**Applying Advanced Marketing Methods such as Psychographic Segmentation and Brand Management to Attract Talent**

**Summary**

*Companies are experiencing talent shortages of executives and leaders. The way to diminish the impact talent shortage has on companies is through implementing effective attraction processes, mainly creating a strong employer brand. By applying evidence-based decision making methods such as segmentation; these attraction processes will be more effective. This study will use segmentation by Arellano´s ESTAR Lifestyles, specifically developed for emerging markets, and employer brand to propose elements for effective talent attraction by developing a segmented, attractive and strong employer brand. The design of this study is qualitative and it will be developed to identify, (a) the characteristics companies look for in talent; (b) the elements each ESTAR Lifestyle identifies as attractive in a company; and, (c) the components of a segmented, attractive employer brand, for each ESTAR Lifestyle.*

**Introduction**

Companies throughout the world encounter major complications with the lack of talent*[[1]](#footnote-1)*. This is critical because, (a) in order to build their competitive advantages, companies need to manage their resources, especially people (Franca & Pahor, 2012; Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Lawler, 2008; Barney & Clark, 2007); and, (b) managing talent is proven to positively impact financial results and stakeholder value (Collings, 2014; Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler & Staffelbach, 2011). According to the Boston Consulting Group (BCG, 2015)[[2]](#footnote-2) this shortage of talent “in Europe and North America… is largely a quantitative problem, while Latin American companies also confront a qualitative problem” (p. 31)[[3]](#footnote-3). Furthermore, this situation gets more critical for Peru, Manpower´s 2015[[4]](#footnote-4) talent shortage survey[[5]](#footnote-5) found this is the second country, behind Japan, to report difficulty in filling jobs; 68% of the companies surveyed in Peru cannot find the talent they need (Manpower, 2015).

The most effective way of attracting talent is by “relying more on evidence—rather than gut instinct—to help them [companies] make tough decisions about their talent investments” (Jesuthasan & Sherwood, 2011, p. 30). As Boudreau and Ramstad (2006) compared “today´s HR is on the cusp of a fundamental paradigm shift. It is the same paradigm shift that saw the evolution of the … Marketing decision science from the professional practice of sales” (p. 26); developing evidence-based decisions in talent management will make this paradigm shift possible (Wallace, Lings, Cameron & Sheldon, 2014; Vaiman et al., 2012; Jesuthasan & Sherwood, 2011; Rousseau & Barends, 2011; Lawler, 2008; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2006; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005a).

Companies already know how to make decisions based on evidence and can capitalize on this knowledge; marketing has been using principles and methods to make evidence-based decisions for more than 45 years with positive results (Kotler, 2000). One of the most effective methods of doing so, is psychographic[[6]](#footnote-6) segmentation (Miguéis et al., 2012; Jansen, 2011; Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Füller & Matzler, 2008; Arellano, 2005b; Kasnauskienė & Urbonavičius, 2005; Gonzalez & Bello, 2002; Kotler, 2000; Wedel & Kamakura, 2000) which is used to complement demographic data. Psychographic typologies give more relevant information because they measure elements like activities, interests, attitudes, opinions, needs, values, beliefs, affections, behaviours and personality traits (Weinstein, 2013; Füller & Matzler, 2008; Arellano, 2005b; Gonzalez & Bello, 2002; Kotler, 2000; Mitchell, 1994).

A method of psychographic segmentation that measures valid variables specifically developed for emerging markets is Arellano’s Estilos de Vida® – ESTAR[[7]](#footnote-7) Lifestyles - (Vigil, Arellano & Arellano B., 2013; Arellano, 2012; Arellano, 2005a; Arellano, 2005b; Marinov, 2005; Valette-Florence, 1994). ESTAR Lifestyles are used since 1996 by many companies in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico, among other Latin American countries. Companies use it as the marketing segmentation approach to expand, create and exploit new market opportunities (Arellano Marketing, 2015; Vigil et al., 2013; Arellano, 2005b; Editorial, 2004). Arellano´s ESTAR Lifestyles as a segmentation methodology has earned the ANDA (Association of National Advertisers) Award for Excellence in Market Innovation in 2004. In 2013, the European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR) recognized the MegaPlaza case study[[8]](#footnote-8) (Editorial, 2004)- based on Arellano´s ESTAR Lifestyles - as one of most important examples worldwide on market innovation (Vigil et al., 2013).

**Literature** **Review**

For the resource-based view theory[[9]](#footnote-9) of the firm, talent is one of the sources of sustainable competitive advantage because it brings value to the company by enabling it to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. According to Barney and Clark (2007)

Not all firm resources hold the potential of sustained competitive advantages. To have this potential, a firm resource must have four attributes: (a) it must be valuable, in the sense that it exploits opportunities and/or neutralizes threats in a firm’s environment, (b) it must be rare among a firm’s current and potential competition, (c) it must be imperfectly imitable, and (d) it must be able to be exploited by a firm’s organizational processes (p. 57).

These four characteristics can be found in talent (Kucherov &Zavyalova, 2012; Areiqat et al., 2010; Barney and Clark, 2007) and for Barney and Clark (2007) “the HR function, through either directly controlling or strongly influencing the characteristics of human resources in organizations, plays an important role in developing and maintaining a firm’s competitive advantage” (p. 129-130). Therefore, a segmented attraction process will make it more effective and could impact directly on the company´s sustainable competitive advantage (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012).

As marketing gains insight on consumers to better attend their needs, and positions brands for different groups of consumers; talent management can also use these insights and brand management to better attract segments of individuals, and make fit with the organizational culture and the job position, in the long and short term (Wallace et al., 2014; Franca & Pahor, 2012; Barrow & Mosley, 2011; Tansley et al., 2006).

Segmentation’s[[10]](#footnote-10) most important objective is to allow a better use of the company’s resources (Arellano, 2010b); for Gonzalez and Bello (2002) “the first reason is that beliefs, opinions and preferences, being highly specific, allow forecasts of behaviour to the extent that they reveal predispositions” (p. 56). Weinstein (2013) presented demographic segmentation as the most widely used method, this can be done by age, gender or economic income. Nevertheless, this approach is very narrow in its view of a unique, emerging market composed by people with different characteristics (Miguéis et al., 2012; Jansen, 2011; Sheth, 2011; Füller & Matzler, 2008; Gonzalez & Bello, 2002). As Jansen (2011) explained “lifestyle is added to the traditional characteristics in the hope that it leads to more accurate explanations and predictions of consumers’ preferences and choices” (p. 178). Ma (2004) stated “psychographic segmentation, which is also called lifestyle segmentation, divides the total population into groups based on the consumer's motivation, attitudes, preference and values” (p. 1). This research will analyse psychographic segmentation because interests, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours reveal predispositions and allow us to predict, whether a professional recognized as talent would be attracted to a certain company based on elements it should develop.

Kotler (2000) acknowledged, “lifestyle segmentation schemes vary by culture” (p. 93). Even more, Sheth (2011) presented “many beliefs that are fundamental to marketing, such as market segmentation, market orientation, and brand equity, are at odds with the realities of emerging markets” (p. 166). In both talent management and marketing, the specific and unique characteristics of emerging markets are in need of contextualized research aligned to these elements (Wallace et al., 2014). This is why, this research will use Arellano’s ESTAR model to contextualize talent management research for Latin America (Arellano, 2005b). ESTAR Lifestyles is a psychographic segmentation which categorizes urban population, older than 16 into six groups of segments that share psychological and behavioural elements, as well as values, beliefs, motivation, attitudes, preferences or interests focused on what people want to be or do, not just on what people are – gender, race (Jansen, 2011; Arellano, 2005a; Ma, 2004). Arellano (2010a) stated some guidelines to understand these ESTAR Lifestyles: (a) it is a classification for the individual; (b) the characteristics mentioned for each ESTAR Lifestyle describe them in general, it does not mean each person holds every characteristic; (c) a ESTAR Lifestyle involves a similarity with other individuals and an option to want to act in a certain way; and, (d) the members of a specific ESTAR Lifestyle share some socio-demographic aspects such as age, sex, social and economic class (Arellano, 2005a). Arellano (2010a) proposed the existence of six ESTAR Lifestyles denominated sophisticated men and women, progressive men, modern women, adapted/formal men, conservative women and resigned men and women. The 6 ESTAR lifestyles already give information about consumption; my objective is to use this classification to group people and create information about attraction.

Attraction is one of the core functions for high impact talent management (Bersin et al., as cited by Ford, Harding & Stoyanova, 2010); it consists of sourcing, recruitment, selection and developing an employer brand (Armstrong, 2000). The best way to attract talent is developing a strong employer brand, that will show attractive characteristics of the company to potential recruits (Alnıaçık, E., Alnıaçık et al., 2014; Chandra & Zillany, 2014; Wallace et al., 2014; Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Lawler, 2008; Knox & Freeman, 2006; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Armstrong, 2000; Ambler & Barrow, 1996); this study will focus on this attraction element. The first mention of the concept employer brand was by Ambler and Barrow (1996), they defined it as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (p. 192); and recognized its benefits as “(1) developmental and/or useful activities (functional); (2) material or monetary rewards (economic); and (3) feelings such as belongings, direction and purpose (psychological)” (p. 192-193). Wallace et al. (2014) summarized “employer branding is a synthesis of marketing principles and recruitment practices and is based on the concept that, just as customers have perceptions of an organisation’s brand, so do other stakeholders including employees” (p. 20). Likewise, for Lawler (2008) “an employer brand needs to speak to what individuals can expect when they join an organization and it needs to help individuals determine whether they are a good fit for the organization” (p. 68). M'zungu, Merrilees and Miller (2010) suggested, “strategic brand management rests on having a brand orientation mindset and possessing internal branding and brand delivery capabilities” (p. 608). The internal branding or employer brand needs to be embedded as “‘brand spirit’ throughout the organization” (M'zungu et al., 2010, p. 609). Some other authors recognized employer brand is an important part of the brand strategy, since actual and future employees are important stakeholders of the company; so, the brand strategy needs to align corporate and employer brand (Wallace et al., 2014; Franca & Pahor, 2012; Berthon et al., 2005). What´s more, M'zungu et al. (2010) concluded, “internal branding necessitates recruiting and hiring the right management team and employees, and ensuring that management team members have the leadership qualities to build a leadership brand” (p. 609). Finally, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Wallace et al. (2014) recognized employer branding could also have a theoretical foundation in Barney and Clark´s (2007) resource-based theory of the firm, since “the practice of employer branding is predicated on the assumption that human capital brings value to the firm” (p. 503).

**Proposal**

The importance of this research lies in the proposition that segmentation by ESTAR Lifestyles, when applied to talent attraction processes can make them more effective and accurate (Wallace et al., 2014; Koster, 2013; Ruse & Jansen, 2008) due to the possibility of prediction and forecast. As Boudreau and Ramstad (2005b) stated “just as marketing systematically segments customers to target investments strategically, HR [human resources] needs to segment talent” (p. 24).

The purpose of this study is to propose how to capitalize on advanced marketing methods such as psychographic segmentation and brand management to manage talent attraction effectively by developing a segmented, attractive and strong employer brand for medium and big[[11]](#footnote-11) management consulting companies[[12]](#footnote-12) in Lima, Peru.

The general question guiding this research is:

RQ1: How can advanced marketing methods of segmentation and brand management contribute to effectively attract talent in management consulting companies in Peru?

This research is oriented to attraction because it is an internal and external process, and although retention is critical, high turnover rates impact directly on more attraction processes. Segmentation is chosen due to (a) its wide spread use, (b) the results it already demonstrated regarding products and services, and (c) the information it can provide for talent management. Even more, ESTAR Lifestyles are being used as a psychographic type of segmentation because it is contextualised to Latin American culture and due to its widespread use in different Latin American realities.

The literature is clear in asserting the most effective attraction process relies on a strong employer brand that will allow the company to have recruits with the talent characteristics they need. These talent characteristics are varied, so this study will try to identify in a group of management consulting companies in Peru; the elements that compose the talent profiles they look for when searching for talent. Consequently, the question is:

RQ 2: What talent profiles do management consulting companies in Peru look for in the attraction processes based on elements measured by the ESTAR Lifestyles?

This question will look for elements such as values, beliefs, interests, motivation, needs, attitudes, behaviours and preferences. Once the elements of these talent profiles are clear, the next step is to study the employees’ point of view, the question will be:

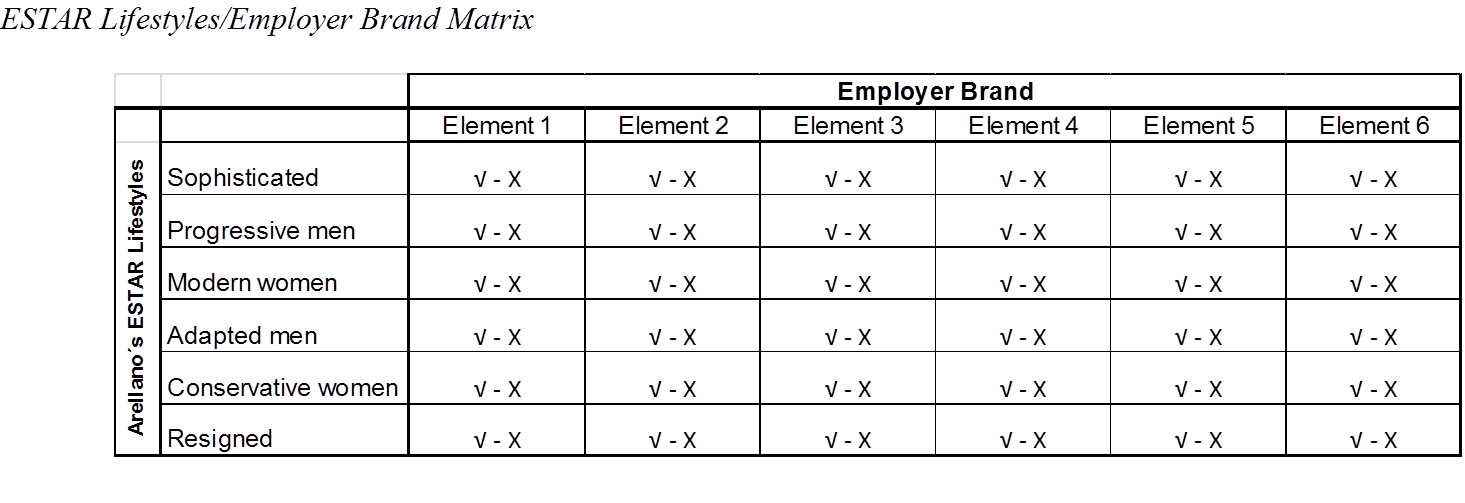
RQ 3: What elements attract each ESTAR Lifestyle and can help develop a stronger employer brand?

The purpose of this question is to find professionals recognized as talent in the consulting companies they work[[13]](#footnote-13), from every ESTAR Lifestyle and identify the elements that attract them to a company.

With these two questions the study has identified the puzzle pieces, the information of what companies look for as talent and the information of what talent wants to find in companies, both elements based upon ESTAR Lifestyles to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The next step is to fit both puzzle pieces. According to the literature this has to be studied from the element that makes the process more effective, this is the employer brand, so the question is:

RQ 4: What elements does an employer brand need to develop to effectively attract each ESTAR Lifestyle?

This question will propose the elements the company needs to develop to have an attractive employer brand aligned to the different ESTAR Lifestyles. The result of this question is a proposal of an ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix that will allow consulting companies to determine their employer brand propositions in accordance to the ESTAR Lifestyle they wish to attract; making the process more effective, faster, cheaper and more accurate.



*Figure* 1. ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix

This study is of importance because (a) the results will be contextualized to a Latin American reality and include the employees’ viewpoint both mainly inexistent in talent management research (Alnıaçık et al., 2014; Wallace et al., 2014; Vaiman et al., 2012; Sheth, 2011; Yu, 2011; Boxall, Purcell & Wright, 2007; Budhwar & Debrah, 2004; CIPD, 2010); and, (b) the research will explore lifestyle characteristics for attraction as a way to anticipate and focus results on the actual needs and values of people, a new use for this kind of segmentation (Durham &, 2012; Jesuthasan & Sherwood, 2011; Uren, 2011; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005c; Miguéis et al., Charman, 2012; Jansen, 2011; Füller & Matzler, 2008; Gonzalez & Bello, 2002).

**Methodology**

The design of this study is qualitative. It will be developed to identify, (a) the characteristics management consulting companies look for in talented professionals such as behavioural aspects or competencies (Tansley, 2011); (b) the elements each ESTAR Lifestyle identifies as attractive in a company based on values, beliefs, interests, motivation, needs, attitudes, behaviours and preferences; and, (c) the components of a segmented, attractive employer brand, companies need to develop to attract each ESTAR Lifestyle. The result of this study is a proposed matrix of ESTAR Lifestyles and the elements identified by each ESTAR Lifestyle as attractive in an employer brand denominated the ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix.

This study seeks to deepen knowledge regarding the elements that attract each ESTAR Lifestyle, this is why it will be qualitative. Strauss and Corbin (1998) claimed qualitative research is appropriate when the study needs to understand what people are thinking and feeling. On the other hand, the intention of this study is to ask professionals from the same ESTAR Lifestyle to share and socially construct the elements that attract them to a company, this is why social constructionism is the philosophical perspective for this research; recognized as part of the interpretive paradigm, which intends to understand the world as it is and believes in its subjectivity (Easterby-Smith, Lowe & Thorpe, 2002).

This study has three distinct steps. The first step will try to find, through 15 semi-structured interviews with talent managers of management consulting companies[[14]](#footnote-14), the elements they evaluate or look for in a talented individual, their talent profiles. This information will be used to select the participants for the focus groups in the next step. The second step consists on focus groups with each ESTAR Lifestyle so the group will share and socially construct their own view of the elements that attract them and that can compose an employer brand. There will be two for each of the six ESTAR Lifestyles, each focus group will have ten participants; this means 120 participants[[15]](#footnote-15). The final step consists of 10 semi-structured interviews to talent management and marketing experts[[16]](#footnote-16) regarding the elements that will construed the employer brand axis of the proposed ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix.

The method for this study will be based upon Eisenhardt’s (1989) proposal for building theories from case studies due to the fact it is exploring new constructs such as talent segmentation and the use of ESTAR Lifestyles for talent management. Eisenhardt’s (1989) first step is defining the research question, already done for this study and the next step consists on selecting through theoretical sampling the cases for study[[17]](#footnote-17) also presented before. Hereafter, the third step is the design of instruments for data collection; this study will design the semi-structured interviews and the focus group guides. After this step, Eisenhardt (1989) indicated the need to enter the field, in this method based on grounded theory and case studies this step overlaps with the data analysis step, and is focused on compilation and examination of enormous amounts of data following an iterative manner in order to look for saturation of categories. Eisenhardt (1989) said “tentative themes, concepts, and possible even relationships between variables begin to emerge” (p. 541), in this next step the themes, concepts and relations between ESTAR Lifestyles and the employer brand will emerge and become the base to propose the ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix. Finally, the last two steps proposed by Eisenhardt (1989) will not be applied, since the purpose of this study is not the creation of a theory but the proposal of the matrix.

**Conclusions**

Attracting the right talent for the company has become exceptionally complex, challenging and more urgent than ever before (Collings, 2014; Lawler, 2008) specifically in emerging markets such as Peru; due to the population´s particular characteristics. The best way to attract talent is by making evidence-based decisions just as marketing does.

This research proposes the study of psychographic segmentation of talent as a way to forecast and predict the behavior, activities, interests, attitudes, opinions, needs, values, beliefs, affections and personality traits; and with this information build a strong, segmented employer brand that will attract them to the company. To contextualize this attraction process, this study proposes the use of a psychographic segmentation especially designed and used in emerging markets such as Latin America, these are ESTAR Lifestyles.

The participants of this study are professionals recognized as talent. In order to identify them, the first step of this study is to define a talent profile with elements management consulting companies recognize as talent. So, the first product of this research will be a talent profile of big and medium management consulting companies regarding the elements they look for when searching for talent.

With the talent profile defined, the next step is to sort professionals with this profile by ESTAR Lifestyle and in focus groups, ask them to socially construct the elements of companies that attract them. At the end of this second step, this research will have differentiated elements that attract each ESTAR Lifestyle group. With these findings, the first version of the ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix will be developed. This matrix consists of two axes, in the Y-axis one of the six ESTAR Lifestyles and in the X-axis the eight to 10 most important employer brands elements mentioned in the focus groups. The third step will ask marketing and talent management experts through interviews to review and validate the first version of the ESTAR Lifestyles/Employer Brand Matrix. Future research could turn this matrix into a survey in order to validate its elements (Berthon et al., 2005) and generalize the findings.

The originality of this research is the proposal of a synergy between talent management and marketing to develop contextualized knowledge for Latin American realities by applying ESTAR Lifestyles with the objective of sustainability, growth and profitability for companies through effective talent attraction.

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1. The concept of talent this research will use is presented by Ulrich (2007) as the sum of the competence, commitment and contribution of an individual. This definition includes most elements found in different authors. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Web survey conducted in 83 countries with more than 4700 responses from executives (BCG, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The World Bank (2011) recognized in Peru “there is widespread consensus that a serious improvement of the human capital base of the economy is quintessential” (p. 15); according to this report on Peru “the supply of skills –generic (cognitive, socio-emotional), technical, professional— does not match the skills the market [employers] demand” (World Bank, 2011, p. 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The use of information from practitioner reports will be used as Collings (2014) stated “while clearly such practitioner reports should be viewed with a degree of caution owing to a lack of peer review of underlying methodologies and findings, I use it here to point to the perceived focus and value [of a topic]” (p. 306). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “ManpowerGroup surveyed more than 41,700 hiring managers in 42 countries” (Manpower, 2015, p.3). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Anderson and Golden (1984) argued “the terms psychographics and lifestyle remain largely undefined and indistinguishable in the marketing literature” (p. 207). This research will use the term psychographic when referred to the type of segmentation and lifestyle when referring to Arellano´s ESTAR Lifestyles. . [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This segmentation model of lifestyles was named ESTAR because of its Spanish acronym ´Estilos de Vida por Recursos y Actitudes de Arellano Marketing´. R.J. Arellano B. (personal communication, February 9, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “MEGA PLAZA looks pretty much like any shopping mall … What makes these duelling malls unusual is where they are: on a congested and dusty stretch of the Panamerican Highway, in what were once shantytowns and today form part of Lima's northern suburbs. When it opened two years ago, Mega Plaza defied the notion that Lima's sprawling, largely self-built suburbs are uniformly poor. Between them, the two malls clocked up sales of $130m last year” (Editorial, 2004, par.1-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The resource-based view has already developed into a theory, recognized as fundamental for talent management and marketing (Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. According to Wedel & Kamakura (2000) Smith was the first to define market segmentation in 1956, his definition recognized “that segments are directly derived from the heterogeneity of customer wants…arise from managers’ conceptualization of a structured and partitioned market” (p. 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For the Peruvian Labour Ministry, a medium company holds between 50 and 199 employees, and a big company has more than 200 employees (Mintra, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “Firms where the majority or even the whole of the workforce consists of knowledge workers… tend to be service-based organizations often competing their respective sector based on their ability to solve complex problems and provide solutions for clients. Law firms, accountancy practices, management consultancies” (Newell et al., 2002, p. 24) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Professionals who meet some general elements found in the second question. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The management consulting companies should be: (a) medium and big; (b) national and transnational companies; (c) according to Romeo’s (2012) categories these should work fields such as marketing, human resources, general management, finance and logistics. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. These participants should follow a criteria: (a) ESTAR Lifestyles recognized through the questionnaire; (b) professional men and women, meaning they should have some kind of university or technical studies, finished or unfinished; (c) they have to be employed at medium or big consulting companies; and, (d) they need to be recognized as talent by the companies they work for. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The criteria they should meet are: (a) recognition by positions or awards, (b) professors at the graduate level, (c) hold a master’s or doctorate degree; and, (d) consulting positions. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Regarding sampling, Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) indicated the social constructionist philosophical sampling requires “small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons” (p. 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)