**Employee Experience in the Finnish Charter Coach industry
– A Case Study**

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Abstract

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The worldwide transport industry is currently facing a driver shortage. In Europe the situation is equally bad. Driver shortage has increased. There is no previous research regarding Employee Experience (EX) in the Charter Coach industry. The aim of this study was to produce new knowledge on how EX could be improved in the Finnish Charter Coach industry. The purpose of the study was to respond to the underlying issues in the coach industry, using Employee experience as a method to solve the staff shortage in the industry. The research questions were:
1. What are the main EX-factors, and how do they manifest in the Finnish Charter Coach industry, according to the drivers? 2. What EX factors should be focused on to improve the EX in Finnish Charter Coach companies, based on the drivers' experiences? 3. How could driver shortage be addressed according to the driver in Charter Coach Companies? and 4. How could EX be implemented in Finnish Charter Coach companies?

This is a collective case study. The study subjects were chosen through purposeful sampling via invitations to the study through an industry association. Study subjects (n=6) were chosen based on the order of response. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews during 9/2022. Data was analysed through deductive content analysis, guided by the theoretical framework of EX and driver shortage.

The study found that components regarding EX and driver shortage could be found in all study-related categories: strategy and culture, community, physical spaces and environment, technology and tools, activities, driver shortage. The result showed that the Charter Coach industry has a strong EX in the community category. The study further concluded that in all other categories there were room for improvements. The study has produced recommendations for the industry.

Key words
Employee Experience, Charter Coach, Bus Driver, Driver Shortage

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1   Introduction

The global transport industry is currently facing a driver shortage. International Road Transport Workers Union (IRU) estimated in 2022, that over 14 % of all driver job listings for heavy road transport in Europe were not filled. The worldwide passenger road transport driver shortage has equally, increased since (IRU 2022) The worldwide covid-19 pandemic hit especially hard the tourism and charter coach industries throughout all of Europe. IRU further states that 7 % of European Bus and Coach driver listings were unfilled, when in 2022 the corresponding amount was 8 %.

In a newsletter from 2022, Finnish Transport Workers Union (AKT) states that the Finnish bus and coach driver shortage is further induced by long working hours (up to 14 hours in long-distance transport). This has a negative effect on the drivers' social life and family relations, which also might scare away new employees from the industry. According to AKT Chairperson, Ismo Kokko (2022), the only solution to mitigate driver shortage is to make permanent and concrete changes in driver working conditions. (AKT 2022)

Just as the worldwide industry was affected by Covid-19, the Finnish industry suffered huge losses in active drivers. Many drivers were left unemployed and left for other work opportunities in other industries, which further deepened the issue on driver shortage. The coach industry, linked to the Finnish tourism industry, was hit harder than its state supported or local traffic counterpart (LAL 2022b). This left many entrepreneurs, who did not participate in route or express traffic in a dire situation; many companies had to lay off staff and write coaches off from traffic. In a membership survey from 2022 Finnish Bus and Coach Association (2022b) states that resulting uncertainty in energy prices, because of the war in Ukraine 2022, further has raised fuel prices. This has increased the need for cost efficiency in many companies, which might further might have impacted the current, employed drivers.

As a former representative of the Charter Coach Industry, both as a driver, and as a former employer representative, I have seen the driver shortage first handed. I have experienced the upscale of operations in the industry during the years 2015-2019, and the problems which driver shortage caused in service production. The industry landscape has traditionally been saturated with small to medium sized companies but have been reducing in the latest years (Liikennefakta 2022), which might indicate that companies are merging or closing. The Employee Experience (EX) varies throughout the industry when discussing to drivers, there seems to be companies who are successful in this, and companies who do worse. This is also the reason why it would be important to review what factors of EX are present in Finnish Charter Coach companies. Hence, this thesis strives to address this difference of EX in the industry as a means of reducing the impacts of driver shortage.

1.1 Aim and purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to produce new knowledge on how EX could be improved in the Finnish Charter Coach industry. The gathered information is then used to produce suggestions for how the EX could be implemented in Finnish Charter Coach companies as a way of mitigating the impacts of driver shortage and make employers more attractive to drivers.

The purpose of the study is to respond to the underlying issues in the coach industry, using Employee experience as a method to solve the staff shortage in the industry. The research questions are:

1. What are the main EX-factors, and how do they manifest in the Finnish Charter Coach industry, according to the drivers?
2. What EX factors should be focused on to improve the EX in Finnish Charter Coach companies, based on the drivers' experiences?
3. How could driver shortage be addressed according to the driver in Charter Coach Companies?
4. How could EX be implemented in Finnish Charter Coach companies?

1.2 Literature review

To explore the previously conducted research on the subject, a literature review was conducted. A systematic search was conducted in two databases: Google Scholar and Web of Science. For the search words, see Table 1.

Table 1 Search words for the article review

Study subject	Content
Coach Driver	Employee experience
Bus Driver	Employment experience
Charter Bus Driver	Staff experience
Charter Coach Driver	Work Experience
Motor Coach Driver	

Bolean phrases ("Coach Driver" OR "Bus Driver" OR "Charter Bus Driver" OR "Charter Coach Driver" OR "Motor Coach Driver") AND ("Employee Experience" OR "Employment Experience" OR "Staff Experience" OR "Work Experience") were used for the search, which was conducted 8.10.2022. The search was narrowed down to publications made in the latest 10 years (2012-2022).

Table 2 Article search hits and reviewed articles

Searched database and Bolean Phrase	Search Hits	Articles chosen based on headline	Articles reviewed and chosen
Google Scholar	1520 references	18	3
Science Direct	104 references	5	0
EBSCO Tourism and Hospitality Complete	128 references	1	0

The search produced a result of a total of 1752 hits (see Table 2). The inclusion criteria were articles relating to employee experience of industry drivers. The articles were written in English, Finnish or Swedish. Based on the headline a total of 24 references were chosen. Out of the removed reference, 4 of the references were not articles, 18 references were of irrelevant subject for the study. A total of 3 articles were chosen for the review. Based on the contents of the articles, none of the below were chosen for this thesis, as these did not fit the purpose for the study. The summary of the reviewed articles can be viewed in Table 3.

Table 3 Articles reviewed for the thesis

Authors, publication name, year, country	Main Results of the articles
Lianzhen Wang, Yulong Pei: *The impact of continuous driving time and rest time on commercial drivers' driving performance and recovery*, 2014, China	Drivers' cognitive skills are affected after over 2 h of continuous driving. Drivers need to take breaks to recover from the fatigue effects before continuing to drive.
Vasyl Golinko, Serhiy Cheberyachko: *Assessment of the risks of occupational diseases of the passenger bus drivers*, 2020, Ukraine	The health of passenger bus drivers is mostly affected by hygiene hazards: fever, vibrations, and emotional stress.
Vatanavongs Ratanavaraha, Sajjakaj Jomnonkwao: *Model of users' expectations of drivers of sightseeing buses: confirmatory factor analysis*, 2014, Thailand	Bus users responded that bus drivers, driving customers on sightseeing would prevent accidents by not: smoking or drinking (urban users) and training (rural users). Cause for accidents worldwide is driver negligence, just as this study concluded.

1.3   Structure of the study

This study has 6 chapters. In the 1st chapter, the introduction is presented. In the 2nd chapter the international and domestic Charter coach industry is presented, using key statistics, as well as legal restrictions and studies on the subject. In the 3rd chapter Employee experience is covered as a theoretical framework for this study. In the 4th chapter the Research Methodology is presented, and in the 5th chapter the results are presented. In the 6th chapter the discussion of the study is presented.

2   The coach industry in Finland

In this chapter, the Finnish Bus and Charter Coach industry will be presented regarding *the work-force of the industry*, *legislation*, and *concerns of the industry* in comparison with the available information on the international perspective.

The Finnish Bus Transport Industry covers the largest part of collective transport in Finland on an annual basis. It is estimated that 88 million passengers travelled in average of 4632 kilometres per passenger in 2018. When comparing to the closest form of collective transport, railroads transported 87 million travellers with the average of 4391 kilometres travelled per traveller. (Traficom 2018, page 8) According to The Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom, Chartered Coach Services covered in the year 2018 a market share of or 15,2 million travellers, traveling over 1156 kilometres per passenger on average. (Traficom 2018, 21)

In the European Union, there are over 692.000 buses in circulation. In 2021, they transported over 32,1 billion passengers over 511,4 billion kilometres annually. This means that European bus travellers travelled on average in 2021 over 5814 kilometres. The average age of buses in the European Union was 11.7 years in 2021. (ACEA 2021a) The number of registered buses in the EU in 2020 20.458 which was a 27,1 % decrease from 2019 (n=28.065). (ACEA 2021b)

The Finnish Bus and Coach Association, Linja-autoliitto (LAL) states in their publication *Kalustotilastot*, from 2022 that the size of the Finnish Bus Fleet had grown from 11.000 to 14.000 between the years 2016 - 2021. From the fleet of commercially registered buses 62 %, or almost 6200 coaches were registered as Minibuses and Long-distance Coaches (mostly used in the Charter Coach industry). The average age of commercially registered buses in 2021 was 10,5 years, when it in 2016 was 10,1 years. This implies, that the Finnish coach fleet was on average growing older between 2016 - 2021. (LAL 2022b, 4-9) LAL states in their publication that roughly a fourth of the active Finnish Bus fleet meets the current Euro6 emissions standards, making bus traveling an environmentally friendly way of traveling. (LAL 2019b)

According to LAL in 2019, most of its Finnish operator members possesses 1-5 coaches (35 %) or 6-10 coaches (23 %). LAL also estimated that Coach operators employed in Finland over 12.000 persons annually. The total turnover in the Bus Industry in Finland reached in 2019 1,093 Meur. Chartered Bus services covered almost 19 % of sales, with a turnover of 222 Meur. (LAL 2019, 3-4)

2.1   The employees in the industry

Due to its part-time nature, Chartered Coach services can often be combined with long-distance bus driving, making classification of staff and tasks in the Charter branch difficult. According to Official Statistics Finland (OSF) (2022a) Bus and Finnish Coach companies in Chartered Traffic employed in 2020 an estimation of 2036 Full-time employees (FTE) (see table 1), showing a change of +16 % compared to 2019.

Table 4 The Charter Coach Companies key metrics (Based on OSF 2022 a)

Year	Companies (amount)	Turnover (1000 eur)	Size of staff (FTE)	Profit (1000 eur)
2017	374	189 203	1 911	59 195
2018	372	236 962	2 368	77 725
2019	370	243 398	2 416	80 084
2020	352	178 923	2 036	65 305

When comparing the situation to the whole Bus industry in general between the years 2019-2022 the change of staff (in FTE) was a reduction of 400 drivers (or 4 %). (OSF 2022 b) When reviewing statistics for workers registered as bus and tram drivers (national code 8331), the following can be identified; most Drivers are male, aged between 55-64 (30 %, n=3813 FTE). The number of drivers aged 55-64 has steadily increased since 2010 (see figure 1). Female Bus Drivers make up only 11 % (n=1248 FTE) of the active work force. Drivers aged 25-44 make up 30 % (n=3514 FTE), when drivers aged 45-64 make up 62,7 % (n=7225 FTE) of the registered work force. Employees aged 55-64 are the only group of Drivers to increase during 2018-2019. (OSF 2022c)
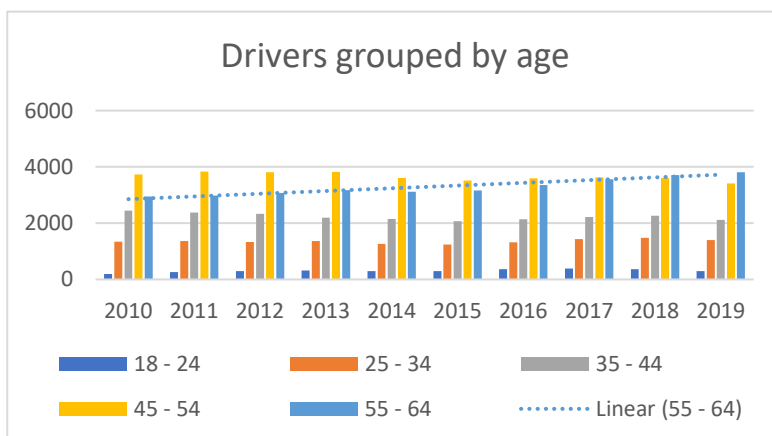

Figure 1 Finnish Bus Driver age

The bus drivers' European counterparts, on the other hand, reduced in average age from 51 in 2019 to 50 in 2020. The number of female drivers increased from 2019 (10 %) to 2020 (16 %) but dropped in 2021 (12 %). Drivers, aged 25 and younger, reduced from 2019 (4 %) to 2020 (3 %). Denmark has Europe's highest rate of female bus and coach drivers (22 %), which is still a big difference compared to Finland's 11 %. The global average age for bus and coach drivers is 50 years. (IRU 2022)

2.2 Laws and regulations regulating the industry

As the industry part of the transport industry, it is controlled by several legal restrictions. These affect both employers and drivers of the European and domestic level.

The European Union decided in August 2020 that it would unify the prerequisites of the Road Transport Market in the Union. The decision aimed to regulate the market conditions, prevent Grey Economy in the industry, streamline wages and working conditions in the open-border market of the EU. The EU Mobility package also updates requirements on Transporters and drivers during the first half of 2022. This mobility package has a direct implication on domestic legislation in Finland. (Traficom 2022c)

The Finnish Act on Transport Services (24.5.2017/320) states that all professional transporters in Finland must have Transport Licenses to be able transport people or goods. Transports con with vehicles under 3500 kg and with seating for a maximum of 9 occupants, are applicable for taxi transport licencing. This also includes goods transports, conducted with vehicles with a maximum total weight of 3500 kg. Any goods transports conducted with vehicles over 3500 kg requires a goods transport license. Same applies also in person transport; companies that transport people in vehicles over 3500 kg or with seating over 9 occupants require a passenger transport license. (Traficom 2022a)

According to Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) (2022a), passenger transport licenses can be granted to natural persons or legal persons (companies or organizations) with minor differences. The requirements for receiving passenger transport licenses are:

1) The applicant(s) must be of age and not have a custodian

2) Meets legal requirements of the EU Transport Operator Regulation
(professional proficiency, legal capacity, of good repute, residing in Finland, solvency, and compliance towards obligations as legal-, employment- or entrepreneurial entity)

3) Has not been declared bankrupt when operating businesses applicable to road transport licenses

4) Has not neglected payments to the government (taxes, fees, customs fees)

5) Is not banned from or imposed on business activities

6) No court sentences from negligence to pay employment -based payments
(Traficom 2017)

According to Traficom' s site liikennefakta.fi (2021), the amount of passenger transport licenses has reduced constantly between the years 2013-2020 (see Figure 2). This is mainly explained by that transport companies are growing relatively in size, and fewer and fewer private entrepreneurs are applying for the Passenger Transport License. Instead, companies are applying for licenses as legal entities. (Liikennefakta 2022)
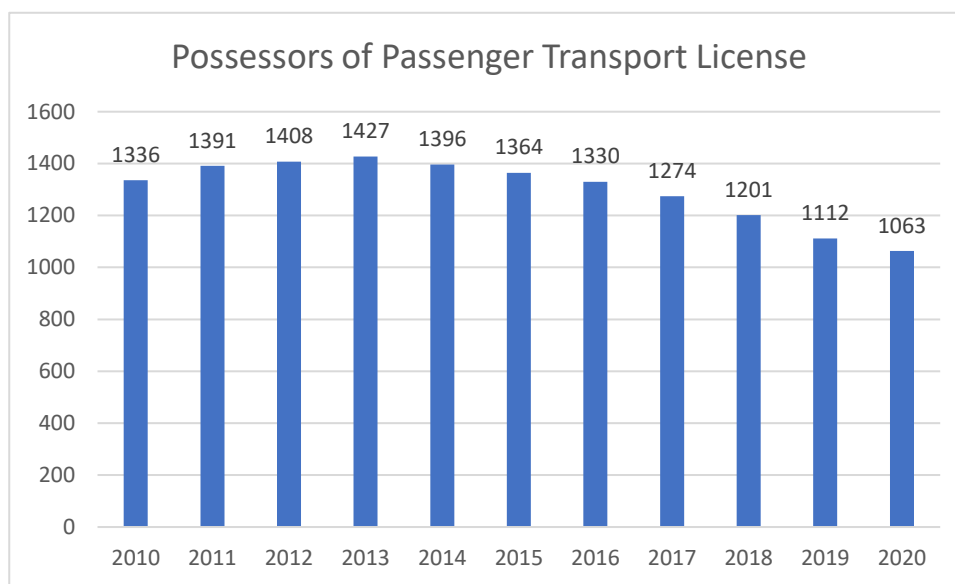

Possessors of Passenger Transport License

Figure 2 Possessors of Passenger Transport License in Finland (based on Liikennefakta 2022)

As well as being supervised by police, Traficom and other official instances in Finland, the Regional State Administrative Agency (AVI) also follows up that that companies in the regions meet legislative basic and social rights, environmental protective restrictions and enables a healthy market climate, fighting grey economy. (AVI 2022)

Coach drivers, just as lorry drivers are regulated by legislation Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 (legislation relating to road transport). The aim of this regulation is to improve the social and working conditions of the staff and improve traffic safety. This is done by restricting daily maximum driving time, weekly and bi-weekly maximum driving time. In an essence, it requires drivers, applicable to the law, to keep at least one weekly resting period during two consecutive weeks. It also requires drivers to rest for at least for 9 hours during a 24-hour period. (Skal 2006a, 2) The working time can be supervised with the usage of a digital tachograph or a paper tachograph. (Skal 2006b)

Drivers should meet the following restrictions:

1) Daily driving time can be 9 hours in total. This can be extended twice in a week to 10 hours.

2) Weekly working time cannot exceed 56 hours.

3) During two consecutive weeks the total working time cannot exceed 90 hours

4) The driver must report other duties (related to commercial driving).

5) For each 4h 30 mins driving time, the driver needs to keep a minimum of 45 min break. This can be divided into 15 minutes, followed by 30 minutes during the 4h 30 min period.

6) Minimal daily rest is 11 hours. This can be reduced to 9 hours three times during between weekly rests.

7) Weekly rest should be held after a maximum of 6 working days, and it should at least be 45 hours. It can be shortened once to 24 hours during a two-week period, but it needs to be compensated as an extra daily rest before the beginning of the third week. (Skal 2022)

Arrangements affecting drivers, such as compensations, benefits, working conditions and holidays are concluded into legally binding collective agreements in Finland between employer parties: Employers' Federation of Road Transport (ALT) and employees: Finnish Transport Workers' Union (AKT). (ALT 2022)

2.3 Concerns of the industry

The transport industry has been impacted by many contemporary concerns during the latest years. There is an increasing driver shortage, the drivers are working long hours away from home. There is also an environmental pressure on the whole transport industry to reduce the carbon footprint of the industry. The pandemic Covid-19 hit the industry hard, which, the crisis in Ukraine, starting in February 2022 increased fuel prices which impacted the already tight economy in many Charter Coach companies. (LAL 2022b) The following chapter will discuss these concerns to create an understanding towards the issues the industry is facing.

IRU reported in their publication *Driver Shortage Global Report* (2022) that the Bus and Coach Driver shortage, globally will increase steadily in the future, even though the situation in 2022 is not as bad as it was in pre-pandemic levels. In 2021 7 % of all European bus and coach positions were not filled, when the corresponding estimation of 2022 is that 8 % will not be filled.

> "With few young drivers in the profession, a high proportion of old drivers that will retire in less than ten years, and a progressive recovery of passenger transport demand, driver shortage can only become worse in the coming years if no action is taken."
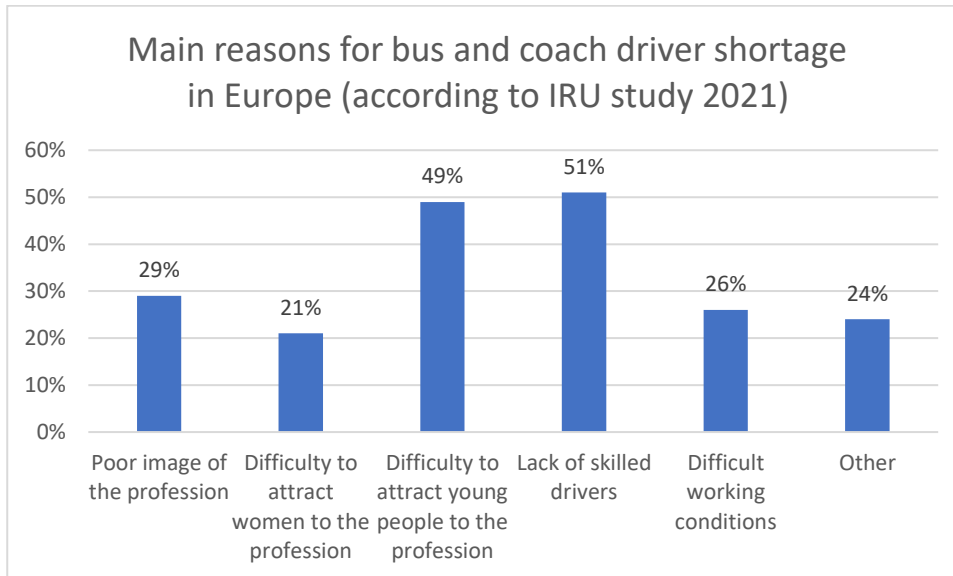> - IRU Publication Driver Shortage Global Report (2022)

Figure 3 Main reasons for driver shortage in Europe (based on IRU 2022)

IRU furthermore explains that one reason for this increase is explained by the fact, that many bus and coach drivers changed profession due to the pandemic, and that fewer young drivers are entering the profession due to cuts in training from restrictions, and low attractiveness of the profession. Another reason is said to be that many drivers are retiring, but few employers can replace the old workforce. (IRU 2022)

According to European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), liberalization of the markets and the increase in competition has worsened the working conditions of bus and coach drivers through minimizing staff size to gain higher yields which, in effect can be seen as risen workloads, working time and generally reduced wages for the drivers. In their publication *Social Conditions in Bus and coach Transport in Europe*, ETF further states that European bus and coach drivers' salaries are considered as low income which varies much, due to seasonal changes in demand. It also adds that, drivers' income is highly dependent on supplements, for trips abroad and weekend shifts. It is also common, that employers use retired drivers as a means of cutting costs as it enables employers to cut costs in social security-related costs. ETF also outlines that late bookings of coaches, and irregular working time leads to drivers only being able to plan one day ahead. This affects the work-life balance, which is already strained due to long working days. This in combination with the unfortunate development of the travel industry in the post-pandemic society has led to a reduction of drivers throughout Europe, and an increased workload for those who are currently employed as coach and bus drivers. (ETF 2022, 3-5)

The following concern which the industry is facing is, are the environmental concerns, where it should cut emissions during the upcoming decade. According to the European Commission (2022),

buses coaches and lorries were responsible for ¼ of the road-transport-related CO2 emissions in Europe. Therefore, the European Commission developed a climate action plan for 2020-2030, in which it strives to reduce the emissions of heavy-duty vehicles by 15 % by 2025 and 30 % by 2030. This is achieved by creating classification- and incentive mechanisms for usage of zero and low-emission vehicles (ZLEV). (EC 2022) IRU has also developed its own, global Green Compact 2050 initiative which aims at making commercial road transport carbon neutral by 2050. (IRU 2021) When investigating how the measures will affect the Finnish bus and coach industry, one must consider, that the average Finnish bus park in 2020 was on average 11,5 years, and in 2021 11,9. (Statfin 2022) The average age of buses in the European Union was 12,8 years. This implies that the industry in general is moving towards older coaches, which has a direct impact on companies trying to meet on the climate action plan emissions cuts. (ACEA 2022)

2019 was an excellent year for the Charter Coach industry compared to previous years. (OSF 2022 a) In beginning of 2020 the Finnish Travel Industry was reporting increases of hotel room utilization rates of 7-8 % in January-February. As Covid-19 developed into a worldwide pandemic the whole travel industry experienced dramatic reductions of customers. OSF reports in their publication Accommodation Statistics 2020 that by April 2020 domestic customer hotel bookings had reduced by 86 % when the corresponding number of international guests had reduced with 95 %. (OSF 2020)

In a press release from 9.3.2022 LAL stated that their members reported during the spring of 2022 that the Covid restrictions still affected the industry. 24 % of the operators reported that turnover was down 50 % while 40 % of the operators reported having to terminate contracts with employees. 76 % could report that no further layoffs were necessary. Furthermore, 80 % of the member operators reported that some of the fleet was set on hold, and almost half of the respondents reported that no new fleet investments were possible for 2022. Noteworthy is also that 24 % of the respondents answered that their companies will survive the pandemic, when 7 % are worried that their companies might need to declare bankruptcy. Many of the respondents pointed out the necessity of fuel tax reductions for professional vehicles. LAL points also out in the press release, that this survey was sent conducted before the war in Ukraine (February 2022-) (LAL 2022b)

Globally, the World Road Transportation Organization reported in 2022, that Passenger Road Transport sector was showing in 2020 a loss of USD -500 Billion and in 2021 USD -543 Billion. These estimations were conducted with help of purchasing and insolvency indicators. (IRU 2021)

2.4   ETF toolbox to mitigate driver shortage

As previously mentioned, arrangements in Finland affecting drivers are concluded into collective agreements between the unions Employers' Federation of Road Transport (ALT) and Finnish Transport Workers' Union (AKT). (ALT 2022) The unions strive to develop the industry and address contemporary issues of the industry.

As earlier concluded, driver shortage is an issue of the industry. Hence, European Transport Worker's Federation (ETF) has researched on the topic. In the publication *Toolbox of Trade Union driven Good Practices for Bus and Coach Drivers*, ETF presents recommendations in mitigating staff shortage in the industry. The toolbox was compiled with help by trade union representatives from 11 European countries. The issues have been categorized into 10 themes:

1. Mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Providing help and advice for drivers
3. Harmonization and improving social and working conditions for drivers in the whole bus and coach sector
4. Making a career in bus and coach more attractive
5. Equal opportunities and supporting female drivers
6. Better work-life balance and working time planning
7. Demographic change and support for older drivers
8. Benefits and compensation for work strains
9. Bilateral funds as a tool for improving social security and employability
10. Better accommodation and sanitary infrastructure.

As some of the guidelines are directly aimed at legislation makers or unions, there is little, which companies can do to implement them on a company level. Hence, to serve as a guideline on how to approach the research problem of this thesis, some of these guidelines will be reviewed further in the discussion part of the study.

3   Employee experience

This chapter will review Employee Experience (EX) as a theory. Two theories were chosen: well-published author Whitter's (2019) book *Employee Experience,* and to bring a corporate aspect: the publication *Designing Employee Experience* by IBM (2016) and for a Finnish angle on the subject: results from the Talent Vectia's (2020) publication *The Challenge of Building a purposeful future* are added for further depth.

The topics discussed in this chapter include the *core factors of EX*, *key elements of EX* and *actions for successful implementation of EX* in organizations.

Experiences has become the new currency with which businesses create added value for customers of today. The reason for this is that, while businesses previously used to focus on pure Customer Satisfaction, many forgot the human factor; that us as humans want to create memories and connections, share experiences and stimulating all senses through meaningful, genuine interactions. In an essence, this experience seeking has led to a shift in many industries towards, what is referred to as Customer Experience (CX) (Whitter 2019, 1-2). The idea behind CX is that services must be developed and delivered with strong empathy for the customers obvious and hidden needs, only then can companies offer what customers truly desire and need. (Whitter 2019, 5-6)

Through the CX-centric view of running businesses, Employee Experience (EX) has emerged in workplaces as a new aspect of traditional HR. EX builds on the idea, that employees are also consumers, with same needs and wants as the customers they are serving. The theory of EX also builds on the idea that experiences are shared and created when employees and customers meet. This leads to a problem; *how could a business create happy customers if the front-line employee is not also happy?* (Whitter 2019, 5-6)

The rise of gig economy or portfolio careers on the job market are changing the way we work. The possibilities to change employer rapidly creates added pressure to businesses on how to attract and keep the best talent. The very landscape in what markets businesses compete on are changing; more and more companies find themselves competing in the employment industry. Through this, EX does not only become a tool to improve businesses, but also a strategic advantage when trying to differentiate companies in the competition for skilled labor. (Whitter 2019, 7)

There are many theories around EX, and how it should be implemented. Most of these conclude that EX concludes that employees interact with physical spaces, people, and the company itself. By using technology, companies can create the added value for employees.

3.1   The key aspects of EX

According to Whitter (2019), a strong EX requires *Context*, *Connection* and *Community*. (Whitter 2019, p.45) IBM (2016) refers to these as the *Social-, Physical-* and *Work Spheres,* encircled by *strategy and culture*. In an essence, these are the same aspects of work, the authors have only named these differently.

Context requires that business leaders review the business strategy, values, and particular challenges of a company. While EX is highly focused on the needs of the employee, it still requires that all measures taken, are in line with the needs of the company, and its customers. (Whitter 2019, 45) IBM refers to this same factor as strategy and culture. (IBM 2016, 9)

Connections also plays a vital role for companies. Just as it is important to keep a good connection to customers, a good connection to employees is important for the success of the company. Whitter (2019) points out that connections should be people to people and of high quality. It can also be mentioned that unnecessary policies, processes, and procedures should be eliminated between the people and the organization to further strengthen the connection. (Whitter 2019, p. 29-30) IBM (2016) on the other hand calls this aspect the *social sphere*. (IBM 2016, 4)

Whitter claims that a sense of belonging or *community* does not appear automatically. It requires commitment and focus to work towards a strong unity within companies. The creation of community starts right from the CEO and down. Community can be regarded as *trust* between different parties – and it should be prevalent on all levels of the organizational hierarchy. (Whitter 2019, 29-30) This corresponds to IBM: s model factor: *Strategy and Culture* (IBM 2016, 9) which is mentioned in the next part.

To create a strong experience, HR or EX officers might need to consider working facilities, IT, catering, and marketing as well as team rosters. Implementing EX does not only change the way we interact, but also the whole structure at workplaces. (Whitter 2019, 45) IBM takes this even further by reviewing this factor of EX as the *Physical Sphere*, which includes all interactions the employee has with the tangible environment. (IBM 2016, 4)

As both authors' theories correspond to each other, I have chosen to adapt both in this thesis. My adaptation is built upon IBM's model, as it is clearer to grasp for the reader. The facets or key elements of EX are presented in the next part.

3.2   The key elements of EX

IBM identifies that EX consists of three spheres of interaction during our work, the Social-, Physical and Work spheres. According to IBM, these spheres tend to overlap each other (see Figure 4), which on the other hand creates, what is referred to as the six facets of employee experience: *Community*, *Physical Workspace*, *Environment*, *Tools*, *Activities* and *Social Platforms*.
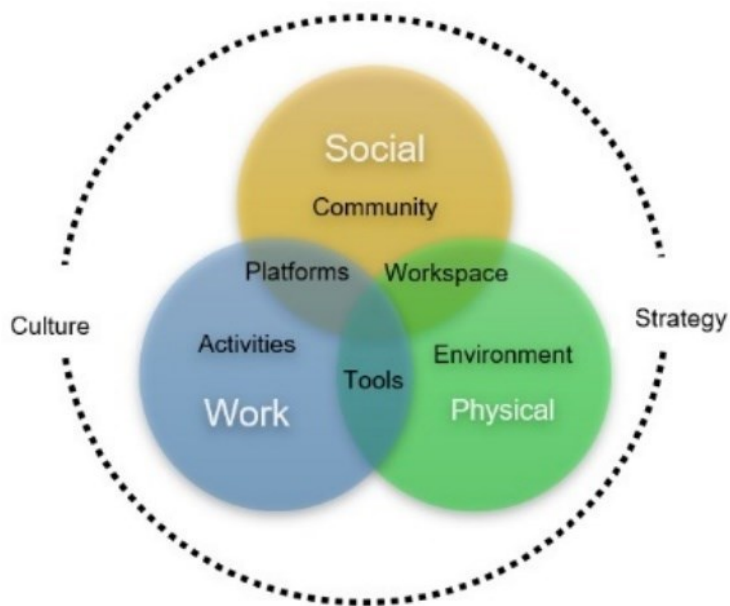

Figure 4 The six facets of EX (Based on IBM, 2016)

Depending on how the facets overlap each other, they include various aspects of workplace EX. These facets are further surrounded by the company culture and strategy, which impact all aspects of how employees regard their work. (IBM 2016, 7)

Whitter (2019) calls these same facets the lens of *Holistic Experience* (HEX). According to whitter HEX includes *Human*, *Leadership*, *Structure*, *Technology*, *Workplace* and *Community*. These surround, which according to Whitter is the most important aspect: *truth*. All of these are presented below, grouped into a more facets, combined from both IBM and Whitter's models, where I strive to compare them to each other.

Strategy and culture

Strategy and culture according to IBM involves that organizations need to evaluate all six facets of interaction through the perspective of the goals and culture of the organization. As the company defines its strategy, it needs to consider its management culture as it drives EX. (IBM 2016, 11)

Talent Vectia (2020) states further that autonomy at work will not bring added value to organizations unless the mission and structure to the work is clear to all employees. (Talent Vectia 2020, 7)

Whitter (2019) calls this same phenomena *Truth* - a key factor for EX in any organization. It creates a meaning to what organizations are doing. It is more important to help employees find purpose instead of telling them what to do. Many organizations tend to refer to mission, rather than purpose. Values are core when it comes to helping employees structure their work and orientating themselves. Whitter 2019, 58-60) *Structure* is the most common part, which companies emphasize on when developing operations. Companies, in all shapes and sizes work under some sorts of structures. Since the industrial revolution companies have been working in a top-down way of conduct, meaning that influence and decision making has been in the top management. According to Whitter, this affects the agility and innovation of companies, which stresses the need to review the structures within the company. (Whitter 2019, 65-67)

Leadership is key when measuring employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Employees either stay with leaders or leave them. The role of traditional leadership has changed, as the job market of today understand that leaders go beyond what traditionally was handed to leaders. Whitter states that the task of leadership in EX is to enable employees to reach their full potential, making a difference for the organization. (Whitter 2019, 63-65) Talent Vectia (2020) adds in their report *The Challenge of Building a purposeful future*, that balance between all aspects of EX is key to a successful implementation of it. (Talent Vectia 2020, 7)

Community

The first facet in IBM: s (2016) model is *Community*, as most of us depend on some way of interaction with others. The way we connect and work with others tend to affect the way we regard our own organization. According to IBM, the connections lead to what is known as *Social Capital*, a way of sharing and receiving help from your peers, which contributes to increased employee satisfaction. (IBM 2016, 7)

The view of Whitter (2019) converges with the findings of IBM. Us humans are mostly thriving in strong *communities*. Any company wants and needs to create a sense of belonging to get the full potential of the employees. *Community* should already be created in the vision of the company, as it will affect the internal culture of the organization. It should also be mentioned that communities stretch outside the workplace. Many companies are trying to give meaning to their employees on the free time through various causes and activities. (Whitter 2019, 73-76)

Physical spaces and environment

The second facet, *Physical Workspace* is, according to experts a critical component of employee experience. Organizations can encourage diverse team building and information sharing by planning spaces with specific furniture for each specific purpose of the space. (IBM 2016, 6)

Whitter (2019) furthermore claims that the workplace can help to strengthen the identity and immerse the employee in the brand and its vision and goals. (Whitter 2019, 70-73) *Environment* according to IBM's model include, that organizations need to emphasize on the surroundings as lightning, temperature, noise, and office location can affect the productivity and EX of the employees.

Technology, tools, and social platforms

Tools have changed the way we live and work. Employees can reach the necessary information in an instant. Just as physical space planning can impact the efficiency and experience, so can software. IBM furthermore emphasizes, that software should enable that the aging workforce can be productive even in the future. (IBM 2016, 7)

Employees get immersed with consumer-grade *technology* as the consumer they themselves are. Whitter (2019) claims, which thriving EX organizations have understood this, and are deliberate on which kind of technology the staff is using. Working with technology should not mean that the work is centered around technology, instead technology should be a tool to help organizations achieve efficiency. Machine learning has a bright future role in enabling strong EX as it can personalize the experience. (Whitter 2019, 67-70)

Social platforms help to support innovation and knowledge sharing when employees can connect to each other. This creates a network, which can be valuable for all employees. Analysis of the technology can also reveal hidden morale issues. (IBM 2016, 8)

Activities

One of the most key factors in EX is that the employees feel that they can influence their work, become a master the profession and understand the general purpose of the task. The facet *Activities* include, that the employees receive support and feedback from managers or systems. IBM (2016) states that research has shown that the secret to performance in employees is related to our desires of living and working according to our plans and beliefs. (IBM 2016, 8)

Whitter (2019) calls this same aspect *Human,* which builds on the idea that we all have human needs as employees. This means that we have good and bad days, and organizations need to balance between managing expectations and enable the *human experience*, which is life. As a result of this, job positions rarely correspond to the job advert, as many tasks are often tailored around the hired person. The reason for this is that people want to create their own experiences as employees. (Whitter 2019, 60-61)

Whitter continues, in what he calls *the Human Manifesto*, that we as human, both privately and employees need to do to feel like we are living with purpose. This should be taken into consideration when planning for successful EX in the organizations we work. The parts of the manifesto include:

1. Develop ourselves (Masters of the universe)

2. Claim ownership of our own outcome (*Autonomy*),

3. Live according to our values and beliefs (*Meaningful work, purposeful life*)

4. Learn from our own mistakes (*Failing and flourishing*)

5. Live and work in psychological safety (*Supported, safe and trusted*)

6. Make a difference in our communities (*Respected, rewarded and recognized*)

7. Feel valued by our peers and foremen (*Commitment and care*)

8. Feel heard and understood (*Powerful voice*)

9. Enjoy ourselves and the company of others at work (*Enjoy the experience*)

10. Be empowered with the help of technology (Tech-enabled) (Whitter 2019, 61-62)

3.3   Implementing EX in organizations

Whitter (2019) further identifies 10 principles, which successful companies have embraced when they have implemented EX. As Talent Vectia (2020) stated, it is important that companies regard all aspects of employment for a successful implementation of EX. Hence, Whitter's (2019) principles are mentioned below:

1. *Human obsession*. Organizations need to understand that CX and EX are co-created simultaneously. This requires a high degree of empathy and focus on details.

2. *Long-term orientation*. Organizations should move from quarterly thinking to a more long-term perspective (5 years or more)

3. *Purpose: EX* should be regarded as a means of aligning staff, the purpose and efficiency of the organization. EX is a means to shift into inside-out thinking, creating meaning, which in combination with the values becomes the truth, which is bigger than the business goal itself.

4. *Fail fast, win big*. Agility, speed, and repetitions should not be condemned but instead encouraged. It should be viewed that failures are a part of life which help us to develop.

5. *Community first*. Organizations should commit to the staff, its customers, and society. By being active in the communities' companies become more connected with the people around them.

6. *A holistic experience by design*. Organizations should consider that experiences are experienced with all senses and certain information is processed in different ways in our brains. Using empathy processed should be designed to create good experiences.

7. *Evidence-based, data-driven action*. Data from inside and outside the organization should impact decision making. Organizations should focus on solving problems in the processes related to EX.

8. *Evolution, not revolution*. Organizations are addressing the needs of yesterday, and tomorrow will address the needs of today. This is having always been a business paradox and will still be. Whitter claims that organizations need to embrace the constant change and strive to address the problems and needs of tomorrow.

9. *Sharing is caring*. Organizations need to be transparent and inclusive in the decisions which are being taken and change which is happening. By doing so, organizations earn trust which is translated into stronger commitment of the staff.

10. *Digital lifestyle*, digital EX. Organizations should support the staff by empowering them with platforms, which enhance their efficiency and learning. Platforms are a good way of connecting people and encouraging communication.

Some of these principles will be used, in combination with the results of the study as a guideline for the suggestions which will be presented in the discussion chapter of this thesis. By doing so, the probability of improving the EX in the companies will be improved.

4   Research methodology

In this chapter the research methodology is presented. This thesis is conducted as a collective case study (Yin 2002, 53-54) The cases to be studied in this thesis was how Charter Coach drivers' experiences of EX as well as driver shortage. Data was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Eriksson et Al. 2008, 81-82) and analyzed utilizing deductive content analysis. (Eriksson et. Al. 2008, 156-159)

Sampling

The study subjects were chosen based on purposive sampling. Purposive sampling of interviewees was chosen, as it would broaden and deepen the understanding of the research problem. (Rossman & Rallis 2017) Interviewees were invited to the study through advertisements on the charter club of Finland (industry association) members Facebook page (see Appendix 1) and through an e-mail to all members of the organization (see Appendix 2). The Charter Club association of Finland (Tilausajokuljettajat) consists of 1500 members, spread all over Finland. Its members are either coach drivers, entrepreneurs, tourism professionals or traffic industry teachers. The organization has no labor market-political ties or missions, only to improve the future of charter coach industry in Finland. (Tilausajokuljettajat 2022)

Hence the decision was made to sample the associations members, as they represent the relevant industry segment, and a common will to improve the industry. The inclusion criteria for interviewees, was that the interviewee was driving charter coaches, either part-time (on demand) or full-time. Interviewees were offered the possibility of participating in the study in Finnish, Swedish or English. The interviewees were chosen, based on the order of responds on the advertisement and e-mails.

The invite generated more interest than this study could cover, which meant that interviewees were chosen in the order of interest and response. A total of 6 interviewees were chosen for the study. The interviewees were located all around Finland.

Data collection

In semi-structured theme interviews an Interview Guide is created, consisting of categories to be investigated, based on the prior knowledge and relevant research questions. Questions can either

be added or removed from the interview manual as additional interviews are conducted as new categories discovered. (Taylor 2015, 120)

An interview manual was compiled (see Appendix 3), based on questions of the charter coach industry and theory of employee experience. The Interview Guide consisted of warm-up questions and evermore increasing in-depth questions in the research problem as the interview progressed (see Appendix 3: The Interview Guide). The purpose of the interviews was to deepen the understanding on the topics, by letting the interviewee share his/her views, using follow-up questions and probing as supportive techniques. (Taylor 2015, 121)

The study offered options on how the interviews could be conducted. As interviewee spread was from anywhere in Finland, interviews were conducted in-person or online, using MS Teams. In-person conducted interviews were recorded using Apple native software for speech-memos and transcribed using the automatic transcription feature of MS Word with interview notes as support for the interview. Interviewees who required an online meeting were invited by sending an MS Teams-meeting link before the scheduled interview. The interview sessions were recorded using the native meeting record function of MS Teams, using interview notes as support. Transcripts of the interviews were automatically generated, using the MS SharePoint function Stream. Both automatically generated transcript modes used in this study required some corrections, which were conducted using the live recordings of the sessions.

The interviews were conducted during 19-30.9.2022. For identification purposes the separate interview dates are not published. The interview material included over 9 hours of recordings; the transcripts consisted of 88 pages of transcripts which were reviewed for this study.

Data analysis

The raw, collected data was first sorted, using open coding (Williams et. Al. 2019, 48). The material was grouped into two categories which were found in the literature review of this study. The categories were adapted according to my interpretation a charter coach industry application of these categories.

Each interviewee received a specific color for coding purposes. As the interviewees had the possibility of participating in the study on three different languages, the answers were coded and analyzed in the original language. The categories which the material was grouped into, according to the theory of EX and regarding driver shortage are *Strategy and culture*, *Community*, *Physical environment*, *Technology and tools*, *Activities* and *Driver Shortage*.

The open codes then sorted into axial codes according to the pre-set categories. These axial codes were then grouped into selective codes. This also helped in the quantification process of the codes. Based on the quantification and selective codes, a pattern was established for the discussed categories. (Williams et Al., 2019, 48-53)

5   Results

In this chapter the result of the study is presented. The results were grouped into adaptations of categories, based on my own experience of the charter coach industry. Charter Coach Driver EX is described through the following categories: *Strategy and Culture*, *Community*, *Physical Spaces and Environment*, *Technology and Tools*, *Activities,* and *Driver Shortage*.

5.1   Strategy and Culture

The first category to be analyzed in the study was Strategy and Culture. From this one can conclude that most of the comments were related to *Appreciation*, *Non-inclusive Leadership*, *Employer Culture* and *Mutual Trust*. Hence, the following chapter presents the results in Figure 5 in an order, based on frequency.

Figure 5: The categories and frequency of Strategy and Culture

Appreciation

Appreciation towards drivers is shown in the industry through feedback and follow-ups. Entrepreneurs might call and ask how the gig went or discuss with foremen on a personal level. This is also highly appreciated from the drivers, which creates a respect for the employer who do this, as the following citations point out:

> "Well, in my opinion, appreciation is shown when they call and ask, and also tell that it went well. It's good that that feedback comes. I have also understood that negative feedback will also come." (R 1)

> "Well, I would have gotten a little more from that other guy for this same gig, so still, I'd rather work for a little cheaper, although they say that "even a cat can't live on gratitude." (R 2)

Appreciation gives the drivers a possibility to a work-related dialogue with the employer, which is also experienced as important. Drivers feel like it is important that they get heard. The drivers have a strong professional pride, and the work force has a large collective know-how, and would like

employers to listen and appreciate their ideas. Drivers appreciate a flat, informal organization, where they are treated like equals with the owners. This can be identified in the following citations:

> "Like this contacting to check that everything is in order from the employer's side. It is important is that they listen. And in a way, If there is feedback to give, that the feedback is, in a way, that the feedback is respected. Not necessarily right away, but it can be said, or even if you say, "it's a good idea, but we can't at the moment" or that "it still needs to be improved, that idea."" (R 1)

> "…our strength is that we do things right and are appreciated, and we always get to do our work in peace. We don't have anyone complaining anywhere, at least to the extent that I would have noticed that... In other words, there is such a thing as an appreciation. So clearly, there is that kind of perceptible appreciation as a person, when I go to that driver coordinators' booth, I don't need to pretend anything there." (R 3)

The issue of lack of appreciation is present in some companies. One of the interviewees, having experience for working for several had only one example from gratitude from employers, where only one of the companies had shown appreciation for the work effort. This respondent is the only one to clearly state, that he/she is working as a part-time driver for many employers. This gives a broader picture of the prevailing industry culture around appreciation, which is best identified in the following citation:

> "…I've done work for many companies. And I can't think of anything other than exactly one where I've been verbally thanked every time after every gig, calling back to say thank you once more for this." (R 2)

Basic appreciation for human value seems to be lost in some companies of the study. Some of the drivers feel like they are being treated with disrespect, or that they are not appreciated as workers or human beings. Some drivers have tried to implement positive thinking in a negative environment. Positive feedback is rare and appreciated in some of the companies of the study, as laid out in the following citations:

> "The employer's appreciation for the drivers, as well as the profession and as a person, seems to be lacking these days, and the behavior of the superiors, of course, should be civilized. That all that kind of inappropriate language and stuff like that… I don't either call the manager and let them know that he behaves like a **** or something similar… And that you should also never get used to it from there or from the other direction." (R 4)

> "In my current company, the personnel policy is that the driver is not worth anything. That's it. Yes, everyone feels that way. Me too sometimes, but very rarely anyway, that I want to believe that my work is appreciated, it shows every now and then. It's not every day, and probably not every week, but every now and then. I always get strength from it." (R 5)

Drivers seem to understand the importance of appreciation and mutual trust for the business success. There seems to be leaders who do not implement an inclusive leadership style. These companies seem to do worse than counterparts where drivers are treated with dignity and respect. The result of these can be found in the following citations:

"Companies just have to invest in that people or their employees are being taken care of and equipment is being maintained. Those are the prerequisites, otherwise, it will never work. (R 5)

"...The growth stems from employees, not the management. Management is not the Leader alone, who controls all such people. You won't find one on earth one who manages all the different things in the best, possible way. If a person believes this, like Putin, for example, then we already know that it's going to go wrong, that it can't possibly succeed." (R 4)

One interviewee explains that gratitude is shown through that you are asked to come back for the next gig. This is described with that appreciation towards employees is shown by how often employers call for work. The industry employers are well connected, and most employers convey information on how well drivers do their work. The interviewee also pinpoints underlying reasons why some drivers are appreciated and some not; If drivers do a bad job, or a mediocre job, some are not in as high demand as others This can be seen in the following citation:

..."The industry is, first of all, a small industry. Even if we are talking nationwide, practically everyone knows each other… You won't make it in this field if you are not good at your job or even average at your job. If you're good at your job, you'll be ripped off, you are wanted everywhere. If you're average at your job, when you find a job where it's worth being, be there. If you're a bad worker, the employer would rather keep the car parked than take the risk of selling bad service or losing customers or something similar." (R 2)

Non-inclusive leadership

The industry seems to have developed a culture of not including drivers in decision-making or planning, on matters, which might affect the driver's work. This is felt to the drivers like an alienation from the work the drivers are doing, and a disrespect towards their professional pride. Some drivers feel like their requests are not even heard, even if they would bring an improvement to the delivery processes. These examples can be highlighted in the following citations:

"…it has changed in such a way that much more is ordered, commanded. It's more, like dictating." (R 5)

"I am talking about it generally and "we've always done like this… We have always done like this in our company. I make the decisions, you implement them. You tell me to do this and that", but it is not accepted. It's my decision"." (R 4)

Some drivers are reflecting about differences between transport industries, where the trucking industry seem to have adopted a more inclusive approach toward driver needs, generally speaking. Employers are more attentive towards driver wishes for the vehicle, in which the driver will work. One possible explanation to the industry difference is explained by that many trucks roll in one shift, with one or two drivers, while on the charter coach side, several drivers might drive the same coach. The interviewee further describes that charter coach entrepreneurs more often decide on

investments for the coaches, and do not include drivers in the process, as explained in the following citation:

> "Many times, and I think, that is considered much better on the trucking side than on bus side. On the bus side, I think… I would like to think that here you have more the side that, the one who pays for the bus, who decides what kind of bus it is, how the driver's seat is, and what kind of equipment the bus has, that very little is listened to the driver. And there, the bus and the truck side are very different." (R 6)

The industry leadership style of not including drivers, might be explained by changes in society and a tradition of organizational hierarchy in some of the companies. This might explain why some drivers indicate that a very old-fashioned leadership style is present in the companies. This culture is changing in companies, as no generation will continue the work, as laid out in the following citations:

> "There has been a time in history when the employer has been irreplaceable. When nowadays it's more like that the employee is irreplaceable. That it's… A bit, a bit like that, that do you want to look at it from both sides: is it because of history, or is it because of present day?" (R 2)

> "It has been in the family, always someone who has continued to drive. But now that culture and that time are probably starting to be far over. It's rare, I would see today that very few companies today will be left without anyone to continue. They will probably just become like a workplace; It becomes less of a lifestyle and more of a workplace." (R 6)

Company culture

Some of the companies seem to have a culture where the staff is expected to work on the same terms as the entrepreneur, and where duties outside work is expected from drivers.

> "…where life is a lifestyle, you also have to understand that people want to be paid for the work they do. When it's a lifestyle, you do a lot of that for free just because you think it's part of it and it's fun...you wash the buses in your spare time, and polish and stuff like that, and do a lot of planning and change tires...you've done it for maybe 50-60 years, and so you think it belongs to the work... It's not a hobby and not a lifestyle... You have to completely simply be prepared that every single tire change and every single washing and cleaning, everything costs." (R 6)

Some companies seem to have adopted a passive culture towards meeting future challenges and societal change, both as service providers and employers. This is frustrating for drivers, as they feel that if they are required to do their job conscientiously, but they cannot require the same from their foremen. Covid showed many examples of where employers did not know what to do in the situation. The same phenomenon is seen in recruitment where many entrepreneurs are not actively searching for employees, as they expect drivers to call them. Examples of this can be found in the following citations:

> "…if I think about my own company, there are an insane number of challenges. But how are those challenges are perceived… it's going to be difficult… If you want to continue in the field, you must embrace those challenges, and in my opinion, you could also train yourself in a skillful way. So that you would understand what you need to do next. But if you even want to think about it in that way…" (R 5)

> "This far, they have managed to get drivers who have applied for the job themselves. But now you must understand that you can't just sit and wait for it, because they are probably still doing that today. You sit around a lot, waiting and thinking that "we don't have drivers, and nobody calls us, and then we need to sell the buses - what are we going to do?"" (R 6)

A similar phenomenon can be found in tour production in several charter coach companies. Many companies have their own travel agencies. Most of these seem to focus on cruise tour production to Tallinn or Stockholm – while examples of successful companies who produce bus tours to Europe are mentioned as benchmarks in the interviews. The importance of tours come forth in the fact, that drivers enjoy experiences, and can use their knowledge during long tours. Two separate drivers discuss this phenomenon in their interviews. According to one driver, travel agencies should start focusing more on producing coach tours to Central Europe, while the other sees, that companies should start producing tours in the regions, as this is both sustainable and would reduce the carbon footprint of traveling in the future. One driver asks him/herself if Tallinn or Stockholm is any more relevant to customers, or are they sold because they are easy. The driver further wonders if there is no professional pride in the travel agencies. This can be seen in the following citation:

> "What I think is so important for the industry is that we get this idea out of Tallinn and get it out of the sales department, that we have more than Tallinn or we have more than Stockholm. But when they're so easy to sell... there's more to the world than Tallinn. Nowadays, people might even go to Tallinn themselves... people even go there themselves in their own cars to buy a ticket directly from the shipping companies. You no longer need a bus travel agency. And specifically, that you would dare to expand in a way the own chain of thought in the sales organization... That we boldly start planning and marketing different themed trips to Central Europe." (R 4)

Companies seem to have been reluctant to take in outside views on how to solve problems regarding operations, such as driver shortage or working conditions for drivers. It also seems like the entrepreneurs are not demanding excellence from employees, but rather that the job is only done. This leads to a situation where employers accept basically any job applicant who can do the job and send them out for work without proper training, which makes the industry appeal worse, as drivers do not seem as professionals to outsiders. These examples are highlighted in the following citations:

> "Well, first of all, let's push the head out of the box. In my opinion, that would be the very first point, that you would open the lid of the cardboard box and poke your head out of the lid of the cardboard box, and then look a little like the outside of the cardboard box and what might be around there. That's because those cardboard boxes are really small. The head doesn't even fit to turn in that cardboard box, it covers that one wall most of the time and then the 3 walls are gone." (R 4)

> "…employers should demand excellence, and not just accept that the car moves. That maybe we should start with... Now it is like not acceptable that as long as the car moves as cheaply as possible from one place to another, as long as there is someone driving it. So, it would no longer be a matter of just going, but that the work would be done well, with a good attitude. And so that the customer is really satisfied and willing to pay his bill, and maybe even during the order time, the importance of pricing would be reduced if these quality issues were brought up to the level where they should be." (R 3)

One driver mentioned that the company has not any written values, purposes or missions. The driver feels that these are unnecessary words if they are not implemented in practice, as in many companies of today. The work speaks for itself, as laid out below:

> (R 3) We don't have that, if we're talking about these kinds of phrases that are used in working life today…There are no such thing as having been sacredly promised to do this. I'm like that now. I am. Working in an almost [age] -old company, which is an [age] family business, in a way the work culture is also a bit different from what might be in today's IT sector. If I open the company website of a normal person's workplace, there are these ridiculous values. We don't have anything like this recorded anywhere, and I don't feel that they have any function if they are not implemented and there is no semblance of will.

Mutual Trust

The industry pace requires a strong mutual trust to manage the rapid changes in operations. This requires that employers are flexible towards drivers when they request free days, and that drivers are flexible when orders come in on short notice. A strong sense of commitment is also required to get the operations running in the companies, as laid out in the following citation:

> "I know how hectic this industry is and how it works these days. It's like we're at a taxi station, no one knows until a week from now, what there… What's coming. It requires that the staff is flexible and willing to try to get this thing going on our own. That is the prerequisite for this. (R 3)

There are industry employers who seem to take time for the employee, by talking to them about personal topics, or inquiring how the gig went. Leaders who have general empathy towards the profession seem to be respected, and appreciated by the workers, as laid out in the following citations:

> "I have the opinion, that now in this company, the reason is that a driver has been promoted to CEO back in the days, and that he has brought with him his experience and understanding, which enabled him to get his own will through, how things work, or should work." (R 1)

> "...we have such a good spirit that if you and the CEO meet in that yard, you'll stay for an hour to chat. We are talking about something completely different than work. Our personal relationships are in order." (3)

Another driver underlines the importance of the foremen and their knowledge of the industry. The driver claims that it is a result of society, that too many managers are hired without any experience from the industry. This affects the decision making in many companies, which might explain why

companies led by leaders who have experiences in driving seem to do better, as laid out in the following citation:

> (R 2) if we are talking about big houses…You can't get into the middle model boss position if you don't have that work experience in that field. I claim that too many people graduate from the school bench, like straight little bosses without understanding what it is based on.

5.2   Community

The following employee experience topic of the study is community. In this topic, three categories were identified: *Inter-professional Relations, Customer Interactions* and *Experiences*. The difference in frequency of these topics is small, and hence might seem to be equally important for the drivers in the study. The choice was made to include the driver experiences in this theme, as relate to the social part of the work.
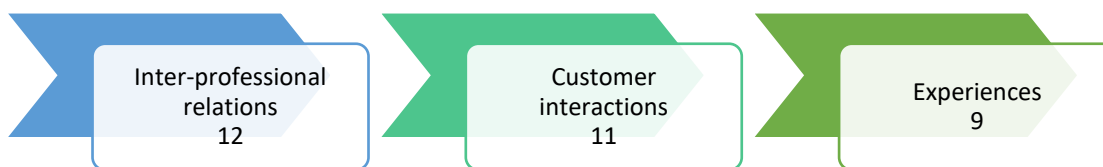

Figure 6 The categories and frequency in Community

Inter-professional relations

The comradery between drivers in combination with the mutual experiences create a strong bond when drivers cross company boarders spend time together. Drivers' respect and appreciate help each other. This is the most frequent mentioned topic in the EX-theme community. Drivers appreciate and value their colleagues. All respondents only talk positive about older colleagues. Many of them mention that they befriend each other and enjoy spending time at and outside work. Whenever they get to go on gigs together, they have much fun. In the driver community, helping and advising each other seems to be an important part of the work. This seems to create a sort of psychological safety for the drivers, as laid out in the following citations:

> "…99 percent of drivers from somewhere, even if they work for another employer, is a charter bus driver. We belong to this same pack of lunatics. So, the spirit of togetherness is surprisingly good. And in general, the longer the trip is, and especially if there are more than one driver, the more fun we often have." (R 4)

> "But these closest colleagues, who have been there a little longer now, with them, it's really nice. They are wonderful people, and they are professionals, and I appreciate them." (R 5)

The psychological safety also helps in mitigating driver exhaustion. The support and advice between colleagues on the road and in the depots are mostly done in good spirit. There seems to be a culture where drivers debrief and discuss about topics that are stressing drivers, which helps drivers process what is stressing them, as laid out in the following citation:

> "On one hand, I have actually had the privilege of working only in companies where the atmosphere between the drivers has been good. It has sorts of helped that, then you didn't feel that... Incredibly good atmosphere, and that has something which has then smoothed over when you feel exhausted..." (R 6)

The newcomers to the industry might not be aware of the strong comradery in the industry, or why they should appreciate their colleagues. It is common that older drivers' advice new drivers when they began working for a new employer. This is not clear for all entering the industry, and it seems like it is creating friction between colleagues:

> "If you think about our youngsters out there. Yes, when such a starting point is that "Oh, why do you have to greet if you meet someone on the road? - "Well, he's a colleague and he could be the person who helps you out of that ditch when you're there with a flat tire." (R 2)

> "Then when you go to say that "this matter should be handled like this, in this way" then they answer, "who are you to advise me!". So, then it always comes down to the fact that "oh man, this is such a naysayer", so it's not good for me to say anything." (R 5)

The employers of the industry also seems well connected. One driver mentioned of a situation where there was an agreement of coming for work the next day. Another employer called for work, but the driver had already agreed on working for the other employer. As it seems, the employers had in advance planned between the two parties about the driver, as laid out below:

> "I had seen one gig; I had made an agreement with a local operator... So, the night before, another operator called me that he needed me to work. And I said that if it doesn't work out that... "when I've already agreed with that guy". Of course, these operators knew each other...so there was an immediate response: "it doesn't matter that she just talked to the other one, we put my driver to work there, come on my gig here." (R 2)

Customer interactions

Bus drivers are mostly social, and the social interactions through customer encounters are what makes the job worthwhile. Drivers meet customers from all over the world, which gives them a deep insight into cultures and languages. Drivers appreciate the social diversity which they encounter at work, and they take great pride in the work they do. Many drivers report, that the most rewarding part of customer service is when they feel like they are brought into the group which they drive, this partially blurs the line between vacation and work, enabling long workdays where there are many other tasks than just driving:

> "...I would say that the best thing is probably, from the driver's point of view, that you get to meet so many different kinds of people and that is that as a citizen you would not come into contact with. So many different kinds of industries because you can transport any kind of groups." (R 6)

> "…in the charter bus job when you have a good group in the bus it becomes a bit like being on vacation yourself." (R 2)

Not all drivers have the necessary social skills, and some drivers see this as a threat to the industry. Many drivers report that newcomers joining from outside the industry, do not know what kind of socializing is expected from them. This also seems to lead to a culture of segregation, where the newcomers are not appreciated by the new, more experienced colleagues, as the new drivers do not seem to understand the culture of advising each other, as exemplified in the following citation:

> "...unfortunately, you see a lot of drivers, for whom this kind of socializing with customers doesn't go well at all." (R 3)

> "Then there are these new ones, when there are so many new ones, they are not necessarily like the people in the industry. They are, they are like… There are a lot of local bus drivers. They don't know anything about things." (R 5)

Just as changes in society, also customer needs and expectations are changing. These affect the coach drivers in negative ways, as the rules of engagement between customer and driver is changing. Before it was normal that drivers were asked to join in on activities, and drivers were expected to guide and show and tell during trips. Today many customer groups only expect drivers to sit and drive and demand service from them. This leads to an internal conflict for the drivers, as they have joined the industry because they are social. The professional pride also suffers, as the drivers take great pride in their social skills, which are not needed as much anymore. This phenomenon is highlighted in the following citations:

> "Today's customers are so much more demanding. They can demand anything possible that they have experienced somewhere else…you have to be very careful about what you say, how you say it, what tone of voice you use…today I'm not required to socialize with those people in the same way as before. I've become a bit of a recluse." (R 3)

> "The physical part is not that heavy, but the fact that you should be happy and polite in all situations, and also that you must be very flexible and able to adapt, and that is it for better or worse. (R 6)

Experiences

Charter coach drivers seem to be adventure-seekers. They enjoy the experiences which they get when driving customers to different destinations. The experiences seem to outweigh the fact, that the schedules, gigs, and situations change in a fast pace in the industry. Many drivers also seem to appreciate that they do not know where they will end up at the end of the day. Many of the drivers

seem to understand that the borders between work and leisure are blurred when talking about the experience they experience during their work, as laid out in the following citations:

> "… the greatest richness of this driver's job, that you get to be part of those groups, you get acquainted to different people. You get to visit places that you wouldn't visit in any other professions. I've been to many factories to see how cars are made… I have skied in the Alps, hiked in Lapland. And then you get to visit different places in Russia and the Baltics and so on. And I've been paid for it." (R 3)

> "…the most interesting moments were when they came as a surprise, for example, that we were going to do, drive a big bus... to a depth of several kilometres... to nuclear waste… What are they called…repository sites... And yes, it's like that, there are a lot of places like that...that's it, but it's the most amazing. The most wonderful things have been done and seen. (R 2)

Some of the experiences which the drivers experience are quite exclusive in nature. Drivers seem to understand this and appreciate this benefit of their jobs. One driver mentions that not even authorities would have access to some places where they have visited. Only people in direct work-connection to the site would have access. This further makes the job feel special for the drivers, as laid out in the following citation:

> "…when I worked for my employer, I was at the Loviisa nuclear power plant. And also, down to a hundred and four meters underground in this final repository, and that was interesting… if the policeman on the street says that he wants to go there and look, he probably would not gain access there, if he doesn't really have anything work-related business there... Small things maybe, but big ones nonetheless." (R 6)

Most of the drivers mention that the experiences they experience in their work would not be possible in another profession. They seem to realize that to experience the same amount, it would require a lot of money and free time. This further makes the drivers enjoy the experiences, as mentioned in the following citation:

> "…if I had to buy all those experiences with my own money and my own time, I don't know. No number of vacations would be enough for that, and no amount of money." (R 3)

New drivers, entering the industry are not aware of this benefit in the profession. They do not seem to know that as a charter coach driver experiences a lot during their job and is asked to join in on activities with the customers. It only becomes evident to them, once they have entered the industry, as explained below:

> "These new drivers that I talk to regularly, they are very positively surprised by these experiences. They haven't understood that they can be involved in so much, so it's probably a hidden, hidden, positive thing that they haven't been able to convey." (R 6)

Unfortunately, the experiences, which the drivers can participate in during their work seem to be reducing. It might be a result of service providers focusing on cost-efficiency. As an example of this are theaters who do not longer provide free tickets for drivers who brought a group to a show, as laid out in the following example:

"Then, of course, some things also get worse, like the drivers' things… Like these, which we may have received, which I myself have been surprised by... The Swedish theater no longer invites the drivers to the theatre. And so I think so, then the customer himself must have an extra ticket. That the theater does not offer. There may be other theaters that have taken an equally hard line… I myself was surprised that why have you chosen not to invite the driver when you have previously invited…" (R 6)

5.3   Physical Spaces and Environment

In this subchapter, the following categories were identified through coding: *Maintenance and Fleet Compliance* of the Coaches, the Depots and *Facilities* and *Vehicle-induced stress.* Maintenance had the largest frequency (17 hits), depots had the second most frequency (8 hits) and environment-inflicted stress (6 hits) was least frequent of these. The choice was made to include the themes of the vehicles in this part, as the Coaches can be regarded more as working space for the drivers than tools. Examples of the previously mentioned categories can be seen in Figure 7.
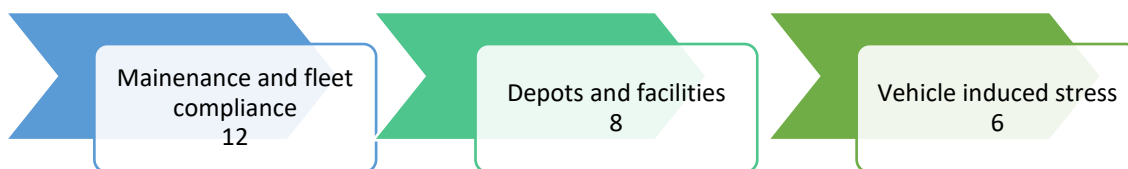

| Mainenance and fleet compliance 12 | Depots and facilities 8 | Vehicle induced stress 6 |

Figure 7 Categories and frequencies found in Physical Spaces and Environment

Maintenance and Fleet Compliance

The state of the coaches varies a lot between companies. Some coaches are in a good state, and some are quite badly maintained. The maintenance degree is not affected between company sizes, as maintenance negligence is prevailing in many different companies. Some companies seem to do better than others. The state of the industry coaches is best highlighted with the following citations:

"Fits (except for 2 Volvo buses) perfectly for this job. But of course, the fact that that at the moment, our biggest problem is lack of maintenance...I think we have such a good product. But if you have a good product, you should be able to take care of basic maintenance and basic repairs... So, you should be able to handle it more efficiently." (R 4)

"The buses are top notch, and there are no… There are no defects. They are maintained and repaired, neat and clean and the tires are good. The buses have actually been serviced..." (R 1)

"Basically, they have either been in very good condition and everything works as it should, or they have been in completely different extremes: There has been that when the owner is an

> expert and knows his car inside out, and then there may have been those that "you kick that pull, stroke that and talk nice, and maybe it will work"." (R 2)

There seems like there might be a way of thinking that the travel agencies in the companies do the marketing, while it seems to be forgotten that the coaches speak for themselves, as laid out in the following citation:

> "In many charter coach companies there is a travel agency connected, and they advertise that hey, you can't get there and I can't get here, but they only advertise to their potential customers. They don't advertise their own exterior to all by passers." (R 2)

The coaches would not need to be the newest possible if they would be well maintained and safe. New coaches do not seem to be that important to some drivers, as laid out in the following citation:

> "Good equipment, serviced. The passenger compartment is clean, which means it does not have to be brand new. In my opinion, the most important criterion is reliability, which is reflected in the maintenance…. And the traffic safety. It doesn't matter if the bus is 15 years old or 3 years old, as long as it is… The hatch works reliably and it has all the air conditioning and the like that are required today." (R 4)

One explanation for the bad state of the coaches is explained by the fact, that in larger companies, coaches are used by several drivers. This reduces the possibility that drivers know the vehicle and preventively detect any faults which are arising. This is highlighted in the following citation:

> "Well, the old basic rule also applies in this charter coach business: the more drivers there are, the worse condition the bus is in. 2 drivers per bus and the car will still be in good condition. When there is a third driver, that's when it starts to deteriorate." (R 2)

Covid-19 affected the industry operations. As many coaches were written off traffic, few companies could afford to service the coaches while the fleet was standing. This is now visible in some companies, where the same coaches, which were not maintained during the pandemic, are now driving customers. This is partially explained by the ramp-up of orders in post-pandemic times, which seemed to surprise the companies, as laid out in the following citation:

> "Of course, it's because of the corona. That is probably one of the reasons, i.e., the financial situation of companies has become tight, but that's the way I think it is… Now when we talk about a bigger company, I think it's the way that we have older coaches and also like, like this top-of-the-line equipment, which is really good. It would be beneficial to always take one car at a time from the better end, whenever it is possible and to go through those cars one piece at a time." (R 4)

There are also differences between companies' coaches, based on how they have profiled themselves with customers. Companies that sell Business to Business (B2B) services seem to have better coaches, as customers demand more, and pay a higher price for transports, as exemplified in this citation:

> "...those who drive business customers are surprisingly successful. But those who namely drive single tourist groups, football clubs and juniors don't really have money, when hobbies can't cost anything... So, so… They have to charge less for the gig. I'm not at all surprised that

they can't afford to keep newer equipment. But of course, does the entrepreneur want to keep newer equipment, since even a little older one is fine for the football team as long as it's clean, and the bus's age doesn't show. I've driven many old buses, which I like much better and neater than many new ones." (R 2)

There seems to be differences between transport industry branches. The trucking industry seems to have understood, that nice vehicles attract more customers and employees. This has also led to an upswing on the trucking side, while the gap to the bus industry is growing. This is best as laid out the following citation:

"I claim that the cargo side is currently more salable than the passenger side. Because... The cargo side started to lift itself. I'm talking now about truck tuning. When I feel again, that if you compare the cargo side and the bus side, the further we go from here, it seems to me… If I had to predict, then the development curve shows that the guys on the trucking side, even if it costs a little and takes a little money from the cash register, they want to look good. On the bus side, it feels like the fleet is constantly deteriorating. You have to go with older and older (coaches) all the time". (R 2)

The legal and emissions compliance checks are not as common as in Norway or Sweden. In Sweden coach emissions are checked when entering cities. One driver feels distressed that the Finnish coach fleet is not more frequently checked, as they are in the neighboring countries:

"...the difference probably comes from the fact that the Norwegians are really interested in the technical condition of foreign vehicles on their roads and... then in Finland, on paper, the Finnish authorities are worried about the condition of the vehicles on the road. But in practice since the National Traffic Police was abolished, the Finnish authorities show that they not interested in which state the vehicles are in." (R 4)

Depots and Facilities

As social interactions between colleagues are important to the drivers, also social spaces at the depots are equally important. The coffee room has become a space where drivers discuss their schedules for the day, and possible destinations. This is also a space where drivers advice each other on route choices:

"What is quite important is that colleagues…Like, there is… a coffee room and such. A space where one gets like so much information there too...Same space where one can like come to work sooner and prepare. And in a way too, that when you go into traffic like that… That way you would get the coffee, so you don't have to always go through a gas station and pick it up even if you've been drinking at home. But in a way it gives such a calming feeling." (R 1)

Social spaces for drivers and the depots in many companies seem to be impractical. Either there is no space whatsoever, or they are dirty or old. Drivers are wondering how it can be, that drivers and coaches are expected to be neat and clean, but the spaces where coaches are cleaned and stored, and where drivers move are dirty or outdated. This is best laid out the following citations:

> "At the moment the depot where I am is so outdated, there is the coffee room, but it is not practical in a way." (R 1)

> "If the bus must be clean inside and out and the driver must be clean and neatly dressed, then I also think that where you handle the driver's... Where the driver moves in his own spaces and where the bus is handled in its own spaces, they would have to be tidier. It is quite horrifying to look into many bus companies' spaces today." (R 6)

Some drivers report that coaches in the industry are in a bad state, which creates psychological unsafety for drivers who need to embark on long journeys. Coaches might break down on the road, display warning lights, or have other miscellaneous faults which the driver cannot do anything about. This is partially explained by the tight economic situation in some companies, because of Covid-19. There is also a mention that the drivers experience stress when customers complaint about faults that were present during the previous journey, question the professionality of the companies, as laid out in the following citations:

> "I have driven quite a lot with all coaches. But lately, I've gotten coaches that are a little better, so to speak. But the fact that, as I said before, when they don't... there's something wrong with all of them, So there is always this moment of suspense." (5)

> "…of course, different companies can have very thin finances. The fact is that, yes, the first point is that the equipment which has been standing for a long time, possibly in other companies, and the fact that the equipment needs to be put in such condition that it is reliable, that it does not break down on the road, because whenever that equipment breaks down on the road, we very likely will lose the customer in the future who was on the bus that broke down, so that's like the first point." (R 4)

Vehicle-induced stress

Even if the drivers are filing fault reports of the coaches to the employers, some drivers report that employers are not maintaining the coaches. This increases the stress of the drivers and decreases the employee's appreciation towards the employer. As the coach is the working space of the drivers, drivers appreciate reliable coaches, and this is also why it would be important that entrepreneurs react to fault reports. An example of this can be found in the following citation:

> "…when you hear drivers who are upset or disturbed by the fact that we write so-called fault reports. But then nothing happens. It's the same fault: It's leaking air. it's like the worst, and you probably get so tired of it: if you tell about, that and you write down that: this is leaking air… so that the buzzer screams or flashes. That would then have to be taken seriously and there is a big difference and there is a huge difference between the companies, but that it comes up far too often when you hear many different drivers in many different bus companies…" (R 6)

When the coaches are maintained, drivers feel more relaxed and less stressed during the day, even if the day would be longer. Here the impact of how reliable coaches affect the drivers' wellbeing is depicted in the following citation:

"…for example, yesterday was an absolutely wonderful day, because I got to drive a coach like that, that works and is nice to drive. Nice gig, long day, but still no... You don't get that tired even, because that coach works, and feels nice and clean..." (R 5)

5.4 Technology and Tools

In this subchapter technology and tools and are presented. The identified categories in the study are *Importance of IT technology* and *Employer Infrastructure*. The categories and their frequency can be found in figure 7.

Importance of IT technology
10

Employer IT infrastructure
6

Figure 8 Categories and frequencies found in Technology and Tools

Importance of IT technology

Mostly larger companies have adopted driver portals, apps or extranet pages for instructions or reporting of the gigs. These help drivers in planning and scheduling their workday in advance. These are best described through the following citations:

"...we don't have a lot of applications in use yet, but we have our own extranet pages and there you can find information and things. The driving series form, driving arrangement forms and everything can be found there..." (R 3)

"[Program name], a program, like where you can see the times, the places of the gigs. It's recorded there... That's pretty good. In a way, you can record your all day there in [Program name], and you don't have to report afterwards." (R 1)

When providing these applications to drivers, the functionality should be tested in advance as there might be glitches or similar in the programs, as laid out in the following citation:

"…I think they should be properly tested first every time they are launched… We have, for example, the previous system, and it was, from the user's point of view, more functional than the current one, in many ways..." (R 4)

Changes in society and the way we communicate seems to have affected the drivers work also. Quick-messaging services such as WhatsApp has entered the industry which creates a gap, as there seems to be drivers who still use traditional mobile phones. Then there are drivers who have adopted modern technology in their work, who draw conclusions between flexibility and willingness to adopting new technology, as laid out in the following citations:

"...the more you use information technology, and the more you are prepared for change… So, the easier it is for that entrepreneur. And the easier it is, the easier it is for the driver to get employed. But it's still not a necessity, because there are... there are still those all-day trips somewhere." (R 2)

"Well, the most important thing is probably a computer and a laptop... As a charter bus driver... the more technical skills you have, the better you are able to work. In my opinion, in our field, at the moment... Mastering information technology is mandatory. And that's probably the most important thing." (R 4)

Employer IT Infrastructure

Most of the drivers use their own phones or navigators in coaches. Most common technology which is provided for drivers, are found in the coaches. This includes driving computers and built-in GPS, which might be quite outdated:

"Perhaps now what concerns the coach, what happens to be in that particular bus, what there is except other than a trip computer, or if there even is one… Or a navigator or something. It is perhaps negative that you don't have the most up-to-date navigators, that you might expect the driver to bring such a navigator with him that he himself needs... That then… The company has navigators but perhaps not always the best, most up-to-date imaginable. (R 6)

"We have nothing. Every customer contact must be done on your own phone. We don't have anything in those coaches anymore; no vacuum cleaners, no tools – nothing…" (R 5)

Some drivers would like to see that work phones or tablet computers would be provided to workers to make work-related calls or report drives on.

"I have never had a company phone from the bus industry, so that… I would see it as a thing that… I think you should have a company phone." (6)

"A company's phone, i.e., as everything has been taken from us. We have nothing. Everything you need to call customers must be done on your own phone. We don't have anything in those cars anymore… So, first of all it should start with having something to work on." (R 5)

"It occurred to me that when we do it now with our own phones, there could be a small tablet in the coach...You can take care of it (reporting) right away, and when it's ready, it will be done." (R 1)

The charter coach industry seems to have a culture of working without technological infrastructure. Drivers report that before Information Technology became available in coaches, foremen would instruct the drivers on where to drive and what to do. The emergence of search engines and navigation services has helped drivers in their work, but at the same time have made new drivers dependent on navigational aids, which older drivers do not need. These examples are best laid out in the following citations:

"Thank God that Information Technology has become common. Correspondingly, it is much easier (to work), especially abroad. So nowadays, when you go on a slightly longer trip, you

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some drivers, as many of the drivers have an adventurous mindset, where they do not like predictability of scheduled work. This attitude can be found in the following citations:

> "Notification of work shifts and such should like work better than it works in this company today. That is, the publications of the drives. Now, if we are talking about just driving domestically, then of course they should come to the driver's attention well in advance the day before." (R 5)

> "...the charter drivers' specialty; like, things can always change, and really, you don't necessarily and always know, that when you go to work in the morning, in which country you'll lay your head on the pillow." (R 4)

Some drivers report that the nature of the charter coach industry has changed, that the industry has become more like taxi business where drivers drive from one place to another on short notice. This everchanging order stock requires flexibility from drivers when planning their own life, and free time, as many drivers are required to swap free days.

> "… the charter industry inside [Geographical location is like a taxi business... There is no like time anymore. It's like, bringing from point A to B, and after that you have to be in the next place." (R 1)

> "I know the hectic nature of this industry and how things are going these days; it's like we're at a taxi stand that no one will know until a week from now what's there and what's coming. So it requires that this personnel be flexible and come along and try to get this thing going on our own." (R 3)

The staff shortage in the industry is starting to show. During and after the pandemic many companies lost their drivers to other industries. This is seen as an ever-increasing workload on the current drivers. Many drivers are under pressure as minimal, legal resting times are adopted between shifts. Drivers are asked to swap days off from the shift list or come to work during days off to fill the need. The capacity is according to one driver already at peak, even if 20 % of the customers are missing. This results in that many drivers cannot keep their compensational free days when needed. Laws on driving and resting times are also violated in some companies. These examples are shown below:

> "When you have a fourteen-hour day, and then there's a nine-hour night. And when the 9 hours start from when you stop the bus until you leave the next day. That's it… If you have an hour's work commute, then you have 7 hours. Then when you are at home, you don't fall asleep, because you're already anxious about waking up in the morning. So that leaves it to 4-5 hours of sleep at night." (R 1)

> Perhaps the biggest problem at the moment is that during the Corona, when drivers left, many left for other jobs...And now after the corona, when drives started and there are not enough drivers, there are a lot of gigs and when there are no employees, at the moment it seems like keeping your compensational free-days getting time off, at least in our company, is very difficult." (R4)

Driver shortage and decreased capacity in office workers, in combination with a large order stock has driven the industry to a situation where shifts and schedules are made at a very late stage. In

many charter companies it is standard practice that the next day gigs are published the previous afternoon. Some of the drivers report that companies have not been able to publish these on time. This has also affected the vacation lists in some companies, as laid out below:

> "...now there was a terrible polemic here with the colleagues, that when there were no holiday lists - nothing came. Of course, everyone wanted to take those vacations in the summer, so suddenly it happened that everyone was given those vacations, so it feels somehow strange suddenly that it was ordered..." (R 5)

> "Work shifts, reporting and the like…It should work better than what it works in the company these days. That is, the driving list publications, if we are talking about just driving in the country, should come to the driver's attention well in advance the day before." (R 4)

There seems to be some companies where planning in advance is possible, and where shifts are published well in advance. These drivers generally seem more content with their working conditions, as exemplified in the following citation:

> "…in our company, these day off requests and holiday requests are well considered. But these are of course always depending on how things are done in different companies, and the fact that when these types of things work well, it enables the job." (R 3)

The emergence growing orders and staff shortage has led to that some drivers to prefer part-time or zero-hour contracts, as this gives them a possibility to choose where and when they go for work. This also means that drivers can work for multiple employers without having to be tied to one, specific employer, as laid out in the following citations:

> "My current contract is still zero-hour contract. So, I don't have a shift list now... But with the current work pressure, that probably won't be true in an awful lot of companies, unfortunately... and sometimes the company has to dare to say no... The companies should say no to that number of orders." (R 1)

> "But I perhaps saw it as an even bigger plus for myself. I got a day off just when I wanted. If I didn't want to go to a gig, I say I won't go. As an employee, people would have had to go…Every single house has its own problems. Why would I, excuse the use of coarse language; Why would I commit myself to those problems and that shit when I can eat the cherry on top of the cake." (R 3)

Some companies might have had, due to the circumstances, to adopt change around employment questions and working conditions, as drivers more and more seem to move towards 0-hour contracts. This leads to that a shift in thinking has to happen, where employers are the servants of the staff, and not the other way. It should also be noted that it seems like smaller companies use to a higher degree zero-time employees. Examples of the phenomenon can be found in the following citation:

> "Well, I claim that they have already involuntarily been forced into it, although they may not even have understood it themselves yet. Because whatever the reasons are that a person wants to be free and doesn't want to tie himself to anything, the more zero-hour contracts increase. So even then, the more the company uses zero-hours contracts. The more, it has to think about it specifically that the boss is everyone's servant. I claim that especially Finnish

small charter coach companies have already had to change their way of thinking, even if they don't understand it yet." (R 2)

Work-free time Balance

All drivers report that combining work and free time in the job is hard. The drivers are working long days, notified on short notice about these. Drivers report departing before their families wake up and return after they have gone to sleep. The long workdays cause fatigue among most drivers. Most interviewees report that the work means that their family life and social life suffered in the work, which caused stress for the drivers, as laid out in the following citations:

> "...even though it's fun and rewarding and I get to experience a lot of nice things. But then I'm also away from home quite a lot, so that's the price… if I were a person with a family, living the peak years, who would have 3 children under school age, then this equation would be pretty terrible." (R 3)

> "…you wouldn't want to be at work all the time either. Depending, of course a little bit on the life situation, I liked being at work all the time. Well, of course, that led to a burn-out. But then again, when you have a family, it just doesn't fit that well. That, whenever you went, you didn't know when you'd come back. And if you did know, you always didn't even know when you had to leave." (R 2)

> "The work dictated the free time, I can say. That is, when I worked full-time with the charter bus driver job. I was the one who didn't have a family, and didn't have children at the time, so it was assumed that I work evenings and weekends. And I did that a lot too, and in the long run it became quite heavy, because you would have liked to have had a different social life as well. If you have Monday and Tuesday off, or maybe not... The social life suffers." (R 6)

Drivers discuss about the definition of free time in the interviews. It seems like drivers can run errands, do hobbies or socialize with friends and family during the workday. This creates an unclear boundary between work and free time, as laid out in the following citations:

> "As a charter driver, there are many free hours in foreign cities. And if the Driver thinks that his free time is, that he can do something specific, and if that thing might be, for instance visiting the gym, it's really easy to combine it nowadays when there are national gym owners, that with one membership fee you can go anywhere. But then if free time means a social life outside of work, then it can be a bit more challenging." (R 2)

> "…when I'm somewhere in a city and I have 5 hours to spend there, I like to use those 5 hours for something like watching some streaming stuff on the internet, or read, or go to visit someone... or I take care of some of my own things, own hobbies…" (R 3)

Driver Exhaustion

Covid-19 has impacted the industry in many ways. Drivers work and free time balance has been severely affected. Some drivers estimate that the customer base has reduced with 20 %, whilst the

production capacity is reduced due to driver shortage. This has led to an emergence of inflexibility from the drivers, considering swapping of free days in the shift lists, as shown below:

> "It's quite hectic, that we now go, and go flat out, so there's nothing like having your own time. And then when you have a day off, I don't feel like I have time off, because that's when I clean and wash clothes and feed my mother and take care of her and. Like I was in terrible pain at one point when my mother got seriously ill, like that… So, when I get that one day a week, I take care of my mother and bring food and put everything that is needed… You are not left with any time for yourself." (R 5)

> "Now they are much longer than they were before the corona virus. We try to do it with a much smaller staff. So, when the workload is the same, as with more drivers before, and… That's why right now, specifically in my case, I've now decided: I'm going to stick to the days off that are important in the work shift list, and I won't start to swap them, so that I have the opportunity to do my own things and your own life, because there are still mandatory errands that people have to run." (R 4)

The long working time, and little time to rest is affecting the drivers. Some drivers discuss this in the interviews. They report that many colleagues are suffering from sleep apnea which are not treated, as drivers fear that they might lose the job. This is a big risk when these drivers transport people on board, and they are not well rested.

> "…I've sometimes wondered that yes, yes "I'm in good shape", that I'm taking care of myself, but when you know that I'm not... But then everything seems to be there: Sleep apnea and all, but you don't want them that way to accept...that they just get passed...I've seen it, that they avoid it...Because they're afraid that then they won't be able to drive anymore or not. I won't take the card away, so then I don't dare to take care of the matter. Even if it's just that, it's really wild. You can even die from it...in my opinion, these health checks should be more effective. That that person would be taken care of just to the point that it's not a risk for those people, when you have quite a lot of people sitting back there anyway…" (R 5)

5.6   Driver Shortage

In this subchapter, the industry driver shortage is discussed. The topics which were found are: *Industry Appeal*, *Industry Actions*, *Working Conditions*, *Driver Suitability*, *Socio-demographic differences*. The categories and their frequencies can be found in Figure 10.
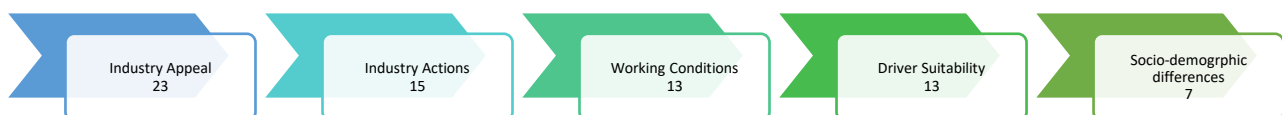
Industry Appeal 23	Industry Actions 15	Working Conditions 13	Driver Suitability 13	Socio-demogrphic differences 7

Figure 10 Categories and frequencies found in Driver Shortage

Industry Appeal

The charter coach industry seems to not attract female drivers. Drivers report that women sitting in the coaches reflect that they could imagine themselves driving the coach. Nevertheless, the drivers state that no female drivers are ending up in the industry, they seem to end up in local traffic. Good examples of this phenomenon can be found below:

> "If we think about it... We take 10 women who are choosing a profession for themselves. It seems like it's possible that out of these 10 a single one won't become a driver." (R 3)

> "After all, I haven't seen any new ones this year. But that... From the local transport side, I have seen a few when I came to the charter side. It's pretty weak, yes..." (R 1)

> "…many times when you listen to the women talking behind the back, the customers say to each other, "I could drive one of these, too", but when they don't come to drive there anyway... when you think that during these 45 years, and I understand that in the 80s there wasn't many, but even today, if there are women at the wheel, but they are on the local traffic side. They don't come like here on the charter side." (R 5)

The reason why female drivers are not entering the industry or leave the industry at an early stage could be explained by family reasons. Women seem to have more pressure on forming families, which affect why they leave or do not enter the industry, when they are about to start a family, as laid out in the following citations:

> "I claim that there is one reason, even though women come to the charter industry, they leave it in a certain stage in life, and don't return…On the other hand, men are somehow more allowed to travel for work, when… If we're talking about the general world of thought." (R 2)

> "Women inevitably don't stay with us because of that, because they have the problem, with women, that at the point when you start a family, especially charter driving doesn't appeal to you. They might end up somewhere on the side of city traffic and somewhere in the morning rush hour...Only because they have to be for long periods of time away from home and that's our problem." (R 4)

Female drivers seem to instead choose local traffic, where they can sustain normal family life, through scheduled work and predictability, even if they would in many ways be more suitable for the charter coach industry, as laid out in the following citations:

> "...when you think that during these forty-five years, and I understand that there was not much in the 80s. But even today if a woman is at the wheel, so she is in the local traffic industry. They don't come like here in the charter industry. Despite, a woman drives more moderately and more thoughtfully than a man, because she doesn't go out and show off how it's done." (R 5)

> "If we talk about the work of a bus driver now, even in city traffic, there is work done day and night. Of course, the working hours are more regular there and that it is easier to coordinate their day care and their normal family life." (R 3)

Another reason for driver shortage and that not more applicants are applying for the job is the picture of the job, and the industry in general. Many outsiders have no understanding of the charter coach drivers work picture. Drivers mention that outsiders and potential drivers get a skewed

picture of the job, when they compare coach drivers to local traffic drivers, as explained in the following citations:

> "...when we go into the mental landscape of that teenage monster who has been on the bus, he has traveled to school by bus. And then has possibly traveled on game trips…in hobbyist circles somewhere on game trips in a coach. On charter trips, they have gone to play Ice hockey or football. So, what kind of image does the young person get of this profession? Does it look up at us in appreciation? In admire thinking, that "damn, that's a great job - I want to become a bus driver someday". " (R 3)

> "The first reason is probably that many people don't even realize how versatile the bus industry is, that when a person thinks of bus drivers, the first thing that comes to mind is local traffic drivers, where they have a big mushroom in their foreheads." (R 4)

> "But now it would be good for me to perhaps emphasize that a charter bus driver is also something completely, completely different from a regular bus driver, too. Many may have that image, many people today who go to their jobs may have the image that that bus is always driven by drivers who drive local traffic or long-distance traffic. Many people don't have the faintest idea that you can work as a charter bus driver… many people may have that image of when they have gone to their jobs in public transport, they think that they don't want to be that grumpy bus driver who never says, "good morning" or says "thank you" or "goodbye". (R 6)

One reason seems to be the attitudes of the society towards the driver's profession in general. Some of the drivers feel like their job is not appreciated. Several of the drivers compare their work to airline pilots, both parties travel a lot and are away from home. One party has good salaries and is appreciated while the other one is not. This affects how attractive the industry seems to potential drivers or outsiders. It is generally regarded as not all can fly, but anyone can drive a bus:

> "If we compare bus drivers, for example and a pilot. In principle the same thing; both travel from destination to destination and so on. The pilot is appreciated but not the bus driver. Partly due to the fact that it is thought that not everyone can fly, but anyone can drive." (R 2)

> "…as the flight captain said, "you are in a pay pit". I took a group to Turku; the captain came with me from this airport. Said: "yes, you have these 60 people. I had all these on my plane, and I was followed by 15 people what I was doing, and you have a million people here on the roads who does anything imaginable". So, he said that "your salary is terrible compared to the amount of responsibility, but it can't be compensated for in any way". (R 1)

Industry Actions

Driver shortage is real and increasing in the industry. The industry seems to have been quite passive towards recruitment, employer branding and updating its image towards potential workforce. This is particularly seen in the charter branch, where according to the drivers, both drivers and entrepreneurs have protected the industry as something exclusive during the past 20 years. This has led to a situation where there are today many retired drivers who regularly drive the coaches. Examples of these can be found in the following citations:

> "And as the driver shortage will certainly last for a long time. I don't really see any quick solutions there because they have been doing away with it for many, many years. I would say that in the last 20 years the industry has neglected this. They haven't understood that they will run out of drivers, or they haven't understood that they will have difficulty getting a sort of rejuvenation, that they will have a sort of continuum where drivers enter the industry regularly. They have failed there." (R 6)

> "Then why is it like that, that when it's being talked about that there is this terrible driver shortage, and there are no newcomers or workers, so I kind of think that there is an effect that feeds on itself. The fact that when it is said that there is a shortage of drivers, how is it done? Is it done so that "hey, educate yourself to become a driver", and then open up the good sides. Or do we convey that there is a terrible driver shortage, and there are jobs that no one wants to do? So it again feeds the fact that, well, why would you want to do it? I don't want it either when others don't either." (R 2)

One of the drivers pointed out that the driver situation in the industry started lagging because of a key person in the Labor Union AKT died in one of the worst bus accidents, in Finnish history (Konginkangas). This person was supposed to start working on the Charter Coach Industry questions to develop it on a national level. This can be seen in the following:

> "…it's due to Konginkangas. The guy who was supposed to start pulling the thing died there...And after that, the thing is not like it hasn't progressed. And no one else has wanted to influence the matter. That's the reason. Well, it was just left since then. It's a strategy or it was such a big hard hit, I don't know why… And somehow, I feel that it's not important. And yet it's like, should we say, on the bus side, there should be professional pride, and that in a way, it's kind of lost." (R 1)

Some companies do not seem to have any strategy for the future. They seem to regard downsizing instead of searching for solutions to solve the current issues. Some of the drivers have reported that entrepreneurs will sell out coaches as the current, retired drivers will not re-apply for Drivers Professional Competence.

> "There are several business owners who have bluntly said that they will reduce the number of coaches, because we see… We kind of see the problem in that they won't succeed in recruiting drivers so they will start selling coaches. They will downsize if they, and if they don't quit, they decrease so that they have fewer buses, and then they know they can, they can have they have a number of drivers, which they know they still have like a number of years ahead." (R 6)

Some drivers highlight this phenomenon by saying that the mindset of many entrepreneurs is that "we have always done like this", and therefore nothing should change. This seems to be a quite common way of thinking in the industry. Here one can see that Covid-19 was disruptive in nature, and forced companies to re-prioritize their operations, as laid out in the following citations:

> "...you can't compare when you have to hire new people and recruit new ones to the industry, that you only offer what you have offered for the last 40-50 years." (R 6)

> "…we need to think about it specifically in the way that it is the Boss who is everyone's servant. I claim that it's the same in Finland, especially in the small charter companies, so they've had to change their way of thinking, even if they don't understand it yet." (R 2)

The industry has a lot of collective knowledge which is slowly fading away, as drivers retire, or become employed in other industries. Even if new drivers enter the industry, there is no system of efficiently transferring the knowledge to the new drivers. Instead, new drivers are employed for the work, but need to figure the tasks out themselves, as laid out in the following citations:

> "...of course, older drivers have quite a lot of experience, but that experience is lost when the older drivers retire. So, in a way it's not like that - because that know-how is not transmitted anywhere. In other words, it just disappears from the industry… Now if that know-how is not transferred anywhere… in my opinion, that is quite a challenge." (R 4)

One solution to the problem would be that older drivers would mentor the young drivers with a sort of master-apprentice mentality, which would not cost too much for the companies. This would enable an efficient way of letting new drivers drive more demanding gigs, as more experienced drivers would mentor them, as laid out in the following citation:

> "...we would train, hire those young people and then give them someone from that company that they can rely on and with whom they would work in a way if there were any gigs with several coaches. They would go there like one and the older driver would then advise and teach them, so they could be trained at a slightly faster pace, instead of the guy then learning everything by banging his forehead against a tree and thinking that how he will make it, and instead be show how it is done." (R 4)

Some drivers report the actions they would like to be taken to attract more potential drivers to the industry. They include marketing campaigns to outsiders, bringing the charter industry job awareness in education and labor political educations forth as a suitable option. One driver states that the industry should start demanding excellence and professional pride in the way the work is conducted, in this way entrepreneurs and customers would start appreciating the profession and hence a salary increase could be motivated. Examples of these can be found in the following citations:

> "We should get a voice, through an advertising campaign, or something like that. Starting from the Bus Union or something like that. If you don't put an ad on the TV, where you would focus on young people. In social media, "Bus Driver", and "become a bus driver", where they are shown that hey, "bus transportation; local traffic, regional traffic, express traffic and then there is this charter", and you would give a picture how broad this industry really is." (R 4)

> "Let's bring it up when, for example, new people are applying for labor policy trainings, how is this industry presented there as one option. Because here you also must remember that here men and women do not get exactly the same salary. We are truly equal. And so away and employment is good. And it doesn't require, for example, physical strength these days at all. ...in a way, a woman's physiological differences don't bother me at all in this field, so yeah, it's not a problem. (R 3)

> "in general, the external appearance... if the drivers don't value themselves, if the entrepreneurs don't value the drivers, how could those passengers value the drivers? And if those passengers don't value the driver and the driver's work, then there isn't a single potential among the passengers who would like to do with this work." (R 2)

Working Conditions

The industry is also lacking a sustainable salary. According to one of the drivers, the covid pandemic lead to a situation where young drivers could not sustain themselves by waiting for the market to be revived. This led to many young drivers leaving the industry, furthering deepening the problem, as mentioned below:

> And as a bigger problem I would see that there went all the young drivers for other jobs, who couldn't afford to be unemployed. Because if you have housing debt, and a family and so on, you won't be able to do it then. For people my age, where the economy is in good shape and there are no housing debts, of course it didn't hit us in the same way, but from the point of view of the industry, it's the biggest problem." (R 4)

The industry wage-system also has no system for rewarding skills and competence. Many drivers pointed out that a salary raise in minimum wages with 2 € / hour would increase the pull-factor of the industry. Currently other parts of the transport industry, such as trucking and local traffic pays better wages than charter buses. This is partially explained by customers not requiring more from the service providers, as exemplified below:

> "Now in this field, what is completely missing is that we would be paid for our expertise… we're only paid for our presence. In other words, if you know all forms of traffic well enough that you can be put in express, city traffic or charter coach, you know languages, you speak good English, Swedish, and even German, reasonably well, you won't get anything extra for it, and no one will pay anything for it." (R 3)

> "At the moment, the bus driver's salary is, in my opinion, compared to others, we really have lagged behind, and especially on the charter bus side. If you like can get 2 € more an hour in local traffic, it really affects. A guy can join from that side, but he will be fed up then, so he is a little while so then goes back." (R 1)

Driver Suitability

One partial problem with driver shortage is that the drivers report that applicants for the industry are not suitable for the work. Already in the schools, most of the young students show a disinterest towards the job itself. This is mostly explained by labor political solutions where unemployed youngsters are sent by TE-offices to educations, as a means of employing the unemployed. Another problem mentioned during older students is that many of the applicants are of immigrant background – which by the industry seems to be regarded generally as not suitable for the job. Examples of these can be found below:

> "...at the moment, the situation, with both adults and youth, is that we can't get drivers for the bus industry, but there are enough for the trucking industry. And speaking about the bus industry; if we're talking about adults, the only applicants are, in a mean way said, immigrants. Among the youngsters, most of them are sent there by the TE-office." (R 2)

"I've once heard from an educational institution trainer, the teacher who said that sometimes there are such miserable-looking groups. He hopes that they will never get a job... In these courses, where there, where there were these bus driver groups, you can see that there are a couple of, 3 active people and the rest are sleeping." (R 3)

"…in charter, there is so much more to that concept than just driving. That is, the driving, so I would say that for a charter coach driver, it is 10% of the driving and 90% of everything else. Then I would say that at least of that 30 % is customer service. And that's exactly what comes as a surprise to an urban traffic driver." (R 4)

Socio-demographic Differences

One reason for driver shortage is explained through socio-demographic differences between employee segments. Young workers expect more from their employers today. The industry has for a long time been in a standstill, where employee benefits have not been a priority. According to some drivers, this culture needs to change. This phenomenon is seen as culture shock between new employees and employers, where employers are expected to offer them uniforms, lockers, exercise and culture vouchers. The reason for this is explained, that the old work force has never required this from the employers. The current retired drivers seem to be working under different conditions as new drivers, which might skew employers' image of what is expected by workers. These examples are best laid out in the following citations:

"A young person today might ask that "well, how do you take care of your drivers? I exercise a lot and I go to the Gym with others. Do you have any, like these... What kind of exercise- and culture vouchers do you have?" And then many times the business owners in the industry wonder, that: "What, what kind of vouchers? We have never had any vouchers."" (R 6)

"…the entrepreneur should make a certain point and it should draw some boundaries. The fact that. For example, does he use pensioner drivers or not? Do you use them because there is a real need? ... and then whether they use, for example, pensioner drivers for the fact that a multi-pensioner driver goes to a gig with an order drive that, hey, you can get free food there. Or are you paid a decent salary?" (R 2)

6   Discussion

In this chapter the discussion of the study is presented. The discussion includes *findings in relation to the theory of EX*, *suggestions for implementation of EX* in Finnish Charter Coach Companies, discussion about *research methodology and ethics* and finally *the learning process*, where my learning- and thesis process and possible recommendations for future studies are reviewed. The purpose of thesis was to identify what elements of EX are already implemented and what they look like through the phenomenon of driver shortage.

6.1   Findings in relation to the EX-theory

In the interviews several factors were identified as positively impacting the industry EX. These help companies in the EX-development process. As a disclaimer it would be good to ask whether the existing aspects of EX have risen by the employees themselves or as a conscious effort by the employers?

Strategy and culture

As seen in

Table 5, a part of the industry seems to have a polarization when it comes to leadership.

Table 5 Existing and improvable EX factors regarding Strategy and Culture

Existing EX factors in the industry: Strategy and Culture	Threats for positive EX in the industry: Strategy and Culture
✓ There seems to be employers where drivers are appreciated and respected ✓ Companies with satisfied drivers seems to show a greater flexibility and mutual understanding between employer and employee	✓ There seems to be employers which treat drivers with disrespect, where drivers feel unappreciated ✓ There seems to be alienation from the work itself in some companies ✓ In some companies there seems to be unclear what tasks should be paid, drivers working on same terms as entrepreneurs ✓ Some companies could not cope well with the impacts or change of Covid-19 ✓ A communicated strategy and vision seem to be missing in some companies ✓ Strategical work and innovation seem to be missing in some companies ✓ The industry in atmosphere in general seems weary

There seems to be employers who have created an atmosphere where employees are treated as equals, and the drivers' feel the mutual respect and appreciation towards the employer. These companies also seem to show a greater flexibility in the staff. These companies seem to indicate that they might be led by entrepreneurs who are driving, or who have a great understanding towards the job, which is confirmed by some of the interview material.

There are also companies where drivers seem to struggle with their employers. Many drivers feel like they enjoy their job, but express negative emotions towards the entrepreneur and the daily leadership. An alienation for the grass-root working seems to be present in some of the companies, and some companies seem to be led through hierarchy, which could be explained by inexperienced foremen, as one driver mentioned in the material. The struggling drivers seem to be

resorting to positive thinking, probably as a coping mechanism to stand out with the working conditions. One driver in the report had recently changed employer because of bad treatment.

There also seems to be companies where there are unclarities on what tasks are expected to be included in paid work or not. It is reported that in some companies' drivers are expected to maintain coaches unpaid, on the same terms as entrepreneurs. This also includes washing the coaches after long journeys, which is felt almost as a punishment. According to the same driver, this is not as common in larger companies. This way of working seems to have foregone for a long time.

The driver shortage and Covid-19 showed that companies were not able to cope with changes in society. This is continuing in the post-pandemic world, where the driver shortage is only increasing. The industry thinking towards innovation and employment also seems to have stagnated. Some drivers report, that employers are not willing to adapt new ideas, or even listen to them. Instead, they refer to the company heritage when dealing with changes. Drivers are also reporting that many companies' travel agencies have resorted to producing cruise tours to Tallinn or Stockholm, while examples of successful implementations of long-distance bus tour productions are mentioned as benchmarks for the industry. Long distance tours seem to be important for drivers, as during these, drivers can use the full spectrum of their skills.

There also seems to be companies in this study that do not know how to solve future issues the industry is facing. Some interviewees report that if a professionalism is required from them, why cannot the same be required from the entrepreneurs in hard times? Instead of trying to solve the issues around driver shortage, some companies view downsizing as an option – which might indicate on weary employers and a weary industry. This could imply that the industry might see a drastic change in the company landscape in the future, as many entrepreneurs do not have the necessary means to adapt to industry changes. This is supported by Figure 2 Possessors of Passenger Transport License in Finland (based on Liikennefakta 2022) in chapter 2.2 which implies that the amount of Passenger transport licenses seems to point out a declining trend.

Community

The charter coach industry is small, and both drivers and entrepreneurs alike seem to be well connected. There seems to be a friendship in the whole industry between the drivers. Drivers from competing companies are regarded as friends, and there seems to be a culture of assisting each other throughout the industry (see

Table 6).

Table 6 Existing and improvable EX factors regarding Community

Existing EX factors in the industry: Community	Improvable EX factors in the industry: Community
✓ The industry is inter-professionally well connected	✓ New drivers seem not to be aware of the social culture in the industry
✓ Drivers regard colleagues as friends, enjoy working and travelling with them	✓ Educational institutes could help in managing expectations for the industry
✓ Drivers are social, one reason why they become Bus Drivers	✓ The nature of rides is changing, drivers are not required to socialize
✓ Drivers appreciate customer interactions	✓ New drivers are not aware of the experience benefits of the industry
✓ Befriending customer groups are considered positive	✓ Some venues have stopped offering free entrance for drivers
✓ Experiences are one of the largest benefits of the job	
✓ Drivers understand that these experiences would cost time and money in another profession	

The same friendship helps drivers mitigate exhaustion under varying working conditions. Newcomers to the industry are not aware of this connection and might be seen as a clash between new employees and older employees. The newcomers might come from workplaces where there are many drivers, and people do not know each other. Here educational institutes can play a major role, but also the industry generally by opening the job to outsiders. It is important that the industry finds people who are socially talented and motivated for the work.

Social interactions are the reasons why some become bus drivers while others become truck drivers. Drivers enjoy bringing customers to new destinations, meet different nationalities, and experience various activities together with customers. Customers and society are changing, and the rule of interaction seems to be changing between customer and -servant. This is seen as a threat in the industry, as drivers are not expected to socialize as much with customers today.

Experiences might the one of the largest pull-factor of the industry. Simultaneously it is the most hidden benefit of the job. Drivers' report, that many newcomers are not aware of this benefit. Charter coach drivers seem to be adventure seekers, who don't mind traveling and experiencing. They recognize that these experiences would not be possible in a regular work, which might be one of the reasons why drivers withstand long working days, away from home. Simultaneously many groups and venues have shown indications that drivers' tickets and meals no longer are automatically included. This is a direct threat to the part, which drivers like about the profession.

Physical spaces and environment

The vehicles with which the drivers drive are their working offices. The general state of the Finnish bus and coach fleet seem to be growing older and deteriorating (see Table 7).

Table 7 Existing and improvable EX factors regarding Physical Spaces and Environment

Existing EX factors in the industry: Physical spaces and environment	Improvable EX factors in the industry: Physical spaces and environment
✓ Some companies seem to take good care of the coaches ✓ Companies who drive B2B seem to have better coaches ✓ Properly working coaches reduce driver stress ✓ Some companies have invested in outside cleaning services of the coaches ✓ Some companies have invested in new depots	✓ The Finnish Charter Coach fleet seem to be growing older and deteriorating ✓ Coaches seem to be temporarily fixed but constantly out driving ✓ Customer and drivers report faults in the vehicles, but they do not seem to be repaired ✓ The trucking industry seems to understand the importance of investing in vehicles ✓ Badly maintained coaches cause stress to drivers ✓ One reason for the fleet state might be that many drivers drive the coaches, in trucking only a few drives the same vehicle ✓ Covid-19, high fuel prices and low yield of the industry seems to be partial cause for the bad state of Finnish coaches ✓ Authority compliance checks are not as common as in neighboring countries ✓ Finnish Authorities might have induced the problem by closing the national traffic police ✓ Some depots are old, unorganized, inadequate, or dirty ✓ Some depots seem to be lacking tools to properly maintain and clean the coaches

Coaches are not maintained; some even seem to break down on the roads. Other coaches seem to be temporarily fixed, permanently driving daily on gigs. Customers and drivers alike are reporting on faults of the coaches, but these seem not to be repaired regardless of reports. Drivers are

reporting that unreliable coaches without tools are causing stress on longer journeys. In companies where several drivers are using the same coach, the general state of the vehicle seem to be worse. One reason for the deteriorating fleet seems to be Covid-19 and generally a lower yield in the industry, which is seen as a higher utilization grade of the coaches. Drivers report that the competition for customers in the industry is hard, and that lower prices are partially causing this, when customers do not demand more from their service providers. Simultaneously there seems to be coaches which work well and are well-maintained. This are depending on company culture and the customer-base. One driver in the study highlighted that companies which drive B2B customers generally have better coaches.

Finnish authorities seem to partially induce the problem with the state of the Finnish coach fleet by not conducting more compliance checks on it. One driver report that in neighboring countries, emissions- and legal compliance checks are more common than in Finland. This is partially explained by the closing of the National Traffic Police.

Some depots of Finnish charter coach companies seem to be old-fashioned, worn down or inadequate for drivers and coaches. Drivers report that depots do not have proper facilities for changing clothes, taking a break, or maintaining or washing the coaches. Some facilities also seem to be very dirty and unorganized. One driver is wondering why entrepreneurs are not investing in outside cleaning of coaches and the facilities. The phenomenon of inadequate depots seems to be common for companies of all sizes in the Finnish industry. There are also some companies which have invested in modern depots and facilities, and even hired outside cleaning of coaches, but in these companies' inadequate tools for maintaining coaches are mentioned as downsides.

Technology and tools

The industry seems to be quite technologically isolated, compared other branches of the transport industry, such as local traffic or trucking (see

Table 8).

Table 8 Existing and improvable EX factors regarding Technology and Tools

Existing EX factors in the industry: Technology and tools	Improvable EX factors in the industry: Technology and tools
✓ Most of the drivers seem to use technology (GPS or search engines) daily ✓ Drivers appreciate working with technology, has brought much ease to the work ✓ Some companies have invested in ride dispatch programs and extranets for reporting and handbooks ✓ Communication has changed: most drivers use quick messaging programs for communication ✓ Embracing new technology might create more opportunities	✓ The industry seems to be technologically behind compared to trucking or local traffic ✓ Drivers seem to be using own devices for working ✓ Only technology in some companies, provided by the employers, are technology in the coaches, which are often outdated ✓ Some drivers still work with paper and phone, might not be able to cope with change ✓ New drivers would not necessary be able to navigate without a GPS ✓ Some drivers would like to see that companies would provide a device for work

Drivers are using own equipment such as phone or GPS for work. The only technology, provided from the employer, which is used in many companies, is the infrastructure which is found the coaches. These include driving computers or outdated GPS in the coaches. Some drivers' request company tablets or phones for use in their work, as most drivers report that all job-related calling and messaging is done using own devices.

It is more common in large companies that some form of site or application is implemented for scheduling or reporting purposes. In smaller companies many tasks are done by paper and phone. Many drivers report that working before IT-technology became common, drivers had to rely on maps and advice. Older drivers also see this as a threat, as many new drivers simply do not know how to navigate without navigational aids.

As the communication ways of the society changes, also the communication in the industry changes. Many drivers report that there are internal WhatsApp groups for drivers, where

information is conveyed. Simultaneously, there still are older drivers, who only use traditional mobile phones, and are only reachable by calling or sending SMS. These are often sent to whole day trips, where schedules do not change. One driver points out that embracing the technology leads to more work opportunities, while another driver states that the flexibility enables the work. Company tablets for all drivers, part-time and permanent would solve the issue of messaging with drivers.

Activities

Drivers report that the industry has changed more towards taxi business, where coaches transport people on short notice. This in conjunction with late publications of shifts is regarded as something negative which further affects the exhaustion of the current drivers (see Table 9).

Table 9 Existing and improvable EX factors regarding activities

Existing EX factors in the industry: Activities	Improvable EX factors in the industry: Activities
✓ Drivers seem to have an understanding towards employers in the industry, and the pressure they are under	✓ The industry seems to be changing as it becomes more like taxi driving ✓ Late publication of shifts and long working days seems to lead to driver exhaustion ✓ The industry seems to be running at full capacity even if 20 % of customers are missing ✓ Covid-19, the war in Ukraine also affected the charter coach industry (not only Travel Industry) ✓ Drivers are under pressure, leading to emergence of zero-hour contracts ✓ Permanently drivers seem to have resorted to not changing free days

All the drivers respond that the nature of the job affects family life and is a partial reason to why not younger people are joining the industry, or if they do, they leave the industry to more regular or scheduled jobs.

Most drivers would like to see an improvement in work list publications, but simultaneously realize that a proper publication of lists would require that employers would reject orders arriving with short notice. The driver realize that employers are under pressure, as industry prices are low, and many

companies are suffering from staff shortage, both on the driver and office side. The industry seems to be running with full capacity, even if, according to one driver, an estimated 20 % of the customer base is missing (Chinese and Russian tourists). This underlines the impact which the Covid-19 and Ukraine crisis has had on the Finnish travel industry in general. Going further, some of the drivers also wonder why the industry accepts low service prices, which is seen as a partial cause for the working conditions of charter coach drivers. The change in working conditions of the industry in conjunction with driver shortage has led to a phenomenon where some drivers prefer zero-hour contracts instead of a permanent employment. According to one of the drivers, this leads to a situation where a driver on zero-hour contract can choose flexibly which days to work, while the shortage guarantees work almost all the time. If the same driver would work permanently, he/she might not be able to affect the working days of the shift list. The drivers who have chosen to stay as permanently employed, seem to have resorted to keeping the scheduled free days, instead of swapping them upon request.

Driver shortage

The industry seems not to be able to attract enough new drivers. One reason is that the industry is not able to provide stabile working conditions for people with families. In addition to this, the industry seems not to be able to convey what good sides there are to the job. There would be many potential drivers who might apply for the job if they would understand how the Charter Coach Industry differs from Local Traffic (see Table 10).

Table 10 Areas for improvement regarding driver shortage

Improvable factors in the industry: Driver shortage
✓ The industry seems not to be able to attract enough new drivers
✓ The industry seems no to be able to provide stabile working conditions for employees with families
✓ The industry seems to fail at conveying the good sides of the job to outsiders
✓ Outsiders seem not to understand the profession - drivers feel like their profession is not appreciated
✓ Trucking industry seems to have become more attracting to young employees
✓ New drivers seem not suitable or/and motivated for the job, possibly further worsening the picture of the profession
✓ The industry seems to have not kept up with salary adjustments, compared to trucking or local traffic
✓ The customers should start demanding more from the transport service providers – might increase the yield and attraction of the industry

✓ Drivers could ask themselves: are doing the best job they can? A cultural change from within might increase salaries and profession appreciation

Local traffic drivers are also mentioned as an example of how the drivers within a profession category can be so different, while outsiders generally regard local traffic drivers and charter coach drivers as the same. This general view of the profession leads to a situation where the drivers feel like their job is not appreciated by the society. According to some drivers, this would be corrected by bringing the different jobs of the bus industry forth, which might increase the attraction of the work. Some of the drivers compare the charter coach industry to the trucking industry, and it seems like the trucking industry has created a better image to both customers and potential drivers compared to the trucking industry.

Another situation deepening the driver shortage is that new drivers entering the industry are not motivated or suitable for the job. Drivers might have been sent to the courses as labor-political solutions, by the ELY-centrals, and does not seem to not show interest towards the job itself. This leads to a situation where the entering workforce does not have professional pride, or proper competences for the job, which further strengthens the phenomenon of drivers not feeling like their profession is appreciated by the society. Wages are also discussed in the study. Many of the drivers feel like the charter industry is lagging in wages, which confirms ETF: s (2021) statement that competition has worsened the wages in the industry. The general salary leads to a sustainability issue, where young drivers from outside the Metropolitan area can't afford to live and work in the industry, which further increases the gap in pull factors between the local traffic and charter coach industries. To solve this, the drivers would like the public to demand responsibility from the service providers. The drivers would also like to see that charter coach industry would do its job with pride; wear proper uniforms, keep a high service level, and take good care of the coaches which it uses. Hence, it can be concluded that a paradigm shift also has to happen in the way drivers regard themselves, because if drivers do not appreciate themselves – *how could the employers or customers do it?*

6.2 Suggestions for implementing EX in the industry

As I have industry experience from 2009-2018, I have tried to close out my pre-set biases towards industry questions. The suggestions are still based on what suggestions would be relevant for the industry. Based on the findings, and how Whitter (2019) laid out in chapter for how organizations have implemented EX and the ETF (2021) toolbox for mitigating driver shortage concluded, the suggestions of this thesis are presented in 2.4 ETF Toolbox for mitigating driver shortage. The

suggestions are grouped in the text, according to the categories, through which this case study has been conducted (see Table 11).

Table 11 Suggestions of EX implementation

Suggestions for implementation of EX
✓ Encourage continuous dialogues on work-related questions
✓ Include drivers in strategical work
✓ Encourage industry connections to educational institutes
✓ Train and tutor new staff properly
✓ Focus on vehicle maintenance
✓ If possible, include drivers in vehicle investments
✓ If possible, name titled vehicles
✓ Focus on cleanliness and arrangements in depots
✓ Investigate use of technology for cost-efficiency
✓ Introduce and transit all employees to technology
✓ Communicate using technology
✓ Investigate possibility to offer work benefits using technology
✓ Use technology to agree with zero-hour employees on work
✓ Bridge the gap between supply and demand using technology
✓ Consider pricing of transports, too many orders impact EX
✓ Support drivers with families – ask how you can help
✓ Consider media strategy – how the industry and the job is presented
✓ Ask yourself – Am I doing the best I can? Am I working with pride?

Whitter (2019) states that companies should focus on *long-term orientation* and encourage *transparency*. The industry would benefit from including drivers in decision-making and encourage open discussions around work-related topics. This would create a path for a dialogue and possible solutions for questions or issues that can be addressed quickly. This would enable mutual learning and empathy for the other party's job.

The industry would also benefit from including drivers in strategical working. It seems that some companies are operating without any communicated strategy or vision. Most of the drivers in the study seem to have a strong professional pride and know-how of their part of the profession, but little insight into how or why companies are making decisions. Including drivers into strategical work could help reducing the workload of entrepreneurs. This study finds indications that the industry and its employers seem weary, including drivers in the strategical work would most likely

increase employee activity and commitment at the workplace. This is supported by Whitter (2019) who states that giving *purpose* and placing the *community first* would help achieve a strong EX in the organizations. These suggestions above might also lead to, in accordance with ETF (2021) mentioned *improved working conditions* and the *industry employability*, as there is a continuum in company operations.

There are indicators, which point out that the relations in some companies are bad between the employer representatives and the employees. Encouraging natural dialogues, as suggested in the previous part, could address these issues. As the connections between drivers are strong in the industry, inter-professional relations could be improved between newcomers and the workers of the industry. Here current drivers and educational institutes could play a role: The industry should be more encouraged to connect frequently with educational institutes, their staff, and the students. Whitter states in the principle *Human Obsession* that organizations need to have a strong empathy and focus on details. Connecting with students could help companies learn about the new work-force, and their thinking, values and beliefs. It is crucial that companies try to meet new driver's ex-pectations as the EX of the future employees becomes relevant guidelines for the employers, as whitter mentions in his principal *Evolution*. Connecting students and industry workers would also help laying the foundation for personal relations between students and the industry, which might help in expectation management of new drivers, trying to integrate into the industry. Considering giving new drivers mentoring colleagues or proper inhouse training in the onboarding stage might also enable companies to understand what kind of support the new employee might need. This is part of what Whitter (2019) refers to as the principle a *designed holistic experience*, when individ-ual learning requirements are taken into consideration. These could help in *making the career more attractive* (ETF 2021)

As the coaches are the offices of drivers, attention should be made to make sure that the vehicles are maintained. This could include reacting to fault reports making sure that coaches are thor-oughly maintained on a continuous basis. Here technology could play a part. Whitter (2019) states that companies should move towards a *Digital Lifestyle*. Reacting to driver fault reports quickly could be made possible with the help of IT systems.

A suggestion of this study is also that companies should consider naming titled vehicles to perma-nent drivers, if possible, as this could create *Purpose* (Whitter 2019) for the drivers. As previously concluded in the study, drivers who use the same vehicle seem to take greater care of it and might be able to identify emerging faults in the vehicle. It would also be beneficial to include drivers in possible vehicle investments, as the features of the vehicle directly impact the driver's work.

The depots are also the working spaces of the drivers. It would be beneficial to the Employee Experience to consider the cleanliness and arrangements in the depots. If drivers need to clean the coaches after the shift, it would be beneficial to consider proper cleaning facilities and possibilities for drivers to clean themselves afterwards, as mentioned by one of the drivers in the report. By considering this, employers would meet, what Whitter (2019) refers to as the principal *Human Obsession*. This could partially *improve the sanitary infrastructure*, which is part of the ETF (2021) toolbox for mitigating driver shortage.

As Whitter (2019) states in principal *Digital Lifestyle*, companies should empower the staff with the help of Technology. Technology could improve EX in coach companies in unexpected ways. It would be beneficial for companies to investigate the possibility bring more technology as a means of improving operations cost-efficiency. Drivers in this study have reported that the industry is moving more towards taxi-business where schedules change rapidly and most of the drivers use handheld devices daily in their work. Utilizing driver location data could enable employers to get a real-time location of fleet movements, enabling rapid changes in planning if necessary. This would help companies in *mitigating the impacts of Covid-19* (ETF 2021) by providing work opportunities because of flexibility.

As there seems to be still drivers who use traditional mobile phones and paper, it would be beneficial to introduce these drivers to technology, as this creates more job opportunities and flexibility to the companies. Introducing technology on a broader level would further make the workforce more prepared for possible launches of new dispatch software. Whitter (2019) states in the principle *fail fast, win big*, that agility speed should be encouraged. Albeit it should be mentioned that an unwillingness for change and implementation of technology should not be accepted by industry employers. This would help in mitigating the impacts of *demographic* change and provide *support for older drivers* (ETF 2021).

Communication using IT technology could enable official, moderated communication channels between the offices and drivers. The feature of location sharing could enable drivers to socialize more during breaks. As this study conclude that drivers work and free time, during the workday become unclear, companies could investigate further possibilities to offer work benefits for the breaks, using technology.

The emergence of zero-hour contracts might change the way companies and employees interact. It would be beneficial for employers to consider the way interactions and working days are agreed on between companies and on-demand employees. It is important that the industry realizes that the paradigm shift from full time employees to part-time employees might be a result of the the previous industry leadership culture. In the changing employment landscape, Whitter's (2019)

principle *Digital Lifestyle* can play a part in bridging the gap between supply and demand. This would help the industry in achieving *better work-life balance and working time planning* (ETF 2021)

It would be beneficial for the industry to consider not accepting too low rates on orders, as this seems to have an impact on staff EX. A sudden increase of + 20 % in the customer base, in the current state, could have a devastating effect on drivers' EX. Considering the current EX in the industry, it should be important for companies to put emphasis on the current staff before increasing sales. If an increase in sales is necessary, a good way of doing this, is to research what kind of customers the drivers would appreciate serving. This is what Whitter refers to as *Evidence-based, Data-driven action*. By doing so, the staff could be included in decision making while enabling growth. This could lead to industry *compensate for work strains* (ETF 2021)

Regarding driver shortage it is important that the companies in the industry would consider the working conditions, which the drivers are working under. People with families should be able to combine work still be able to take care of family-related errands. Hence, employers for drivers with small children and families could investigate how they can support the driver's personal life. In this way the company places the *community first*, by making sure that employees and his/her family is taken care of. This would support men and women equally, *creating opportunities for female drivers to get employed in the industry* (ETF 2021).

Regarding changes in society, which is seen in both fewer social interactions, reducing driver experiences, and lowering prices, the industry, it's key players and should be opened to the public. Companies and the general industry would benefit from developing media strategies, for publishing driver and customer stories from the work itself. This could help to educate potential customers and staff on the job, its benefits, and educate in what way transports should be conducted. This could also help in raising awareness and improving the appreciation for the profession, which could result in higher wages in the future. By doing so the industry would put adapt, in accordance with Whitter (2019) the *digital lifestyle* and become more present in the society (*community first*). By doing this, the industry could help in making *employment in the industry more attractive* (ETF 2021)

As a last comment it would be beneficial for the drivers to ask themselves, *what am I doing to improve my own situation? Am I working with professional pride?* As one respondent pointed out, how can the employers, the public, or potential drivers appreciate the drivers, if they do not appreciate themselves or their profession?

6.3   Research methodology and ethics

As there were no previous studies on the subject, a Qualitative Study approach was suitable for the study. As interviewees were sampled from an industry association, the relevance of these for the study was guaranteed. The study subjects were also chosen, based on the order of response, the only inclusion criteria for the interviewees were that the study subject had to be working as a charter coach driver, either full-time or part-time. Hence, there is a possibility that the Employee Experience differs in the industry, or that this study has not been able to cover. Interviews enabled that the topic of the Charter Coach industry was discussed in-depth with the study subjects. As the study only covered 6 interviewees, the results are not applicable for generalization of the whole industry. The interviews were conducted by the researcher alone, and discussed topics emerged in several interviews at an early stage, hence the saturation of the data was obtained. There was an understanding in an early stage that the own conceptions of the industry might be a threat to the study. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to review the interview manual questions, as the interview questions pulled interviewees off topic easily. A realization was also made after the first interview, that some of the questions could have been left out as they were relevant for the study. This ended up causing more material to process in the analyzing phase.

Special care was taken to make sure that the interviewees' anonymity was secured, as the drivers were discussing their employers in the study. The study has been conducted conscientiously, and in a good manner. The results will be presented to all members of Charter Club Finland in their member magazine (see Appendix 4).

6.4   Learning process

As an industry ex- driver and Development Manager, who left the industry in late 2018 before the Covid-19 pandemic, I had time to view the industry as an outsider. In the post-pandemic times, I was regularly briefed by from many ex-colleagues on the situation in the industry. It was easy to get the impression that entrepreneurs were trying to mitigate the impacts caused by covid-19 by themselves, without much help from the government or other authorities. My interest for the industry initiated early the thought that I could write the thesis for the industry. As I already knew that not much knowledge was produced on the industry, I thought that it would be beneficial for all parties to produce something for both the entrepreneurs and the employees in the industry.

It became hard in the initial phase of writing to find relevant information on the industry, which is also why not angles have been successfully covered in this thesis. One thing which surprised me during the interview phase, was the amount of interest which the invitations generated. I received

phone calls from all around Finland by current and former drivers, who wanted to help me find the right interviewees. Many of these phone calls lead to extended conversations on the topic of the Finnish Charter Coach industry. It also became clear to me that the drivers take pride in the work they do, and care about the future success of the industry. The widespread interest also helped in creating the understanding on that this is a relevant subject of the service industry, which could be studied more. It was partially helpful that I was not employed in the industry during the process. It helped in creating distance from the problems, which before would have been too close to me. The thesis process started in January 2022 and was continued throughout the year with various success. The process led to many insights in both research work and the industry itself.

Even though this thesis did not have a commissioner, I have agreed with the Charter Club Association chairperson on publishing the results of this thesis in their magazine (see Appendix 4). The role of Charter Club Finland is to uphold driver competence and to develop the industry, while it has no labor-political ties (Tilausajokuljettajat 2022). Hence, Charter Club merely becomes an association for the drivers, where topics are discussed. Despite this, I hope that the result of the thesis would spark a discussion in the industry on how it should change to better meet the needs of future drivers, because clearly something needs to be done.

As a result of this study, some suggestions can be made for future research: It would be beneficial to study how effective EX implementation is on mitigating driver shortage. Further Quantitative research on EX in the Charter Industry would be beneficial for identification of the industry main issues. It would also be beneficial to create a tool for identifying main EX factors, that needs to be addressed in the companies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The interview invites 17.9.2922 to Charter Club Finland's Facebook members

Tony Hiltunen
Alldeles nyss · 😊

Tervehdys arvon kollegajäsenet.

Teen opinnäytetyötä YAMK-tutkintoani varten Haaga-Heliassa. Opinnäytetyö käsittelee Suomalaista tilausajoalaa, sekä myös miten se voisi kehittyä vastatakseen tulevaisuuden haasteita.

Tarvitsisin haastattelua varten 6-7 kuljettajaa ja/tai yrittäjää.
Mielellään näkisin, että yksi haastateltavista voisi olla naispuolinen.

Haastattelu voidaan suorittaa kasvotusten (PK-seudulla) tai esim. Microsoft Teamsin välityksellä. Arvioitu kesto haastattelulle 60-90 min. Haastattelun voidaan suorittaa joko Suomeksi, på Svenska tai in English.

Jos haluaisit auttaa, voit laittaa minulle yksityisviestiä facessa, lähettää sähköpostia (tonyhiltunen@hotmail.com) tai tavoitella puhelimitse 0505444660.

Haastateltavan tietoja käsitellään luottamuksellisesti. Kaikki tutkimusvastaukset julkaistaan anonyymisti.

Kiitos jo etukäteen avusta!

Appendix 2. The interview invites 17.9.2022 to Charter Club Finland's members

Tervehdys arvon kollegajäsenet!

Tilausajokuljettajat ry <taku@mg.sensereg.com>
Lör 17 Sep 2022 11:47
Till: tonyhiltunen@hotmail.com <tonyhiltunen@hotmail.com>

Teen opinnäytetyötä YAMK-tutkintoani varten Haaga-Heliassa. Opinnäytetyö käsittelee Suomalaista tilausajoalaa, sekä myös miten se voisi kehittyä vastatakseen tulevaisuuden haasteita.

Tarvitsisin haastattelua varten 6-7 kuljettajaa ja/tai yrittäjää.
Mielellään näkisin, että yksi haastateltavista voisi olla naispuolinen.

Haastattelu voidaan suorittaa kasvotusten (PK-seudulla) tai esim. Microsoft Teamsin välityksellä. Arvioitu kesto haastattelulle 60-90 min. Haastattelun voidaan suorittaa joko Suomeksi, på Svenska tai in English.

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Haastateltavan tietoja käsitellään luottamuksellisesti. Kaikki tutkimusvastaukset julkaistaan anonyymisti.

Ystävällisin terveisin
Tony Hiltunen

Viestin välitti
Tilausajokuljettajat ry

Ps. Älä vastaa tähän viestiin.

Appendix 3. The interview guide

1. Introduction: Tell me about how you entered the Charter Coach industry?
2. What are the good sides of the industry, what works well?
3. From an employee perspective, describe the challenges of the industry
4. How would you solve the issues?
5. Tell me about your employer

   How big is your organization and how does it affect your operations?

   How would you describe the facilities and the coaches with which you drive?

   What is the company reputation like – is it appreciated as an employer?

   Tell me about the management - how is your organization managed daily?

   What purpose, mission or values are leading your organization in its work?

   Describe how your employer shows appreciation for the staff?

   How would you describe your cooperation with colleagues and the atmosphere at work?

   What kind of technology do you use for work?
6. Work and free time and balance

   How well are you able to combine your work and free time?

   What factors influence and why?

   How well are you able to wish for holidays and days off?

   Have you ever felt exhausted from the work you do?

   If so: Can you identity any reasons for these?

   If so: what would improve it?
7. Driver shortage in the industry?

   What are your opinions – are drivers leaving the industry?

   What do you think are the reasons behind this?

   What should be done to address these reasons?

   Why do you think not more women are not joining the industry?
8. Tell me about what you think is the future for work in the industry?

   Can you identify any threats?

   What tools might become important for drivers?

   What competences might become important for drivers?

   How should employers need to change to better meet future needs?

   How will the working culture need to change?

   Can you identify any culture change that employers will struggle with?

   How can these be addressed?

Appendix 4. The infographic handout to the industry

Employee Experience in the Finnish Charter Coach Industry - a Case Study

YAMK Opinnäytetyö:
Tony Hiltunen, Haaga-Helia, 2022

Tausta

Maailmanlaajuista kuljetusalaa uhkaa kuljettajapula. Vuonna 2021 EU:n alueen linja-autokuljettajapula oli 7 %, vuonna 2022 se on jo kasvanut 8 %. Koronavirus pahensi entisestän kotimaisen tilausajokuljettajien tilanteen. Yhteiskunnan avautumisen jälkeen moni kuljettaja kokee olevansa rasittunut liiallisesta työmäärästä.

Tavoitteet

Tutkia   Tutkia miten työntekijäkokemusta voitaisiin parantaa Suomalaisissa tilausajoalan yrityksissä

Tuottaa   Tuottaa suosituksia miten työntekijäkokemusta voitaisiin kehittää alan houkuttelevuuden parantamiseksi

Tutkimus-kysymykset

Nykyhetki
Mitä työntekijä-kokemuksen osa-alueita löytyy alalta?

Miten se ilmenee?
Miten työntekijäkokemus ilmenee alalla?

Missä parannettavaa?
Mihin työntekijäkokemuksen osa-alueisiin tulisi keskittyä?

Miten voidaan soveltaa?
Miten työntekijäkokemusta voitaisiin soveltaa alalla?

Tutkimus

Laadullinen, puolistrukturoitu, kollektiivinen tapaustutkimus
6 haastateltavaa (osa-aikaisia tai kokoaikaisia tilausajokuljettajia)
Haastattelut aikavälillä 19-30.9) - kasvotusten tai MS Teams välityksellä. Litterointi tietotekniikan avulla.

Tutkimuksen osa-alueet

- Strategia ja kulttuuri
- Yhteisö(t)
- Fyysinen ympäristö
- Tietotekniikka ja työkalut
- Aktiviteetit
- Kuljettajapula

Tulokset

Strategia ja kulttuuri	• Ala vaikuttaisi olevan jakautunut työskentelytavoissa; löytyy yrityksiä jossa kuljettaja arvostetaan ja kunnioitetaan. • Löytyy myös yrityksiä, jossa kuljettajia ei arvosteta - jotkut työnantajat vaikuttaisivat olevan vieraantuneita kuljettajan työstä • Monesta yrityksestä vaikuttaisi puuttuvan julkaistu strategia ja visio • Joillakin yrityksillä vaikutti olevan haastaita Koronapandemiasta selviämisessä • Alan ilmapiiri vaikuttaisin olevan aika väsynyt
Yhteisö	• Ala on hyvin verkostunut • Kuljettajat pitävät alan kolleegoja ystävinä - auttamisen kulttuuri. Alalle pyrkijät eivät ymmärrä tätä kulttuuria jos tulevat toiselta alalta. Aiheuttaa kitkaa kuljettajien kesken • Sosiaalisuus on syy miksi kuljettaja hakeutuu alalle - asiakaskontaktista pidetään • Työn aikana koetut kokemukset ovat arvostettuja - ala ei ole välittänyt tätä viestiä ulkopuolisille. Uudet kuljettajat eivät tietoisia tästä edusta
Fyysinen ympäristö	• Alan kalusto vanhenee ja on huonossa kunnossa verrattuna kuorma-auto alaan • Kuljettajat ja asiakkaat antavat palautetta puutteista, vaikuttaisi sitä, että niitä ei korjata • Huoltamattomat ja epäluotettavat linja-autot aiheuttavat kuljettajille stressiä • Joidenkin tilausajoyrityksen varikot ovat vanhoja tai likaisia tai soveltumattomia kuljettajille tai huoltoa varten. Joissakin yrityksissä ei ole työkaluja huoltamiseen • Viranomaiset osasyy ongelman, ei valvota kuntoa ja vaatimusten mukaisuutta enemmän
Tieto- tekniikka ja työkalut	• Lähes kaikki kuljettajat käyttävät tietotekniikkaa työssään (navigointi, hakukoneet) • Kuljettajat arvostavat tietotekniikan tuomaa hyötyä - tämä on myös mahdollistaa työn • Ala on eristyksissä vrt. muihin aloihin, tietotekniikkaa ei käytetä yhtä yleisesti työssä • Kuljettajat käyttävät omia laitteita työskentelyssä - myös työpuhelut omalla puhelimella • Yleisin työnantajan tietotekniikka löytyy linja-autoista
Aktiviteetit	• Alan luonne on muuttumassa taksityyppiseksi - kuljetukset muuttuvat nopeasti • Ajot julkaistaan myöhään - kuljettajat väsyvät, eivät enää jousta vapaapäivistään • 0-tuntisopimukset yleistyvät jotta kuljettajat voivat vaikuttaa omaan vapaa-aikaan • Yritykset tiukilla, Korona, Ukraina ja polttoainehinnat vähentävät alan kannattavuutta • Yritysten tuotantokapasiteetti lähes täysi, kuitenkin 20 % asiakkaista puuttuvat • Kuljettajat ymmärtävät yrittäjien tiukan talouden
Kuljettaja- pula	• Ala ei houkuttele uusia kuljettajia - monelle työn ja perheen yhteensovittaminen haaste • Ala ei ole onnistunut välittämään kuvaa alan työstä ulkopuolisille - kuljettajat kokevat että yhreiskunta ei arvosta ammattia. Rahtipuoli onnistunut tässä paremmin • Uudet kuljettajat eivät soveltuvia tai motivoituja työskentelyyn - ELY koulutukset osasyy • Alan palkkaus jäänyt perään - ei pärjää paikallisliikenteen tai rahtipuolen palkkaukselle • Asiakkaiden tulisi vaatia enemmän kuljetusyrityksiltä eikä pelkästään seurata hintaa • Kuljettajien tulisi kysyä itseltään - teenkö työni ylpeydellä ja parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla? Alan arvostus lähtee omasta arvostuksesta, näin työnantaja ja asiakas oppii arvostamaan kuljettajia, alaa ja ammattia
Suositukset	• Työaiheiseen dialogiin kannustaminen • Kuljettajien sisällyttäminen strategiseen työskentelyyn - lisää motivaatiota • Yhteys koulutusmaailmaan parannettava • Uusien työntekijöiden perehdytys alalle • Kaluston huoltoon panostettava • Kuljettajat hyvä sisällyttää kalustohankintakysymyksissä • Varikkojen siisteydestä vaaliminen • Tietotekniikan valjastaminen toiminnassa • Totuta kaikki työntekijät tietotekniikkaan • Hyödynnä tietotekniikka komunikaatiossa • Hinnoittelun vs. kapasiteetin arvioiminen • Perheellisten kuljettajien tukeminen • Mediastrategia alan ja ammatin edistämiseksi