

Chapter 12

Promoting Road Freight Industry to Women: Motivations and Challenges of Female Truck Drivers in the UK

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ABSTRACT

Distribution and freight transportation play a significant role in the development of a region, but the sector is usually a male-dominated one. Considering the shortage of drivers in some countries such as the UK and lack of studies investigating the challenges female drivers face, it is crucial to identify motivations and challenges. Identifying challenges would help promoting the industry to more female drivers. Thus, the chapter aims to discover the main motivations and challenges as well as discover if females feel they are treated equally to males within this industry. Accordingly, a qualitative study is designed, and a total of 16 interviews have been conducted with female truck drivers in the UK. The results indicate that the main motivation for female truck drivers is the freedom that the job allows. The study also found a number of challenges faced by female truck drivers in their day-to-day working life. The biggest challenge for female truck drivers is clearly shown to be a lack of facilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the UK there is a deficit of around 59,000 Truck drivers (FTA, 2019), and this is an aging workforce. This means that the majority of drivers are of an older age with few younger people joining the industry. This is a concern as truck drivers are essential workers in the movement of goods, which is the key in distribution of value (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Truck drivers are necessary in the movement of all things ranging from animal feeds and raw materials to road maintenance and delivering to supermarkets and so are vital to ensuring that the country remains operative. There is a very small number of females within this profession, the Road Haulage Association (RHA) claims that only between 1 and 2% of drivers are female. By encouraging more females to consider or become truck drivers, this deficit could be reduced. Therefore, knowing what motivates and challenges female truck drivers plays a vital role.

Encouraging more females joining the industry is also a large step for equality in workforces, the more normalised female truck drivers become the more it will be seen as an option for women to join this industry as currently it is saturated with males. There is also a great gap of literature focusing on female truck drivers. The lack of information surrounding this aspect highlights that there is a need to study what motivates and challenges female truck drivers. Furthermore, the literature surrounding truck drivers generally is lacking surrounding their motivations and challenges also. There is some information in previous literature but it is limited. For instance, Reed & Cronin (2003) investigated the health issues faced by female truck drivers. Naysmith & Rubincam (2012) studied the perceptions and experiences of female truck drivers and their employees in South Africa. The existing literature covers the health of truck drivers and therefore does not have the detail surrounding what encourages them within their profession. This is again important as with the current deficit of drivers more information needs to be collected in order to see what policies and motivators can be put in place to make truck driving a more desirable career.

The literature is also lacking a focus directly on female truck drivers particularly within the UK. This gap in knowledge shows a need to focus on females working in the industry in order to better understand what motivates and challenges them. This leads to the purpose of this study in taking a direct approach in finding the challenges and motivations. Accordingly, the aim of this book chapter is to discover the main motivations and challenges of being a female truck driver in the UK. Main objectives of this book chapter are to discover if females feel they are treated equally to males within this industry; if females feel accepted and included within their roles; how females find working in such a male dominated industry and also; how female truck drivers decided to be a truck driver. It will also be important to

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