefore, the best ones from each club are widely acknowledged among the clubs. For the foreign players, we have a good relationship with some agents who can introduce them to us. We then assess the players through a short trial and reach the final decision. (Club B)”

The advantages that scouts can bring into the club are undeniable; however, not every club in Vietnamese football leagues has appointed this head-hunter position due to the fact that the size of national players in the country has not been a problem for them to cover. The clubs that do not have professional scouts have attempted to find alternative ways to identify the talents and proceed with the recruitment, which are sending members of the coaching team to attend

certain matches in which a potential transfer target may be playing or assign a member to watch the target right in the match that their team is competing.

“Currently, we do not have an appointed scout position. The player scouting network is built from the knowledge of our coaching staff, which are assigned to watch a certain number of matches to identify the talented players. The Vietnamese pool of players is quite small; therefore, we don’t have to appoint specific scout personnel only to find the local players, except when it comes to recruiting young players. (Club C)”

All of the clubs who were interviewed understand the important role of professional scouts. However, the characteristics of the player market have limited the use of scouts for players within the country. The clubs rather rely on their own coaching team to identify talented first-team players and only utilize scouting networks to recruit youngsters to further develop them in the youth team. The existence of multiple quality youth academies and the wide range of youth competitions in Vietnam is another reason that the teams are not required to have professional scouts for local players.

“Each year, we’re expecting many talented young players from our own academy. Besides, players from other academies such as PVF, Juventus Academy, or Hoang Anh Gia Lai are highly rated. They compete in various youth competitions between the age of U13 to U21; therefore, we have many chances to observe and identify talented young prospects to bring them to our clubs. Those competitions are held every year, and they draw serious attention from teams all around Vietnam. (Club D)”

From the interviews, it is apparent that Vietnamese players in the market can be covered without the appointed scouts. However, when it comes to recruiting foreign players, clubs in Vietnam heavily rely on the agents, but this is proven to be a double-edged method because the intermediaries can either bring the teams good players or charge them high fees but missing the core value of the negotiation: the quality of players.

4.4.2 The „middle-man“ in the recruitment process

In an underdeveloped football environment such as Vietnam, player agents are yet to be considered as an important role for player recruitment, especially regarding domestic players. Player agents in Vietnam mainly operate on scouting and representing foreign footballers; however, due to the fact that the football system in Vietnam is still under development, this role is considered to be the necessary evil for the clubs. The agents can have a wide network of players from all around the world, but there is a blindside that does not ensure the quality of

footballers they bring to Vietnam. The clubs lack knowledge of such foreign players; therefore, they heavily rely on those whom the agents introduce, and only from a few trials, the club hastily decide to sign the contract without thoroughly assessing them. Agents also demand considerably high fees from the clubs for their services whenever their clients sign a contract, regardless of the players' quality.

The abilities of agents in Vietnam are also in question due to the new regulation from FIFA in 2015, which allowed any person who is registered with the respective football federation and has a representative contract with the player to act as an agent. The old regulation is more strict, which required a license from the agent, or the agent has to be naturally related to the player. The new and open regulation created many more possibilities for agents in Vietnam yet also brought more uncertainty when it comes to recruiting foreign players. Respondents from Club A also confirm this situation of agents.

“Our club is using the player network from our own coaching team, our players, and some agents. The agents bring us a lot of information on players who can be available for transfer, but the current football environment in Vietnam still lacks professionalism and yet to follow the international regulations; therefore, it is difficult to properly utilize the agent's role. (Club A)”

The unprofessionalism that Club A mentioned is further discussed through several articles in the Vietnamese media. Tuoi Tre, a newspaper company, operating for almost 50 years, has done a long article reflecting the reality of so-called „player agents“ in Vietnam football, including interviews with clubs' officials and the most experienced agents. The same issue of unprofessional agents was also addressed by the Chairman of TP HCM FC, a club competing in the highest division.

“In a few years before, an agent is only eligible to work when he/she has the certificate from FIFA, but now all they need is the representative contract with the players, in which they act as the intermediaries. It became easier for them to be the agent but the entangled problem could increase. Some of the agents demand such high fees that the player even received less money than he should have in the contract. (Mr. Huu Thang Nguyen, Chairman of TP HCM FC, Tuoi Tre)”

The biggest issue that Tuoi Tre and Goal Vietnam have discovered is the one related to the signing on fees, which bizarrely doesn't depend on the players, but on the agents. The interview with Jernej Kamensek, a Slovenian agent who has been working in Vietnam for seven years, has unraveled the problem.

“In Vietnam, the signing on fees have massive meaning, and sometimes they far exceed the monthly wages. 99% of coaches in Vietnam demand their shares from these fees. That is the reason why V. League can not have quality foreign players. At some moments, the clubs were ready to refuse the players with better quality to recruit the ones with a little less quality just because they would agree to pay the so-called fees. (Kamensek, Goal Vietnam, 2019)“

Following the claims from Kamensek, Mr. Huu Thang Nguyen, the Chairman of TPHCM FC confirmed the abnormal reality that comes from the transfer market in Vietnam. However, he suggested that even if the claim was true, this trend would be eliminated because real capability and professionalism is demanded in football.

“The reality is there are some agents who are ready to pay a big amount of fees to the head coaches in order for his players to have the contract signed. But it is only a limited number of agents because if the coaches are capable and have a certain vision, none of them will do such a thing. They would want the best players to bolster the squad so that the club will achieve competitive advantages and, consequently, the trophy. The head coaches who accepted the money will have such a hard time working with the players in the future due to this reason (Mr. Huu Thang Nguyen, Chairman of TPHCM FC).“

The unprofessionalism of the player agents is the main reason that the clubs in Vietnam would like to avoid collaborating with them. However, regarding the shortage in foreign scouting, the clubs are forced to work with some of the agents to widen their network and recruit suitable players from abroad. All of the interviewed clubs acknowledge the double-edged impact of utilizing agents; therefore, they have prepared carefully to minimize the risks that would come from these recruitments by running medical tests and trials.

“The players will sign the trial with the administration team and be transferred to the coaching team. They will join the team’s training and will be evaluated through friendly games. The criteria that we use to evaluate them are their attitudes and professionalism during the training and in the locker room, and most important is their on-pitch abilities. (Club A)“

“Conducting trials is very important to the recruitment, especially considering the foreign players. If the players have been playing for one or a few seasons in Vietnam, it is possible for us to analyze and assess him, but if he just arrived from another continent, we have a limited amount of information on the players. However, even for

those who had experience playing in V.League, trials are still required to fully evaluate the potential contributions that he can provide to the club. (Club B)“

The intermediaries have posed various challenges for the clubs when they engage in transfers; however, it is undeniable that the teams heavily rely on this source for the players from abroad. The reason for this is the foreign players have played a major part in the success of Vietnamese football clubs. Evidently, in the last 10 seasons, every club that won the league has at least two prolific strikers, who are not Vietnamese, in their squad. The foreign players' contributions are so great that the clubs are willing to take risks to acquire their signatures, and when they did not perform up to par, the clubs immediately terminate the contract in only 6-month time.

Gathering from the interviews with the clubs, it is clear that football intermediaries have been a problematic recruitment channel for the clubs to utilize. However, it is undeniable that the clubs still have to rely on these channels to find the talents from abroad unless they are able to deploy a network of scouts in foreign countries. What those clubs can do right now is use various methods in order to diminish the uncertainties from the agents by conducting trials or different methods such as statistics and data analytics.

4.4.3 Utilization of Statistics and Data analytics

In the past decade, statistics and analytics have become increasingly important towards the assessment and development of the football industry. The football club has recognized and attempted to employ more data analytics in the assessment and evaluation process of their squad players and the potential players in their recruitment list. The idea of utilizing data analysis and metrics aims to assist club managers to take up more logical player assessment and acts as a supporting system to determine, reduce and eliminate the risks that can arise during the recruitment process. It can also provide an evaluation foundation to identify the talents and avoid the risk prospects which are usually overlooked by other teams. The proper use of analytical tools can also help the teams with low budgets to pinpoint the alternative and affordable options that possess similar qualities in comparison to those of the expensive players.

The extend of data implementation depends on the clubs, but it seems that the top clubs in Vietnam have started to use some of the advanced statistical tools to make their scouting and recruitment easier. Club A, regardless of their position at the second division of the Vietnam football league system, has joined the trend of data analytics tools.

„Currently, our club is using Instat, a statistics, an analytics tool from Russia. Instat has aided us a lot with the wide range of detailed match reports and analysis which covers many different countries and regions. The tool has provided a huge amount of data for us to assess players that can one day become our transfer targets. (Club A)“

“Instat is a powerful tool to assess the performance of our players on the pitch, which can be much helpful when designing tactics and training programs to improve such performances and help the players realize their true potentials. Furthermore, Instat provides the data of those players who are currently starring in the league so that we can understand their strengths and weaknesses and devise a plan to maximize the sporting performance. (Club D)“

Instat is the tool which utilizes their own unique parameter to derive the most accurate assessment of the players' performances. It measures the significance of their actions, opponent's level, and the current championship level that they are playing in. The utilization of such a tool can save a massive amount of time for the scouting process and even predict the increases or decreases of his performances. To gather data for Instat, the tool that has been used in the clubs is the Electronic Performance and Tracking System (EPTS), which is contained in a tiny device and attached to the player's body through a small sport shirt that goes under the uniform.

“Our club uses this EPTS in training and matches to keep track of the player's total distance covered, velocity, and the average position during the match. From the results, we can better understand the fitness condition of the player, especially for those who just returned to training after injuries. Furthermore, the system, in combination with another analysis system, can provide the coaching team with a detailed examination of their current tactics, which can assist in improving the performance of the team in total. (Club C)“

“The EPTS has been a great help to the assessment and training process. Besides our own players, the system has been used for the players who are on trials with the club. It brings us first-hand knowledge of the players' initial fitness and performances to know if he is good enough to sign a contract with the team. If we can determine a good player, it can not only improve the sporting performances but also minimize the financial risks that can potentially come in the process, especially when considering the foreign players. (Club B)“

The analytical tools and statistics are not only helpful during the season but also provide the clubs' management with a foundation of knowledge of the current squad's condition, their strengths and weaknesses, which area needs to improve, which players are ready to be promoted from the youth team. Moreover, analysis tools with large databases such as Instat can also present the abilities of the potential transfer targets from the statistics they have gathered from the players in their database. From which, the clubs can design a suitable recruitment plan based on these statistics and analysis.

“The data from Instat provides us with a certain amount of information on the players that can be potential transfer targets. Based on such information, we can determine which player is potentially fit into the squad thus devise a shortlist of targets that will be considered in the recruitment strategy of the club. During the season, we can look further into the players who are under our radar through the statistics and data analysis and reach the final decision based on such data. (Club A)“

The analysis from the interviews have pointed out the positive impacts that the utilization of statistics and data analytics can bring to the recruitment strategy of the football club. Results from the analysis tools can be a huge foundation for the administrators and coaches to make the appropriate decisions regarding first team contribution of certain players as well as the abilities of the potential transfer targets.

4.5 Innovations for players recruitment strategies

The basic idea of strategic thinking is to execute things differently from the competitors in order to gain competitive advantages. In the football world, such actions include implementing innovative strategies in the transfer market, especially for the clubs with a limited budget to compete in a fair manner with the counterparts with abundant financial resources.

4.5.1 Market specialization

Football recruitment can be considered as completing a puzzle, which the coaching team needs to deem as a tactic that demands focus and a transparent view of the market pool of footballers alongside the proper evaluation for the players in the current squad and youth system. With the openness of football nowadays, there are plenty of markets that teams can direct their radar, such as local, national, and international markets. In accordance with the financial situation, it is crucial for the clubs to determine their focus to a specific country, region, or league rather than spreading out their scouting resource towards a broad yet uncertain market. The goal of

the clubs has to be excessive exploitation of their favorable marketplace, which is shared by all of the interviewed clubs.

“At the moment, the focused player pool of our club is the national market. Besides, we are also looking at certain markets such as Thailand, Japan, South Korea, South East Asia area and in the recent years we’re examining Serbia and the former Yugoslavia region, which was available through the cooperation with partner club in the area.”
(Club A)

It is undeniable that all clubs want to have their network as wide as possible, yet they also acknowledge the difficulties that are posed in the foreign markets.

“The range is wide; however, due to the information limitation of the players that are suitable for V.League, it is unsure that we can reach such players for negotiation. The players from foreign markets such as Europe and Latin America require high recruitment fees as well; thus it poses additional difficulties for recruitment” (Club A)

There have been plenty of examples when clubs excessively spend over their resources to compete in the transfer market; it is apparent that Club A understands well their financial position and directs their focus to the domestic market, which is more realistic for them. Not only for such a club with limited budget as Club A, a wealthy club as Club C also understand the meaning of focused market.

“The limitation for foreign players in V.League 1 is only 3 per season, so our club has to determine the specific market to identify the ones that can bring real value to the team. Each season, we get many foreign footballers on trials with the club, yet not every player can adapt to the playing style of Vietnam football, or in a broader sense the Southeast Asian football. Therefore, in the past few seasons, we redirected our radar towards the players that excel in the national tournaments within the region. Those players will adapt faster to Vietnam football and the life in the country thanks to the experience they acquired from similar countries in the region. (Club C)”

4.5.2 Building the foundation for the development

In the football world, the desire of almost every player is to play as many games as possible, and in order to do this, footballers must secure their position and role at a specific club where they can maximize their exposure to the games. In other words, Elliot (2013) stated that the players might consider transferring to a club that is suitable for their current abilities, but the club could be playing in a league which can be considered to be the “stepping-stone“ for them

to develop themselves to reach the league on the higher level. Club A have expressed clearly their goal and objective as the potential competitive advantage.

“During the negotiation process, we let the players know clearly our current goal and situation, what they can expect when signing the contract in terms of playing time and future development. We have the advantage in tight cooperation with PVF, the best academy with the best youth facilities in the country, so we consider that as absolute competitive advantage. However, we can not be in the race of wages and signing on fees with bigger clubs, so we hope with the infrastructure factor, we can help the players understand that they can hone the skills here and have the possibility to move to bigger leagues. (Club A)”

In the last few seasons, Club A has achieved precisely what they have been aiming to do. Although they are still playing in the second division of the league system, at least two of their players have been promoted to the highest division thanks to their performance with the team. One of them is from the PVF academy, and the other couldn't establish himself in V.League, so he capitalized the opportunity in Laos League and then became the top goalscorer for Club A, which handed him the ticket to join the highest division of Vietnam football.

The „stepping-stone“ approach is the appropriate way for the small clubs that possess a limited budget to persuade top talents, but instead, they can attract young talented players that aim to improve their own abilities and reach the more significant leagues. Those small clubs can even acquire young players that are not exposed to the first team games but still in need of playing time to develop their skills and gain experience. Even though this approach does not show the innovation, it is innovative in terms of financial aspect towards clubs with such limited budget to tempt top talents to join the team.

Club B understands the advantages of a focused market, and they have proved that they are an example of utilizing such strategy during the span of their history. Club B has the reputation of fielding the local and national players who mostly share the military foundation and achieve many trophies through their way of football development.

„We have the advantage in player development thanks to our academy. A wide range of youth scouting have brought us many talents from the young ages, and after years of training and commitment, the young players who possess the ability will be provided with opportunities to play for the first team or go on loan to gain experience. (Club B)”

Club D shares the same approach towards young players as does Club B; however, they don't have the academy up to the quality of their counterpart. Club D choose another approach of

acquiring players from other academies in Vietnam, such as Promotion Funds for Vietnam Football (PVF). Each year when the young players in PVF „graduate, “in other words, these players reach the age of 18, Club D has approached and signed a professional contract with the players. The ones who are capable of first-team football are given chances to prove themselves, and for the ones who are not, they will continue their development at the club.

„The youth system in our club has not been performing well in recent years; thus, we lack young talents from our own academy. In contrast, PVF has been one of the best youth academies in Vietnam for a decade, and they are providing such top-of-the-industry facility in Vietnam, so recruiting their young talents has been the right direction for the team as we can get proficient players who are able to contribute immediately for the first team while continuing their development. The club can also be the stepping-stone for them to reach the higher level of the game in bigger teams or leagues. (Club D)“

4.5.3 Using Statistics and Data Analytics for players‘ screening

The primary idea of utilizing statistics and data analytics is to provide the managers with a rational amount of information, from which they can make the best decisions regarding the recruitment or assessment of the team’s current squad. The players‘ screening process by using such tools doesn’t have to start when the players have gone to the club for trials, but it can be a season-long work to throughoutly understand the strengths and weaknesses of the players. The idea of keeping track of the players‘ performances through the season is shared among Club A and C.

“The players observation is carried on throughout the season. We only employ one scout, therefore, the utilization of such scouting platform such as Instat is much welcomed thanks to its big database of players and the level of details it brings to the analysis of the players. (Club A)“

“The data provided by the scouting platforms such as Instat have allow us to have first hand knowledge of the players, so the coaches can visualize how to make the best out of the players‘ skill set, which position and role he can take up in the squad and if his skill set befit the team’s current tactic or not. We can further assess the situation by finding and comparing the players who share the same set of skills to determine the best one to bring to the squad. (Club C)“

The respondent from Club B acknowledges the perks of using data analytics on the potential transfer targets; however, Club B focus on the development of their young players so they have a slightly different use of the data analytics.

“We apply the data analysis to assess the performance of our own players, including the first team squad and the youth squad. Our primary aim is to develop our young prospects, therefore the analysis provides a guide for us to design an appropriate training program for each player that can push him reach his full potential. The data can also determines the fitness condition which we can pay close attention to so that the injuries are minimized. (Club B)“

However, club B do not neglect the use of data analytics when it comes to better understand the players in the market.

“The data gathered from the players in transfer market is compared to the data of the players in our squad. We look for the similarity and uniqueness in the performances of players. After the analysis, the potential transfer target is only put into the shortlist if his skill set has a certain amount of uniqueness, which in the match he can be the difference. If the situation allows, we would use a few players who each possess a part of a certain skill set and befit the team rather than gamble on a transfer. (Club B)“

From the interviews, it is evident that there can be various ways to utilize the statistics and data analytics. Yet, the clubs have the same goal, which is to maximize the abilities of the players in the squad and minimize both internal and external risks. Once the process is done right, the achievement of competitive advantages is within the reach.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 Key Findings and Discussion

From the analysis based on the interviews, the researcher was able to come to a conclusion that every recruitment strategy focuses on sporting achievements, which are winning football matches, getting promotions, and establish their position within the league. However, the increasing amounts of player wages have made the requirement for achieving competitive advantage more costly. Accordingly, the findings from all four club interviews pointed out that every club understands that they can make the club financially healthier from proper recruitment strategy, which conserves the fees involved when signing talents. Moreover, through development, the club can potentially generate revenue through future transfers, which is a type of revenue that has not become a standard income in Vietnamese football due to the

fact that most of the transfers in Vietnam are free transfers. With the strong correlation between financial conditions and sporting performance, the study suggests that the clubs should examine their current recruitment policies and explore additional sources which can bring them extra income in order to strengthen the squad further.

The further finding regarding strategy is the clubs are confusing the term „strategy“ since three out of the four clubs interviewed only described their current goals and objectives without a specific plan to achieve those goals. The lack of a well-planned strategy could be a factor that negatively affects the process of achieving competitive advantages from the football clubs. The study suggests that the clubs need to clearly define their vision and combine it with their philosophy on football styles and recruitment and integrate those with their long-term development plan. Such plan and philosophy should be documented in detail and extensively communicated so it is accepted, understood, and implemented within the club.

The study also determined a clear communication between the club head coach and their sporting director; however, this kind of working relationship is not shared within the other clubs since they do not employ such a position. Nevertheless, the recruitment strategy is well discussed and implemented since the ending period of the previous season and carried out until the beginning of the next season. The clubs understand that their strategy has to be the result of careful consultation from all relevant roles rather than being decided imperiously from the top-level administrators or coaching team in order to avoid unnecessary conflict between members of the management team.

Risk assessment and management is another factor that all interviewed clubs have considered and come up with specific actions to minimize such sporting and financial liabilities in recruitment. The study has pointed out that the clubs in Vietnam lack full-time scouting roles in their employments, even though the clubs understand the advantages that scouts can bring. Moreover, it was discovered that Vietnamese football clubs' scouting responsibilities usually incorporate with the sporting director's job or another member of the coaching team. The incorporation is necessarily done due to the resource limitation of the clubs. Nevertheless, the clubs have recognized the importance of establishing a vast range scouting network in order to maximize the players' selection and minimize the sporting and financial risks when it comes to recruiting players. Yet, the financial resource limitation, which the clubs stated to be the reason for the lack of scouting investments. Instead, the Vietnamese clubs rely on the network from their own coaching members to identify the talents even though their network is understood to be limited in scope.

The study further examined the appropriate strategies which can be adopted in the labor market to maximize the financial and sporting competitive advantages. From the interviews, all four clubs have set out their specific market strategies towards a specialized market that is bound by geographical factors in a nation, a region, or a specific league. Therefore, increasing the competence and widening the knowledge in a particular market can potentially lead to a competitive advantage from spotting talents ahead of other competitors. Moreover, the clubs which operate as the stepping-stone for talented players to come developing their abilities then move to bigger clubs can gain competitive advantages because they are deemed to provide more playing time and experience for players to express themselves on the pitch.

An additional strategy in the labor market that can be considered is the recruitment of those players who is undervalued due to old age, injuries, lack of form or playing time. This strategy can present a high risk due to the uncertainties in such players; however, the costs to acquire these players are relatively low; therefore, the club can develop and help them return to the former level or consequently utilize them in the positions where they can still contribute in the sporting performance or become a role model for young players to develop. Furthermore, if such players possess specific intelligence in football management, they could earn valuable experience then assist the coaching team in the future.

5.2 Recommendations and Future studies

Based on the key findings above, the study can conclude with certain recommendations. The main objective of the study is to find out how the football clubs in Vietnam can achieve a competitive advantage by implementing specific recruitment strategies. As such, the researcher came up with four recommendations on the methods of how the Vietnamese football clubs can exploit the players market to achieve competitive advantages.

First of all, a player recruitment system that is well structured and organized is crucial for the proper implementation of recruitment processes. The strategies should be well documented and in correlation with the vision and philosophy of the club. Therefore, the efficiencies are able to be improved by identifying and acquiring the best players who are the best fit to the team's playing style and system, which is defined in the strategic document. In order to successfully and sustainably implement the recruitment strategy, communication between the club management and sporting leadership must be established and maintained. The key to this is to create and maintain the understanding and confidence throughout the organization, across all levels so that it can build continuity and clarity within the recruitment process, establish

stability and long-term effectiveness, thus ultimately contribute to achieving competitive advantage.

The second recommendation is related to personnel investments, which should be aiming at those who are equipped with capabilities and expertise in the field of player identification, assessment, and development. Considering the significant business investment involved in the player recruitment, the club needs to carefully assess the sporting and financial return via the employment of scouts to avoid the risks that come from wrong recruitment decisions. The investments made in player knowledge and information not only assist the club in acquiring the best-talented players, who can fit well within the team but also minimizing the prospect of wrong players recruitment. Players are the core factors that can make or break a club, so the better they are, the more valuable they can become to the team, and the more likely competitive advantages can be created both in terms of sporting performances and off-pitch value.

Market specialization is the third recommendation, which suggests the club focus their resources on a particular market that can enhance their competence within the market. The characteristics of such a market can include the recruitment of young players who can be potentially sold. The goal of such specialization is to recruit talents with low prices, develop them and attempt to sell them at higher prices. In order to achieve such progress, a certain level of knowledge and competencies is required to identify and develop the players to be good enough to attract better offers in the future. The clubs whose aim to focus on constant development and sale of players may see their sporting performance fall if they are not able to replace their talents with equivalent or better players. However, if the club is able to maintain its ability to specialize in a certain market, they have the capability to sustain the sporting performance level.

The last recommendation is built around the exploitation and implementation of statistics and data analytics in order to keep the club at the same competitive level. The results from the analysis of data and statistics aim to provide the coaching and administrating team with a rational assessment of players as well as reducing or excluding the potential risks from the transfer market. Additionally, proper implementation of data analysis and statistics can bring several more improvements, such as acting as the base to identify talents with minimum risks, which is usually overlooked by other teams. The analysis can also provide the club with the assessment of the current players in the team that can aid in the players' training and development progress; therefore, the clubs should implement such technological tools both in transfers and training.

The current study is still limited in terms of scope, which is reflected in the low number of respondents and the depth of the interviews. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies should be conducted in the broader scope, which provides a further and deeper understanding of player recruitment, especially in Vietnam. The football world in Vietnam is still under development, so further research can play a specific role in providing the required knowledge that can help the clubs reach a higher level in terms of recruitment and furthermore, the level of professionalism in the best football leagues in the world.

5.3 Recruitment strategy recommendation

In this final section, the author would like to propose a specific recruitment strategy that befits Pho Hien football club, the team playing in the V.League 2, the second-highest division in the Vietnamese football league system. To recommend such a strategy, the author looks into the statistics and data of the club from the prior two seasons to determine the strengths and weaknesses, which area needs improvement from the transfer market. Moreover, the author will attempt to recommend some appropriate transfer targets based on the collected data.

5.3.1 Pho Hien’s performance analysis

The season 2018 marks the first-ever season of the football club after being established in the same year. Pho Hien was competing in the Third Division, taking the league by storm, and at the end won promotion through play-offs to play in the Second Division, V.League 2 in season 2019. The following table contains detailed information regarding the club’s performance in the last three seasons. The team has played well in the first two seasons, but in the third one, with the departure of key players and the impact of Covid-19, the performance has not met expectation when Pho Hien only finished in the 4th position.

Table 10: Pho Hien’s performance in last three seasons (2018-2020)

Season	Pos	Games	W	D	L	Goals for	Goals Against	Points	Points /game	GF /game	GA /game	Win Rate
2018	2	12	8	3	1	30	6	27	2.25	2.5	0.5	0.67
2019	2	22	11	7	4	37	22	40	1.82	1.68	1	0.5
2020	4	16	7	5	4	19	12	26	1.62	1.19	0.75	0.44

Table 10: Pho Hien’s performance in last three seasons (2018-2020). Source: VPF

Table 11: Pho Hien’s points and goals analysis (2020)

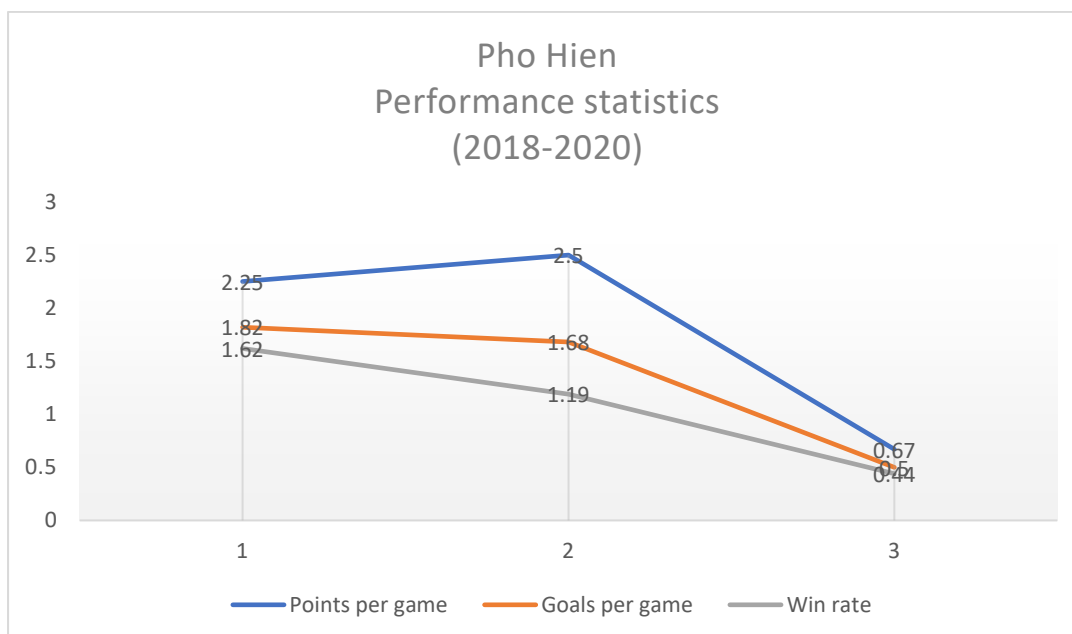


Table 11: Pho Hien's points and goals analysis (2018-2020) . Source: Pho Hien FC

The reduction of the goal-scoring ability is the first factor contributing to the form of the team in the last season of 2020. In season 2019, Pho Hien has recruited Xuan Nam Nguyen, a Vietnamese striker who has built his name in Laos League and continued his blistering form in Pho Hien. He was the club's and the league's Top Goalscorer in the 2019 season with 14 goals, contributed to approximately 38% of the team's total goals. More importantly, his 14 goals have brought Pho Hien 20 points, 50% of the team's total points earned in the entire season. Unfortunately, at the end of season 2019, Pho Hien has failed to gain promotion after having been defeated in the play-off game; however, Xuan Nam Nguyen had a memorable season which has given him the ticket to join V.League 1's TPHCM FC in season 2020.

Table 12: Xuan Nam's contribution to Pho Hien's performance in 2019 (VPF)

Round	Goals	Points	Result
2	2	3	W
3	1	1	D
4	2	1	D
7	2	3	W
8	2	3	W
15	1	0	L
16	1	3	W
19	1	3	W
20	2	3	W

TOTAL	14	20	
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Table 12: Xuan Nam's contribution to Pho Hien's performance in 2019. Source: VPF

The departure of Xuan Nam Nguyen had been a huge blow to Pho Hien FC because, in the next season, their goals have massively decreased as the goals per game ratio has reduced from 1.68 to only 1.19. The strikers recruited to replace Xuan Nam have not been performed well since the highest scorer of the 2020 season, Khac Khiem Nguyen, only managed to put his name on the score sheet four times; thus, Pho Hien can only finish at the 4th position. However, this record is somehow understandable due to the limitations and difficulties that have arisen during a season that is disrupted by the impact of Covid-19. The following table further explains how Pho Hien players have underperformed in the season 2020.

Figure : Pho Hien's Expected Goals For and Goals Conceded season 2020

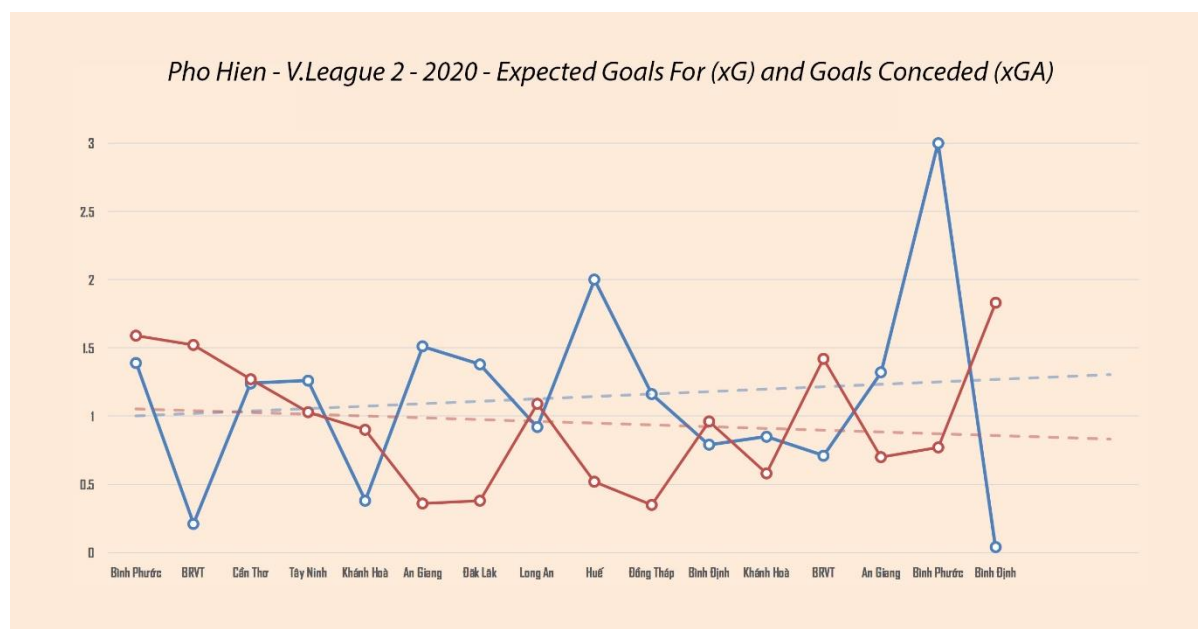


Figure 3: Pho Hien's Expected Goals For and Goals Conceded season 2020. Source: Pho Hien FC

From the statistics, it is apparent that the defensive record is not a real problem with Pho Hien because, in season 2020, they managed to keep the opponent at bay with only 12 goals conceded, the lowest in the league. The Goals conceded per game ratio have been relatively stable in the last three seasons, progressively at 0.5 in 2018, 1 in 2019, and 0.75 in 2020, which has shown the defense system's consistency. Nevertheless, scoring goals have been a real problem for the club in season 2020. The Expected Goal (xG) determines the possibilities for scoring goals depends on the position, openness, and distance to the goal from the player who is making the shot. In season 2020, there have been a few matches that Pho Hien should have scored more, such as the match vs. Long An, in which the xG was more than 1, but the match

ended with a 0-0 scoreline. Even with the game against Binh Phuoc in the last two season games, which ended with a 2-0 win for Pho Hien. The team's xG was 3, but Pho Hien's players only managed to score two goals. These statistics pointed out that if the players have played better in converting chances, the final results of the season must have been better because the team has done well in creating chances in comparison to the opponents in the league.

Figure 4: Offensive Efficiency of Pho Hien (2020)

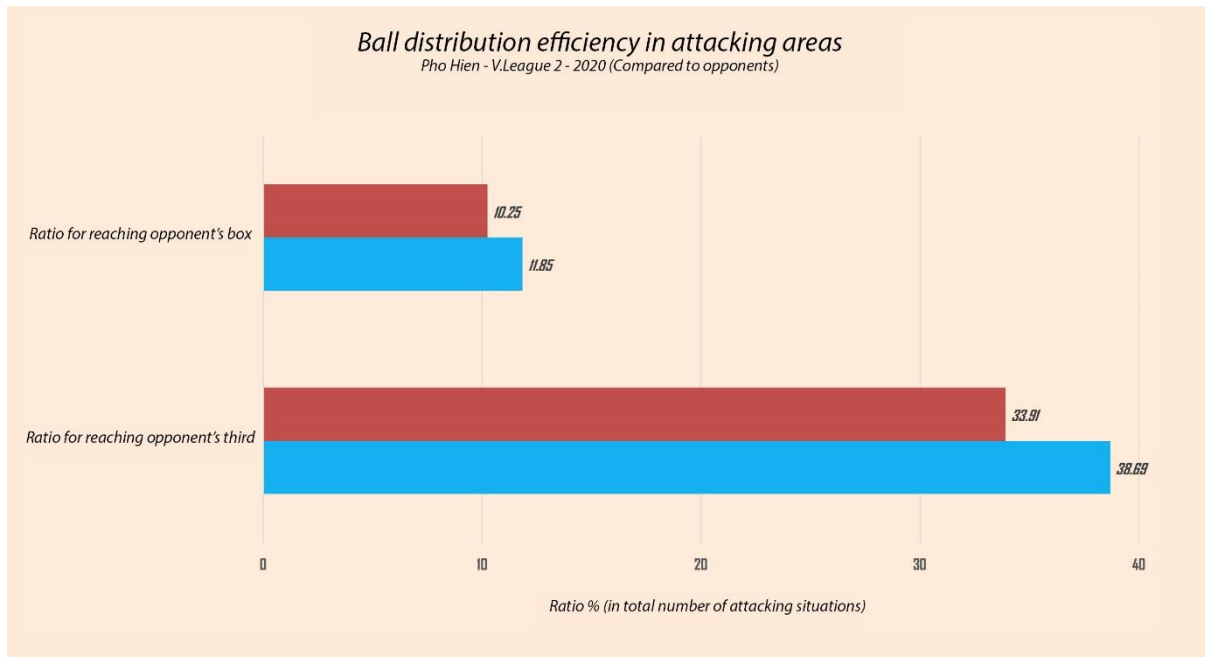


Figure 4: Offensive Efficiency of Pho Hien (2020). Source: Pho Hien FC

Pho Hien has the possession and pass completion statistics to thank for providing such a sturdy base to create scoring chances. The numbers shown in the following Figure explains that Pho Hien players have done better than their opponents in terms of keeping the ball and distributing it properly; however, the expected results of those attacking situation, which are the goals, are still insufficient.

Figure 5: Pho Hien's possession statistics (2020)

V.League 2 - 2020

Pho Hien FC	Statistics	Opponents
58%	Possession	42%
84.00	Pass completion	79.11
461	Avg passes/match	339
28.44	Long range passes/match	35.19
26.38	Passes into opponent's box/match	26.00
13.00	Crosses/match	9.75

Figure 5: Pho Hien's possession statistics (2020). Source: Pho Hien FC

Pho Hien is currently using a squad of young players with an average age of only 22.5, a considerably young squad compared to the 24.3 as the rest of the league. The Figure below displays the distribution of playing time in the first team matches to different age groups of players in the squad. From the data gathered, it is noticeable that the vast majority of playing time is being shared between the age group of 20-22.

Figure 6: Pho Hien Playing time distribution based on age (2020)

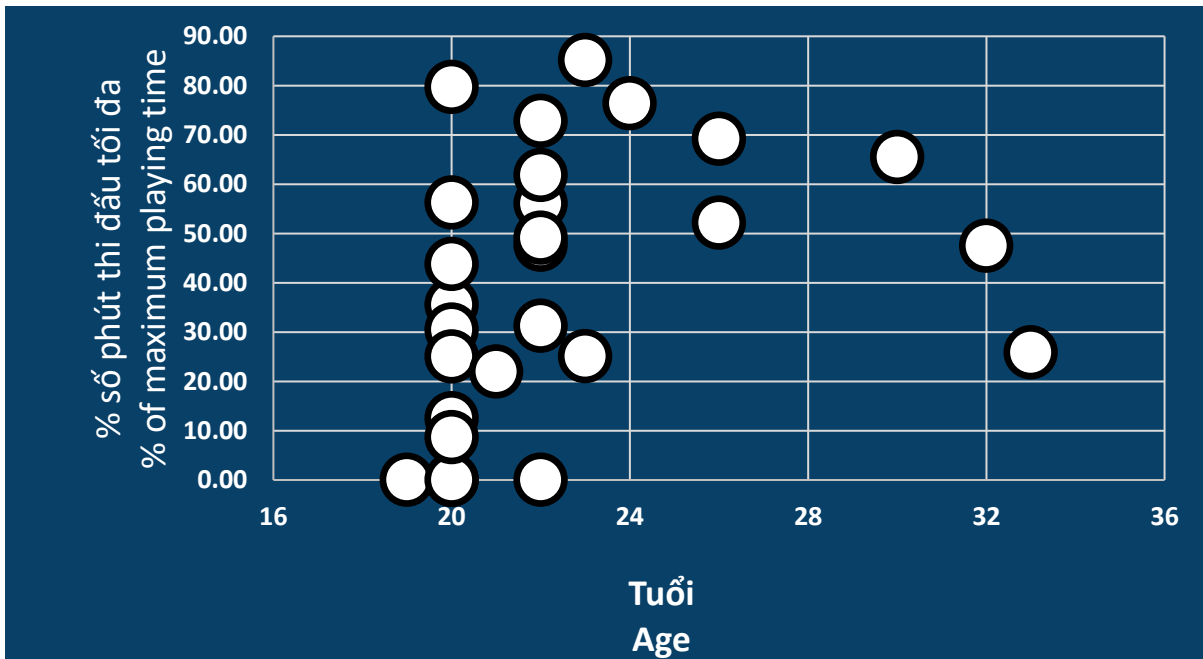


Figure 6: Pho Hien Playing time distribution based on age (2020). Source: Pho Hien FC

From exposure to the first-team experience, the club's young talents have been performing at an increasing level through the last three seasons. The youthful Pho Hien has been building up their game and progressively construct the core of the squad through a few key players. Interestingly, those coming stars are at the age of only 20-22.

Table 13: The top performers of Pho Hien (2019-2020)

Name	Position	Age	2019			2020		
			Games	Goals	Assists	Games	Goals	Assists
Van Trung, Tran	Striker	22	9	6	1	14	2	3
Khac Khiem, Nguyen	Striker	20	1	0	0	10	4	0
Huỳnh Tiến Đạt	Striker	20	3	5	2	7*	3*	3*

* played in Third Division for Cong An Nhan Dan FC

Table 13: The top performers of Pho Hien (2019-2020). Source: VPF

5.3.2 Recommendation for recruitment

In the new season of 2021, the first and foremost objective of recruitment is to find at least one proficient striker capable of scoring at least 10 goals a season. The midfield area also needs replacements after the departure of Trong Long Nguyen, one of the best players of season 2020 who is also one of the players that played the most games for Pho Hien.

Table 14: Pho Hien's players with the most games in season 2020

Player	Position	Games	Total minutes	Current club
Ngoc Bao, Le	Center Back	12	1048	Pho Hien
Thanh Loc, Nguyen	Center Back	16	1226	Pho Hien
Trong Long, Nguyen	Center Midfielder	14	1100	TP HCM
Van Trung, Tran	Striker	16	1148	Pho Hien

Table 14: Pho Hien's players with the most games in season 2020. Source: Pho Hien FC

1. Market specialization

Pho Hien's market should focus on is the Vietnamese player market due to a simple reason that the clubs in V.League 2, the Second Division of Vietnam, are not allowed to recruit foreign players. Therefore, Pho Hien can consider players based on a few player pools with specific criteria:

- V.League 1:

- Players who are lacking first-team matches
- Young players who need match experiences
- V.League 2: Players who have performed well in the past seasons
- Youth academies: Pho Hien is in cooperation with PVF, an excellent youth academy in Vietnam that can provide the team with talented young players in multiple positions.

2. Stepping-stone approach

The stepping-stone approach can be an effective strategy during negotiation due to the club's young players' utilization trend. In the past three seasons, most players in the squad are between the ages of 19 and 22. The distribution of maximum playing time per age group in the squad has shown that the young players have a real opportunity to maximize their exposure to first-team football in Pho Hien.

The preference of using young players could be an advantage that Pho Hien can utilize in the negotiation because the bigger clubs with strong academies such as Hanoi FC and Hoang Anh Gia Lai can send their players on loan to gain experience, which can be helpful towards the development of their players.

3. Recommended players

Based on the analysis of the first team performance, the author can recommend a few players that benefit the Pho Hien squad's requirements.

The priority of recruitment is a new striker; the club can consider the following shortlists of names who could be possible to recruit.

a. Striker recommendations

i. *Cong Thanh, Nguyen*

Current club	Dong Thap FC
Age	23
Position	Striker
Last played division	V.League 2
Matches	13
Goals	12 (Top goalscorer)
Assists	1
Points contribution	12/15
GPG	0.92

The first on the list is the Top goalscorer from season 2020 of V.League 2. Cong Thanh is an out-and-out striker with good control of the ball and good finishing skills. Physically he can be dominant from the height of 181 cm, but Cong Thanh is not without speed. He was the best player of Dong Thap, the worst V.League 2 last season, which has seen the team relegated to the Third Division. Currently, Cong Thanh can only play in one position but considering Pho Hien's lack of quality in front of goal, this striker can bring certain results to the club.

ii. *Danh Trung, Tran*

Current club	Viettel FC
Age	20
Position	Striker/Winger/Attacking Midfielder
Last played division	V.League 1
Matches	0
Goals	0
Assists	0
Points contribution	0
GPG	0

Danh Trung, Tran is one of the players who are regarded as the future stars of Vietnam football. At the age of 19, he already established his name as one of the best players in V.League 2 with 8 goals for Hue FC. Last season, he was registered for Viettel FC first team in V.League 1, but mostly he played for the U21 team and helped Viettel U21 become the national U21 tournament champion for the first time in their history. Interestingly, in the same tournament one year ago in 2019, Danh Trung was the Top goalscorer with 19 goals.

Agility and Technique are the top two attributes that contribute to make Danh Trung a good player. His intelligence on the ball is another significant factor that helps him overcome his opponents and integrate quickly into the team tactics. However, with the increasing reputation after the tournament, it may not be possible to recruit Danh Trung, yet it's definitely worth an attempt to acquire such a talented youngster.

iii. *Xuan Nam, Nguyen*

Current club	TPHCM FC
Age	27
Position	Striker
Last played division	V.League 1
Matches	3
Goals	0
Assists	0
Points contribution	0
GPG	0

Xuan Nam is a familiar face in Pho Hien, thanks to his wonderful season 2019 with the team when he was the best goalscorer. However, after moving to TPHCM FC in V.League 1, Xuan Nam has not been able to play many first-team matches because he was only the third choice for the striker position besides the two foreign forwards. Currently, in the best age for a senior player, the Vietnamese finisher needs more playing time in order to get a better chance of establishing his reputation in the league and get on the radar for the national team. A loan move back to the club that has made him notable in the country could be an appropriate step in Xuan Nam's career. He is also familiar with the competitive level of the league, and therefore if he is able to continue the same form in the 2019 season, he can make it a win-win situation with Pho Hien.

iv. *Vu Tin, Nguyen*

Current club	Saigon FC
Age	21
Position	Striker/Winger
Last played division	V.League 1
Matches	7
Goals	2
Assists	1
Points contribution	6/34

GPG	0.28
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Vu Tin, Nguyen is a striker who has two years of experience playing in V.League 1 for Saigon FC. The young forward has played well in two seasons for Saigon FC with 4 goals and 3 assists in a total of 15 matches. Work ethics and the ability to collaborate with teammates are what make Vu Tin a good player. Another advantage of Vu Tin is he was trained and developed from PVF, the academy that provides the majority of players for Pho Hien; therefore, he doesn't need much time to integrate with the teammates that he probably has already been familiar with.

b. Midfielder recommendations

i. *Thanh Hau, Vo*

Current club	Dong Thap FC
Age	19
Position	Attacking Midfielder/Winger
Last played division	V. League 2
Matches	14
Goals	1
Assists	6
Points contribution	12/15
Assist Per Game	0.43

Dong Thap FC may have had a terrible 2020 season, but there were two names that lit up their performance, and Thanh Hau, Vo is the one that complemented the league's best goalscorer who turns out to be his teammate Cong Thanh, Nguyen. Thanh Hau has given assists to 5 of Cong Thanh's goals throughout the season. The 19-year-old midfielder has done well with his crossing and free-kick-taking ability to deliver quality passes into the position of his striker. Pho Hien has done well in the chance-creation area, yet if they are bolstered with another midfielder with a specialized set of skills from the set-pieces, the scoring opportunities would be much higher. In addition, with the relegation of Dong Thap, if Pho Hien shows enough ambition, their possibility of succeeding in negotiation is not too shabby.

ii. *Hồ*

Current club	Dak Lak FC
Age	21
Position	Attacking Midfielder/Winger
Last played division	V. League 2
Matches	14
Goals	2
Assists	3
Points contribution	12/16
Assist Per Game	0.21

The achievement of Dak Lak to avoid relegation from last season has 21-year-old Ho to thank for his contribution. The team has finished with 16 points, only 1 more than the relegated Dong Thap FC, and out of that 16, Ho's assists and goals have brought them 12. Ho's greatest weapon is his ability to penetrate the opponent's wings to provide cutback passes and cross into the box. He is not shy to finish himself if the opportunity is presented; therefore, Ho can bring the dynamics into Pho Hien's attack and probably able to contribute to the team's total goals as well.

The recommendations for players that the author made were based on the gathered data from the team's results during the latest two seasons. Pho Hien is a young team with a squad full of growing young talents who can possibly perform inconsistently due to the lack of experience. Therefore, the club could further build a steady foundation by placing these players in the first team for match fitness and experience, alongside attempting to recruit first-team players with more match knowledge and understanding in order to mentor their young teammates. Furthermore, the older players can immediately impact the team's performance to make sure that the club reaches its sporting objectives.

6 Conclusion

Based on the review of literature relevant to the research topic, the author has summarized the process of achieving competitive advantages through recruitment in the transfer market; the factors that influence the construction of recruitment strategy and the methods to minimize the risks that can arise from the players' market. The competitive advantages in football can be

achieved through the investments into players, which are the backbones of the industry. However, every recruitment is a risk to the club because the outcome relies heavily on the accuracy of the decision. In order to make the best decision, the clubs can depend on the two sources of players: internal sources which are the clubs' academies and that of private organizations; external sources of players are those who come from the transfer market, free agents who are without contracts, and the players on loan. A club must spend four kinds of transaction costs in order to acquire the players, and among them, the search cost which includes the agents' fees is the highest expenses that Vietnamese football clubs are required to pay. However, the agents' channel is unreliable due to the individual purposes which are more important to those agents. Therefore, the assessment process is becoming more crucial to minimize such risks. In the recent years, sports sciences' contribution is one of the measures that are being utilized in the risk management process. Vietnamese clubs have realized the important role of sport science; however, not every club in the league uses this measure due to the lack of financial resources.

The player recruitment is a result of resource-based perspective of Human resource management strategy, which emphasizes that via examination of characteristics and performance, the internal strength can flourish and in contrary, weaknesses can be overcome. This perspective is tailor-made for the football clubs, because the players in the squad are specific resources that require to be thoroughly assessed to make the best of their abilities in order to achieve sporting objectives. Club governance plays an important part in the context, because the coaching team and the administrating team have to look at the same direction so that the strategy can be executed properly without any discontent among the club.

In the context of Vietnam football, the author analyzed and discussed how to create an efficient strategy to get the best result from recruitment. The first area to be considered is the difficulties that every club has to face each season. Internal difficulties, which are the lack of budget and limited scouting network, have diminished the club from reaching their sporting objectives, thus impaired the potential revenue from merchandising. Meanwhile, the external difficulties lie in the underdevelopment structure of the league, the absurd demands of the agents and their limited ability to introduce quality players. The interviewed clubs have come up with certain innovative strategies in order to minimize the risks and ensure the quality from the intake of players. They need to determine an appropriate players market to direct their resources; for the smaller clubs, they can present themselves as the stepping-stone for the young players to come, develop their skills and then gain revenue from the sales of those players; the risks can be

further minimized by utilizing the statistics and data analytics tools, which provide a rational insight of players' abilities for the club to consider. In the football world, the utmost objective for every club, in spite of their size or wealthiness, is to win matches and trophies. For the clubs in lower divisions, their first and foremost goal is to achieve promotion. Accordingly, those clubs need to carefully consider their resources and devise a proper recruitment strategy to achieve competitive advantages. From the knowledge acquired from the analyses, the author created a strategy for a specific football club in Vietnam. The club is currently in the second division and they are fighting for another chance of promotion. The proposal considers the past performances of the clubs, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses, then listed out the appropriate candidates that the club can consider for transfer.

In the football world, the utmost objective for every club, in spite of their size or wealthiness, is to win matches and trophies. For the clubs in lower divisions, their first and foremost goal is to achieve promotion. Accordingly, those clubs need to carefully consider their resources and devise a proper recruitment strategy to achieve competitive advantages. From the knowledge acquired from the analyses, the author created a strategy for a specific football club in Vietnam. The club is currently in the second division and they are fighting for another chance of promotion. The proposal considers the past performances of the clubs, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses, then listed out the appropriate candidates that the club can consider for transfer.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Interview with Club A's CEO (Original Vietnamese Version and related translation)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the study: Study the current practices of the recruitment strategies in V.League and propose an appropriate strategy for a specific club.
2. I hereby give my commitment that the information collected through this interview will be kept as a secret and will solely serve the purpose of this study.
3. What is your role and responsibilities in the club?

CEO/Managing Director

4. How long have you been working at the stated role?

I've been working here for the last 2 years, since April 2019.

5. Please, in a brief way state the general goals and objectives of your clubs in the following categories:

- Sporting objective:

The sporting objective of the club is to achieve promotion in season 2020/21 and become a stable football club that can stay in the top half of Vietnam's highest

division in the next 3-5 years, then compete for the championship and reach the continental competitions

- Financial objective:

We aim for stability and look to generate revenue from the major sources of professional football to gradually eliminate the dependence of a sole source, from which aim to stability of the club based on the revenue generation of the club.

6. How does the recruitment strategy of your club be influenced by the following achievements:

- Influence of sporting achievement:

The current team has a certain level of stability and looks to continue and improve the performances on the pitch. Therefore, we're trying to further improve the quality of the squad from the transfer windows of 2021.

- Influence of financial condition:

We're aiming to have a specific strategy that can generate the income from selling players, although at the beginning it is not too great. This kind of income does not exist in Vietnam football

7. What is the pattern for your club's recruitment strategy?

The recruitment strategy is designed based on the current strengths and weaknesses of the team, which is assessed multiple times throughout the season.

8. What is the focus of your club's recruitment strategy?

The external market is the primary source of players for us right now. Until 2020, the club hasn't got a youth academy, but with the cooperation with PVF, we are expecting a number of new players graduating from the academy every year.

PART II: RECRUITMENT STRATEGU PLANNING PROCESS

9. Can you further describe your club's recruitment process?

Based on the orientation indicators such as vision and objectives, we assess the current squad to determine the strengths and weaknesses in medium and long-term. Thus, from the transfer market observation, we can select the potential target and add them to the shortlist of players to further discuss with the coaching team. The discussion needs to consider both sporting performance and financial condition factors then the final recruitment decision has to be mutually agreed between all personnel.

- How many scouts does your club dispatch each season?

Each season we dispatch 01 scout, although he is a member of the coaching team.

10. What is your club's specialized market? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

On a general level, for international market we're looking at Thailand, South East Asia, Japan, Korea, Serbia and former Yugoslavia region due to the cooperation with a domestic club. In Vietnam, due to the fact that the domestic market is small, there is no need to narrow down to region or area.

PART III: Player assessment process

11. Which methods or tools does your club implement to identify and assess the transfer targets/new players?

Currently, our club is using Instat, a statistics, an analytics tool from Russia. Instat has aided us a lot with the wide range of detailed match reports and analysis which covers many different countries and regions. The tool has provided a huge amount of data for us to assess players that can one day become our transfer targets.

Appointing scout can be a lot of help to provide detailed information about the players' performance and playing history, thus makes it easier for the head coaches to observe, evaluate and make selection. Scouts can provide not only information about the first team players but also the youngsters who have the skills, and there is a lot of room for development.

12. Does your club use external sources to execute the transfers?

At the moment we're utilizing the network from the coaching team, the players in the team and some agents. The agents can provide a certain amount of information, however the Vietnam football environment is still unprofessional and not following the worldwide regulations.

13. How does your club conduct trials to assess the abilities of players?

The players will sign the trial with the administration team and be transferred to the coaching team. They will join the team's training and will be evaluated through friendly games. The criteria that we use to evaluate them are their attitudes and professionalism during the training and in the locker room, and most important is their on-pitch abilities

14. How long does your club observe a player before deciding to approach him?

The time we spend for the trials is normally around a week, for transfer targets we'll spend around 1-2 seasons.

PART IV: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

15. In your club, which roles participate in the decision-making process to recruit a player?

The Head coach and CEO are the primary staffs who participate in the decision-making process.

16. In your club, does the Head coach have the total control over recruitment? How is the cooperation between the members of management team towards the recruitment?

In the transfer planning process, the head coach's opinion is crucial in terms of sporting performances, but to reach the final decision, besides what happens on the pitch, the club needs to consider various aspects of the player recruitment, such as financial condition. Each department needs to fulfill their player assessment responsibilities to ensure the club makes a correct decision.

PHẦN I: GIỚI THIỆU

1. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Nghiên cứu tình hình hiện tại trong quá trình chuyển nhượng cầu thủ tại VLeague và đề xuất chiến lược chuyển nhượng phù hợp với CLB

2. Tôi cam kết rằng những thông tin thu thập được trong bản câu hỏi này sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu trong phạm vi bài nghiên cứu này.

3. Vai trò và trách nhiệm của anh trong CLB là gì?

Giám đốc điều hành.

4. Anh đã làm việc trong CLB bao lâu?

Khoảng 2 năm, từ 04/2021 tới nay.

5. Hãy phát biểu ngắn về mục tiêu chung của CLB về hai mặt:

- Thành tích thể thao:

Thăng hạng trong năm 2021, trở thành một đội bóng ổn định nửa trên bảng xếp hạng trong 3-5 năm tới tại V.League 1 và cạnh tranh vô địch sau này, tiến ra các giải đấu châu lục.

- Mục tiêu tài chính:

Bền vững, tạo dựng doanh thu từ các dòng chính của thể thao chuyên nghiệp để trở nên không bị phụ thuộc vào một dòng duy nhất nào, từ đó hướng tới khả năng tồn tại bền vững dựa trên khả năng thu hút doanh thu của đội.

6. Chính sách chuyển nhượng của CLB anh đang làm việc chịu ảnh hưởng như thế nào?
- Ảnh hưởng của thành tích thể thao?
Đội đang có được sự ổn định và nổi tiếp về mặt chuyên môn, cải thiện rõ rệt chất lượng sau mùa chuyển nhượng 2021.
 - Ảnh hưởng của tài chính?
Mang về một lượng doanh thu nhất định từ việc bán cầu thủ, dù chưa lớn. Đây là loại doanh thu chưa phát triển tại Việt Nam.
7. Chính sách chuyển nhượng được đưa ra dựa theo tình hình thực tế hay theo một khuôn mẫu có sẵn?
- Dựa trên tình hình thực tế.*
8. CLB của anh chú trọng tuyển quân theo hướng nào?
- Chiêu mộ cầu thủ từ thị trường chuyển nhượng?
Đây là hướng chú trọng, ngoài ra Phố Hiến có sự hợp tác với Trung tâm đào tạo bóng đá trẻ PVF, qua đó có sự giao nhận cầu thủ trẻ tốt nghiệp hàng năm.
 - Phát triển và sử dụng cầu thủ trẻ từ lò đào tạo của CLB?
Cho tới hết 2020, CLB Phố Hiến không có lò đào tạo của CLB.

PHẦN II: QUÁ TRÌNH LÊN KẾ HOẠCH

9. Anh có thể miêu tả rõ hơn về quá trình thực hiện chuyển nhượng ở CLB?
- Dựa trên các tuyên bố định hướng như tầm nhìn và mục tiêu => Đánh giá đội hình hiện tại để nhận biết các điểm mạnh, điểm yếu dài và trung hạn => Theo dõi thị trường chuyển nhượng và thiết lập danh sách cầu thủ theo dõi => Tổng hợp và bàn bạc thông tin cùng ban huấn luyện => Ra quyết định chiêu mộ (chuyên môn) và thương thảo (CLB/cầu thủ).*
- CLB cử trung bình bao nhiêu tuyển trạch viên ở mỗi mùa giải?
01
10. CLB của anh hoạt động chủ yếu ở thị trường cầu thủ nào?
- Thị trường quốc tế: những quốc gia/vùng lãnh thổ nào?
Theo dõi chung: Thái Lan, Đông Nam Á, Nhật Bản, Hàn Quốc, Serbia, khu vực Nam Tư cũ.
 - Thị trường trong nước: theo khu vực/đội bóng/giải đấu?
Không, do bóng đá Việt Nam nhỏ về qui mô.
 - Những lợi thế và bất lợi của các loại thị trường là gì?

Thị trường quốc tế: Tuy rộng nhưng sẽ phụ thuộc vào việc có liên hệ được hay không, do với mức trình độ cầu thủ cần cho V.League thì sẽ có hạn chế về thông tin.

Thị trường trong nước: Tại Việt Nam, thị trường chuyển nhượng ít hoạt động chính thống chính thức, đòi hỏi khả năng quản trị công việc và thích ứng.

PHẦN III: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐÁNH GIÁ CẦU THỦ

11. CLB anh sử dụng phương pháp, công cụ nào để xác định và đánh giá những mục tiêu chuyển nhượng/tân binh của CLB?

Chúng tôi hiện đang sử dụng Instat, một bộ công cụ phân tích và đánh giá xuất xứ từ nước Nga. Instat có lợi thế là kho dữ liệu rất lớn và trải khắp nhiều quốc gia, khu vực. Công cụ này mang lại cho chúng tôi một lượng lớn dữ liệu để đánh giá các cầu thủ giàu tiềm năng trở thành mục tiêu chuyển nhượng của CLB.

Ở thời điểm này, CLB chưa bổ nhiệm một tuyển trạch viên chính thức, thế nhưng chúng tôi hiểu được sự hữu ích mà tuyển trạch viên có thể mang lại. Họ sẽ cung cấp những thông tin chi tiết về phong độ cũng như lịch sử thi đấu của cầu thủ, qua đó khiến công việc quan sát, đánh giá và lựa chọn của HLV trở nên dễ dàng hơn. Tuyển trạch viên không chỉ cung cấp thông tin về cầu thủ đội một mà còn có thêm dữ liệu về các cầu thủ trẻ giàu tiềm năng phát triển.

12. CLB anh có sử dụng những nguồn lực bên ngoài để thực hiện chuyển nhượng không
- Có – mạng lưới của BHL, các cầu thủ trong đội, môi giới. Có lợi: thêm thông tin. Bất lợi: môi trường Việt Nam còn thiếu chuyên nghiệp và chưa tuân thủ qui chuẩn quốc tế.*

13. CLB anh tiến hành thử việc cầu thủ để đánh giá khả năng như thế nào?

Cầu thủ sẽ ký thỏa thuận thử việc và được bàn giao cho BHL, tham gia vào các buổi tập luyện và thi đấu giao hữu. Cầu thủ sẽ được đánh giá trên các góc độ gồm thái độ và tính chuyên nghiệp (qua tập luyện, sinh hoạt) và khả năng chuyên môn (qua tập luyện và thi đấu).

- Lợi thế và bất lợi của quá trình thử việc?

Lợi thế: Hiểu rõ và nắm bắt được khả năng của cầu thủ.

Bất lợi: các cầu thủ chất lượng cao sẽ không muốn thử việc.

14. CLB anh quan sát một cầu thủ trong bao lâu trước khi quyết định ký hợp đồng?

Từ 1 tuần (thử việc) cho tới dài hạn 1-2 năm (chuyển nhượng).

PHẦN IV: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐƯA RA QUYẾT ĐỊNH

15. Ở CLB anh, những vị trí nào góp mặt trong quá trình đưa ra quyết định ký hợp đồng với một cầu thủ?

Giám đốc, HLV trưởng.

16. Ở CLB anh, HLV trưởng có được toàn quyền đánh giá và quyết định chiêu mộ tân binh hay không? Sự phối hợp giữa các bên là như thế nào trong quá trình chuyển nhượng?

HLV trưởng có ý kiến mang tính chất quan trọng nhất về mặt chuyên môn, tuy nhiên không phải tất cả, do còn có rất nhiều yếu tố khác phi chuyên môn xoay quanh cầu thủ, ví dụ như chi phí.

8.2 Interview with Club A's Head Coach (Original Vietnamese Version and related translation)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the study: Study the current practices of the recruitment strategies in V.League and propose an appropriate strategy for a specific club.
2. I hereby give my commitment that the information collected through this interview will be kept as a secret and will solely serve the purpose of this study.
3. What is your role and responsibilities in the club?
4. How long have you been working at the stated role?
5. Please, in a brief way state the general goals and objectives of your clubs in the following categories:

Sporting objective:

The club is currently in the second division of Vietnam football league system, and therefore if we can not achieve high league positions, it creates many obstacles to recruit players. The club is in the second division is also one thing that is less attractive for the new players.

Financial objective:

The club is a bit short on transfer budget, so we need to take that into consideration when recruiting players.

6. How does the recruitment strategy of your club be influenced by the following achievements:

- Influence of sporting achievement:

If the team failed to achieve good results, it would be difficult to recruit good players.

- Influence of financial condition:

The transfer budget of the team is limited.

7. What is the pattern for your club's recruitment strategy?

The recruitment strategy is based on the current squad's situation.

8. What is the focus of your club's recruitment strategy?

We are looking to strengthen the squad from two sources: transfer markets and the players from PVF youth academy.

PART II: RECRUITMENT STRATEGU PLANNING PROCESS

9. Can you further describe your club's recruitment process?

When it comes to transferring discussion, firstly, the head coach states the transfer request for certain positions in the squad. Then the head coach, assistant coach, and executive director will discuss the players' abilities and financial demands, and finally, they come to a conclusion whether to recruit or not

10. What is your club's specialized market? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

At the moment we're focusing on the domestic market, but we will direct our radar to the players in Asia, Europe and Latin America. These markets require a reasonably high amount of transfer fees, so it is something we have to consider carefully.

PART III: Player assessment process

11. Which methods or tools does your club implement to identify and assess the transfer targets/new players?

We're currently using the data analysis from Instat. The data from Instat provides us with a certain amount of information on the players that can be potential transfer targets. Based on such information, we can determine which player is potentially fit into the squad thus devise a shortlist of targets that will be considered in the recruitment strategy of the club. During the season, we can look further into the players who are under our radar through the statistics and data analysis and reach the final decision based on such data

12. Does your club use external sources to execute the transfers?

Our club is using the player network from our own coaching team, our players, and some agents. The agents bring us a lot of information on players who can be available for transfer, but the current football environment in Vietnam still lacks professionalism and yet to follow the international regulations; therefore, it is difficult to properly utilize the agent's role

13. How does your club conduct trials to assess the abilities of players?

We conduct trials and assess the players based on what he shows in trials and his performance from previous season. Another factor to be considered is his adaptability with the club.

14. How long does your club observe a player before deciding to approach him?

Normally, we observe the players from the matches to assess them. For trialists, they have 2-3 weeks to prove his ability

PART IV: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

15. In your club, which roles participate in the decision-making process to recruit a player?

Chairman – CEO – Head Coach – Assistant coaches.

16. In your club, does the Head coach have the total control over recruitment? How is the cooperation between the members of management team towards the recruitment?

The Head coach has an important opinion in selecting the players for recruitment. The transfer targets will be discussed between the coaching and management team to reach an agreement on the player selection and cost.

PHẦN I: GIỚI THIỆU

1. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Nghiên cứu tình hình hiện tại trong quá trình chuyển nhượng cầu thủ tại VLeague và đề xuất chiến lược chuyển nhượng phù hợp với CLB
2. Tôi cam kết rằng những thông tin thu thập được trong bản câu hỏi này sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu trong phạm vi bài nghiên cứu này.
3. Vai trò và trách nhiệm của anh trong CLB là gì?
4. Anh đã làm việc trong CLB bao lâu?
5. Hãy phát biểu ngắn về mục tiêu chung của CLB về hai mặt:
Thành tích thể thao: luôn hướng đến thành tích cao nhất ở các giải đấu
Mục tiêu tài chính: Cố gắng cân bằng thu và chi
6. Chính sách chuyển nhượng của CLB anh đang làm việc chịu ảnh hưởng như thế nào?
Ảnh hưởng của thành tích thể thao?

Ảnh hưởng của tài chính?

7. Chính sách chuyển nhượng được đưa ra dựa theo tình hình thực tế hay theo một khuôn mẫu có sẵn?

Chuyển nhượng cầu thủ theo tình hình nhu cầu thực tế của vị trí cần thiết

8. CLB của anh chú trọng tuyển quân theo hướng nào?

Theo hai hướng là cầu thủ từ thị trường và sử dụng cầu thủ trẻ từ lò đào tạo của PVF

PHẦN II: QUÁ TRÌNH LÊN KẾ HOẠCH

9. Anh có thể miêu tả rõ hơn về quá trình thực hiện chuyển nhượng ở CLB?

Huấn luyện viên Trưởng đưa ra yêu cầu tăng cường cầu thủ. Tiếp đó, mục tiêu chuyển nhượng sẽ được bàn bạc kỹ lưỡng cùng với các trợ lý và ban giám đốc để tính toán về khả năng của cầu thủ cũng như yêu cầu tài chính để đưa ra quyết định cuối cùng.

10. CLB của anh hoạt động chủ yếu ở thị trường cầu thủ nào?

Hiện tại chúng tôi chủ yếu là trong quốc gia của mình. Nhưng sau này thì CLB hướng đến các cầu thủ đến từ Châu Á - Châu Âu và Châu Mỹ la tinh. Phí chuyển nhượng thị trường Châu Âu và Châu Mỹ cao nên gặp khó khăn tại V

PHẦN III: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐÁNH GIÁ CẦU THỦ

11. CLB anh sử dụng phương pháp, công cụ nào để xác định và đánh giá những mục tiêu chuyển nhượng/tân binh của CLB?

Chúng tôi đang sử dụng bộ công cụ phân tích Instat. Dữ liệu từ Instat giúp chúng tôi hiểu rõ hơn khả năng của các cầu thủ, thông qua đó chọn ra những cái tên có tiềm năng và phù hợp với CLB. Những cầu thủ này sẽ được điền tên vào danh sách rút gọn và sẽ tiếp tục theo dõi dựa trên thông số của cầu thủ này trong cả mùa giải để đưa ra quyết định cuối cùng.

12. CLB anh có sử dụng những nguồn lực bên ngoài để thực hiện chuyển nhượng không?

Hiện tại chúng tôi đang sử dụng nguồn cầu thủ từ ban huấn luyện và một vài người đại diện.

13. CLB anh tiến hành thử việc cầu thủ để đánh giá khả năng như thế nào?

Chúng tôi thử việc và đánh giá cầu thủ khả năng từ thi đấu của cầu thủ ở mùa giải trước và sự thích nghi hoà nhập lối chơi của CLB

14. CLB anh quan sát một cầu thủ trong bao lâu trước khi quyết định ký hợp đồng?

Thông thường chúng tôi xem trực tiếp cầu thủ thi đấu thực tế và tập luyện cùng đội từ 2-3 tuần

PHẦN IV: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐƯA RA QUYẾT ĐỊNH

15. Ở CLB anh, những vị trí nào góp mặt trong quá trình đưa ra quyết định ký hợp đồng với một cầu thủ?

Chủ Tịch CLB – GĐĐH - HLV Trưởng - Trợ lý (góp ý). Và người đưa ra quyết định cuối cùng là HLV Trưởng.

16. Ở CLB anh, HLV trưởng có được toàn quyền đánh giá và quyết định chiêu mộ tân binh hay không? Sự phối hợp giữa các bên là như thế nào trong quá trình chuyển nhượng?

HLV Trưởng là người có tiếng nói quan trọng trong việc lựa chọn cầu thủ để tuyển mộ. Mục tiêu chuyển nhượng sẽ được đưa ra bàn bạc giữa bộ phận chuyên môn và quản lý để thống nhất về mặt con người cũng như chi phí.

8.3 Interview with Club B (Original Vietnamese Version and related translation)

1. Purpose of the study: Study the current practices of the recruitment strategies in V.League and propose an appropriate strategy for a specific club.

2. I hereby give my commitment that the information collected through this interview will be kept as a secret and will solely serve the purpose of this study.

3. What is your role and responsibilities in the club?

I'm the Head coach

4. How long have you been working at the stated role?

This is my second season at the team but I have played here for a long time as player.

5. Please, in a brief way state the general goals and objectives of your clubs in the following categories:

We're extremely ecstatic with the championship from the last season, which has been expected for so long. However, the next season we're competing in an extra competition: AFC Champions League, therefore, the team has to be thoroughly prepared from top to bottom, especially with the recruitment. We have a strong squad this season, but there are a few positions that need to be strengthened and replaced. Winning the trophy is hard enough, but defending it is another tough challenge

6. How does the recruitment strategy of your club be influenced by the following achievements:

Title defend is not an easy job as many of the fans think. The pressure is even higher than the race to championship because you are on a different level now. However, we

may avoid the urgency of acquiring new players, so we can lower focus to only strengthening a few positions.

7. What is the pattern for your club's recruitment strategy?

Our team focus on using young players, the preference of positions depends on the requirements of the first team at a certain time.

8. What is the focus of your club's recruitment strategy?

We have the advantage in player development thanks to our academy. A wide range of youth scouting have brought us many talents from the young ages, and after years of training and commitment, the young players who possess the ability will be provided with opportunities to play for the first team or go on loan to gain experience

PART II: RECRUITMENT STRATEGU PLANNING PROCESS

9. Can you further describe your club's recruitment process?

From the military background of the club, we have a very straightforward and disciplined approach towards the recruitment. We have begun the identification and assessment process throughout the last season, and the potential transfer targets are discussed between the management board, head coach, and assistants in the coaching team. We narrowed down the best candidates, both local and foreign, to a few names which are suitable with the disciplined approach of the club and affordable in case of financial situation. Last season we already spent a considerable amount to acquire a few of the national team's players, so we have to take finance into serious consideration.

10. What is your club's specialized market? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

In the last two seasons, our club focus on the domestic market. We base on the data gather from Instat and video analysis to find foreign players in regional competitions and assess further during trials. Our market is still small and limited.

PART III: Player assessment process

11. Which methods or tools does your club implement to identify and assess the transfer targets/new players?

Looking at the scouts in Europe or Latin America, we understand their responsibilities and knowledge they can bring to our club. However, the market for local quality players

in Vietnam is not really vast; therefore, the best ones from each club are widely acknowledged among the clubs. For the foreign players, we have a good relationship with some agents who can introduce them to us. We then assess the players through a short trial and reach the final decision

In terms of technological assistance, we're using the Electronic Performance Tracking System. The EPTS has been a great help to the assessment and training process.

We apply the data analysis to assess the performance of our own players, including the first team squad and the youth squad. Our primary aim is to develop our young prospects, therefore the analysis provides a guide for us to design an appropriate training program for each player that can push him reach his full potential. The data can also determines the fitness condition which we can pay close attention to so that the injuries are minimized

The data gathered from the players in transfer market is compared to the data of the players in our squad. We look for the similarity and uniqueness in the performances of players. After the analysis, the potential transfer target is only put into the shortlist if his skill set has a certain amount of uniqueness, which in the match he can be the difference. If the situation allows, we would use a few players who each possess a part of a certain skill set and benefit the team rather than gamble on a transfer

12. Does your club use external sources to execute the transfers?

Agents and coaches' relationships.

13. How does your club conduct trials to assess the abilities of players?

Conducting trials is very important to the recruitment, especially considering the foreign players. If the players have been playing for one or a few seasons in Vietnam, it is possible for us to analyze and assess him, but if he just arrived from another continent, we have a limited amount of information on the players. However, even for those who had experience playing in V.League, trials are still required to fully evaluate the potential contributions that he can provide to the club.

PART IV: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

14. In your club, which roles participate in the decision-making process to recruit a player?

Head coach – Chairman of the club – Coaching team

15. In your club, does the Head coach have the total control over recruitment? How is the cooperation between the members of management team towards the recruitment?

The final decision is reached after discussion from every related department.

PHẦN I: GIỚI THIỆU

1. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Nghiên cứu tình hình hiện tại trong quá trình chuyển nhượng cầu thủ tại VLeague và đề xuất chiến lược chuyển nhượng phù hợp với CLB
2. Tôi cam kết rằng những thông tin thu thập được trong bản câu hỏi này sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu trong phạm vi bài nghiên cứu này.
3. Vai trò và trách nhiệm của anh trong CLB là gì?

Tôi là HLV trưởng

4. Anh đã làm việc trong CLB bao lâu?

Đây là mùa giải thứ hai của tôi tại CLB tuy nhiên trước đó tôi đã thi đấu rất lâu tại đây.

5. Hãy phát biểu ngắn về mục tiêu chung của CLB về hai mặt:

Chúng tôi rất phấn khởi với chức vô địch mà CLB đã chờ đợi từ rất lâu. Tuy nhiên mùa tới với các trận đấu tại AFC Champions League, chúng tôi cần chuẩn bị kỹ lưỡng hơn nữa, đặc biệt là đối với vấn đề chuyển nhượng. Chúng tôi đang có một đội hình mạnh, nhưng một vài vị trí vẫn cần được bổ sung. Vô địch đã khó, giữ được cúp còn khó hơn

6. Chính sách chuyển nhượng của CLB anh đang làm việc chịu ảnh hưởng như thế nào?

Bảo vệ chức vô địch không đơn giản như các CĐV vẫn nghĩ. Áp lực còn nặng nề hơn cuộc đua vô địch vì đội bóng đã vươn tới một tầm khác. Tuy nhiên, chúng tôi không bị áp lực phải mua sắm nên có thể chỉ tập trung vào một vài vị trí.

7. Chính sách chuyển nhượng được đưa ra dựa theo tình hình thực tế hay theo một khuôn mẫu có sẵn?

Chúng tôi tập trung sử dụng cầu thủ trẻ, còn vị trí tùy vào yêu cầu của CLB

8. CLB của anh chú trọng tuyển quân theo hướng nào?

Chúng tôi sở hữu lò đào tạo mạnh và liên tục được bổ sung những tài năng trẻ từ khắp nơi. Các em sẽ được trao cơ hội tập luyện và thi đấu để có thể vào đội một hoặc được đem cho mượn.

PHẦN II: QUÁ TRÌNH LÊN KẾ HOẠCH

9. Anh có thể miêu tả rõ hơn về quá trình thực hiện chuyển nhượng ở CLB?

Với truyền thống quân đội. CLB chúng tôi đưa ra chính sách một cách thẳng thắn và kỷ luật. Chúng tôi đánh giá cầu thủ thông qua một mùa giải, sau đó thu hẹp lại một

danh sách để các ban trong CLB cùng bàn bạc đánh giá để thu được bản danh sách thu gọn những cái tên phù hợp với điều kiện của CLB.

10. CLB của anh hoạt động chủ yếu ở thị trường cầu thủ nào?

Trong hai mùa giải gần nhất, chúng tôi tập trung chủ yếu vào thị trường trong nước. Đối với ngoại binh, chúng tôi dựa vào dữ liệu từ Instat và phân tích băng hình trận đấu của các ngoại binh để đánh giá và quyết định sau khi thử việc

PHẦN III: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐÁNH GIÁ CẦU THỦ

11. CLB anh sử dụng phương pháp, công cụ nào để xác định và đánh giá những mục tiêu chuyển nhượng/tân binh của CLB?

Chúng tôi hiểu tầm quan trọng của tuyển trạch viên sau khi nhìn vào các ví dụ từ châu Âu hay Mỹ Latinh. Tuy nhiên thị trường cầu thủ nội vẫn chưa thực sự rộng và đa dạng, vì vậy các CLB đều biết rõ các tài năng nổi bật trong nước. Đối với ngoại binh, chúng tôi thu thập thêm thông tin từ những người đại diện.

Về mặt công nghệ, chúng tôi đang sử dụng hệ thống theo dõi điện tử EPTS. Những dữ liệu thu thập được giúp chúng tôi đánh giá khả năng của các cầu thủ trong đội để phục vụ mục tiêu chủ đạo đó là đào tạo trẻ. Phân tích dữ liệu hỗ trợ CLB thiết kế chương trình tập luyện hợp lý để giúp từng cầu thủ phát triển. Chúng tôi cũng có thể theo dõi kỹ tình trạng thể lực của họ.

Dữ liệu thu thập được về các mục tiêu chuyển nhượng cũng được so sánh với các cầu thủ trong CLB. Sau phân tích, mục tiêu sẽ được đưa vào danh sách nếu như đáp ứng được yêu cầu.

12. CLB anh tiến hành thử việc cầu thủ để đánh giá khả năng như thế nào?

Thử việc là quá trình rất quan trọng đối với chuyển nhượng đặc biệt là các ngoại binh. Họ sẽ thích nghi dễ hơn nếu đã từng thi đấu ở V.League. Đối với những ngoại binh đã quen với bóng đá Việt Nam, thử việc vẫn rất cần thiết để có thể đánh giá kỹ lưỡng hơn khả năng của họ.

13. CLB anh quan sát một cầu thủ trong bao lâu trước khi quyết định ký hợp đồng?

1-2 mùa giải.

PHẦN IV: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐƯA RA QUYẾT ĐỊNH

14. Ở CLB anh, những vị trí nào góp mặt trong quá trình đưa ra quyết định ký hợp đồng với một cầu thủ?

15. Ở CLB anh, HLV trưởng có được toàn quyền đánh giá và quyết định chiêu mộ tân binh hay không? Sự phối hợp giữa các bên là như thế nào trong quá trình chuyển nhượng?

8.4 Interview with Club C (Original Vietnamese Version and related translation)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the study: Study the current practices of the recruitment strategies in V.League and propose an appropriate strategy for a specific club.
2. I hereby give my commitment that the information collected through this interview will be kept as a secret and will solely serve the purpose of this study.
3. What is your role and responsibilities in the club?

Head coach

4. How long have you been working at the stated role?

Four seasons

5. Please, in a brief way state the general goals and objectives of your clubs in the following categories:

We're highly motivated in the new season of 2021 because we have not been able to defend the title last season. We're aiming for an improved and more successful season, and I'm thrilled that the club is willing to invest into the squad to acquire the best players further. Aside from the national competitions, the club is also competing in AFC Cup; therefore, we have to make sure that the squad is strong and deep enough to perform at a certain level across every competition.

6. How does the recruitment strategy of your club be influenced by the following achievements:

Being unable to defend the title is unacceptable for the Chairman's objectives. We have to make sure to regain the championship next season by building a stronger squad.

7. What is the pattern for your club's recruitment strategy?

The pattern has to depend on the result of the season which has ended.

8. What is the focus of your club's recruitment strategy?

From external market, we focus on looking for foreign players to fill in 3 allowed spots of foreigners. For domestic players, we're looking to develop our own players and hand them opportunities to play for the first team.

PART II: RECRUITMENT STRATEGU PLANNING PROCESS

9. Can you further describe your club's recruitment process?

The coaching team discuss throughtout the season to identify the strengths and weaknesses, and the dicision will be reached after the discussion with Chairman and managing board.

10. What is your club's specialized market? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

We focus on the foreign market to identify and recruit the three palyers for the allowed spots in the squad. The limitation for foreign players in V.League 1 is only 3 per season, so our club has to determine the specific market to identify the ones that can bring real value to the team. Each season, we get many foreign footballers on trials with the club, yet not every player can adapt to the playing style of Vietnam football, or in a broader sense the Southeast Asian football. Therefore, in the past few seasons, we redirected our radar towards the players that excel in the national tournaments within the region. Those players will adapt faster to Vietnam football and the life in the country thanks to the experiance they acquired from similar countries in the region

PART III: Player assessment process

11. Which methods or tools does your club implement to identify and assess the transfer targets/new players?

Currently, we do not have an appointed scout position. The player scouting network is built from the knowledge of our coaching staff, which are assigned to watch a certain number of matches to identify the talented players. The Vietnamese pool of players is quite small; therefore, we don't have to appoint specific scout personnel only to find the local players, except when it comes to recruiting young players

Our club uses this EPTS in training and matches to keep track of the player's total distance covered, velocity, and the average position during the match. From the results, we can better understand the fitness condition of the player, especially for those who just returned to training after injuries. Furthermore, the system, in combination with another analysis system, can provide the coaching team with a detailed examination of their current tactics, which can assist in improving the performance of the team in total
The data provided by the scouting platforms such as Instat have allow us to have first hand knowledge of the players, so the coaches can visualize how to make the best out of the players' skill set, which position and role he can take up in the squad and if his

skill set befit the team's current tactic or not. We can further assess the situation by finding and comparing the players who share the same set of skills to determine the best one to bring to the squad

12. Does your club use external sources to execute the transfers?

13. *We have the network built from our coaching team and some long-term relationships with many agents.*

14. How does your club conduct trials to assess the abilities of players?

The players have 4-week trial with training and playing in friendly match with the first team. We then assess the personality and sporting abilities to decide to sign the contract.

15. How long does your club observe a player before deciding to approach him?

At least 2 seasons for domestic players. For the foreign ones, we have to rely on different level of data we can access. We keep track of potential players for at least 1 season.

PART IV: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

16. In your club, which roles participate in the decision-making process to recruit a player?

Chairman – Head Coach – Coaching Team

a. PHẦN I: GIỚI THIỆU

2. Mục đích nghiên cứu: Nghiên cứu tình hình hiện tại trong quá trình chuyển nhượng cầu thủ tại VLeague và đề xuất chiến lược chuyển nhượng phù hợp với CLB

3. Tôi cam kết rằng những thông tin thu thập được trong bản câu hỏi này sẽ được giữ bí mật và chỉ phục vụ mục đích nghiên cứu trong phạm vi bài nghiên cứu này.

4. Vai trò và trách nhiệm của anh trong CLB là gì?

Tôi là HLV trưởng

5. Anh đã làm việc trong CLB bao lâu?

Tôi nay đã được 4 mùa giải

6. Hãy phát biểu ngắn về mục tiêu chung của CLB về hai mặt:

Chúng tôi đang hướng đến việc giành lại ngôi vô địch ở mùa 2021 vì đã không thể bảo vệ thành công chức vô địch ở mùa giải trước. Chúng tôi sẽ nỗ lực để giành lại thành tích với sự đầu tư mạnh mẽ từ lãnh đạo. Mùa giải này CLB còn phải thi đấu tại AFC Cup vì vậy chúng tôi cần đảm bảo đội hình mạnh và đủ chiều sâu.

7. Chính sách chuyển nhượng của CLB anh đang làm việc chịu ảnh hưởng như thế nào?
CLB đã không thể hoàn thành mục tiêu mà Ban lãnh đạo đề ra, vì thế tôi phải đảm bảo một đội bóng mạnh hơn để giành lại chức vô địch mùa tới.
8. Chính sách chuyển nhượng được đưa ra dựa theo tình hình thực tế hay theo một khuôn mẫu có sẵn?
Dựa theo tình hình thực tế.
9. CLB của anh chú trọng tuyển quân theo hướng nào?
Đối với thị trường chuyển nhượng: chúng tôi tập trung chiêu mộ ngoại binh chất lượng cho đủ 3 suất theo quy định
Đối với cầu thủ nội: Chúng tôi ưu tiên các cầu thủ trưởng thành từ lò đào tạo của CLB.

PHẦN II: QUÁ TRÌNH LÊN KẾ HOẠCH

10. Anh có thể miêu tả rõ hơn về quá trình thực hiện chuyển nhượng ở CLB?
Ban huấn luyện sẽ quan sát điểm mạnh, điểm yếu của CLB xuyên suốt mùa giải và sẽ đưa ra quyết định cuối cùng sau khi có sự đồng ý của Chủ tịch và ban lãnh đạo.
11. CLB của anh hoạt động chủ yếu ở thị trường cầu thủ nào?
Chúng tôi chú trọng thị trường ngoại binh để mang về đủ 3 cái tên cho V.League 1. Mỗi mùa giải có rất nhiều cầu thủ thử việc nhưng không phải ai cũng hợp với bóng đá Việt Nam và Đông Nam Á. Vì thế chúng tôi chú trọng vào các cầu thủ giỏi ở các giải VĐQG lân cận vì họ đã làm quen với môi trường khu vực và dễ hòa nhập hơn.

PHẦN III: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐÁNH GIÁ CẦU THỦ

12. CLB anh sử dụng phương pháp, công cụ nào để xác định và đánh giá những mục tiêu chuyển nhượng/tân binh của CLB?
Hiện tại chúng tôi không có tuyển trạch viên chuyên nghiệp vì chúng tôi đã có mạng lưới cầu thủ thông qua ban huấn luyện thông qua việc quan sát họ ở các trận đấu. Thị trường cầu thủ Việt Nam khá nhỏ, vì thế chúng tôi chưa cần TTV chuyên nghiệp.
CLB chúng tôi đang sử dụng EPTS trong tập luyện và thi đấu để nắm rõ các chỉ số thi đấu của cầu thủ, qua đó hiểu rõ hơn về tình trạng thể lực của họ, đặc biệt là những người mới bình phục chấn thương. Thông qua hệ thống này, chúng tôi cũng có thể đánh giá sự hiệu quả của chiến thuật.

Dữ liệu thu thập được từ các công nghệ tuyển trạch như Instat cũng mang lại nhiều thông tin để các CLB có thể đánh giá khả năng và tìm ra vị trí phù hợp. Chúng tôi cũng có thể xác định và đánh giá những cầu thủ có cùng bộ kỹ năng để chiêu mộ.

13. CLB anh có sử dụng những nguồn lực bên ngoài để thực hiện chuyển nhượng không?
Chúng tôi sử dụng mạng lưới từ ban huấn luyện cũng như một vài ngwoif đại diện đã cộng tác lâu năm.
14. CLB anh tiến hành thử việc cầu thủ để đánh giá khả năng như thế nào?
15. *Các CLB có 4 tuần thử việc, họ sẽ tập luyện và thi đấu giao hữu cùng đội một. Chúng tôi sẽ đánh giá tình cách cũng như khả năng của họ rồi đưa ra quyết định.*
16. CLB anh quan sát một cầu thủ trong bao lâu trước khi quyết định ký hợp đồng?
Chúng tôi đặt ra 2 tuần cho cầu thủ nội
Đối với cầu thủ ngoại, chúng tôi sẽ dựa vào lượng dữ liệu mình có thể thu thập được.
Đội sẽ bỏ ra khoảng 1 mùa để theo dõi họ.

PHẦN IV: QUÁ TRÌNH ĐƯA RA QUYẾT ĐỊNH

17. Ở CLB anh, những vị trí nào góp mặt trong quá trình đưa ra quyết định ký hợp đồng với một cầu thủ?
18. *Chủ tịch – HLV Trưởng – Ban Huấn luyện*