

To be, or not to be (in social media), that is the question.

How to use social media in Volvo Trucks, Region East's markets.



Master thesis in Marketing
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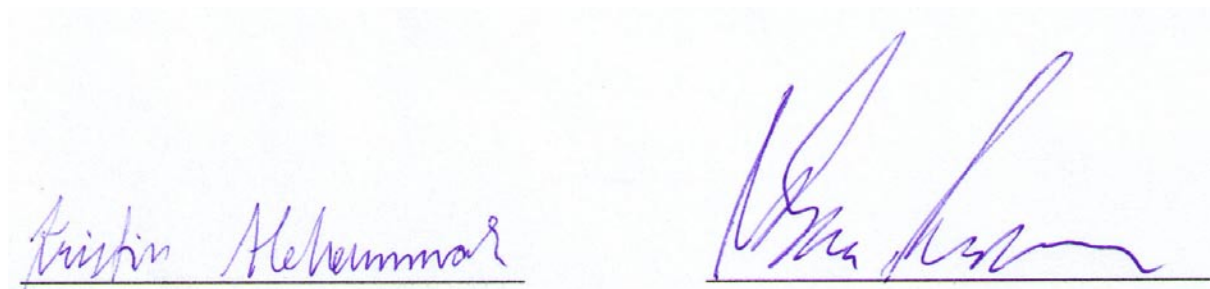
Foreword

First of all we would like to thank Volvo Trucks, Region East for giving us the opportunity to do our master thesis for them. Specifically we would like to thank Anna Engblom, who was our mentor at Region East and helped us throughout the thesis work with input and suggestions.

Throughout our thesis work we have been dependent on assistance from those working for Volvo Trucks in the different countries and would like to thank Elena Salnyk, Ina Ignatova, Irina Marcov and Özlem Çopuroğlu for all their help and input throughout our thesis work. Moreover, we would like to thank Bogdan Serea and Daniela Dimitrova who helped us a lot when we traveled to Romania and Bulgaria for our interviews and made our visits pleasant.

Furthermore, we would like to thank Johan Hagberg who supervised our work at the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg for all his input, guidance and help during the thesis work.

Thank you all!



Kristin Alehammar

Markus Andersson

Gothenburg, 2011-05-25.

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Summary

- Title:** To be, or not to be (in social media), that is the question - How to use social media in Volvo Trucks, Region East's markets.
- Subject:** Master Thesis in Marketing.
- Semester:** Spring 2011.
- University:** School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg.
- Authors:** Kristin Alehammar and Markus Andersson.
- Problem statement:** In this thesis we investigated the Internet and social media usage for the truck drivers and owners in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine, with a special focus on how social media can be used in marketing for Volvo Trucks, Region East.
- Purpose:** To understand how the Internet and social media are used in our target countries and use this knowledge to create recommendations on how Volvo Trucks, Region East can use social media in their marketing.
- Theoretical framework:** Our theoretical framework is divided into two major pieces; the first one is focuses on business relationships and interaction between organizations. The second piece is literature that focuses on strategies for social media marketing.
- Method:** To investigate our research problem we used an interpretive approach and a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Results:** In our empirical research we found that the Internet was used to a greater extent than we had anticipated, furthermore the usage and understanding of social media was also higher than expected. The largest social media used was Facebook and YouTube. In addition to this we found that our target groups were very interested in trucks and the transportation business, especially in the areas of innovation and technical specifications.
- Analysis:** Our interpretation of the results is that there is fertile ground for social media initiatives around trucks and transportation. The Internet and social media usage and the high level of interest in the products indicate this.
- Conclusions:** The conclusion is that the countries are Internet-mature and that social media should be used. A social media initiative around innovation and technical characteristics could prove successful.
- Keywords:** Social media, Marketing, Volvo Trucks, Eastern Europe.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we give the reader a background and introduction to our thesis work. We present background material for the problem at hand, the delimitations we have decided on, our research questions as well as our research purpose and goals.

1.1. Background

For a long time marketing has mostly been about one way communication. New technology has resulted in new possibilities and new ways to communicate, ways of marketing and doing business. Today regular marketing channels such as TV, newspapers and magazines are used less and less by customers, and instead they are turning to media where they have more control according to Mangold and Faulds (2009). They go on to explain that in social media people have the opportunity to influence and thereby also control the content. Furthermore they say that today social media are more frequently used to gather information about products and companies in order to make a purchasing decision and according to them the information found in social media environments is considered to be more credible than information coming directly from the companies.

Also Winer (2009) gives us an overview of the media landscape, with the digital media included and he describes several issues that marketing researchers and managers need to address. Winer agrees with Mangold and Faulds (2009) above when saying that the new media available challenge the established view that the marketers have control over the information flow, saying that now the users can interact with the companies, the medium and each other. He lists customer behavior and brand control as topics that are interesting for researchers to investigate in the current media landscape. As an example of an area important to study Winer (2009) brings up how customers react to user-generated content and the new media that are provided online. Therefore we believe that it is important to investigate what and how truck drivers and owners feel about social media, why they use it and also what they are looking for on the Internet in general.

According to Larry Weber (2009) social media has changed the role of marketing, today marketing is more about bringing content together, enable collaboration and build and participate in communities. According to him social media is a great opportunity to expand and strengthen customer relationships. This new phenomenon with social media, poses many challenges as well as opportunities for companies (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010), and many companies are already using social media in their marketing.

A successful example of marketing through social media in the consumer market is IKEA who together with Forsman & Bodenfors used Facebook to launch the campaign IKEA showroom. IKEA published photos on Facebook where the first person that tagged themselves on a product won the product. This created a lot of publicity on Facebook as well as outside of Facebook (Hepburn, 2009). An example of social media usage within the truck business is Scania AB (2011) who has a “social media newsroom” where they publish news

as a blog and also provide links to their accounts on for example Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr. In these different channels they provide movies, news and pictures, among other things, for their followers.

These two examples show there are a lot of different channels to reach out to the consumers with social media, the question is how companies can reach their target groups and find interesting subjects that they want to engage in. This is something that we are going to investigate for Volvo Truck Corporation, Region East (here after called Region East) in this report.

1.1.1. Volvo Truck Corporation

Volvo Truck Corporation (here after called Volvo Trucks) is the second largest heavy-duty truck brand in the world and their trucks are sold in more than 140 countries (AB Volvo, 2011a). Volvo Trucks is a part of the Volvo Group with 72.000 employees (AB Volvo 2011b). Volvo Trucks do not only offer trucks. They also have offers in aftermarket, services and extended offers. Their main values are quality, safety and caring for the environment (AB Volvo, 2011a).

Volvo Trucks has started to use social media in their marketing. They are present at Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter (AB Volvo, 2011c). When Volvo Trucks last year were launching their new FMX truck they invited bloggers to the launching event, something that Anna Engblom¹, Marketing Communications Manager at Region East, experienced as very successful since they got more publicity through blogs than regular media.

Region East is a department at Volvo Trucks consisting of the countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldavia, Portugal, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan².

1.2. Problem background

Van Zyl (2009) conducted a study of how social media was used in organizations. The study showed that in the UK 42% of the office workers were using social media to discuss work related issues, compared to 30% in the US. In the same study 40.8% of all IT and business leaders said that they believed that social media are relevant in the corporate environment. As such we feel that the subject is relevant to study and that it is fitting to conduct this study through investigating a case.

Volvo Trucks also wants to be present at the different social media channels and Anna Engblom³ at Region East gave us the assignment to develop a strategy for how Region East can use social media in their marketing communication. The different departments within Volvo Trucks have their own marketing strategies and Region East wants to develop a social media strategy for their markets. One problem for Region East is that the local offices within

¹ Anna Engblom, Marketing Communications Manager, Region East, Volvo Trucks, Conversation 2011-02-04.

² Anna Engblom, Marketing Communications Manager, Region East, Volvo Trucks, Meeting 2011-01-21.

³ Anna Engblom, Marketing Communications Manager, Region East, Volvo Trucks, Meeting 2011-01-21.

region are insecure about whether their customers are using the Internet at all and therefore also if they use social media, which makes it interesting and relevant to study their Internet behavior.

Furthermore, English is not as widespread in the countries within Region East according to Anna Engblom⁴, thus adding an extra dimension of complexity to our study. We need to investigate how Internet-mature their customers are and what social media they use, if they use any at all.

1.3. Research Purpose and goals

Region East gave us the assignment to investigate how the Internet and social media can be used in their market communication with their customers in the following countries namely Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. The purpose and goal of this thesis work is threefold:

1. Firstly it is to investigate and create an understanding of how the Internet and social media is utilized in our target countries since their Internet usage is rapidly growing (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2011) and these countries already have access to the full range of services available online though when the Internet was new in Sweden we only had access to simple websites.
2. Secondly we wish to analyze how the social media channels can be used in business to business marketing. To do this it is important to investigate how the customers feel about the media that is provided online and how they use it.
3. Thirdly we will use the information we gain through our research to show how the Internet and social media can be used to communicate and create relationships in a business to business market with a focus on our specific case of Region East.

It is in the nature of this thesis' work to lean towards a practical approach to the problem at hand. This is partly due to the fact that one of the research goals presented above is to be able to create solid recommendations for how Region East can utilize social media in their communication with customers and users of their products, but also due to the fact that we felt that investigating the problem through hands-on research would yield better results. We have consciously let this practical orientation color our research questions and methodological approaches as we believe that this will help us better fulfill our research purposes.

1.4. Delimitations

We are going to study Region East's customers and drivers. To narrow the study's focus further we have chosen to look at four countries namely, Ukraine, Turkey, Rumania and Bulgaria which Anna Engblom⁵ identified as the most interesting countries to investigate and

⁴ Anna Engblom, Marketing Communications Manager, Region East, Volvo Trucks, Conversation 2011-03-22.

⁵ Anna Engblom, Marketing Communications Manager, Region East, Volvo Trucks, Meeting 2011-01-21.

also because these countries share similarities in the distribution of trucks since Volvo Trucks own the offices in these countries.

Furthermore, we have investigated the use of the Internet and social media in these countries, and thus we have only been focusing on these areas of marketing and the communicative part of social media rather than the use of ads and similar in social media channels. Also, as a broad definition of social media incorporates a lot of elements we have decided to keep a focus on the following elements: blogs, social networking sites, collaborative projects and content communities in our research. More information on these elements will be presented later.

1.5. Research questions

We named our thesis “To be, or not to be (in social media), that is the question” as this was the first question asked by Region East as they wanted to know whether they should be present in the social media channels. Early on we understood that they should be present in social media and focus shifted to how this should be done and what strategy should be used. This resulted in two main research questions and several sub-questions to help gather the information needed to answer them.

1. *How can Volvo Trucks Region East use social media to market themselves towards their customers?*

Information need for research question 1:

- How is Volvo Trucks working with social media today?
- How Internet-mature are the customers in these countries?
- What online media is mostly used by this group?
- Which actors are involved?

2. *What should Region East think about when developing a social media strategy?*

Information need for research question 2:

- What does a Region East customer want to communicate about?
- What is recommended in strategy literature?

2. Theoretical framework

Initially we define social media and after that we present the theories that we use to analyze our empirical material. Firstly the industrial network approach is briefly introduced to provide a communication strategy foundation. Secondly we introduce theories that is somewhere between the industrial network approach and our social media strategy literature. Lastly we present social media strategic literature that gives recommendations on how to work with social media.

2.1. Social media definition

Social media is defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as:

“Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

While the definition above is technical it serves a purpose in giving us a tool for creating our own definition but first we will explain what Web 2.0 and User Generated Content means. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) Web 2.0 is the technical platform that allows users to modify and add to the content of different websites, a core feature of social media. To describe User Generated Content they use three requirements. The first of these requirements is that it should be publically accessible. Secondly, some creative effort should have gone into creating it. Lastly, it should not be something posted purely for sales purposes.

Because of the technicality in the above-mentioned definition of what social media is we supply our own definition of the concept with Kaplan and Haenleins (2010) definition as an inspiration. The definition should aid us in our thesis work and be easy to understand, while not getting bogged down in technical issues. The result was the following definition:

Social media includes all methods available for Internet users to add content, to collaborate and communicate with each other in public spaces supplied online.

The key elements in our definition is that what is posted should be available to the public and that it is about communication, where all interested individuals are allowed to comment on or otherwise influence the content that has been posted in the specific social media channel. Furthermore it should not be a pure sales channel, as the focus is on communication and collaboration rather than the one-way messaging that is advertisement.

Our definition includes the same things as that of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) namely blogs, social networking sites (for example Facebook), collaborative projects (for example Wikipedia), content communities (for example Flickr and YouTube) and virtual games/worlds into the concept while the definition excludes e-mail and instant messaging systems since these lack public availability. A glossary of social media terms that we use can be found in appendix 1.

2.2. The industrial network approach

Region East is operating in an industrial market and according to Ford, Gadde, Håkansson and Snehota (2006) business networks are characterized by a few actors that are important to take for the company. Also, these networks are constantly changing and evolving. With the help of Ford et al. (2006) we realized that when analyzing businesses it is important to look at the network in which they act and use that knowledge when forming strategies. According to Håkansson (1982) relationships in industrial markets often are very stable and about maintaining a relation rather than selling. He argues that it is important to examine the interaction between the organizations and has developed the interaction model. This model consists of the following four elements; the *process of interaction*, *the parties involved*, *the environment* and *the atmosphere*.

Håkansson (1982) states that in the process of interaction between seller and owner state that the exchange is made up of a large number of episodes. He categorizes these episodes into four categories. The first one is the exchange of products or services; this is often the core of the exchange process. The second element is the exchange of information. Thirdly, the financial exchange is the monetary transactions between the interacting parties and the last element described is the social exchange between the parties, which is important for maintaining the relationship and reducing uncertainty.

Moreover, Håkansson (1982) describes that the interacting parties are influenced by several factors that are important to consider when analyzing a relationship. Firstly, there are the technological factors. Secondly, there are the size of the organizations involved in the relationship as well as their structure and strategy. Thirdly, the experience the organizations have of different kinds of relationships matter since the organizations involved can learn from all the business relationships and lastly the individuals involved are important, since there is always at least two individuals involved when in a business relationship and they affect this relation.

The environment has several aspects to be considered according to Håkansson (1982). These are the market structure, internationalization, the position in the manufacturing channel, the social system and lastly dynamism, which is how close the parties are to each other.

The last element in Håkansson's (1982) model is called the Atmosphere. This element is specific to the organizations in the relationship and in broad terms it is the level of co-operation or conflict between the interacting parties.

2.2.1. The A-R-A model

The A-R-A model was selected because it provided us with an analytical tool used in the industrial network approach. Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, Snehota and Waluszewski (2008) describe a model they call the A-R-A model. This model contains three layers which are the *Actor layer*, the *Resource layer* and the *Activity layer*.

Ford et al. (2008) describes what these different layers mean. Firstly, there is the actor layer which deals with how the actors feel about each other, if there is trust between them but also how they influence each other. Secondly, there is the resource layer which includes both physical resources and less tangible resources such as knowledge and can also be shared between the organizations. Lastly, the activity layer encompasses activities such as logistics, administration and production which link different companies together more or less tightly.

In addition to the above-mentioned layers Ford et al. (2008) add time and space dimensions to their model to create a deeper analytical tool for understanding interaction. The time aspect is used to order events into a sequence, over time the interaction process will evolve since the parties learn about each other. The space dimension is used to indicate position, not only geographical but also how companies are positioned in regard to resources, knowledge and activities.

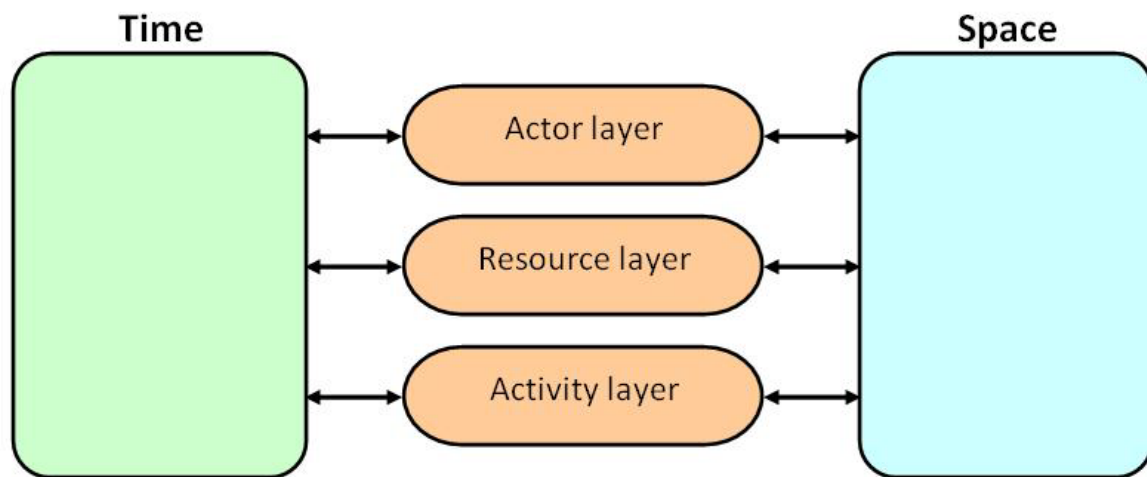


Figure 1: Our adapted version of the A-R-A model by Ford et al (2008).

2.3. Between the industrial network approach and social media strategy

In the section above we provided a framework for analyzing networks and to bridge the gap between the concepts above and the social media strategies below we decided to use Normann (2001) as he provides insights into both business networks and how to work with strategies.

Normann (2001) argues that the old focus in strategic thinking has always been on the relation between the selling firm and the buying firm which according to him is a narrow focus. Instead he suggests that to create value you have to lift your gaze and see the context or the network in which the buying firm is present and through creating value for the customer's customer be able to do better business and this new focus is illustrated by the following model:

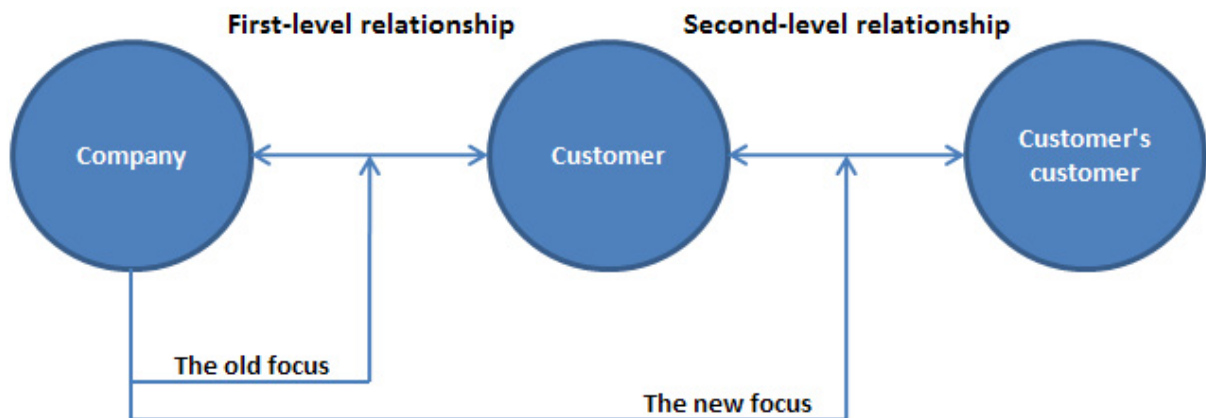


Figure 2: The new focus, model by Normann (2001, pp.71).

Through creating value for the customer's customer Normann (2001) argues that the classical value chain is narrow and only focuses on the value creation process in the company. Furthermore, he goes on to describe that by looking at the customer's value creation process it is possible to get a better understanding of how value is created in the network and what one's own part in this process is. To illustrate the input from different actors in the network into the customer's value-creation process Normann (2001) uses a model he calls the value star which is depicted below:

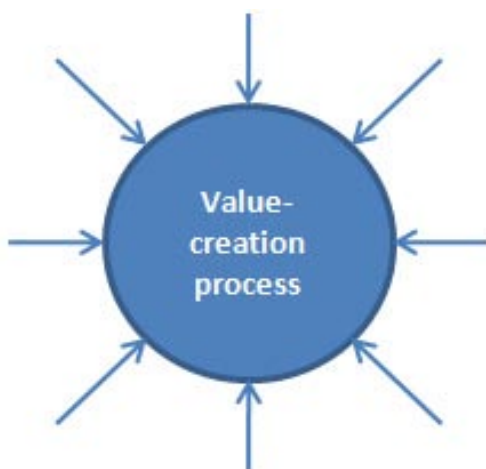


Figure 3: The value star model by Normann (2001, pp.72).

According to Normann (2001) those that adopt the value star model are better equipped to see the environment and network that their customers work in and understand the total input into the customer's value creation process. He goes on to explain that with this knowledge it is possible to create improved offers that enable the customer to do things that were not possible before and continues by saying that through these improved offers the organization has a better chance of becoming the prime actor on the market.

The value star illustrated is radically different from the classical value chain model that focuses more on the company getting input, refining it and then selling to the next one in the chain, which is illustrated by the following model:

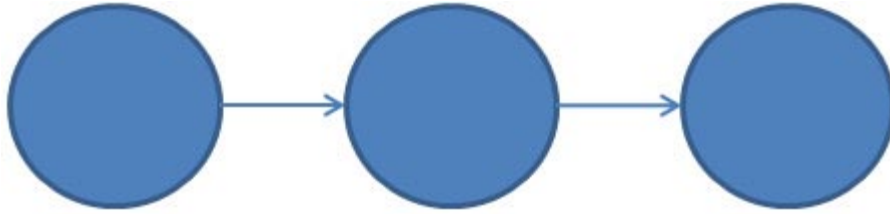


Figure 4: The classical value chain model by Normann (2001, pp.72).

This narrower way of viewing the process prevents the company from seeing the bigger picture and makes it harder to create strategies that include co-creation, involvement from the owners and drivers, building of relationships, trust and brand image that much of the social media strategy literature which is brought up as important components for successful social media initiatives by the literature presented below.

2.4. Social media strategies

We choose to have strategic social media theory in our thesis to be able to judge how Volvo Trucks is working with social media today but also to enable us to judge how value can be created for the users through these channels and from this create recommendations to Region East. Furthermore, we aimed to make this part useful for Region East when selecting a strategy for social media.

When selecting this literature for our study we had a couple of criteria. Firstly, it needed to be recent, preferably not older than a few years because in our opinion this is an area that is growing fast and it is important to be up to date with the latest literature. Secondly, we selected books and articles that were based on scientific research to ensure that our conclusions and recommendations rest on scientific foundations.

Several authors claim that social media is a growing phenomenon and that it is important for companies to have strategies for how to handle and benefit from it (Bernoff 2009; Mangold & Faulds 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Weber 2009). According to research done by Barnes (2010) companies find the following benefits with social media; that they have an alternative channel to communicate through and that they can add value to the customers. Furthermore Barnes (2010) claims that companies find social media useful when demonstrating and creating awareness around products and as a cost efficient way of marketing but also to keep up with trends and competition and to create brand awareness. According to van Zyl (2009) social networking is also good for creating bonds with other professional people such as co-workers and people they are doing business with. It is a good way to engage the customers and improve customer relations and in that way also improve the brand image (van Zyl, 2009). Knowledge is also a product from networking and it can be a good way for organizations or people that are looking for new solutions or want to spread

knowledge/information fast (Tapscott & Williams, 2006 see van Zyl, 2009, p. 911). Below we present the theory that is relevant for the formulation of recommendations and strategies.

2.4.1. The importance of a strategy

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) raise an important issue when stating that entering social media should come with a plan, just creating a social media platform and then leaving it will not generate any benefits, the company needs to be active and part of the discussion, since social media is about engagement and conversation. This is backed up by both Weber (2009) and Ramsey (2010) who also stresses the importance of activity once the company has entered a social medium. Barnes (2010) also argues that social media initiatives must have a goal, and that it must be implemented into the strategy of the company. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also stress the importance of careful consideration before entering a social medium, since it is impossible to join all of them the choice should be based on what the target group for the initiative is and which social media fit the message the company is trying to send.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) go on to say that when creating the strategy and social media platform it is also important to ensure that the activities in the social media channel are aligned with the activities in traditional media and with the activities of other social media as to not cause confusion or mixed messages among customers. Ramsey (2010) supports this saying that there needs to be consistency in the messages the company sends out and that you should make sure to keep the corporate, brand personality and follow the framework set by the company about brand engagement. He adds that you should not be afraid to vary the strategy depending on what social media channel you use and that the tone of voice used should be altered to fit the media used. Mangold and Faulds (2009) agree that social media should communicate the values of the company.

2.4.2. Involving the customers

In Kaplan and Hanlein's (2010) article they also state that the company activities in the social media should be interesting for the customers. Mangold and Faulds (2009) expand this concept with several examples on how this can be achieved. They are saying that the company should use social media to find and support causes important to their target group since this connects to the customers on an emotional level. Also, they say that you should use the power of storytelling, as social media are a form of expanded word-of-mouth channel stories spread fast in social media if they are interesting. They also add that by doing things that are perceived as a bit extraordinary or even outrageous the company can create a buzz about their activities.

Safko and Brake (2009) say that social media are all about engaging the customers, prospects, employees and other stakeholders. This can be done in four different ways, by communication, collaboration, education and entertainment. According to the authors communication is any kind of messaging with the customers like doing a survey or posting something at Twitter. Collaboration is when you use social media tools to communicate on for example discussion boards. Social media can also be used in the purpose of educating

customers and employees by for example publishing education movies on YouTube. Entertainment is, as it sounds, social media used to amuse people.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) go on to say that if the company provides a platform where people can talk with others with the same interest and opinions and when customers can contribute with feedback they feel more connected and engaged in the company and its products. According to them the combination of traditional media channels and social media the consumers can become more engaged in the company's activities and further the effects of word-of-mouth. The authors argue that in order to reach these goals the company needs to provide its consumers with detailed information and it is also important that the products are designed so that they create talking points for the customers while at the same time fitting their desired self-image.

2.4.3. Rules and codes of conduct

In much of the literature the authors also go into what should be excluded in social media communication. Since social media is about interaction it cannot be used to broadcast messages as with traditional advertisement according to Weber (2009). This is further backed up by Ramsey (2010) who points out that for example financial information and other corporate information belong on the company's website, even when in a business-to-business segment as we are. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also agree that the objective of joining a social media should not be direct selling or advertisement, but rather to share and collaborate with the consumers. Furthermore, they argue that when using social media the company should act unprofessionally, by this they mean that the company should not use a lot of resources to create the perfect blog or other media, since it's better to blend in and then improve over time with the input from the users of the social network.

Ramsey (2010) discusses the importance of knowing the rules of specific social media channels before entering them, something that Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) confirm in their article. Moreover, Ramsey (2010) states that even though you should know and follow the rules, you also have to set the limit for what you tolerate and do not tolerate. He says that even though social media are more unofficial than many other media, there should still be rules and boundaries and content that violate these should be removed. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) further discuss the need for rules, but internally. According to them there should be guidelines for how the employees should act within the different social media, so that the social media initiative does not lose credibility due to employee mistakes. Something that Barnes (2010) agrees with.

2.4.4. Online branding

We decided to use a conceptual framework to analyze branding activities online that Simmons (2007) introduces as i-Branding. The author builds the concept on four pillars that work together to create a stronger brand and more loyal customers. The pillars mentioned are the following: understanding customers, marketing communication, interactivity and content. These pillars interact with each other and this interaction is illustrated by the following model:

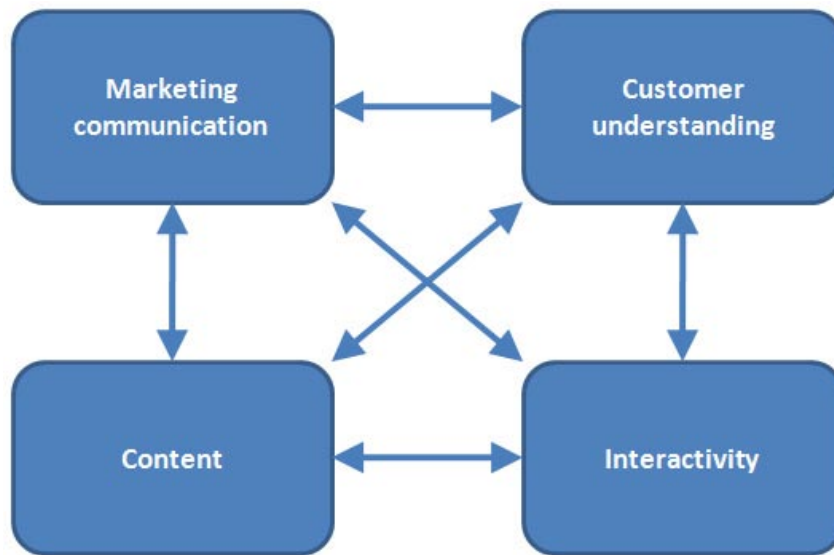


Figure 5: The four pillars of i-Branding, model from Simmons (2007 pp. 545).

According to Simmons (2007) it is important to understand the customers to be able to create trust and build relationships with them. The author mentions several ways this understanding can be built, for example by gathering information through log-files on corporate websites, through online surveys or through customer information from databases. Furthermore, he states that after this understanding is reached the marketing mix should be developed to fit the characteristics of this group to create a positive interaction over long time.

When addressing marketing communications Simmons' (2007) lists three conditions that should be met to successfully communicate with the market. The first one is presence. Secondly, you should develop relationships with the customers, this ties into the industrial network theory discussed above as both stress that with increased interaction the relationships grow stronger. He also mentions that the Internet gives increased opportunity for company-customer interaction. The third condition is mutual value; the communication must add value both to the customer and the company since if it does not add value for the customer they will disregard it.

There are two different kinds of interactivity handled in Simmons (2007) article. There is the machine interactivity which is related to the user's possibilities to interact with the given medium, for example by personalizing the content, the information found there and so on. The other kind of interactivity is the communicative flow between organizations and individuals that can take place through the medium. Simmons (2010) further explains that there is a positive correlation between the trust that customers feel and the level of interactivity offered.

The content must be relevant for the customer according to Simmons (2007). He points out that if it is difficult to find the relevant information it is likely that the customers will get a negative brand perception from the experience. Therefore, the content needs to be organized in such a fashion that it is easy to find and that the content supplies those viewing it with relevant information.

As seen in the figure above Simmons (2007) claims that all pillars interact with each other. In a study Simmons (2010) provides evidence that the four pillars interact in different ways and how this can create brand equity. The different models presented are all based on understanding the customers.

2.4.5. A critical perspective on social media

To add a critical perspective Barnes (2010) adds that social media is not something for all organizations. It may in fact lead to a negative impact on the company and brand. She lists several circumstances in which it might be damaging to enter social media. Firstly, she thinks that a company with few, large and important customers should have a personal relationship with them, rather than using social media as the means of communication. Secondly, there is a risk if the company management is in conflict with its employees, as this might lead to comments that damage the company and brand. Thirdly, she states that the management must be prepared for the increased transparency that will follow a social media implementation. This is backed up in Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) in their article where they discuss that companies cannot control the information about themselves; however they note that even if you are not on social media others can still write about the company. Lastly, Barnes (2010) brings up the legal and ethical concerns which must be considered before starting social media initiatives since the company might not be allowed to communicate everything publicly.

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3. Method

In this chapter we present the methodological choices that we have made for our thesis as well as the reasons behind our decision to use these specific approaches. We start off broad by deciding on a research philosophy and then we go into narrower definitions. In the end we present what we have done to ensure that the study has a high trustworthiness and critically reflect on our results.

3.1. Research philosophies

According to Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2008) there are two main research philosophies called positivism and interpretivism. They describe the positivistic viewpoint with three guiding principles. The first one is that it is possible observe the social world in an objective way, secondly that research is free of values and lastly the researcher can take an objective and analytic role when studying a phenomenon. This is a research philosophy with strong ties with research done within the natural science field.

The interpretivism is also described by Blumberg et al. (2008) in three principles. Firstly interpretivism holds that the social world is a construction and that meaning is given subjectively by people, the second principle is that the one doing the research is part of the system that is observed and the last principle is that interests drive research.

These encompassing philosophies can then be divided into sub-categories which provide further guidance as to how the study is conducted. These sub-categories are called deductive and inductive approaches by Blumberg et al. (2008) and there is also a middle ground where the deductive and inductive approaches are combined which is called an abductive approach. A deductive study, according to Blumberg et al. (2008), is a study that aims to be conclusive and present evidence that leads to proving that a given hypothesis is true or untrue.

The inductive approach is very different from the deductive approach and is described by Blumberg et al. (2008) as an approach where the conclusions are drawn from pieces of facts and evidence and at the same time the conclusion explains the facts and evidence. According to the authors the task for the researchers is to determine what evidence is needed to confirm or reject a hypothesis and to design methods for obtaining and measuring the evidence.

3.1.1. Our choice of research philosophies

We identified that an abductive approach fit our research the best even while leaning more towards the interpretive approach than the positivistic. The interpretive approach is better for us as researchers as we cannot separate ourselves from our object of study, neither do we want to as we wish to understand the motivation of those we study as this our study focuses on the subjective thoughts and views of our target group. But we still ask questions that are of positivistic in character; hence we use the middle ground.

3.2. Type of study

Blumberg et al. (2008) describe three main types of studies that can be conducted, namely the descriptive study, the explanatory study and the predictive study. According to the authors the descriptive study answers the questions who, what, when, where and sometimes how. And the reason to conduct a descriptive study is to describe or define something. Blumberg et al. (2008) move on to describe the explanatory study as a study that aims to answer questions of why and how and in contrast to the descriptive study it also attempts to explain the reason for a phenomenon. Lastly Blumberg et al. (2008) explain the predictive studies. If an event has occurred and there is a plausible explanation the predictive studies aim to predict when and in what situation this event could re-occur.

Blumberg et al. (2008) describe a type of study in, addition to the three studies above, which they call an exploratory study. The researcher may use this type of study to get a deeper understanding of the field and get further ideas to incorporate in our main study, and also to anticipate problems that may occur during the research.

3.2.1. Our chosen type of study

As an initial step we made an exploratory study in order to get a more clear understanding of the problems we might face and prepare for how to tackle them. The study consisted of in-depth interviews with employees at Volvo Trucks that are knowledgeable within the topics regarding our research. Those we have interviewed either have experience with social media marketing or have in-depth knowledge about our target markets. We interviewed Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications where we got information about how Volvo Trucks is working online, Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy for the European Division who provided us with deeper information on how Volvo Trucks are working with social media. Lastly, we interviewed Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR at Region Nordic about Volvo Trucks' social media forum Worldtrucker. During this initial study we also interviewed Ulf Magnusson, Director Region East to get the general picture of the whole region.

This exploratory study also gave a snowballing effect, where the interviews led to invites to meetings and recommendations on who to talk to about the subject next. This gave us a better understanding of the market we have been studying and the global Internet strategy at Volvo Trucks as well as provided us with further material for our surveys and interviews. It also gave us material about Volvo Trucks' strategy and goals with social media that we used in our creation of recommendations as we wanted them to be aligned with Volvo Trucks global strategy. In the early stages of our research we also communicated with our different target markets about problems that they thought might occur during our research.

After these initial studies we decided to use a descriptive approach to the problem at hand. This approach is useful for answering the questions who, what, when, where and sometimes how and as our research question consists of several sub-questions of a descriptive character and our main question provides a foundation for decision making about how to use marketing in social media, this approach fits well with our intention with the study.

3.3. Research approach

3.3.1. Qualitative methods

To structure our work with the interviews we used a book by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). In the book a framework is presented as a seven step process and we have chosen this approach since it includes the preliminary work that needs to be done before the interviews, insights into the actual interviewing process and also how to analyze, verify and report the findings from the interviews.

The seven steps presented by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) are the following:

1. Thematisation: First a purpose and a subject for the interviews are formulated to form a basis for the process. At this stage we answer the questions why and what we want from our interviews.
2. Planning: Secondly the planning for all the remaining steps in the process is done, not only the planning for the interviews. This is done to get a better understanding of all the work ahead. The planning should have its basis in the knowledge sought and also in regard to the ethical issues that need to be observed.
3. Interview: Thirdly the actual interviewing, using an interview guide created during the planning step. At this step it is important to always keep the sought knowledge in mind.
4. Transliteration: Fourthly the material gathered from the interviews is prepared for analysis, most often by writing down what was said during the interviews.
5. Analysis: At the fifth step the material gathered is analysed, this is done through methods appropriate to the purpose of the interviews that were decided in step one.
6. Verification: At the sixth step the validity and reliability of the study is established. We replaced validity and reliability with trustworthiness instead, which we describe later in 3.6.
7. Reporting: Lastly the results should be reported in an appropriate manner, and it should live up to both ethical and scientific standards.

3.3.2. Quantitative methods

3.3.2.1. Self-administered questionnaires

In Blumberg et al. (2008) they discuss the self-administered surveys and that it can be handled in several ways, for example that they can be handed out at convenient locations, packaged with a product, sent via regular mail or email and they could be conducted via the Internet.

Blumberg et al. (2008) list several strengths with self-administered surveys. Firstly, the cost of self-administered surveys is lower than for personal interviews. Another advantage is that they are perceived as more anonymous than interviews and as such the answers might be more truthful. A third strength is that they give the participants time to carefully consider answers and look up facts. Lastly a self-administered survey might reach otherwise

inaccessible people, such as executives that might not have time for a personal or telephone interview.

There are also weaknesses with self-administered surveys according to Blumberg et al. (2008). A major weakness is that according to research those interested in the topic in question or well-educated individuals are more likely to answer which may create a non-response error. Another weakness is that a self-administered survey cannot be too exhaustive or long, a rule of thumb according to Blumberg et al. (2008) is that it should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

3.3.2.2. Telephone surveys

According to Blumberg et al. (2008) telephone surveys have several pros and cons. In short it is conducted through asking the survey questions via telephone and the caller is ticking the answers. The advantages includes lower cost than personal interviews, that they can cover a large area in a short time, that it is a quick way of interviewing and that call-back is easy to do. The disadvantages include limitations on the length of the survey, the lack of visual use, that they are easy to terminate and that the participants generally are less involved than during a personal interview.

3.3.3. Secondary data sources

Blumberg et al. (2008) describe several advantages and disadvantages of secondary data. The main advantage is that the use of secondary data saves both time and money since the researcher does not have to find the data empirically. The main problem with the use of secondary data is that it is not gathered for the specific research problem that is analyzed.

3.3.4. Our research approach

When conducting our research we used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods for our primary data. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages and we felt that a combination would serve our purposes best as the quantitative investigation through surveys gave us a broad understanding of our target countries while the qualitative interviews gave us an in-depth understanding of those that we are studying.

The qualitative method was conducted through interviews with people from the target group for the main study and knowledgeable personnel at Volvo Trucks within the subject for the explorative study. These gave us an in depth understanding of what they want to communicate about, while the quantitative method, done by surveys, yielded a broad understanding of our field of research and in large answered the question, how Internet-mature the customers are. Furthermore, our understanding was aided by several secondary data sources.

3.3.4.1. Our work with the qualitative data collection

In accordance with recommendations given by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) we started by creating a theme for the interviews. To do this we answered the question why and what and lastly the question how:

Questions:	Answers:
Why should we do the interviews?	To gather empirical data and better understand the Internet and social media usage among truck drivers and owners in eastern Europe.
What is the subject we are studying?	We are studying if and how Region East can use social media in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine.
How should we gather the data?	Through a combination of surveys and interviews, to gain both a broad understanding (surveys) and in depth knowledge (interviews).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) also suggest that during this first step you can formulate a hypothesis to work from. In our case these hypotheses that we wished to test were the sub-questions presented in 1.5 Research questions. Here we ensure a high trustworthiness in our study by making sure that our theoretical basis is well founded and that there's a logical link between our research questions.

In the planning phase that followed, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) structured it much like we structured this part of our methodology chapter, hence we used the draft version of this both as a tool for planning our interviews and as a basis for the methodological discussion conducted here. During this step we also created two interview guides, one for the interviews with the drivers and one for the interviews with the owners, both can be found in appendix 3. We made sure that our interview guide was designed to ask the right questions to ensure that the collected data was tied to what we researched, to make sure that the transferability and credibility was high.

For the third step in the process we conducted 11 interviews in Romania with 5 drivers and 6 owners and in Bulgaria we had interviews with 13 drivers and 4 owners. The interview took about 15 to 20 minutes; depending on to what extent the respondent used the Internet. To make the respondents more comfortable we used interpreters during our interviews so they could answer in their native language and guaranteed their anonymity. We also recorded the interviews to be able to do the transliterations, and also to be able to go back and listen to them. To make sure that the data gathered at the interviews was useful when analyzing we made sure that we understood what was meant during the interview and that we had the correct interpretations of the answers by rephrasing the questions and asking follow up questions if we were unsure of the meaning of the answer or the respondent seemed uncertain about what to answer.

At the transliteration step we wrote down what was said in the interviews. To a large extent this was done the same day or the day after the interviews were conducted, to ensure that our

impressions and our understandings were as fresh as possible. When transliterating we translated the spoken language into written language to make it easier to understand. At this step we felt that this was the truthful way to depict what was said without making it hard to read or understand without being embarrassing for the respondents.

To conduct an analysis of the gathered material we used our theoretical frame of reference that we presented earlier and to make our analysis was easy to follow we were logical in our reasoning about how our results match the available theory and made sure that our interpretations of the material was solid through critical reflection and interpretations of the results.

As previously mentioned we did not use the concepts of validity or reliability, rather we used the concept of truthfulness that Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) describes. In many senses it is similar to validity and reliability, but truthfulness is better fitted to our type of research. A presentation of the truthfulness concept can be found in section 3.6. further down in this chapter.

Lastly, to report our findings we followed the norms for scientific reporting and through making sure that the respondents in our target groups are anonymous we ensured that the report lives up to the ethical standards required. When reporting our findings we strived to give an account that presented our main findings in a clear and truthful way that made it easy to follow while at the same time presenting our findings and research material in a way that makes it possible for the reader of our report to not just understand the results but also to be able to interpret them on his or her own.

3.3.4.2. Our work with the quantitative data collection

The surveys gave us a large geographic coverage and more numerous responses which made it possible to draw more generalized conclusions about the results of our study than would be possible if we were to limit ourselves to only qualitative methods for the study. There were statistics about Internet usage in these countries available but we felt that in order to answer our research question properly we had to reach our specific target groups and therefore we needed to do a survey to find this information. To ensure that the questions were viable and were easy to understand for our target groups we had a continuous discussion with the Market Communications Managers of the different target countries, our supervisor at School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg and our mentor at Region East during the process of development.

During our discussions with the Marketing Communications Managers of the different target countries we also got valuable information about response rates and ways to increase it that they experienced as successful.

Since our investigations focused on Internet and social media usage the surveys were conducted via regular self-administered surveys and also through telephone surveys through the local offices, Internet surveys were not used as we believe that it would have made the results less credible. How the surveys were conducted depended largely on what fit best for

the specific markets. Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine viewed self-administered surveys handed out at trucks centers as the best option while Romania felt that telephone surveys were preferable. To get a large enough sample we set the goal to at least 100 answers back from each of the target markets, 50 from drivers and 50 from owners.

To counter the risk of a low response rate we used several methods. The survey was translated into the different languages since we believe that this is necessary to generate a better response rate, this was verified by the Market Communications Managers. Furthermore, we had an attractive layout made for the survey to make it look interesting and noteworthy. Moreover, we had the opportunity to use incentives in the form of miniature FH16 model trucks as rewards to the first 100 people on each market that answered our survey within the given time limit, something our discussions with the Market Communications Managers suggested would be important to generate a high response rate.

In the end the only one falling below our target number of 100 answers was Bulgaria from where we got 92 answers back, 53 from the driver category and 39 from the owner category. Romania decided to get a larger sample and from there we got 311 answers back in total, all of them were owners but 49 of them only had one truck and were drivers themselves. In Turkey it was hard to get drivers to answer and out of the 215 answers from there we only got 38 answers from drivers. Lastly, from Ukraine we got 100 answers back, 47 from drivers and 53 from owners.

3.3.4.3 Our work with secondary data sources

In addition to the qualitative and quantitative data we utilized several secondary data sources for our research. These included statistical and demographical information about our target countries and these statistics include for example growth in Internet usage and statistics regarding social media. We also got secondary data from Region East which dealt with how people from our target groups used the Volvo Trucks corporate website. With this secondary information we were able to get a broad understanding of our target countries in regards to their Internet usage, which we used in our creation of recommendations but since we did not use the secondary data to analyze our specific problem to any extent and relied on our empirical data for the analytical process, we feel that the major disadvantages of using secondary data is not a problem in our study.

3.5. Sample selection

Blumberg et al. (2008) roughly split sampling designs into two categories, probability sampling and non-probability sampling and they point out that in business research the non-probability samples are the ones used most often. Both probability and non-probability samples are divided into several sub-categories. The probability sample is divided into the following sampling designs: Simple random, Systematic, Cluster, Stratified and Double.

The non-probability sample is divided into the following by Blumberg et al (2008):

Convenience The convenience sample is easy and cheap to conduct. The researchers select

those elements which are the most convenient to include in the study. As an example TV interviews with random people on the street is a convenience sample.

Judgment The judgment sample is a kind of purposive sample where the researcher selects elements of study that meet certain criteria.

Quota Quota sampling is the second kind of purposive sampling where a characteristic is thought to represent the entire population. For example if a university has 60 % female students a quota sample at that university should include 60% females.

Snowball When conducting snowball sampling the researcher uses those participating in the study to find new respondents by being recommended on whom to talk to next.

Table 1: Non-probability sampling designs (Blumberg et al. 2008).

According to Blumberg et al. (2008) purposive or convenience sampling are the main designs in business research since the researchers most often must use their personal networks to get access to the information that is sought and also because the populations that the samples are extracted from are generally quite small.

Blumberg et al. (2008) point out that the minimum size of a sample depends on several factors. The following factors are those that we have to consider might have an impact on our study and therefore need to be reflected on when deciding on the sampling size:

- The greater the variance within the population, the larger the sample needs to be to ensure precision in the estimations.
- The greater precision desired, the larger the sample must be.
- If there are sub-groups each, of these must meet the minimum requirement for sampling size.

3.5.1. Sample selection for our interviews

For our interviews we used one of the purposive sample selection methods, the judgment sampling as our main approach. We decided on this since the judgment sample allowed us to select elements that met the following three criteria that we had decided upon beforehand. The respondents selected for our interviews should be:

1. either drivers or owners, since these are the target groups for our study.
2. Internet users, since how they used the Internet was the focus of our interviews.

As we have two sub-groups, drivers and owners, we felt that we needed a large enough sample from each of these groups. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) discuss the sample size for

interviews and come to the statement that between 5 and 25 is a good sample. To get a large enough sample we decided to carry out at least 20 interviews in total; 10 with drivers and 10 with owners and split between Romania and Bulgaria.

To some extent we also used the convenience sampling design when conducting our interviews as the best way to get in touch with the respondents was to greet them at the reception and ask for an interview.

That we decided to focus on drivers and owners in our interviews was due to the fact that these are the main target groups for Volvo Trucks marketing and therefore we felt that these were appropriate groups to focus on in our study.

3.5.2. Sample selection for our questionnaire

To select our sample for the surveys we used similar methods as for the interviews. We used a judgment sampling where we defined the criterion for the selection. The respondents of our questionnaire should be either truck drivers or owners, since these are the target groups for our study as these are the groups that are in focus for Volvo Trucks' marketing efforts.

In the survey we excluded the criteria that they should be Internet users since this was one of the main points of investigation when conducting the survey. The sampling size that we decided on was set to 100 answers back from each target country, evenly distributed between drivers and owners. We felt that this was a sufficient sampling size for drawing conclusions both for the target area as a whole, for analyzing possible differences between our target countries and for analyzing whether there were any differences between our two target groups.

3.6. The trustworthiness of our study

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) describe several problems with the concepts validity and reliability and when evaluating qualitative research of the sort that we have conducted as validity and reliability fits best when it is possible to repeat the study and get the same results (reliability) and when it is possible to draw conclusions that are true and certain (validity). For our type of research they suggest the use of trustworthiness as a concept for evaluation instead. This concept is then split into four aspects that the researchers should work with throughout the research process, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) go on to describe them and how the researcher should work strengthen these aspects to gain trustworthiness in their study. Credibility is gained through showing that the researchers know the subject they are studying, that there is enough data in the study and it is also related to if others can use the material presented to come to similar conclusions. The transferability is strengthened through showing ties with previous research and making connections to the study at hand. The third aspect, dependability, is built up through logical reasoning and through how easy it is to track the thoughts of the authors. The

last aspect is conformability, is reinforced through creating links between the findings and interpretations so that it can be understood by the readers of the study.

3.6.1 Our work with trustworthiness

Throughout our study we have worked to make the credibility high. This was done through a large amount of empirical data to support any claims that we make. We have also worked to make sure that the gathered data is presented clearly throughout the study so that others can draw their own conclusions about the subject at hand while reading. Furthermore we presented a wide range of literature, ranging from social media strategies to communication and network approaches, we did this to make sure that we have ties to research and a strong foundation to build our own research upon, which strengthens the transferability of our study. To ensure that the dependability was high we have tried to make sure that our thoughts and reasoning is clear throughout the following chapters. Lastly we have made sure to create clear links between our findings and the interpretations made by us, we have made our analysis interweaved throughout the next chapter rather than splitting it into empirical findings and analysis as we believe that this gives the reader a better chance to understand our reasoning and interpretations.

3.7. Critical reflection of results

One problem we anticipated with the surveys was that we would not have full control over which respondents were asked to participate. Since the survey was distributed by the personnel at the different regional offices we did not have direct control over the selection of respondents. We minimized the impact of this problem by leaving detailed instructions to the regional offices about the sample group we want to ask.

Furthermore, the data collection process varied from country to country, depending on what approach the personnel in the different countries thought would work the best. The largest difference was that in Romania they conducted telephone surveys while in the other countries they used self-administered questionnaires; we believe that this has had a minor impact on the results, as the Romanian results contain no blank answers, while the others do. The reason for this is that because some of our questions could be interpreted as “leave blank for never” while those conducting telephone surveys were instructed to tick never in these cases. We interpret answers to questions that are left blank as never when analyzing our data, in our graphs and charts we do however show the blank results so that the readers can judge for themselves.

In addition to the above-mentioned, some of our target countries did not reach the goal of at least 100 answers back and at least 50 from each target group, Bulgaria ended up at 92 in total but there were only 39 answers from the owners. Turkey did not reach the goal in the driver category either and had 38 answers from them. However, we do believe that we can use these results as we got close enough to our target numbers.

Another problem that we identified was that all the Romanian drivers in that survey also owned their own trucks and as such they are part of both the owner and the driver category.

We believe that this makes them more prone to use the Internet and in a more advanced way than drivers that work for a company. We have taken this difference into account and moreover we have used the interviews with the drivers in Romania to aid our understanding for that group.

Another problem that we faced was the language barriers. Our target groups did not speak English very well and we wanted them to feel comfortable both when answering our survey and when participating in the interviews. Therefore, we decided to do both the surveys and interviews in their native language, with the aid of translators and interpreters. We realize that this may cause misunderstandings, mainly in the interview sessions and to offset this risk we made sure to be elaborate in our questions, and to ask questions if we were unsure of the answers. Furthermore, we believe that there would have been a larger number of misunderstandings, lower response rates and less elaborate answers if we had conducted the interviews and surveys in English, and we noticed that many of interviews would have been impossible to perform and might have made the sample less representative as sufficient English skills would have required higher levels of education.

Lastly we would like to note that since our initial interviews at Volvo Trucks were conducted in Swedish we had to translate the quotes that we have used. We are aware that this could result in some slight changes in the meaning of the quote, thus we have tried to minimize the impact of this by making as accurate translations as possible and through discussion of the meaning with each other and in some cases going back to the source to verify our translations. All translated quotes are marked as translated in the footnotes to make it easy for the reader to identify them.

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4. Results and analysis of empirical findings

In this chapter we present our findings from the empirical studies that we have conducted, as well as our analysis of them.

4.1. Volvo Trucks today

4.1.1. How is Volvo Trucks working with social media today?

Today Volvo Trucks has established a presence in social media at YouTube, Facebook, Flickr and Twitter⁶. Volvo Trucks has also recently started a community called Worldtrucker where drivers all over the world can communicate with each other⁷. So far Worldtrucker is not launched in any of Region East's target countries (Worldtrucker 2011b). During an interview with Susanne Frödin at Region Nordic, where they developed this community, she gave us more information about Worldtrucker. Volvo Trucks decided to test the community in Italy and Sweden and then evaluate it before launching it globally⁸. They decided to launch it in these two countries first because they considered them to be ready in regard to the use of Internet and knowledge about the Internet. When starting the community Volvo Trucks only wanted active members and did not want to get members by giving away giveaways that only would result in a lot of members that were not really active⁹. But to get people to discuss and to start up activities is also something that turned out to be more difficult than expected, in all the countries. One of the fears they had when starting the community was that it was going to be invaded by a lot of Volvo employees. To avoid this only truck driver were allowed to join in the beginning. Now, however, both Volvo employees and dealers are welcome to join¹⁰.

"I believe and think that we should listen and learn about what they are saying there. What our customers discuss, what is important for them, so that we can let it influence our processes, our way of working, our way of providing service, our way to sell and our way to market ourselves." - Susanne Frödin¹¹

The reason why they choose to start an own community is because they felt they could control the discussion in a better way than if they had used for example Facebook it would also had been more a group for Volvo drivers but now it is a site for all truck drivers¹². Many of the strategy theory authors say that it is important to know the rules and what target groups that are active on different forums (Ramsey, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), this is something that Volvo seems to have considered and decided that the easiest way to get an overview is to start an own site. The purpose of Worldtrucker is for Volvo Trucks to listen and learn from

⁶ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

⁷ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

⁸ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

⁹ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

¹⁰ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

¹¹ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21 [translated].

¹² Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

their customers. According to Simmons (2007) it is important to understand the customers in order to build trust and relationships and in that way also strengthen the brand. Volvo Trucks want to learn what their customers talk about and what they find important and then use that to improve their way of working and their products¹³. We believe that this is a good way to strengthen the relationship with the customers and also strengthen the brand.

In the beginning they wrote monthly reports about the information they got from Worldtrucker and sent it to the dealer so that they could know what they were doing well and not so well¹⁴. In the long run they hope that it will improve their brand.

"I have seen this as a long term investment all the time and I think that it is going to take a long time before you really see the effects. But I think that in the long run this will help us to sell our products and services." - Susanne Frödin¹⁵

Niclas Hermansson¹⁶ talked about how they work with different types of social media. Hermansson explained that Volvo Trucks, like many companies just started to use social media but he also said that he does not really see social media phenomena as something new since it is the same phenomenon as gathering around a camp fire and discussing things.

"It was important for Volvo with presence in the first step, at the larger social media platforms. That was important. We felt that we needed to be with those who wanted to integrate. And particularly the integration is what we see as important, that we have an exchange, a contact and so on. We have said that A: we build up this presence in some kind of reasonable way. B: We learn, we listen and see and maybe we will find better forms for how to continue to work in these channels." - Eva Carlström¹⁷

At first the purpose with social media for Volvo Trucks was to establish a presence¹⁸. Hermansson¹⁹ backs this up by saying that since there are so many people using for example Facebook, Volvo Trucks just have to be there. This also seems to be in line with what Barnes (2010) says about the fact that social media not only should be used to creating awareness around products but also to keep up with trends and the competition. The fact that Carlström²⁰ also says that it is in Volvo Trucks' strategy to start to use new media channels early strengthens this even more. According to Carlström²¹ it was important to listen and learn how to improve and how to communicate in these channels, just as Frödin mentioned above. Moreover, Carlström also stresses the importance of integration and learning. She also believes that social media should not be used for a pure commercial purpose. She thinks that it

¹³ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

¹⁴ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

¹⁵ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21 [translated].

¹⁶ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

¹⁷ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08 [translated].

¹⁸ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

¹⁹ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

²⁰ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

²¹ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

is more a way to create a relationship and to communicate core values, something that is in alignment with Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) opinions that social media should not be used for direct selling but rather to collaborate with customers. Volvo Trucks take care of the information that they get from social media by communicating it to get a comment to the person responsible for this area²².

Hermansson²³ agrees with Carlström and says that in the long run the purpose is to market Volvo Trucks and to sell but with social media you have to use other methods than in regular marketing channels. He thinks that it also is about strengthening the brand and to show the surrounding world that they are modern and innovative in their way of communicating to be able to attract interesting people.

Hermansson²⁴ goes on to talk about three different online channels that they use. There are bought channels such as print advertising, web banners etcetera. There are also the owned channels like corporate websites, portals etcetera. Last, there is what he calls earned channels. He goes on to explain that in these earned channels you attract fans that are talking about your brand and this is what he wants to achieve with the social media but it requires time and commitment. Furthermore, he says that every market needs to decide if they have the time and commitment to invest in a project like this, because if an initiative is started on for example Facebook it is going to take some time to keep track on all the comments and answer the comments that need to be answered etcetera. Hermansson also talked about Worldtrucker and how they hope that this is an initiative that will evolve into an earned marketing channel, as mentioned above and therefore they do not brand the site with Volvo Trucks logotype today.

Barnes (2010), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) think that it is important to have a plan with social media which Volvo Trucks seems to have, from the beginning it was mostly to learn about social media and how they could use it which in the long run developed into the bigger initiative, Worldtrucker, where the purpose is to learn more about the customers. The fact that Volvo Trucks sees interaction between customer and company as one of the most important things we think shows that social interchange is an important element. This is also something that we think aligns with what Håkansson (1982) is saying, that the relationship is more in focus than the selling part in this type of relation.

Carlström²⁵ described that different sites have different purposes and one of their strategies is to develop different forums for different target groups. As examples she mentioned that on Twitter they have one page for jobs, that is intended to appeal to potential workers, one called Volvo Trucks fun where people can upload pictures of their trucks, vote for the best pictures etcetera to create a feeling of fun and devotion. They also have a Twitter account for corporate information with press releases and links to different sites and blogs that have been writing about them. Carlström says that they think that their Twitter accounts do not have that

²² Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

²³ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

²⁴ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

²⁵ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

many followers but they think that the followers on Twitter are mainly professional people and people that are interested in the industry and sometimes they also twitter to their own larger networks. In addition, Volvo Trucks also have a YouTube channel that focuses on people that have a general interest in trucks and the YouTube site has more than 1.1 million followers and is more a community where people have opinions and discuss things according to Carlström. This is well in line with what Ramsey (2010) says about the fact that you should not be afraid to vary strategy in different forums and that you should use the tone of voice that is appropriate for the forum, something that we can see from above that Volvo Trucks already does.

Hermansson²⁶ said that every market has the responsibility to know what media channels that work in their country. He goes on to describe that when Volvo Trucks launched the Volvo FMX truck they prepared a social media package centrally with pictures, things they could twitter about and movies that the different markets could distribute to their different channels. He also mentions that when working at a head office it can be difficult to reach further down in the organisation. Therefore their focus often lies on relationship building and brand strengthening activities and every division then gets to work more on the commercial part.

When we asked Carlström²⁷ what in her opinion had worked the best she said that something that has been working very well is social media arranged around different activities and campaigns. She believes that this is better than the general sites. When they form their strategies it is important to think about the customer, what type of customer you are trying to reach and what the purpose is. As an example she mentions the competition Vista world championship that is a competition where mechanics can compete in teams in a competition arranged by Volvo Trucks. For this competition they created a Facebook site where people all over the world have been very active. She also believes that a support function site, where customers can get support with different things, could be of great use for the customers. Hermansson²⁸ said that it is important that the information you send out provides the customers with value, for example through a game that the customers find entertaining, and it also has to be relevant so that the customers will talk about it and spread the message to others.

How Volvo Trucks is working with social media today seems to be well in line with Simmons' (2007) theories about i-Branding which is good since Volvo Trucks says that the main purpose with social media is to strengthen the brand. Simmons says that there are three conditions for successful communication with the market. The first one is presence which Volvo Trucks obviously have but also had as a first goal. The second one is developing a relationship with the customers, something that Carlström²⁹ says is one of the goals with social media. The third one is creating mutual value for both customers and company which

²⁶ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

²⁷ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

²⁸ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

²⁹ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

we believe is the whole point with social media. It is also obvious from the interviews that Volvo Trucks uses social media to learn, both how to use social media but also to learn what they as a company can do better. Volvo Trucks also is aware of that it is important to create value for the customers for example by entertaining the customers with games.

Volvo Trucks also seem to use a variety of different ways to engage the customers as Safko and Brake (2009) says, like educating the customers by providing the customers with press releases, corporate information etc, entertaining with their fun site, communication through YouTube and collaboration through most of the site since they want to learn but especially through Worldtrucker.

Furthermore, Volvo Trucks have developed Social Media Guidelines³⁰ for their organization. In the guidelines they have stated the opportunities and risks with using this form of media and things that users of this media should have in consideration. Volvo Truck sees social media as an opportunity to interchange knowledge with others and as an easy method to keep information up to date. They think that it can be a good way to build relationships at the same time as they see the opportunity to do this with a little investment. It also gives the customers new opportunities to influence. But Volvo Trucks are also aware that there are risks with social media such as if you publish something it might be impossible to erase it and therefore you have to be careful with what you publish. Also, that it can be difficult to control others' behavior is mentioned. Volvo Trucks recommend their employees to use a more personal touch when using social media since everyone is not comfortable with the corporate language. They also encourage their employees to act in a way that aligns with the brand and to be honest and use their real name when communicating. Volvo also stress that only spokespersons are allowed to communicate Volvo Trucks' position and statement and therefore it is important for everyone else to make clear that it is their personal opinion that they are expressing.

Furthermore the Social Media Guidelines³¹ state that when starting to use social media it is important that you consider that the effort should add some kind of value. This value could be promoting Volvo Truck's values and brand, improving collaboration between customers or basically anything that makes it easier for customers, partners and/or colleagues to do their job and solve problems. They also say that it is important to be patient and realize that it is going to take time to achieve big wins in social media and that it is important for the customers to get to know you and therefore time needs to be invested into the initiative and that you have to be active at the sites that you create.

According to Volvo Trucks' Social Media Guidelines³² it is important to define your target group, who you are trying to engage, and what ability they have to use social media. When choosing a platform you should focus on the people first and then pick an appropriate

³⁰ Social Media Guidelines, Internal Volvo Trucks Document, Issued 2009-11-17.

³¹ Social Media Guidelines, Internal Volvo Trucks Document, Issued 2009-11-17.

³² Social Media Guidelines, Internal Volvo Trucks Document, Issued 2009-11-17.

platform. It is also important to have a clear purpose to be successful. You should also develop a strategy for what success looks like and who within and outside the organization that you will involve. Volvo Trucks recommend you to start small in both money and time when starting a new social media initiative. An initiative like this can require a couple of tries before it becomes successful. It is also important to identify influencers that are driving discussions in your business segment.

In our opinion Volvo Trucks seem to have come a long way with social media even though they recently started to use it. With the social media guidelines they have developed a strategy for how to use social media which according to Barnes (2010) is important in order to get something out of it. But the social media guidelines also express what is allowed, and not allowed which is important according to Ramsey (2010).

4.1.2. Which actors are involved?

As we have seen earlier Håkansson (1982), Normann (2001) and Simmons (2007) all say that it is important to know those involved in the network. In our case we look at how Region East can create value for the customers, namely the owners, and the owner's employees, namely the drivers, and how Region East can work to create value for them through social media. Below we present an adapted version of Normann (2001) model where we have the drivers as part of the second-level relationship:

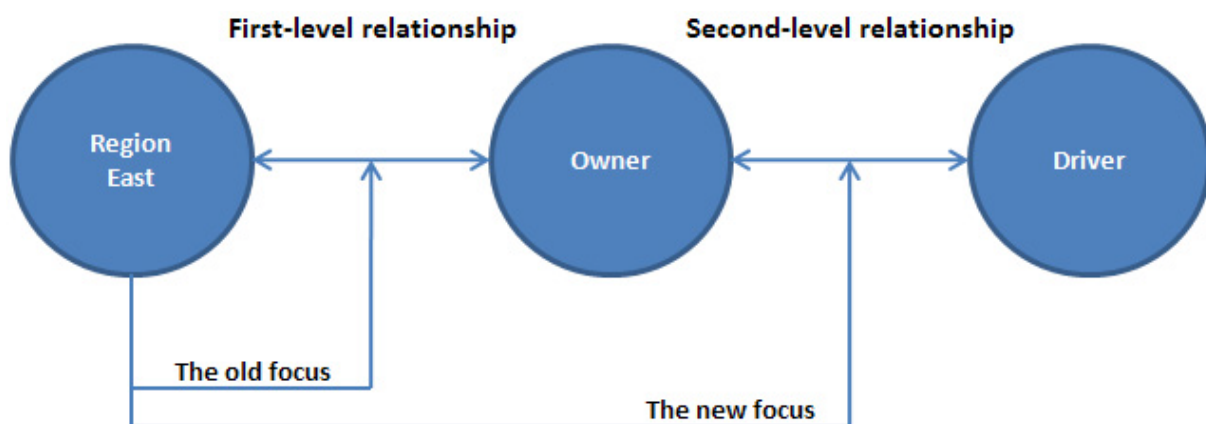


Figure 6: Relationship focus, model adapted from Normann (2001).

As the drivers are part of this network of actors that are contributing to the owner's value-creation process they are an interesting target group to understand and analyze. In the model we can see that Volvo Trucks can strengthen their market position by focusing on the second-level relationship and enabling the drivers to create a higher value together with the owners.

Also, it is interesting to look at the whole network around Region East according to Håkansson (1982). The parties that we have identified in the network around Region East and how they are tied to each other are presented below in the following model:

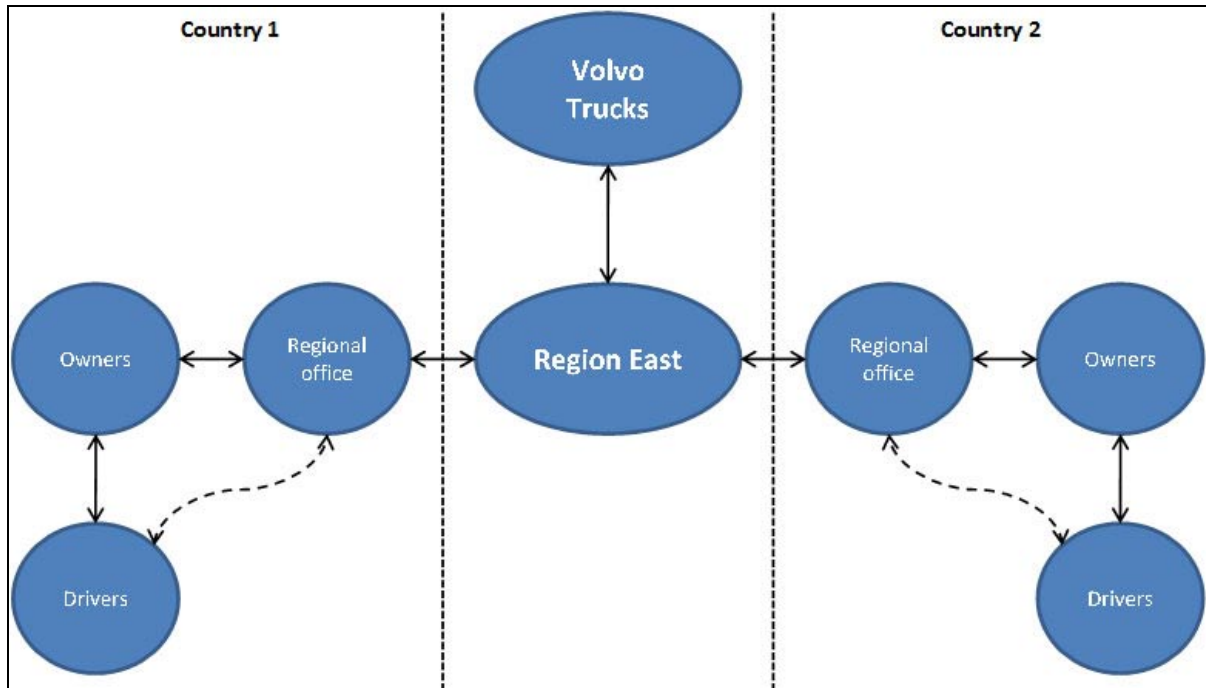


Figure 7: Region East interaction model (own model).

While Region East and the regional offices are part of Volvo Trucks as a whole we felt that it is more interesting to view them as separate actors in the network as they have very different roles in the interaction process.

In our opinion the interaction moves through these steps today. For example Volvo Trucks communicates something to Region East, which in turn communicates with the regional offices in the different countries. These in turn represent Volvo Trucks towards the customers and drivers. The dotted line between drivers and the regional office indicates that we saw in our interviews that many drivers have very little contact with the regional offices other than when their owners send them to the workshops for repairs or maintenance of their trucks.

4.1.2.1. Volvo Trucks

“What we have done is to appoint key personnel, people that are spokespeople for Volvo and our core values. This person that is very much a hub for dialogue and comments, generally it is our PR manager who has the best overview of what the company is saying in different matters and so on.” - Eva Carlström³³

In a large organisation such as Volvo Trucks it can be difficult to communicate with the customers and all employees are not allowed to answer on Volvo Trucks' behalf in the social media sites³⁴. Carlström³⁵ said that it is important in all communication to have routines and

³³ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08 [translated].

³⁴ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08. Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

³⁵ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

by appointing key personnel that get to answer on Volvo Trucks' behalf, most commonly PR managers, they create these routines. As soon as there is a comment that needs to get a response the one responsible for the site sends an email to the spokesperson so they respond and can make a statement on Volvos Trucks' behalf. Every market should also have a Web Information Manager that is responsible for the different online media used but they are not necessarily allowed to make statements for Volvo Trucks.

Hermansson³⁶ also describes that it is important to think campaigns trough carefully. Volvo Trucks usually creates campaigns around products because this limits the amount of questions that they get that is about the organisation. In this way they avoid the complicated process that Carlström was talking about that only the spokespeople gets to answer the comments because the administrators of the groups are allowed to talk about the products³⁷.

“Volvo Trucks have certain persons that are spokespeople for the company and that are allowed to give statements in company questions, everybody is not allowed to do this. When it comes to products the people that administrate these groups are allowed to give statements about the products. But not for the company as a whole.” - Niclas Hermansson³⁸

From our interviews with Volvo Trucks personnel we think that it is clear that Volvo Trucks' size and complexity makes routines for communication important. Furthermore, Volvo Trucks also learned that it can be difficult to keep track of everything that is said in different social media channels and therefore Worldtrucker have been developed so that Volvo Trucks better can get know what is said about them and about trucks in general.

4.1.2.2. Region East

As we explained earlier Region East is a division of Volvo Trucks but it is possible to view it as a separate actor from Volvo Trucks in the network for analytical purposes. The usefulness of this can be seen in the resource and activity layer of the A-R-A model. In the resource layer, the business transactions in the countries go through Region East and this flow of physical resources creates ties between them and in the activity layer can be seen through the fact that Region East handles activities, such as social media initiatives for their countries but also that they coordinate logistics and administration in the region. This brings the Region East closer to the buying companies both in regard to the space and time dimension described in the A-R-A model earlier.

Through social media initiatives Region East also gains the opportunity to learn more about the other actors on the market and as Normann (2001) describes this makes it possible to better understand how value is created in the owner's network and with the aid of this knowledge provide better solutions. Understanding the target group for any social media

³⁶ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

³⁷ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

³⁸ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14 [translated].

initiative is also important for the success of the initiative itself and for the brand image online according to the social media strategy literature that we have presented. We believe that Region East can learn a lot, both about the owners and the drivers by listening to and participating in social media with them, and they can use this to improve both their brand strength and products.

4.1.2.3. The market offices

As we stated previously the market offices are a part of Volvo Trucks and Region East but we have chosen to view them as a separate actor when analyzing the network. These offices are closer to the markets in the different countries than the Region East headquarters in Sweden are. The market offices are handling the day to day activities and they are managing the interaction between the Volvo Trucks and their customers.

As Hermansson³⁹ said it is the market offices that have the responsibility for any social media initiatives started in their countries. He went on to describe that it is important that the different markets estimate if they have time to spare for a project like this since there is no point in starting a social media initiative if no one takes care of it. Furthermore we experienced that the English language is not very widespread in any of the groups we have studied and this makes it even more important that the initiatives are handled locally since any social media initiative would have to be in the local language. The strategy literature stresses the importance of being active once the company has entered social media and as such we believe that it is important to make sure that the markets have the resources needed to manage a social media initiative before starting it. It is also important that the personnel has a positive attitude towards social media since they affect the project and one of the most important things with social media is to be active. However it is important to remember that the market offices are not allowed to make statements for Volvo Trucks and the main responsibility will rather be to monitor the discussions, identify things which need to get an official response and extract information from the social medium.

In our visits to Bulgaria and Romania we got the feeling that they were surprised by the high usage of the Internet amongst their customers and had expected much lower number. Furthermore they seemed to realize that they could use social media and the Internet much more while at the same time some of them believe that a social media initiative is something that is going to demand a lot of time, something that they were not sure that they had. In our opinion, though, a social media initiative could help the regional offices to learn more about the owners of the companies they deal with and better understand the drivers of the trucks. This can help them improve their offers, to create more value for the companies and thus help strengthen Volvo Trucks' brand as Normann (2001) and Simmons (2007) say.

³⁹ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

4.1.2.4. Owners

From our surveys we saw that the owners in all our countries used the Internet extensively, as an example in Bulgaria about 75% of the owners answered that they used the Internet daily and they were the ones with the lowest daily Internet usage. Turkey had the highest number of owners that were non-Internet users, and still more than 94% of the owners in Turkey answered that they used the Internet. Furthermore, it is our belief based on the high growth the last couple of years that the Internet usage will not decrease, but rather increase from these already high numbers and in our opinion this makes it possible for Region East to communicate and build relationships with the owners through social media initiatives. Especially since many of the owners told us that they used social media for different things such as entertainment and communication.

“I use Facebook to communicate with friends. And the others, YouTube for example, for entertainment.” – Bulgarian owner 13⁴⁰

When discussing social media in our interviews we also explained Worldtrucker and the overall impression that we got was that many were positively disposed towards a social media site for trucker and many asked for the address to the site and if it was available in their language.

“Oh it’s something for the truckers, oh I’m really interested” – Romanian owner 1⁴¹

In the interviews and in the surveys we could also see that many wanted to use Internet and in some cases social media to find business opportunities and aid them in their work. In Romania we also heard about a popular site called Bursa Transport which does these things.

When we visited the countries we got the impression that that the structures of the companies are very hierarchical which has an impact on the interaction process, it suggests that it is important to build and maintain good relations with the owners as they are the ones making the purchasing decisions in the companies and we saw in the interviews that many used the Internet to help them to make these decisions.

The fleet composition seemed to vary a lot from company to company; some of the transportation companies were small while others had very large fleets. Moreover, some companies used only one brand of trucks while others had fleets with mixed brands.

4.1.2.5. Drivers

From the interviews in Romania and Bulgaria it was obvious that many drivers in these countries were not allowed to make any decisions or be part of the decision making processes at their companies. The drivers had little or no influence in the purchasing decisions and in our surveys some of the drivers pointed out that they used Volvo because that was the trucks

⁴⁰ Interviewee 13 Bulgaria, Owner, Interview 2011-04-14.

⁴¹ Interviewee 1, Romania, Owner, Interview 2011-04-04.

that their company had. The owners of the company took all decisions and had all the contact with Volvo and the drivers were just sent to Volvo Trucks with the truck when it needed service or repairs.

“I cannot make any decision without my boss knowing about it. So I announce, let’s say I have a malfunction in the truck. I announce it to my boss, my boss is calling make an appointment, the boss takes a decision about repairing the truck and sending it to the workshop.” - Romanian driver 8⁴²

Even if the drivers did not have much contact with Volvo Trucks or influence on the decision making processes at their companies it was still obvious from the interviews that most of the drivers had a strong interest in trucks and the transportation business and often searched for new things such as truck models.

“I read about, new models. Technical things like consumption, truck usage, how much can you load the truck and things like this. Regarding the truck transportation, what new let’s say technologies appeared, accessories for my truck.” - Romanian driver 11⁴³

In our interviews we also saw that some of the drivers owned their own truck and both drove it and managed a small, sometimes one-man, transportation company. Particularly in Romania it seemed more common with these kinds of constellations which we think makes the drivers there an important target group for strengthening the Volvo Truck brand since they one day might start their own business.

From a pure selling perspective our opinion is that the drivers are not the group to focus on, but as we have previously discussed social media initiatives are not for pure selling purposes but rather to build a relationship with the users of the product and be able to understand them better. Also as we saw earlier owners look for information and opinions before purchasing trucks, this can make the opinions of the drivers important in purchasing decisions.

From our survey it is clear that many drivers in our target countries do use the Internet and that they are actively searching for different kinds of truck information. In our interviews several stated that they had laptops in their trucks or that their younger colleagues had one. We believe that this enables the drivers to find information while on the road.

“Information is the most expensive and valuable thing in this world” - Bulgarian driver 3⁴⁴

Since many of the drivers have access to and use the Internet it is possible to use social media for communication and relationship building with this group.

⁴² Interviewee 8 Romania, Driver, Interview 2011-04-06.

⁴³ Interviewee 11 Romania, Driver, Interview 2011-04-07.

⁴⁴ Interviewee 3 Bulgaria, Driver, Interview 2011-04-11.

4.1.3. How Internet-mature are the customers in these countries?

In the early stages of our research we used Statistiska Centralbyrån (2011) to get some general statistical information about Internet usage in our target countries which we compared to Sweden and United Kingdom to aid this understanding. These statistics range to 2009 as there are no later statistical data available at this point. In our target countries the Internet usage in 2009 was 33.5% in Ukraine, 35.3% in Turkey, 36.6% in Romania and 45.0% in Bulgaria. As we had anticipated the diagram shows a lower Internet usage in our target countries than in our two benchmarking countries where the Internet usage in the same year was 90.8% in Sweden and 83.6% in the United Kingdom. Below we use a graph to summarize the statistical information about our target countries.

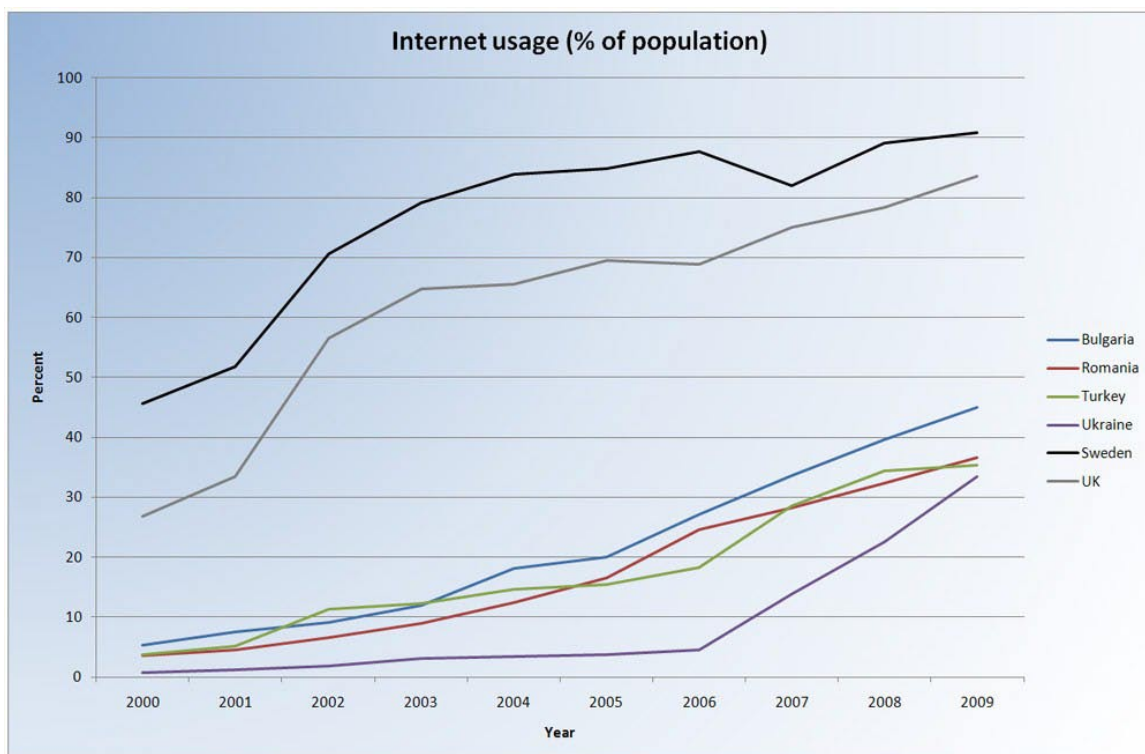


Figure 8: Internet usage (% of population) 2000 to 2009 (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2011).

Even though the Internet usage was relatively low in our target countries it is obvious from the figure above that the usage is growing rapidly in all these countries. We decided to plot linear trend lines for our target countries' Internet usage 5 years into the future (from 2009 to 2014) to get a more visual representation of how the Internet usage might look in the future. The result of this can be found in the graph below.

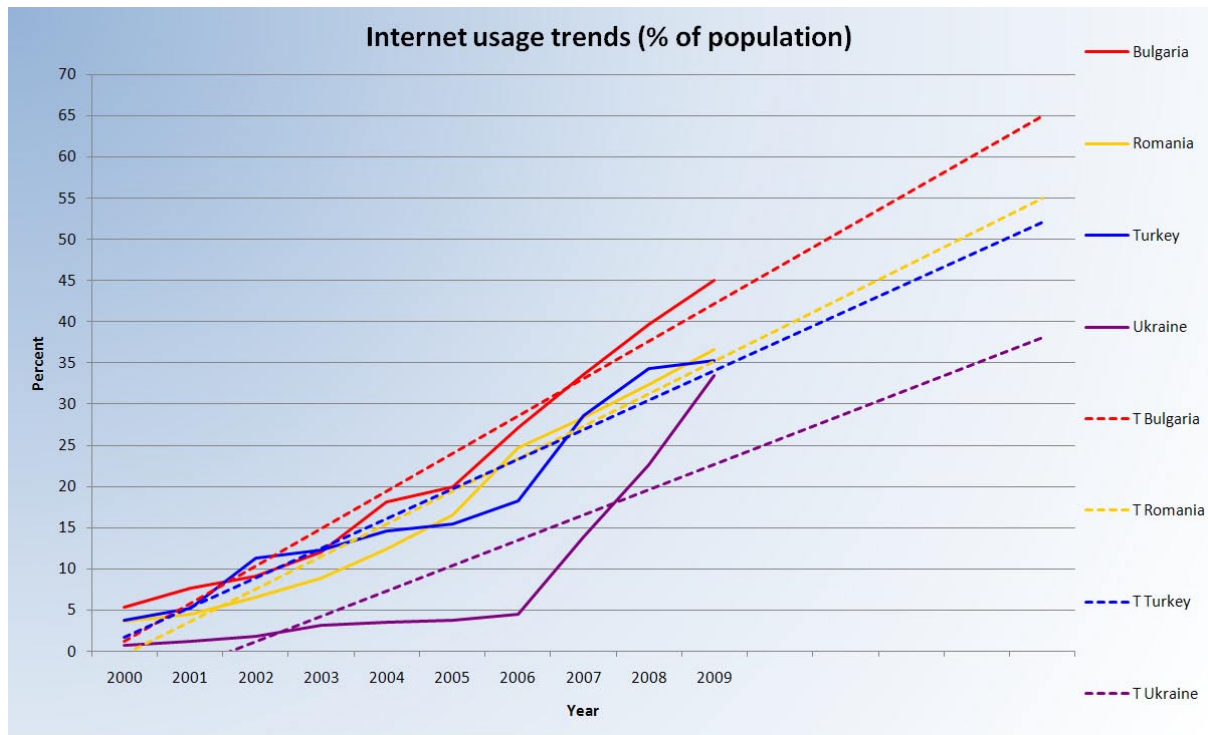


Figure 9: Internet usage trends (% of population) (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2011).

We decided to use linear trends for our estimations since we feel that it gives us an estimate that is both closer to the truth and gives us safer estimates than other ways of plotting the trend lines. However we feel that it is clear that these countries have an Internet usage that is growing rapidly and because of this social media channels in our target countries have the potential of reaching a large part of the population within the near future. As the Internet usage in Ukraine has exploded since 2006 the trend line becomes harder to judge than the others, however we believe that the curve will flatten out and conform to about the same levels as our other target countries.

In our questionnaires we found that the usage of the Internet was quite high among both of our target groups when compared to graph above. The results are compiled in the following graphs:

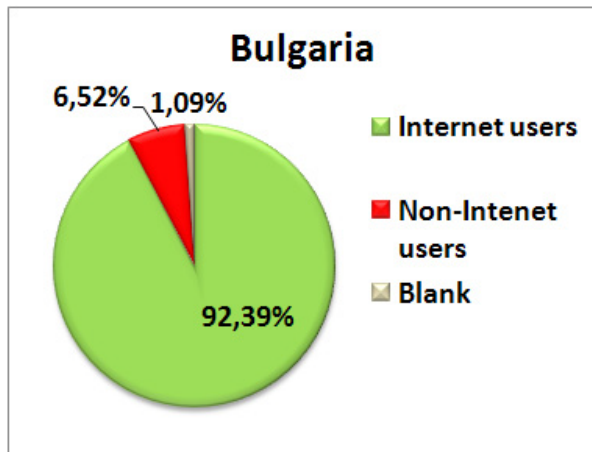


Figure 10: Internet usage statistics for both our target groups in Bulgaria.

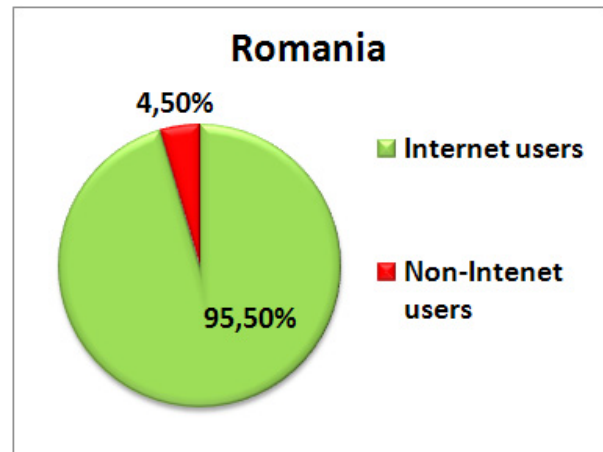


Figure 11: Internet usage statistics for both our target groups in Romania.

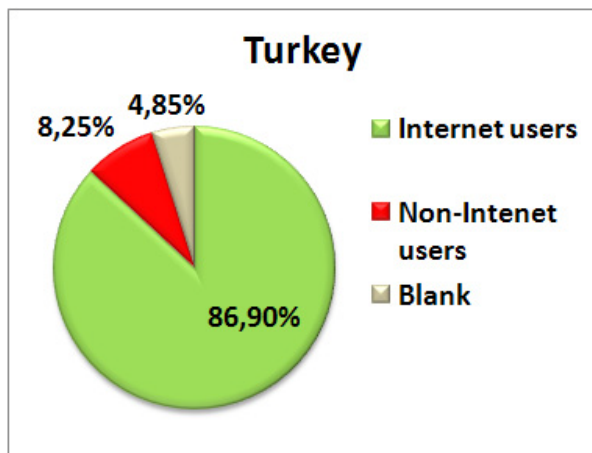


Figure 12: Internet usage statistics for both our target groups in Turkey.

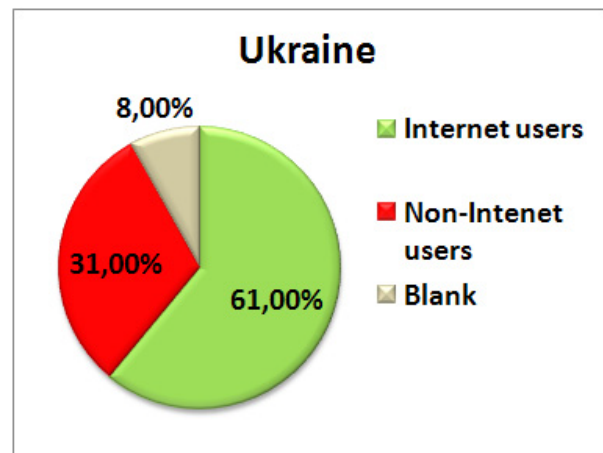


Figure 13: Internet usage statistics for both our target groups in Ukraine.

More detailed information on the Internet usage in all countries can be found in appendix 4. In these graphs we can see that the Internet usage in our target countries is on a high level, for both target groups. In all countries the drivers use the Internet less than the owners. In Ukraine 34% of the drivers answered that they use the Internet, which is lower than in the other countries and this is one of the explanations for why Ukraine has a lower Internet usage than the other countries, as about 89% of the owners in Ukraine used Internet daily and the rest answered that they used it Weekly. Note that, as we have previously explained, we interpret the blank answers as if they are non-Internet users we still declare the blank in our diagrams.

Since the statistics we used from Statistiska Centralbyrån (2010) is from 2009 the Internet usage among these countries has either grown rapidly or our target groups are more inclined to use the Internet than the population in general or maybe a combination of both factors.

Many also used the e-mail in our target countries. Not surprisingly our survey results showed that the use of email is higher amongst owners and they also use the e-mail much more frequently, often daily, while drivers in many countries seems to read their email a couple of times a month or less. We can also see that it is popular to use chat websites like MSN and Skype (see appendix 4). From the interviews we got the feeling that it also was common, especially amongst drivers, to use Skype to communicate with others when they were away on trips. Some owners also mentioned that they use Skype to communicate with their drivers. Many of the respondents also used the Internet to search for information about products before buying anything. We also asked during the interviews where they found the information they read about trucks and the transportation business and many said that they used the Internet and in many cases the Internet was also their main source. We think that this shows that they are not only using the Internet for basic things like visiting homepages etc but that they are also realizing how the Internet can help them in different situations, like Skype that lowers the phone bill for them.

“Every decision that I make, I study Internet, forums, and others’ opinions, then I make my decision.” - Romanian Owner 6⁴⁵

We were very surprised by the high number of Internet users in these countries since the statistics from Statistiska Centralbyrån showed much lower usage. During the interviews we noticed some differences between Romania and Bulgaria. We think that the awareness of the Internet and social media is larger in Romania than in Bulgaria. The interviewees in Romania that did not use social media themselves were aware of what it was, and what it could be used for and had a much more optimistic view of social media than the interviewees from Bulgaria. We also got the impression that many wanted to learn more about how to use the Internet in both countries where we conducted interviews.

“The future is in the Internet.” - Bulgarian driver 6⁴⁶

While some of the respondents did not have social media accounts themselves on for example Facebook many of them still used the sites anyways, often they accessed these kinds of sites through accounts that belonged to family members or friends.

“He says that he uses his wife’s Facebook account and he says that he does not have an account for either social media sites, but he enters those sites” – Romanian driver 8⁴⁷

In Bulgaria we got the feeling that people did use the Internet but not to all at the same extent as in Romania. They had a hard time distinguishing different things on the Internet and for them social media was everything from Skype to email and regular homepages. We did not get the same optimistic view about social media in Bulgaria as in Rumania; two of the respondents in Bulgaria even compared sites like Facebook with pornography. However they

⁴⁵ Interviewee 6 Romania, Owner, Interview 2011-04-06.

⁴⁶ Interviewee 6 Bulgaria, Driver, Interview 2011-04-11.

⁴⁷ Interviewee 8 Romania, Driver, Interview 2011-04-06.

were still positive about communicating and discussing online and showed interest in Worldtrucker.

4.1.4. What online media is mostly used by this group?

From our questionnaire results we could see that search engines were online tools that were used extensively in all our target countries and in both our target groups. That search engines are important could also be seen in the statistics that we got from Eva Carlström⁴⁸ on how people found their way to the Volvo Trucks website. In these reports we could see that the dominating way to find the Volvo Trucks website in all countries was through different search engines. Over 70% of all the people visiting the homepage entered the home page via search engines in all our target countries except Ukraine which landed at 44%, more details can be found in appendix 4 where the questionnaire results are presented.

In our opinion working with search engine optimization could prove important for a successful launch of a social media initiative in our target countries. By being visible early among the results when searching for things regarding Volvo Trucks and the transportation business the initiative might gain additional visitors that are interested. This can also be seen in the diagrams below where search engines are among the most used website types according to our surveys.

We would also like to note that the following charts show what type of websites that are visited by those that are using the Internet in our target groups.

⁴⁸ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

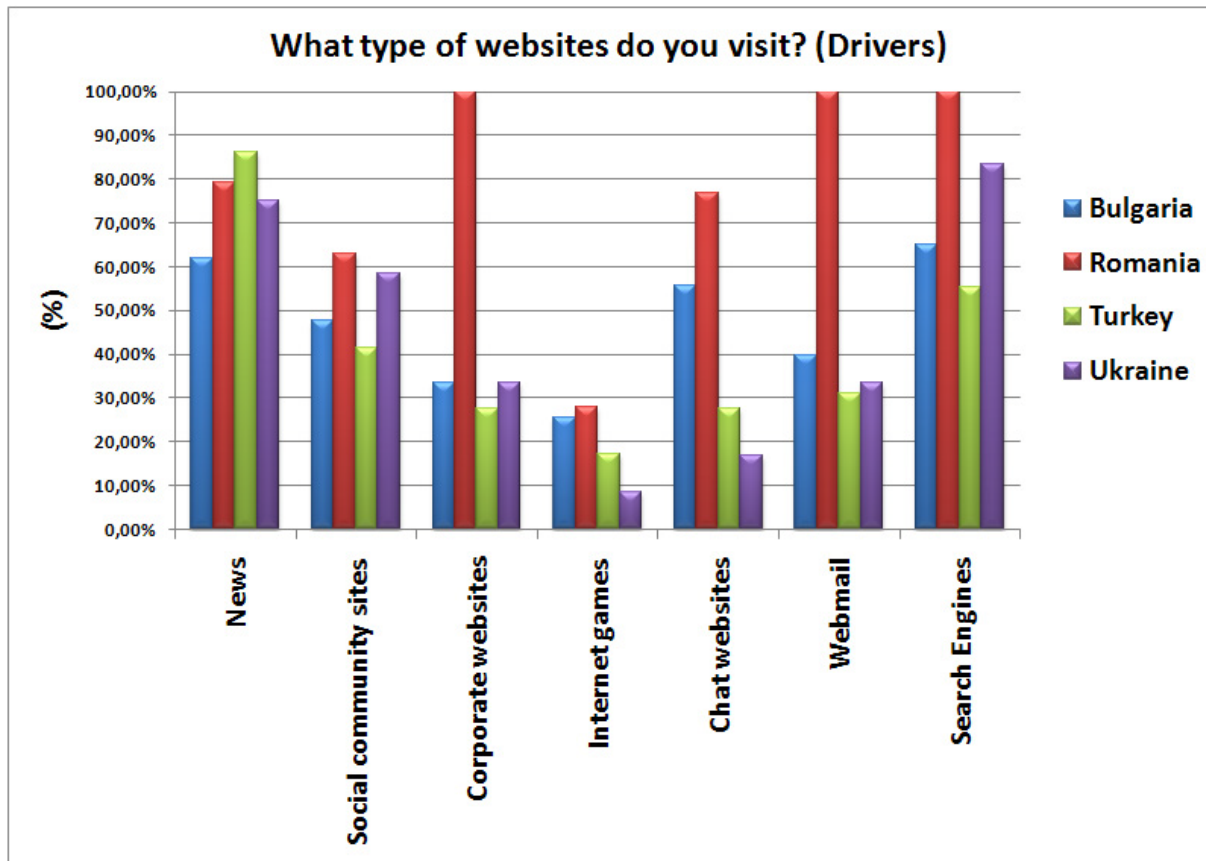


Figure 14: Website types visited by the drivers

It might seem that the Romanian drivers are differing a lot from the drivers in the other target countries, but as we previously made clear those denoted as drivers in Romania also own their trucks and in our opinion this might make them more prone to use the Internet. Therefore it is hard to do a comparison between the Romanian drivers and the other drivers. However from the above diagram it is clear that news websites, search engines and to some extent social media sites are popular amongst the drivers, while Internet games, corporate websites and webmail are not used to any large extent according to our investigation, with Romania as an exception.

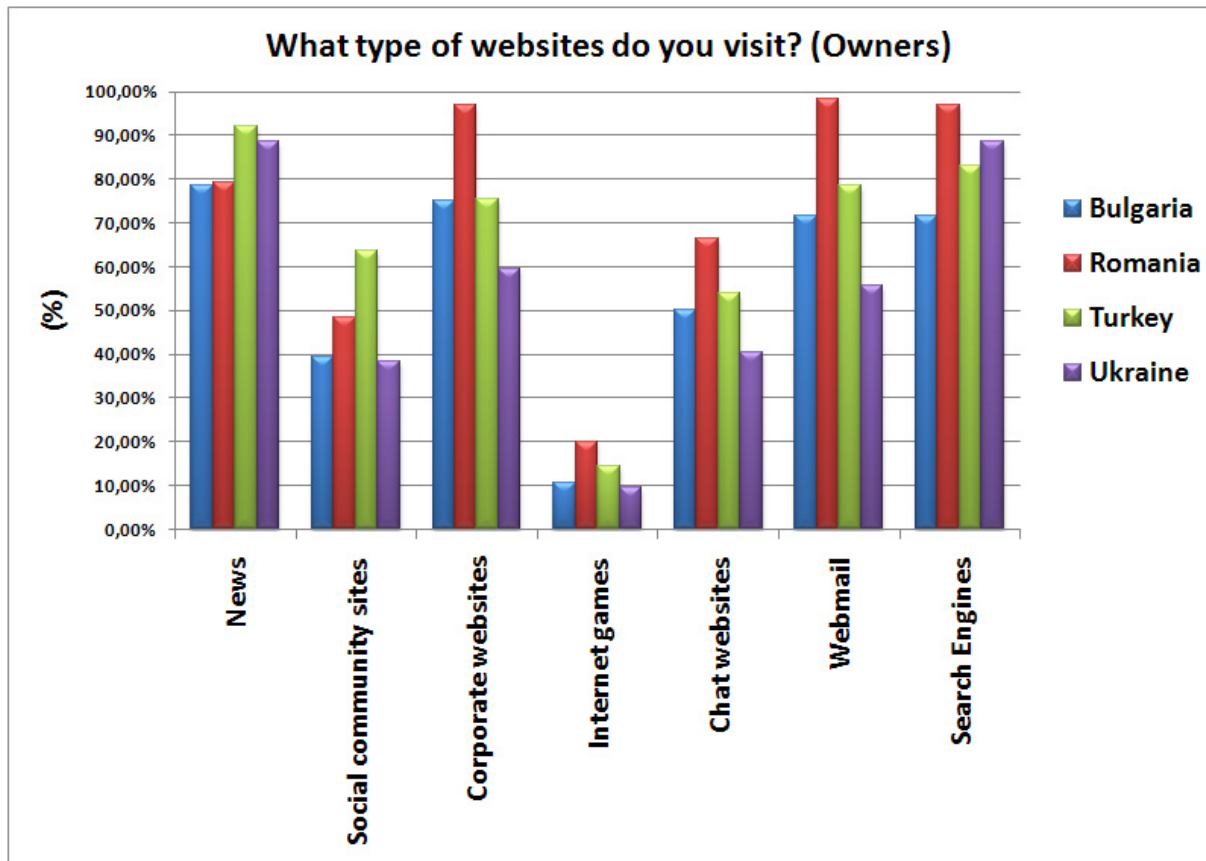


Figure 15: Website types visited by the owners

Just as among the drivers the news websites were popular websites to visit for the owners, as well as search engines and social media sites. Among the owners however webmail and chat websites got notably higher percentages but the most notable difference was that owners visit corporate websites to a much greater extent than the drivers do. Similar to the drivers' Internet games are not used to any large extent, while blogs are a bit more popular among to owners.

Overall it is possible to see that the owners are using a wider selection of the services that are available online than the drivers do. One explanation for this can be that the drivers often said during the interviews that lack of time was a reason to why they did not use Internet more. In our opinion the drivers are still using a lot of the tools that are available online which makes social media initiatives for both are target groups viable.

To further study how spread social media is within our target groups we asked if and how much they used social media and what social media they were using. The results are presented below.

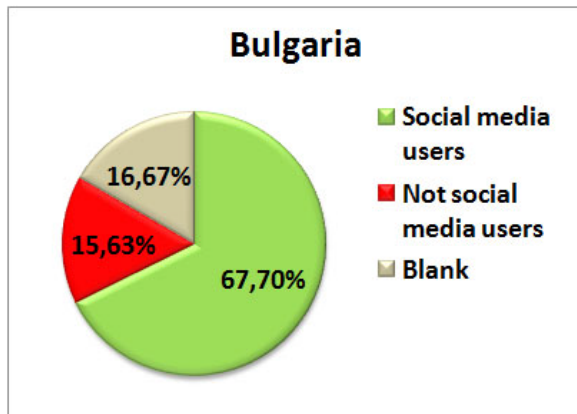


Figure 16: Social media usage statistics for both our target groups in Bulgaria.

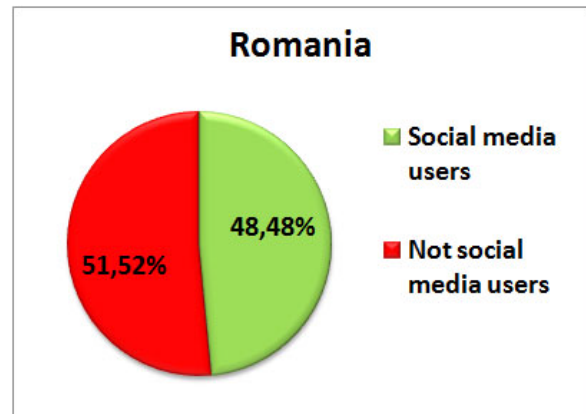


Figure 17: Social media usage statistics for both our target groups in Romania.

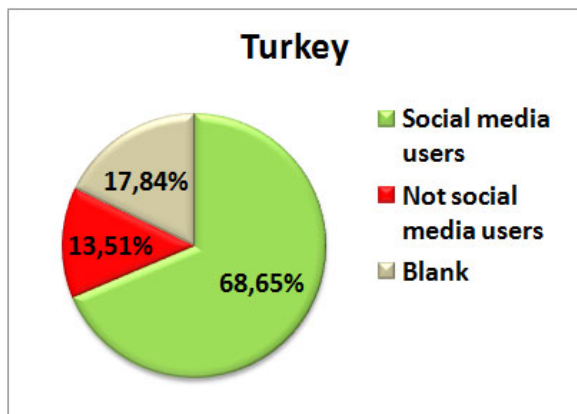


Figure 18: Social media usage statistics for both our target groups in Turkey.

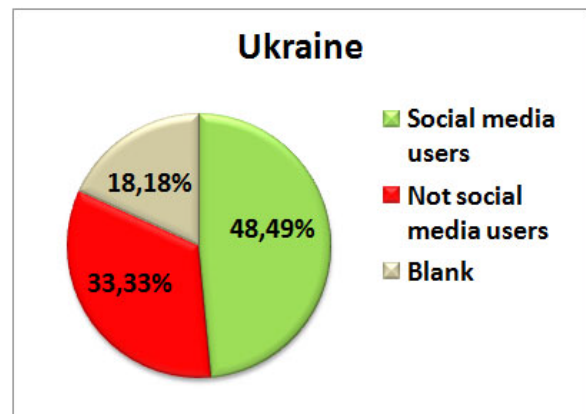


Figure 19: Social media usage statistics for both our target groups in Ukraine.

As we can see from the diagrams above the use of social media varies between the countries. The diagrams show how many of the Internet users that use or do not use social media. We show the blank numbers because we believe that most of the respondents that did not answer this question did not use social media and should therefore be considered. In Romania and Ukraine approximately half of the Internet users used social media. In Turkey and Bulgaria more than 65% of the Internet users used social media. How often they use social media varies a lot between the countries and the target groups. For example in Bulgaria the Internet using owners that use social media weekly or more often is 38.10% and amongst the drivers 22.22% while in Turkey 48.72% of the owners used social media weekly or more often and drivers 24.14% (see appendix 4). Social media can be an important channel for Region East to use in their marketing since their customers are present there, even if some of them only use it once a month.

Below we present what social media was used by our survey respondents, note that these diagrams show which sites were used by those that answered that they used social media.

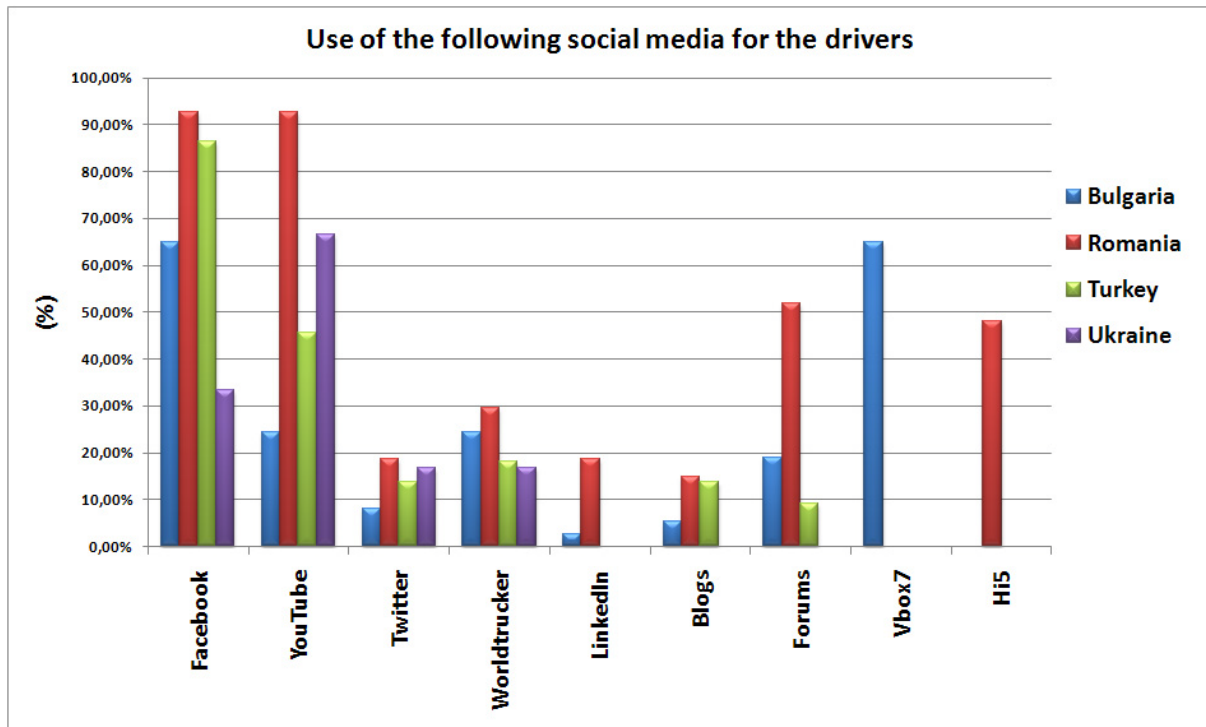


Figure 20: The social media that were used by the drivers.

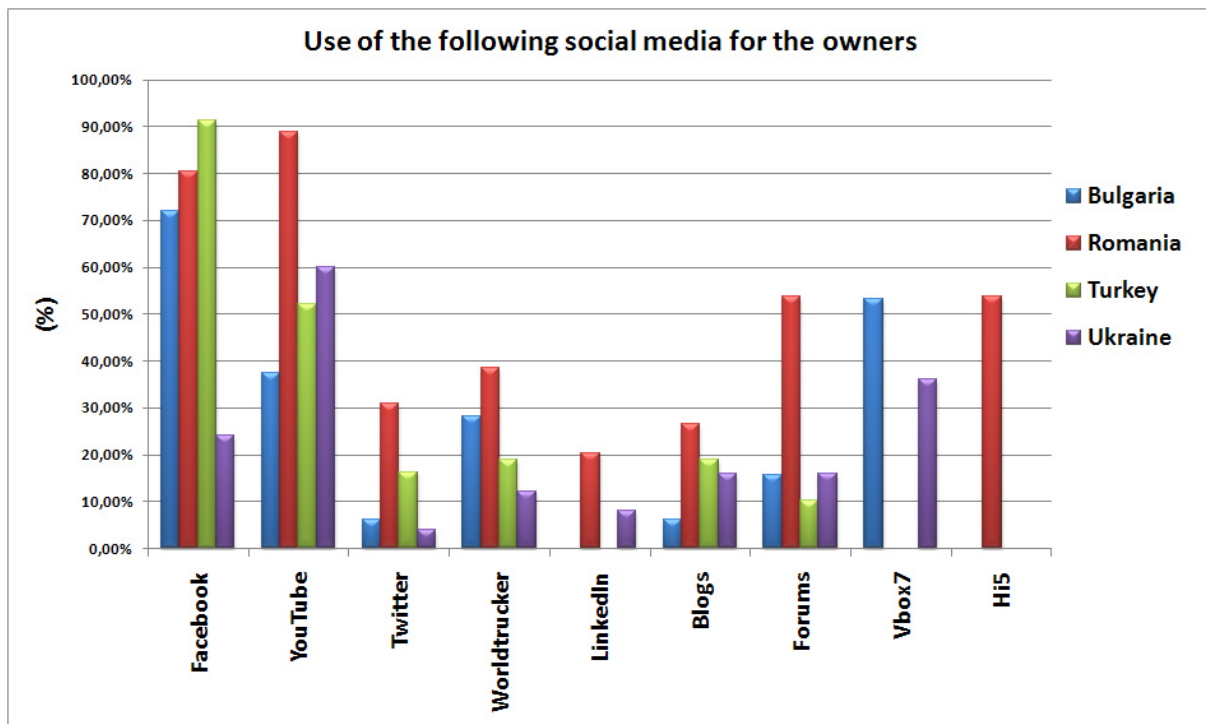


Figure 21: The social media that were used by the owners.

As can be seen above the social media used the most varied between the different countries however both YouTube and Facebook are standing out as popular choices in most of our target countries and target groups. In Bulgaria a site called Vbox7 which is a video sharing site was more popular than YouTube according to our survey and in our opinion it might be

an important complement site to use for posting videos that are directed at a Bulgarian audience. Furthermore Facebook is not at all as popular in Ukraine as amongst the other target countries. Two other sites similar to Facebook, *odnoklassniki.ru* and *vkontakte.ru*, was part of the Ukrainian survey in their local question (question 6 in the questionnaire) and were used about as much as Facebook. Overall these sites are not used much compared to the other countries. A social media initiative in Ukraine might be best to conduct through YouTube as this was used the most while most other social media did not seem to be very widespread at the moment.

Something that we saw during the interviews was that our target groups can use social media, for example *Worldtrucker*, to communicate across borders and through that get access to a larger network than only those in the home country as they are using for example Russian and Spanish sites. This increases the usefulness of the social media initiatives for the groups and makes it more likely that initiatives succeed.

Blogs, Twitter or LinkedIn did not seem popular amongst our target groups and in our opinion these should not be used as initiatives in these sites would probably not generate a sufficient number of followers to be counted as successful initiatives.

Lastly from the interviews in Romania we noticed that it was also common to use a site called *Bursa Transport*. This site seemed to be used almost every day by a lot of owners and drivers to find work and also to find things related to the transportation business such as routes. This also shows how important Internet is for the Romanian owners and drivers in their working life.

4.2. Future social media potential for Volvo Trucks

4.2.1. What does a Region East customer want to communicate about?

As we described earlier Simmons (2007) states that it is important that the content on a site is relevant for the users of the media; otherwise they will get a negative experience from using it. Furthermore he outlines that for marketing communication to work it must add value to the customers, otherwise they will disregard it. Therefore we felt that it was important to investigate what our two target groups were interested in communicating and reading about to be able to recommend relevant content for the market communication.

From the interviews we can see that a common interest that the target groups have is technical information. It can be everything from new engine technologies, truck innovations and information on spare parts to accessories for the trucks. The technical information seemed to be something that both drivers and owners were interested in. This was also reflected during our interview with Frödin⁴⁹ when she told us that on the site *Worldtrucker* the discussions that the drivers start are mostly concerned with technical things and it was also something that we could see in our surveys since many in both target groups answered that they used the Internet

⁴⁹ Susanne Frödin, Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-03-21.

to find technical information about products. Some respondents also said as an example on how they could they could benefit from communicating with Volvo Trucks through social media that they could get help and recommendations in real time.

“When I have something, I don’t know... to repair on the truck I could go there and see the impression, things like this. Things like communicating in real time. You know, I have this problem... to give me some tips.” - Romanian driver 11⁵⁰

Both target groups were also interested in new makes and models of trucks and in our opinion social media initiatives around new products can be interesting for the target groups. An example from within Volvo Trucks where this was done is the Volvo FMX launch that both Hermansson⁵¹ and Carlström⁵² talked about in our exploratory study. As mentioned before to creating groups around products is also much less complicated since the discussions do not have to go through Volvo Trucks’ spokesperson. During our interviews in Romania and Bulgaria we noticed that many were very passionate about trucks, especially their own and while we had known that this was true for the drivers from before, many of the owners were as passionate about trucks as the drivers were.

“My truck is the best one, and they cannot make another one like this, I want to show you my truck. You should ask Ina about this because she has had an interview with me and some pictures of the truck. And my truck was displayed in an exhibition, in Sofia exhibition centre.” - Bulgarian owner 14⁵³

In our opinion focus on technical and innovation content in social media channels could prove successful as this proved to be something that both our target groups were interested in and it would therefore feel relevant and add value to them. But we also believe that to start a more personal discussion around their own trucks could create a lot of activity since many seem to be so devoted to their trucks.

In Romania several of our respondents used a site called Bursa Transport, which enabled them to find work by locating loads that needed transportation. This was also reflected in our surveys done where many answered that they would like to use social media to find business opportunities. At the same time we also observed that they wanted to discuss transportation issues with their colleagues, things like routes, good places to stop and similar things. One respondent also said that it could be good to be able to discuss experiences that other drivers had with different clients⁵⁴. In our opinion this exchange of information could benefit from being done through social media channels while being valuable for those using it.

⁵⁰ Interviewee 11 Romania, Driver, Interview 2011-04-07.

⁵¹ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14.

⁵² Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

⁵³ Interviewee 14 Bulgaria, Owner, Interview 2011-04-14.

⁵⁴ Interviewee 8, Romania, Driver, Interview 2011-04-06.

Another piece of information that was sought by our target groups was financial information, like prices on trucks and spare parts. This was especially true for the owners and they used the Internet to find this information. Even though the drivers were not the ones buying the trucks they were also interested in prices but mainly because they found it entertaining to compare the prices of different makes and brands.

Furthermore, the surveys in Romania showed that discussing prices through social media with other colleagues was something that many were interested in. That prices were interesting could also be seen in the survey results through the fact that many answered that they already utilized the Internet to find pricing information for products. This was something that held true for all target countries and for both target groups. Furthermore it was something that we could observe during the interviews as well since several of our respondents told us that they used the Internet to make product and price comparisons before making purchasing decisions.

In addition to this some of the interviewees in Romania also said that they used Internet and social media to find opinions from others about products. Our surveys also indicated this and both owners and drivers were interested in finding information about products and/or services on the Internet. In our interviews we observed that opinions were also sought by truck owners prior to purchasing trucks, they used the Internet and social media to find information and opinions about different trucks and brands before making a purchasing decision. The following quote illustrates this:

“Now, in this moment our company is buying new trucks. And we study information about every brand, Volvo, Mercedes, DAF and all the opinions from Internet.” - Romanian owner 6⁵⁵

According to these observations we feel that is relevant for our target groups to be able to find and share opinions about trucks and furthermore we believe that this kind of information exchange could be aided by social media channels by enabling the users to share content about these topics with each other and discuss them.

While most of our survey answers showed that both target groups were interested in communicating about work related things through social media we could also see indications that several were interested in communicating about all sorts of things with their colleagues and having a general exchange of information and socialization, for example discussing their interests. We interpret this communication as a social exchange as Håkansson (1982) calls it, this is an aspect of interaction which helps to build up the relationship between the parties that are interacting. To enable the users to do this through a social media initiative could also add value.

We saw another form of social exchange in our interviews, many of the interviewees stated that they used social media sites for entertainment and to find things that were entertaining and caught their attention. This was especially true for YouTube and similar video sharing

⁵⁵ Interviewee 6 Romania, Owner, Interview 2011-04-06.

sites like Vbox7. We believe that this can be both a challenge and an opportunity as the content put on these sites must be entertaining to spread, but if it is, the message can reach a lot of people. Moreover, it is our opinion that these channels are important to consider since a large proportion of the survey respondents in all our countries answered that they used YouTube or similar sites. At the same time we feel that it is important to note that not all of our respondents said that they used video sharing sites only for entertainment, some said that they searched for information, for example on engines.

Furthermore, the survey answers indicated that many were positively disposed towards communicating with colleagues through social media and thought it could be beneficial. This could also be seen in our interviews as several of the interviewees thought that there could be a positive aspect in being able to communicate with colleagues and with Volvo Trucks through social media, although most could not give any specific examples what these benefits could include. Carlström⁵⁶ had an example when we interviewed her, the possibility to give support through social media and when we suggested this to our respondents they thought that it could be helpful if they had a problem with their truck.

Lastly, our surveys indicated that the owner target group uses the Internet at work to a larger extent than at home, except in Romania where they used it slightly more at home but still a lot at work. The drivers, on the other hand, generally accessed the Internet in their homes rather than at work.

4.2.2. Interaction potential with social media

With the help of the A-R-A model we have made a flowchart to analyze what a potential social media initiative might result in and see how the different layers of the model would interact. This can be illustrated by the following flowchart:

⁵⁶ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, Interview 2011-02-08.

A-R-A: Interaction between layers and dimensions

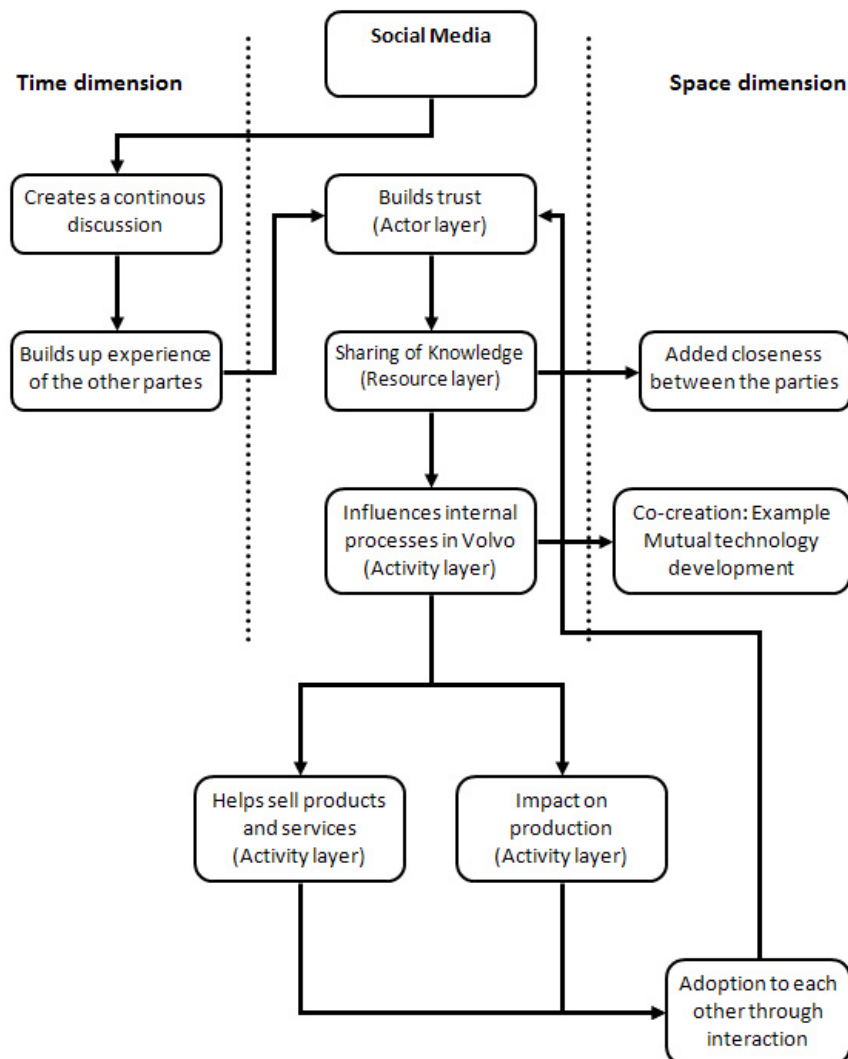


Figure 22: A-R-A flow chart over how Social Media can aid Volvo Trucks (own model).

In the flowchart above we can see that social media has the potential to create a continuous discussion from which the interacting parties can get experience of one another. The trust between them increases. This in turn leads to increased sharing of knowledge which adds to the closeness felt by them. Furthermore the input is supposed to influence the internal processes at Volvo Trucks, which is an example of co-creation and as such has an impact on the production. In the long run it also hoped to help Volvo Trucks sell products and services. In the space dimension these are examples of adaptation to each other through the interaction which further builds up trust between the parties.

It is our opinion that social media can have an impact on how you interact but how it affects the interaction is dependent on what social media is used and how. As an existing example, Worldtrucker primarily focuses on enabling the drivers to interact with each other while at the same time enabling Volvo Trucks to gather information about this group. Since the community is meant to become global one problem lies in the fact that all participants do not

use the same language and that many in our target countries do not know English very well, something that they are aware of at Volvo Trucks.

“One of the difficulties with social media is that centrally you cannot do that much since English might not always be used.”- Niclas Hermansson⁵⁷

Because of this problem it is harder for Volvo Trucks and Region East centrally to work directly with such an initiative and to extract information from it. From our perspective this means that it is up to the regional offices in each country to handle the gathering of information. Another issue is that it becomes harder for those using Worldtrucker to communicate with users from countries because of the language barrier, this limits the use the users have of the media, as they do not have access to the all the content on the site. We do believe that adding new language packages to Worldtrucker is a good idea and that this can become a very useful tool for Region East for gathering information about their markets and many of the drivers showed interest in Worldtrucker when told about the site. As we mentioned earlier we got the impression when visiting Bulgaria and Romania that Spanish and Russian was understood by many which this opens up for communication with a wider network than only on a national level.

We believe that the difficulty presented by the language barrier holds partially true for any social media initiative launched by Region East, maybe to a slightly lesser extent in content communities such as YouTube or Vbox7, as these can be made to rely more on visual images than on language and thus require less translating. Therefore, initiatives on a national level might work the best as initiatives from Region East.

⁵⁷ Niclas Hermansson, Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks, Interview, 2011-02-14 [translated].

5. Conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter we present the conclusions and recommendations that we have drawn from our study. In this chapter we use the research questions to structure the content. We also give recommendations to Region East, and suggestions for further research.

5.1. How can Volvo Trucks Region East use social media to market themselves towards their customers?

In the beginning one of the problems was that we did not know if the target groups used Internet at all. From the results of the surveys we now see that the use of the Internet is much higher than expected in almost all target groups in all target countries with the exception of the drivers in Ukraine. One reason why our target group was more inclined to use the Internet than the population in general can be that everybody in our target group was working. The owners use the Internet much more on a daily basis than the drivers that did not consider themselves to have time to use the Internet as often as the owners who often had access to Internet at work. However, some of the drivers responded that they had a laptop in their truck which they used to connect to the Internet at gas stations etcetera or had an Internet stick, this we think is a positive sign for the future. Also the fact that many used the Internet to look for information about trucks and transportation business shows that even though the drivers might not have time during the day to use the Internet they use it for work related things during their spare time. From the interviews we noticed that the way of using the Internet varied a lot between the respondents. Some considered themselves Internet users when in fact it was their grandchildren that searched for information for them while some were much more advanced in their use of the Internet with for example searching for information on trucks prior to buying new trucks. Overall our impression from the interviews was that many used the Internet to search for information before buying anything and that many used the Internet when they searched for things related to trucks. We think that this shows that the target groups do not only use the Internet for fun but also professionally. We concluded that the target groups are using the Internet and some also social media and that it is in Volvo Trucks' strategy to be early with new media channels therefore we think that Volvo Truck should use social media in their marketing. Also, the fact that the Internet usage is growing rapidly we think shows the potential with using social media and as Carlström said, it takes a while to learn social media and therefore it can also be good to start early.

From the survey and the interviews we could see that Facebook and YouTube were the most well-known and popular social media sites and therefore our recommendation is that these sites are used. At the same time we want to remind you that Volvo Trucks already have a YouTube page and that they prefer that this site is used but that everyone is welcome to upload movies in their own language. Some countries also have alternative sites that could be used like in Bulgaria where Vbox7 is more popular than YouTube according to our survey. Many of the drivers from the interviews were also very optimistic when we told them about Worldtrucker and wanted to talk about the transportation business with their colleagues so we also believe that this is something that could be used.

Ukraine differs from the other countries and they did not use for example Facebook at the same extent as in the other countries. Instead we think that YouTube should be the primary social media effort there.

Simmons (2007) says that it is important to understand the customer in order to create a strong brand and loyal customers. This is what Volvo Trucks is trying to do through the use of Worldtrucker. With Worldtrucker the users can influence the discussions however they cannot communicate with Volvo Trucks through the site and this interaction is also something that Simmons (2007) describes as important for strengthening the brand. Today the users of Worldtrucker might not even know that the site is provided by Volvo Trucks so the site in itself cannot be used directly to strengthen Volvo Trucks' brand by building a relationship between Volvo Trucks and its customers. Instead, Worldtrucker might strengthen the Volvo Truck brand by people discussing the trucks, which might be considered more credible information than information coming directly from Volvo Trucks directly. But since the interaction between Volvo Trucks and its customers is missing in Worldtrucker and since Simmons (2007) suggests that social media to strengthen the brand through relationship building we think that it is important for Region East to use different social media. This will lead to that Region East are not only listening and learning through Worldtrucker but also interacts to builds relationships and strengthening the Volvo Trucks brand in the countries in the region.

According to Normann (2001) learning about the actors involved in the value-creation process of the owners and their network can help Region East to provide better solutions and strengthen the brand. Since Worldtrucker can provide insights into this network and we think that Region East should translate and use it in their markets. In general we believe that social media can aid companies in getting to know their customer's customer and thereby understand the needs of the customer better and the networks that exist around them and thus be able to improve their business.

Many said that they used the Internet to search for information about trucks and because of this we think that using for example Facebook in the same way as Hermansson suggested; with groups around products is a good idea. In this way the customers can get the communication with Volvo Trucks that is lacking via Worldtrucker while at the same time as they can talk with each other. Another positive aspect about these groups is that they can be interesting for both drivers and owners. Furthermore, developing a social media package could be a great idea to lower the amount of work needed from the regional offices and to make sure that a consistent message is spread everywhere.

We also think that if you want interaction, which is much what social media is about, you have to create a discussion. Frödin said that there have not been as many discussions as they expected at Worldtrucker. If you launch a group about a specific truck on for example Facebook people are going to see the group and maybe like it. But to get people to contribute they have to give them something to talk about, one example could be a contest of who has the best looking truck.

As we have seen there are different actors involved in the communication between Volvo Trucks and its customers. In the beginning it felt difficult to do anything with social media since only spoke persons were allowed to give statements for the company and since Volvo Trucks is a large company, this could take time. Since the English language is not widespread in these countries everything will have to be in the native language and because of this more people have to be involved and the same questions might have to be answered many times. But since it according to Hermansson is okay to give statements around products this is an easier solution and makes the communication much less complicated. When using Worldtrucker this is not a problem since Volvo Trucks just provide the site and are not active themselves.

When Volvo Trucks were launching Worldtrucker they tested the forum in countries that they considered having a high Internet-maturity. This can be an alternative for Region East as well, to start testing a social media initiative in some of their countries. In Romania they were very optimistic about social media. There was barely anyone that had not heard about social media when we explained it to them and the ones that did not use it themselves had colleagues or family who used it. Many of them also used Bursa Transport on a daily basis to find work. We can also see that in Turkey they have a high number of Internet and social media users. Therefore, we think that these countries can be good countries to start an initiative in.

5.2. What should you think about when developing a social media strategy?

As we have seen the strategic literature and i-Branding literature provides a lot of insights and recommendations on how to work with social media and we have summarized these in the following conclusions which are adapted to fit Region East and the groups that we have studied specifically.

Before launching a social media initiative it is important to have a strategy for it in place and while Volvo Trucks at large have a developed strategy for social media, we feel that it is important that Region East starts working more actively with social media. In our opinion it is important to vary strategy depending on the used media and on the group you focus on with the initiative. Moreover, this strategy should focus on building relationships with the target groups and strengthening the Volvo Trucks brand. It is also important to remember that any activities undertaken in social media channels should align with what Volvo Trucks wish to communicate, so that the company does not send out mixed messages in their communication with the markets.

Also it is important to pick the channels where the customers are present if entering existing social media. In Region East's case this means Facebook and YouTube in most cases as we have seen. Furthermore we believe that in this regard our target groups are similar to the rest of the population as it is likely that the same social media that are popular in our target groups also are popular in general in our target countries.

For an initiative to be successful the target groups must use it; otherwise it will not be beneficial to Volvo Trucks. The common denominator across all the countries we have investigated and both target groups is that they are interested in technical information and innovations. The drivers are also interested in communicating about work related things such as routes while the owners were more focused on prices and service which are often the situation when they come in contact with Volvo Trucks. In our opinion these things are important to consider when launching social media initiatives. As an example a group on Facebook that focuses on new technologies could be one way to give the target groups what they want and build a relationship with them. In such a group it would also be possible for the participants to discuss and ask about prices, something that the owners were interested in.

It is also important to remember that content should be supplied on a regular and frequent basis to keep up the interest for the channel. Both target groups were also passionate about trucks, especially their own, and this can be taken advantage of when working with social media. In our opinion it is easier to get these groups to contribute content that relates to their own trucks and lives, such as pictures and movies, something that can be started through contests and similar activities in the medium. Furthermore, pictures and movies are less language dependent than for example text in forums and may therefore transcend boundaries created by language differences which can spread such content further even if the sites themselves needs to be in the users' native language.

In our opinion the interaction process that Håkansson (1982) talks about can be directly affected by social media, especially information and social exchange. It is important to remember that these exchanges has an effect on how the interacting parties feel about each other and that new relationships can emerge from a social media initiative and it is therefore important that Region East try to make sure that the users of an initiative gets a positive experience out of it since this will help strengthen the brand. In addition, the communication that take place in social media generally is more informal and as we have seen this interaction also increases the knowledge about the different counterparts that are communicated with. This leads to a better understanding for how the relationships between the organizations should be managed.

The increased Internet usage that we have seen affects the environment in which the communication takes place, as more and more of the communication is done through the Internet through social media, e-mail, instant messaging and phoning programs such as Skype. The Internet and social media can be utilized to bring Region East closer to their customers and to create a more collaborative atmosphere between Region East and the target groups that we have investigated. For example Region East can get feedback from the truck drivers and owners about their products to improve them and the way of working.

Also you should have rules and boundaries in place for the initiatives to make it easy for employees to engage in the media without fear of doing the wrong things, and to be able to judge when content is inappropriate and should be removed. There are rules supplied by Volvo Trucks in the form of social media guidelines and they coincide well with the

recommendations seen in strategic literature. We would recommend that these guidelines are actively worked with and incorporated when Region East starts working with social media.

We have seen that many look for opinions online before making purchasing decisions, this leads us to believe that people view information gained through social media as credible. Furthermore it is apparent that people with specific interests like to share their experiences with each other, be it through photos, home-made documentaries posted on YouTube and similar things which gives the companies an opening to use those who are interested in their products as collaborators and brand ambassadors if the companies are willing to let go of some brand control. Lastly we believe that social media poses great opportunities to strengthen the relationships companies have with their customers and users.

5.3. Recommendations

Firstly it is clear from our investigations that Internet and social media is more widespread than we initially thought and in our opinion it is not too early to start social media initiatives in any of the countries we have investigated. In our opinion Romania and Turkey could be good test markets for potential social media initiatives. We got a good impression of the Internet users when visiting Romania as both target groups seemed very aware of the Internet and its possibilities and in Turkey the numbers of Internet and social media users were very high in both of our target groups.

Furthermore it is important to remember that social media initiatives should not be purely about selling; rather it should focus on building relationships with the target groups. This in turn can lead to increased brand strength which in the long run increases the market position and sales, but it takes time. You can engage the customers with social media by communication, collaboration, education and entertainment as Safko and Brake (2009) suggests.

Also we think that launching Worldtrucker in new languages for our target countries (with the exception of Ukraine) is something that should be done as many of the respondents showed an interest in the site during our interviews and we think that launching it in conjunction with an event would work well. However Worldtrucker is mainly for listening to and learning about the truck drivers, which makes it important to make sure that the markets have the resources needed to work with Worldtrucker prior to the launch.

Overall it is important that the markets have the time and resources to work with the initiatives as social media demands activity to work well and because of the language barriers a lot of work in our target countries has to come from the regional offices as they have to be active, read comments and post things. However we believe that Region East centrally can support them through providing material, such as videos, photos and texts to be translated and posted by the markets.

Since Worldtrucker is mainly about listening and learning other initiatives are needed to build relationships. As we have seen Facebook and YouTube, and to some extent Vbox7 and Hi5

are the sites that are used the most by the target groups. To use these sites for the initiative therefore seems like the best way.

As for the content it is clear that both drivers and owners are keenly interested in technical information and innovations regarding trucks. In our opinion adding this kind of content to the social media initiatives could help them become popular. As an example it could be done through having a Volvo Trucks innovations group on Facebook and posting things on this subject.

To increase the participation from the drivers and owners in the social media channels we believe that creating different activities that makes them participate more. As an example we thought that a photo contest where everyone is allowed to upload their best pictures of their Volvo Trucks and have the chance to have their picture end up on the front of the customer magazine might be a way to get the target groups to become more actively participating.

Another important thing to consider is that different social media channels can be used differently it is important to set a clear goal or goals for that channel. Worldtrucker already has the goal of listening and learning, a Facebook page about innovation might have as a goal to generate a lot of clicks and readers while contests might aim for a large number of participants.

Lastly we believe that making sure that the social media initiatives show up early in the results when using search engines could be helpful in generating visitors to the different initiatives as many of the visitors to Volvo Trucks website came through search engines and thus would see the different social media initiatives when searching for Volvo Trucks.

5.4. Suggestions for future research

We believe that to conduct similar studies in other countries would be interesting, to be able to compare them. Furthermore the Internet and social media is rapidly changing so within a couple of years our study might need to be revisited and revised as there will be new tools available online and how the Internet is used will likely have changed.

Furthermore case studies focused on how brands can be strengthened through social media with a before and after entering social media perspective could provide good insights as to how the brand is affected when entering social media. It would also be interesting to study how different social media types can be used in marketing and if which strengthen brands the most.

Lastly it would be interesting to see an evaluation of how the different social media initiatives in Region East or Volvo Trucks were perceived by the customers and how it affected the brand and sales.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Social media glossary

- Blog** Comes from web log and is a personal diary online where the user can post text, photos and videos and other users can comment on the posts (Nationalencycledin, 2011a).
- Twitter** A kind of micro blog where the users are only allowed to post “tweets” at a maximum of 140 characters. (Nationalencycledin, 2011b).
- Social networking sites** Social networking sites are also called communities; they are a meeting place online where people with common interests can share experiences with each other. The sites vary in size, availability and purpose (Nationalencycledin, 2011c).
- Facebook** Facebook was started in 2004 and is an Internet based community, the users can post contact information, photos, videos and exchange messages with each other. It is one of the top ten websites in the world, calculated on the amount of users (Nationalencycledin, 2011d).
- Worldtrucker** This is a social networking site created by Volvo Trucks where truck drivers can join and connect with other truckers all over the world, regardless of brand preferences (Worldtrucker 2011a).
- Content communities** Sites where the users can share different types of media and also comment on the media content on the site (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).
- Flickr** A content community where the users can share photos with each other (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011).
- YouTube** A content community site for sharing videos with others. YouTube contains everything from home made videos, to professionally created material such as commercials, to scenes from movies or TV shows and music videos (Nationalencycledin, 2011e).

Table 2: Social media glossary.

Appendix 2: Referrer type per country

	Bulgaria	Romania	Turkey	Ukraine
Search Engines	72.7%	77.5%	83.4%	44.2%
Other websites	15.6%	13.2%	9.5%	26.6%
Typed/Bookmarked	11.3%	9.2%	6.6%	28.4%
Social Networks	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%

Table 3: Referrer types per country⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Eva Carlström, Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks, E-mail 2011-02-08.

Appendix 3: The interviews

Appendix 3.2: Interview guide - Drivers

Background information questions

- Could you tell us a bit about your background?
 - Tell us about your work.
 - Could you describe a “normal” day (or describe yesterday)?
- How do you use the Internet? (For what? Do you buy things? Do you look for information? Do you have an email?)
 - Does it influence your purchasing decisions?
- What do you find interesting to read about in regard to trucks/transport business?
 - What is your main source for this information?

Social media question

- Do you know something/have you heard about social media? What do you know?
- Do you use social media?

If Yes:

- What types of social media do you use?
 - What do you use social media for?
- Do you use social media in your work life in any way?
 - In what way do you use it?
 - Can you think of any way where social media can support your work life?
- Have you heard about or used Worldtrucker?
- Is there any way you think that you could benefit from communication with Volvo through social media?

If No:

- Why don't you use social media?
- Do you have any idea what you could use social media for?
- What could make you start using social media?
- Have you heard people talk about social media?

Communication with Volvo questions

- Are you in contact with Volvo in anyway?

If Yes:

- When you are in contact with Volvo, what are you looking for?
- What information is hard to find when communicating with Volvo?
- How do you communicate with Volvo most often?
- Do you use Volvo Trucks' website?

If Yes:

- What do you think about it?
- What do you use it for?

If No:

- Why not?

If No:

- Why not?
- What could make you use it?

Appendix 3.1: Interview guide - Owners

Background information questions

- Could you tell us a bit about your background?
 - Name, title
 - Tell us about your work.
 - Could you describe a “normal” day (or yesterday)?
- How large is the company you work for?
- How do you use the Internet? (For what? Do you buy things? Do you look for information? Do you have an email?)
 - Does it influence your purchasing decisions?
- What do you find interesting to read about in regard to trucks /transport business?
 - What is your main source for this information?

Social media question

- Do you know something/have you heard about social media? What do you know? (if they don't know explain)
- Do you use social media?

If Yes:

- What types of social media do you use?
 - What do you use social media for?
- Do you use social media in your work life in any way?
 - In what way do you use it?
 - Can you think of any way where social media can support your work life?

If No:

- Why don't you use social media?
- Do you have any idea what you could use social media for?
- What could make you start using social media?
- Have you heard people talk about social media?

- Have you heard about or used Worldtrucker?

Communication with Volvo questions

- When you are in contact with Volvo, what are you looking for?
- Do you use Volvo Trucks' website in your communication with Volvo?

If Yes:

- What do you think about it?
- What do you use it for?
- What information is hard to find when communicating with Volvo?
- How do you communicate with Volvo most often?

If No:

- Why not?
- What could make you use it?

Appendix 3.3: Interview respondents

Interview respondents - Exploratory study

Respondent	Position	Interview date
Carlström, Eva	Director Online Communications, Volvo Trucks.	2011-02-08
Frödin, Susanne	Manager MarCom & PR, Region Nordic, Volvo Trucks.	2011-03-21
Hermansson, Niclas	Digital Marketing Strategy, European Division, Volvo Trucks.	2011-02-14
Magnusson, Ulf	Director, Region East, Volvo Trucks	2011-02-09

Table 4: Interview respondents - Exploratory study.

Interview respondents - Romania

Respondent	Occupation/Position	Interview date
1	Owner	2011-04-04
2	Driver	2011-04-04
3	Owner and driver	2011-04-05
4	Driver	2011-04-05
5	Driver	2011-04-05
6	Owner and driver	2011-04-06
7	Owner	2011-04-06
8	Driver	2011-04-06
9	Transport coordinator	2011-04-06
10	Owner	2011-04-06
11	Driver	2011-04-07

Table 5: Interview respondents - Romania.

Interview respondents - Bulgaria

Respondent	Occupation/Position	Interview date
1	Driver	2011-04-11
2	Owner	2011-04-11
3	Driver	2011-04-11
4	Owner	2011-04-11
5	Driver	2011-04-11
6	Driver	2011-04-11
7	Driver	2011-04-11
8	Driver	2011-04-12
9	Driver	2011-04-12
10	Driver	2011-04-13
11	Driver	2011-04-14
12	Driver	2011-04-14
13	Owner	2011-04-14
14	Owner	2011-04-14
15	Driver	2011-04-14
16	Driver	2011-04-14
17	Driver	2011-04-15

Table 6: Interview respondents - Bulgaria.

Appendix 4: The Survey

Appendix 4.1: The Questionnaire form



ANSWER OUR QUESTIONNAIRE AND GET A MINIATURE FH16 TRUCK!

Do you use internet and social media? This is something that we at Volvo Trucks want to know more about. As a token for our appreciation we will give the 100 first who answer a miniature Volvo FH16 Truck.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

Social media questions

9. Do you use social media? (if never then go to question 12
For social media examples, see question 10.

- Never
- Less than once a month
- A couple of times a month
- Weekly
- Daily

10. How often do you use the following social media?

	Never	Some times	Often
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YouTube	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WorldTrucker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specify blogs _____			
Local adaptations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Forums (local example of forum)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specify forums _____			
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Why do you use social media?
(you may tick more than one answer)

- To communicate with others
- To check the news
- To play games
- To find products and/or services
- To find technical information about products and/or services
- To find information about prices
- To find information about organizations
- Other reasons _____

12. Would you like to be able to communicate with colleagues from the transport business through social media? (if no go to question 14)

- Yes
- No

13. What would you like to communicate about with colleagues from the transport business through social media?

14. In what way do you want to communicate with Volvo trucks?

- Through the website
- Through e-mail newsletters
- Through regular newsletters (fliers, printed material) by post mail
- Through personal contact
- Through phone
- Through SMS
- Through social media

Through what social media? (write up to three media)

Closing questions

15. What sector do you work in?

- Urban distribution
- National transport
- International transport
- Building and construction
- Other _____

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that?

- Less than a month
- 1-6 months
- 6 months to a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- More than 5 years

17. What are the top three reasons as to why you use Volvo?

18. Which brands does your company use?
(multiple answers possible)

- DAF
- Iveco
- MAN
- Mercedes
- Renault
- Scania
- Volvo
- Other _____

19. What is your function in the company?

- Driver
- Planner
- Fleet manager
- Director
- Other _____



Personal data

Your details will only be used for the purpose you indicate and will never be made available to third parties. We guarantee your anonymity.

1. Use of your personal details

- Only for receiving a token of our appreciation.
 To contact you for a personal interview.

2. Gender

- Male
 Female

3. Age _____

4. Address _____

5. Name of company _____

6. E-mail _____

7. Any comments to this questionnaire? _____

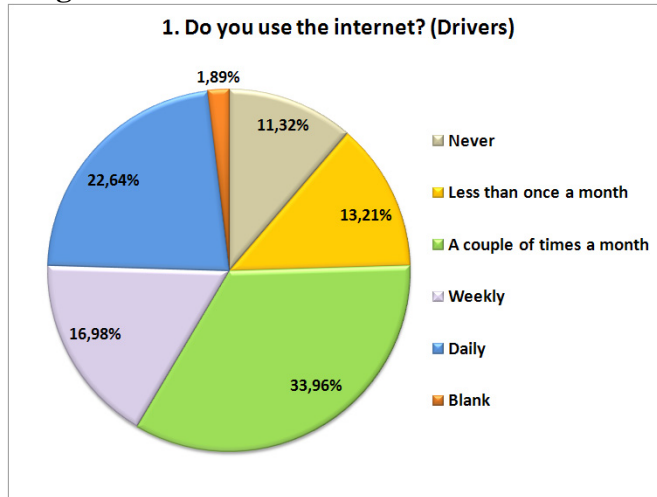
Thanks for your participation!

Volvo Bulgaria
www.volvotrucks.bg

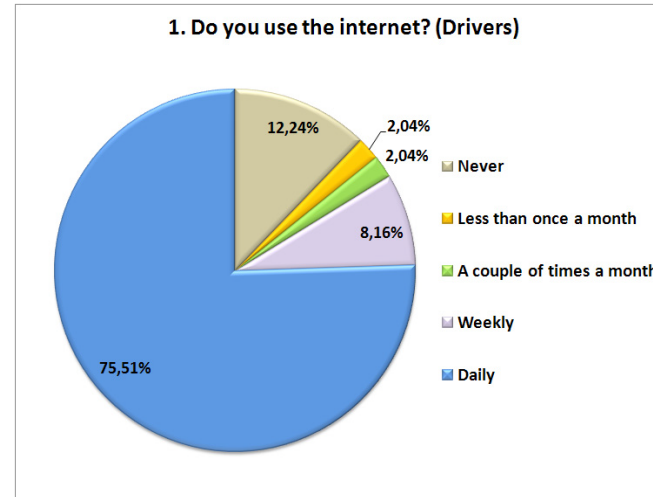
Appendix 4.2: Results from the questionnaire

1. Do you use the Internet? (Drivers)

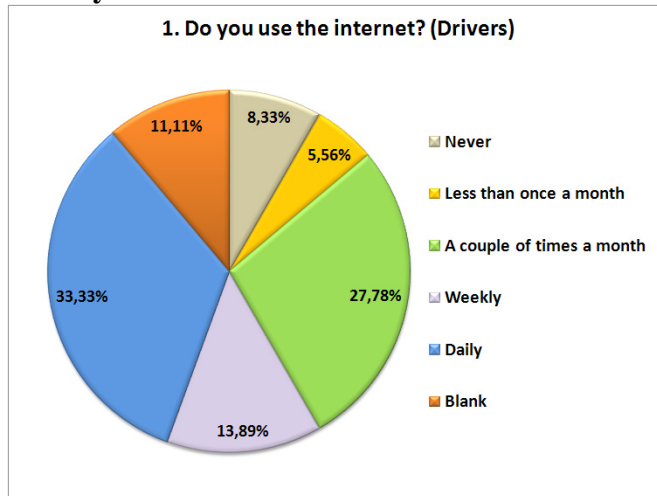
Bulgaria



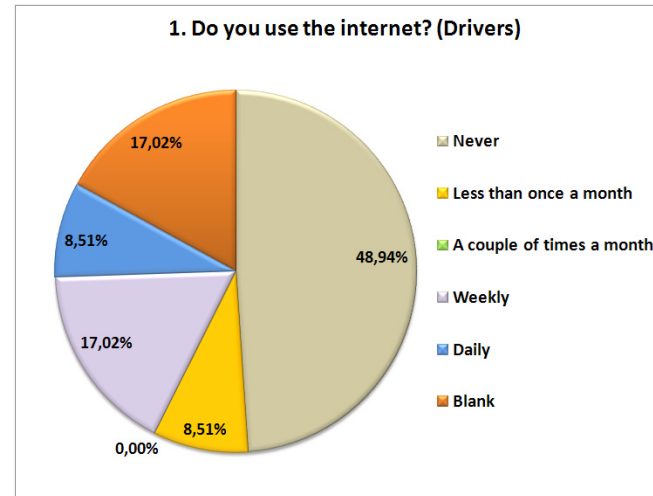
Romania



Turkey

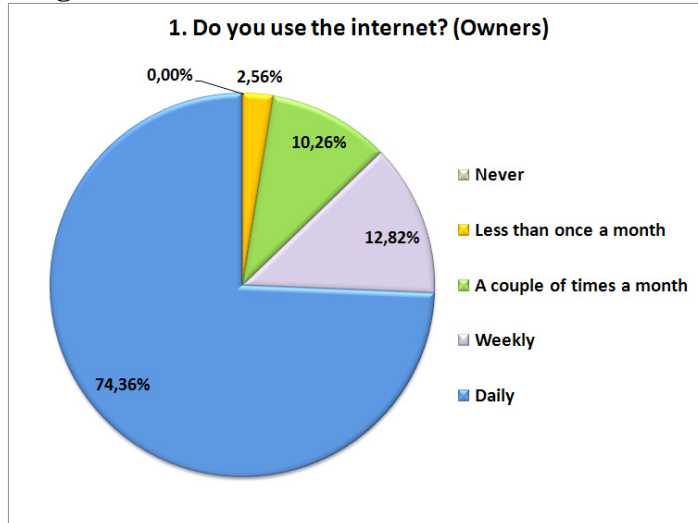


Ukraine

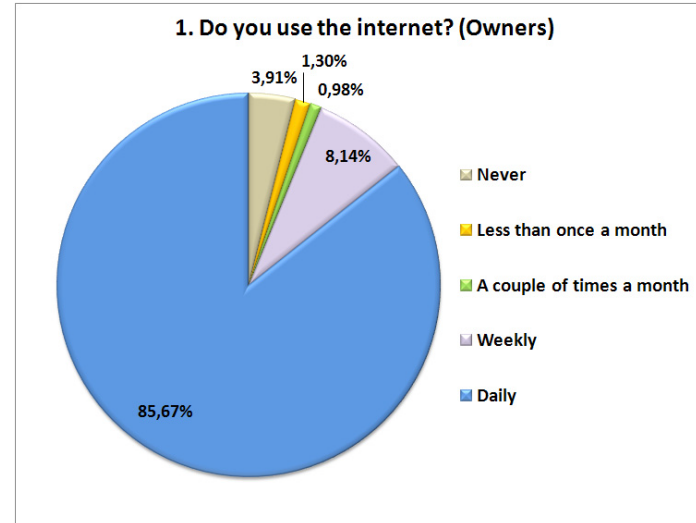


1. Do you use the Internet? (Owners)

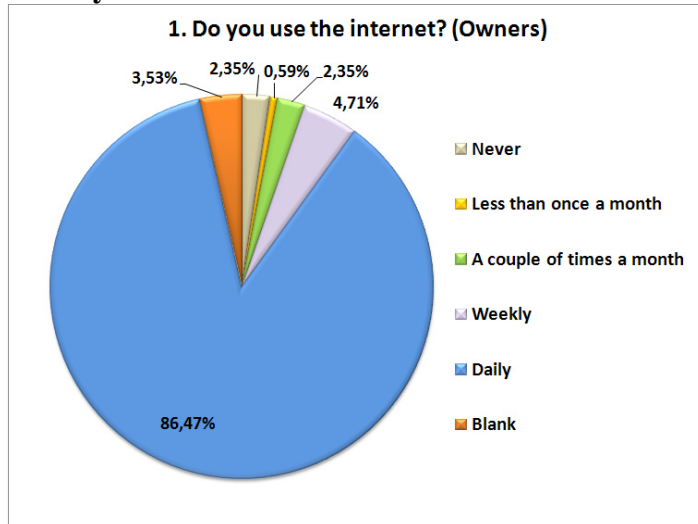
Bulgaria



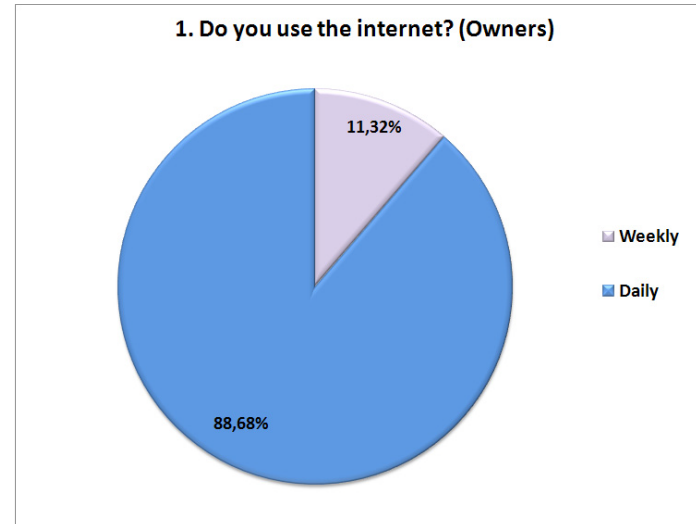
Romania



Turkey

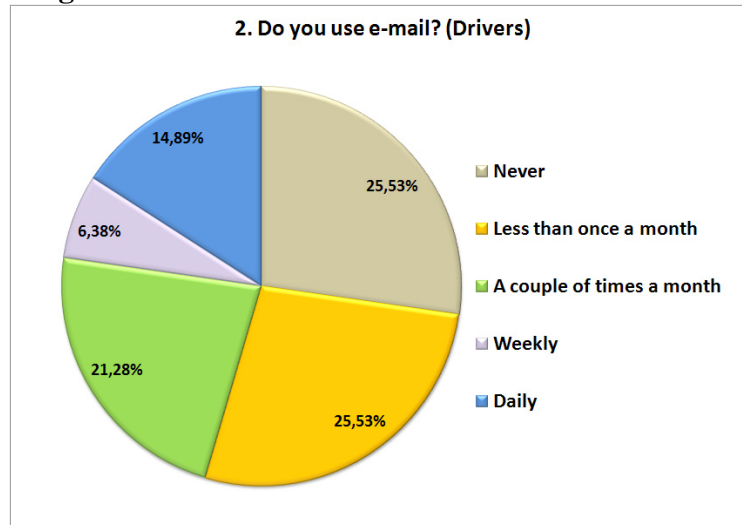


Ukraine

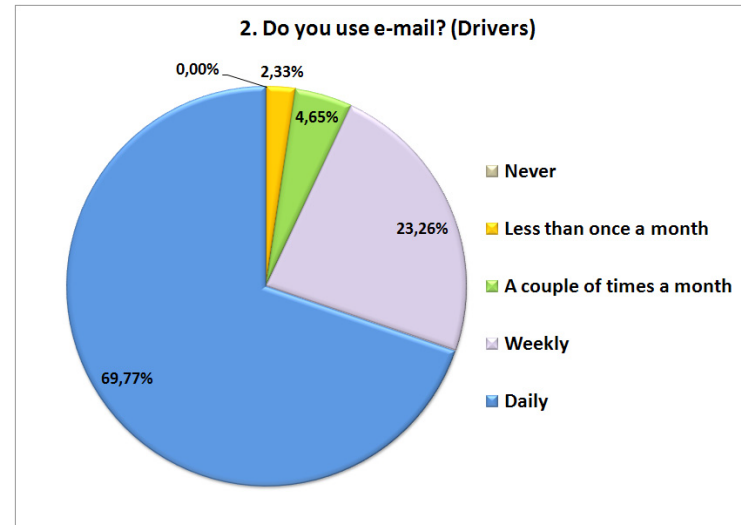


2. Do you use e-mail? (Drivers)

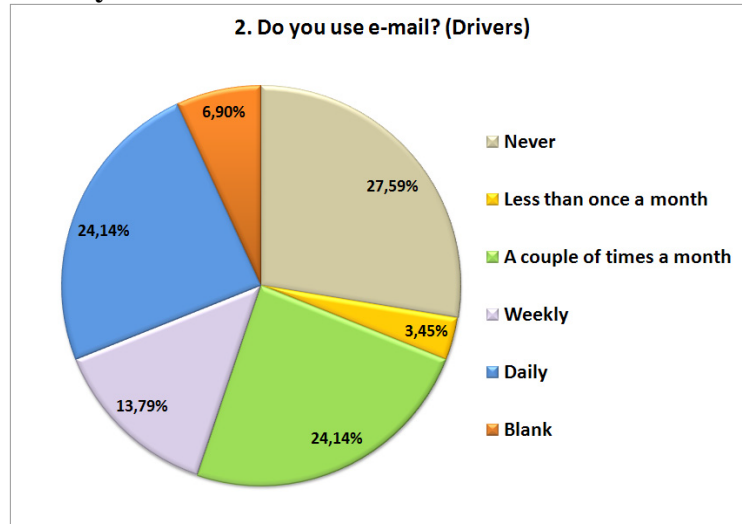
Bulgaria



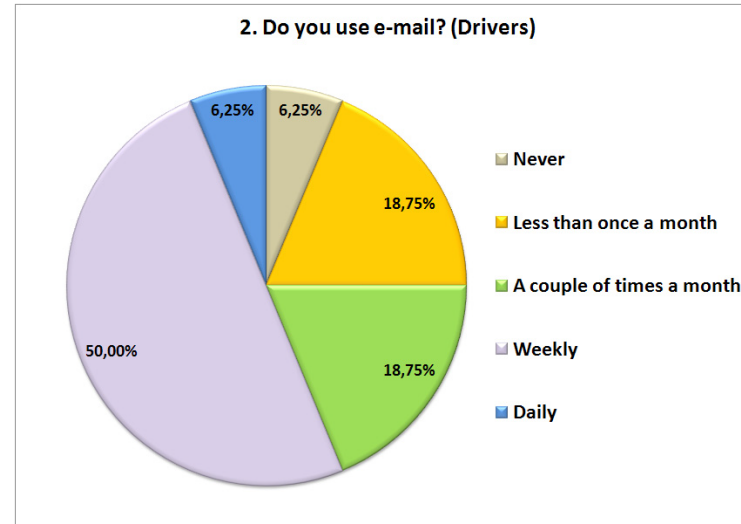
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Turkey

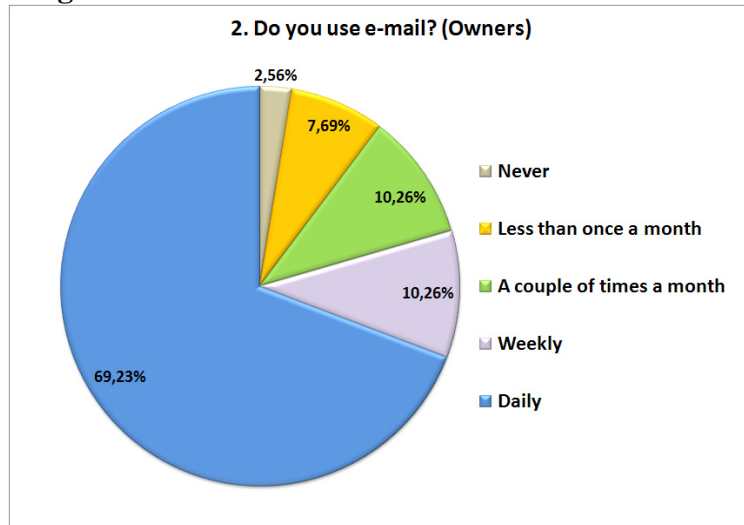


Ukraine

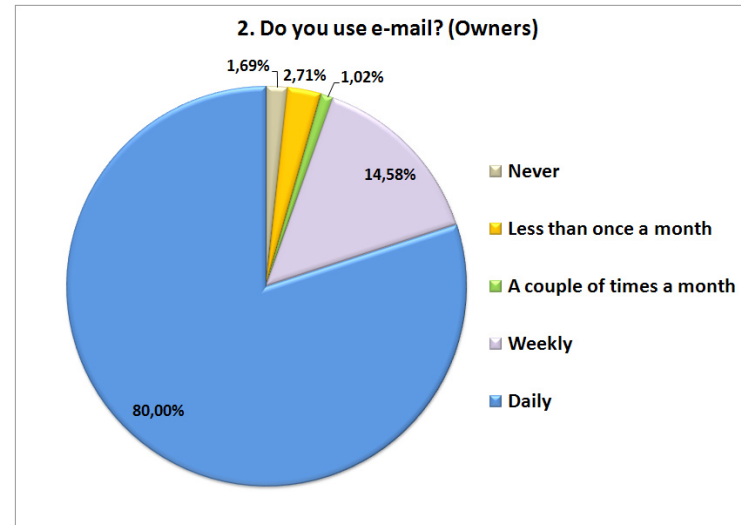


2. Do you use e-mail? (Owners)

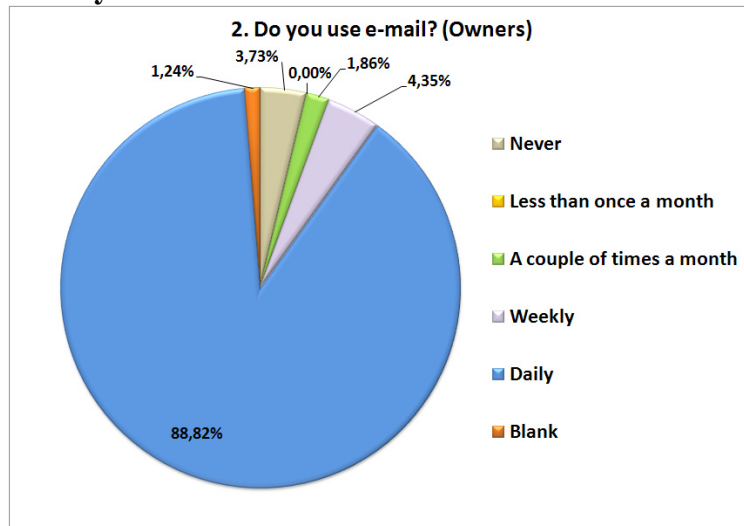
Bulgaria



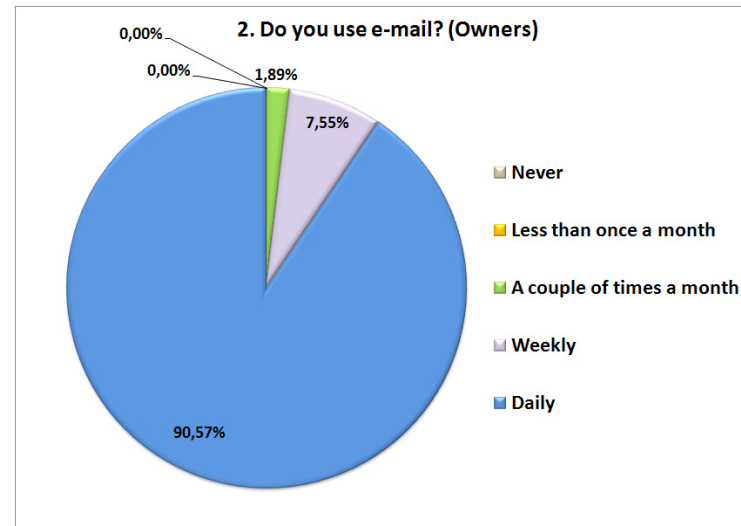
Romania



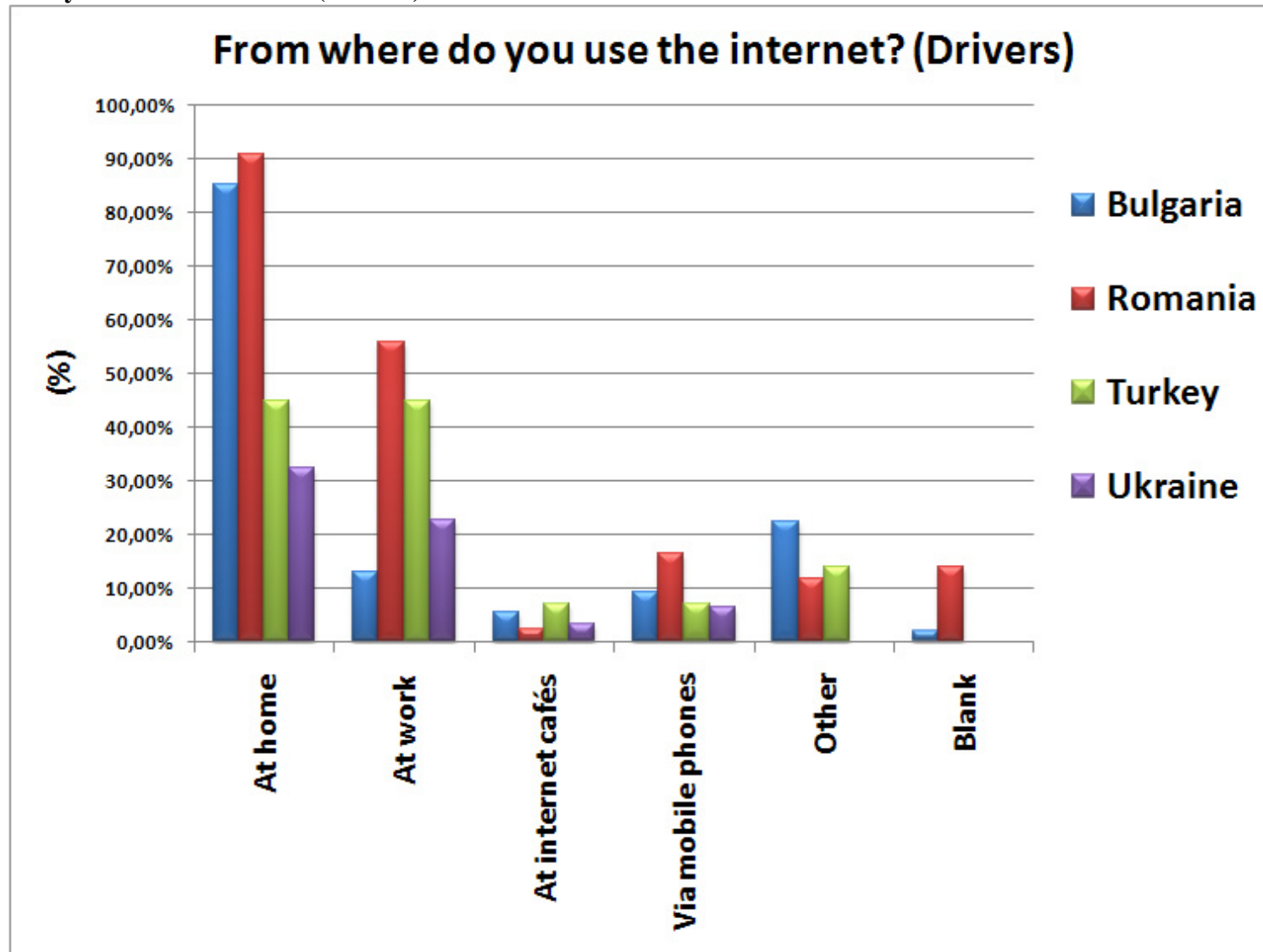
Turkey



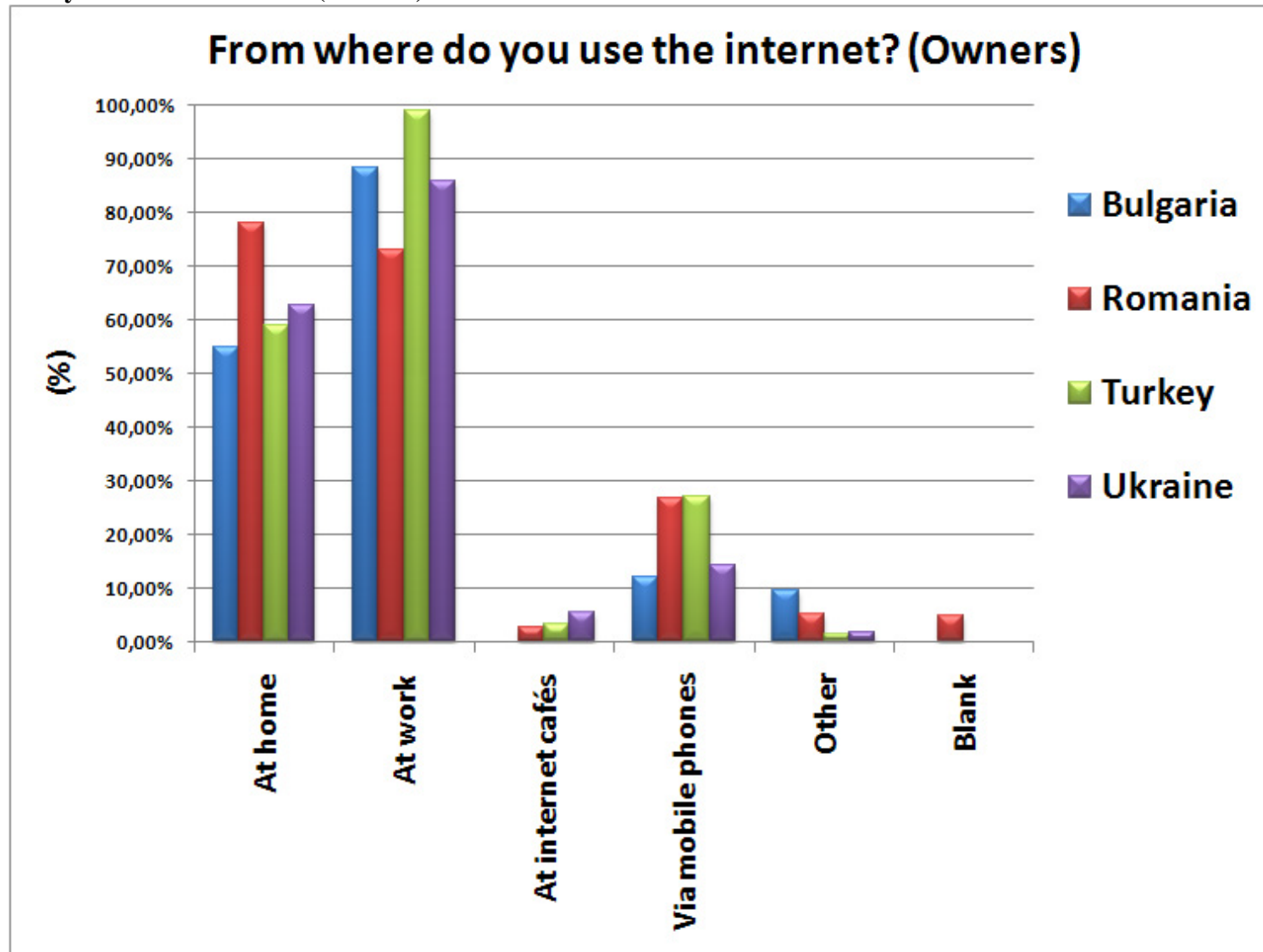
Ukraine



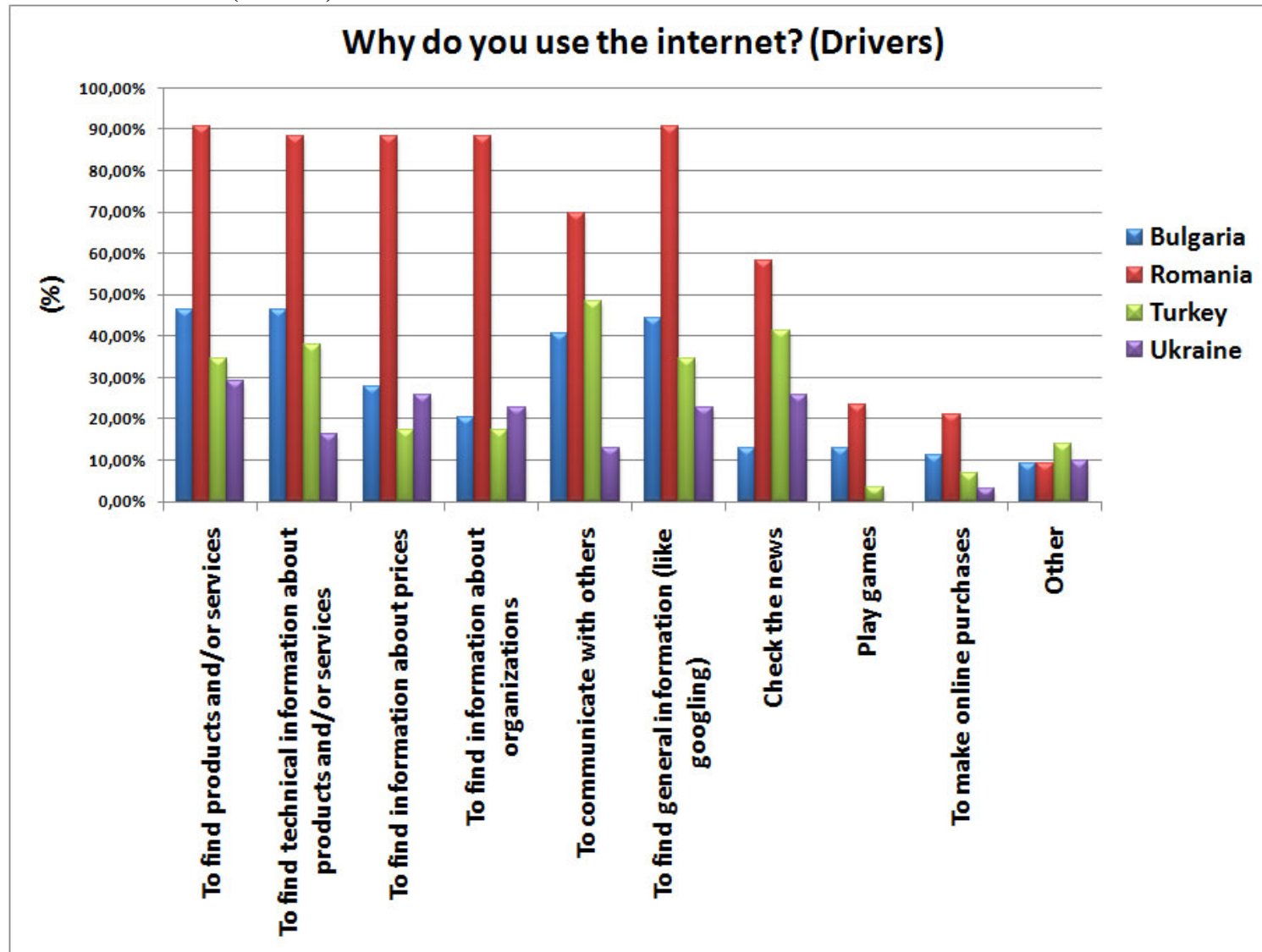
3. From where do you use the Internet? (Drivers)



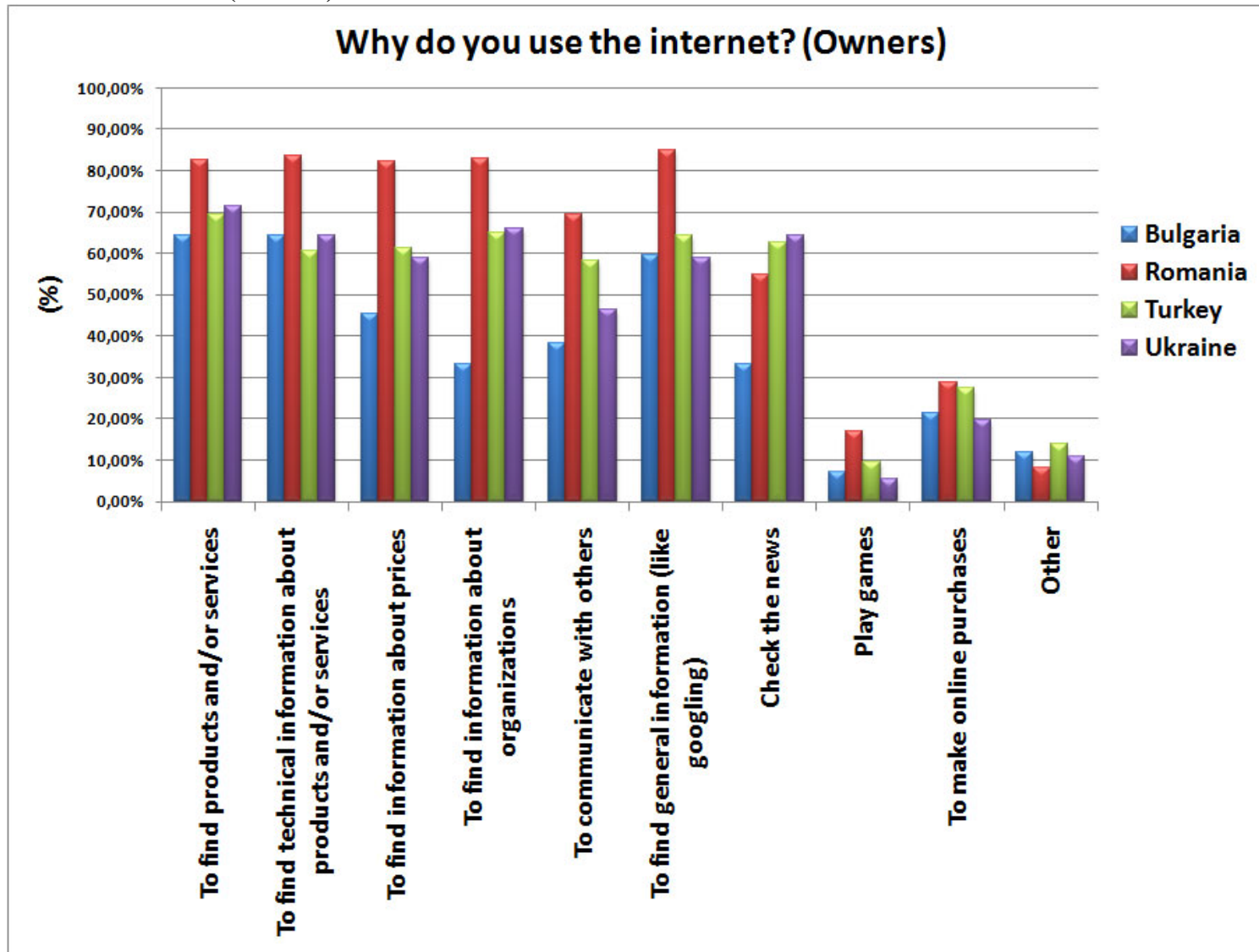
3. From where do you use the Internet? (Owners)



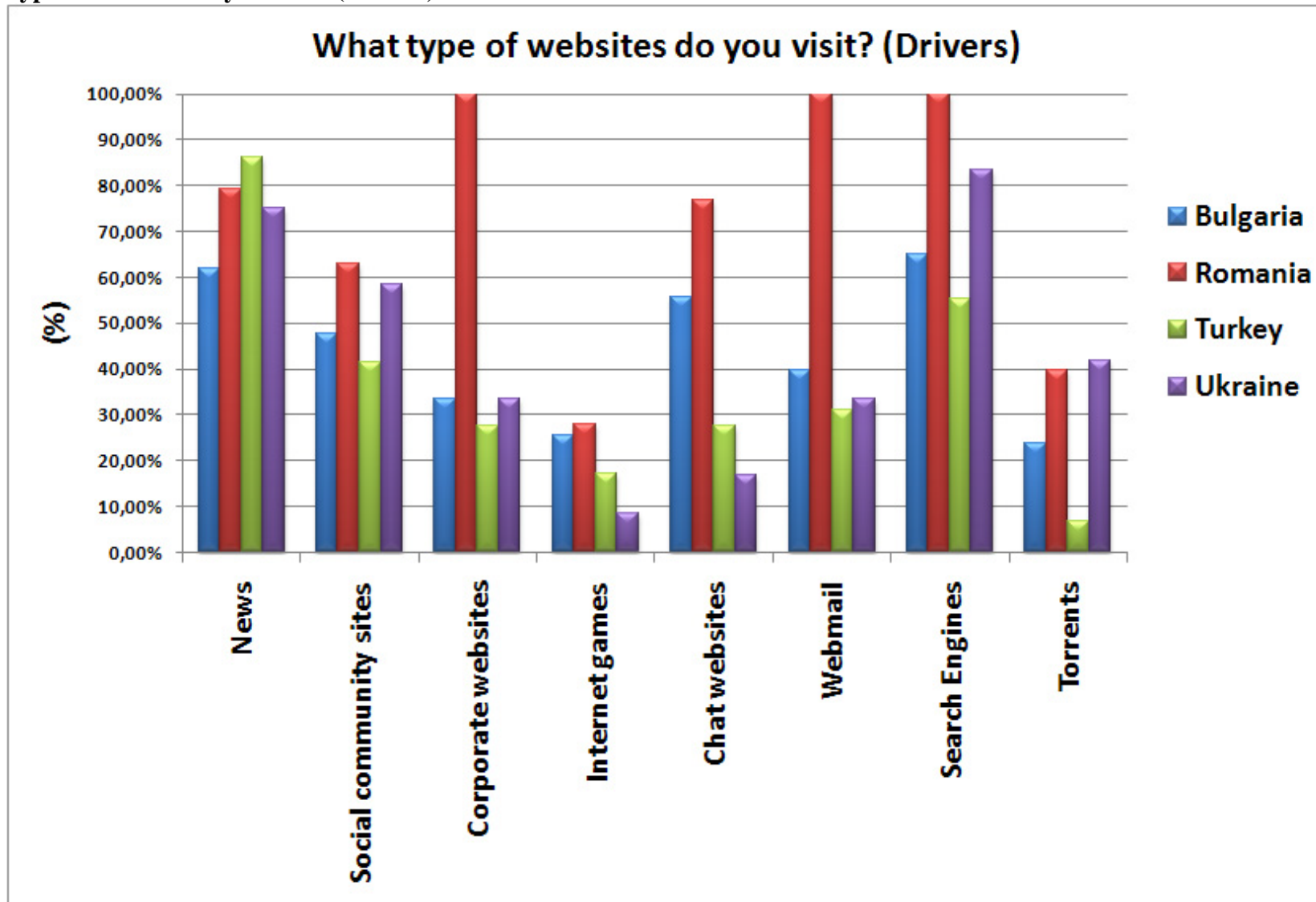
4. Why do you use the Internet? (Drivers)



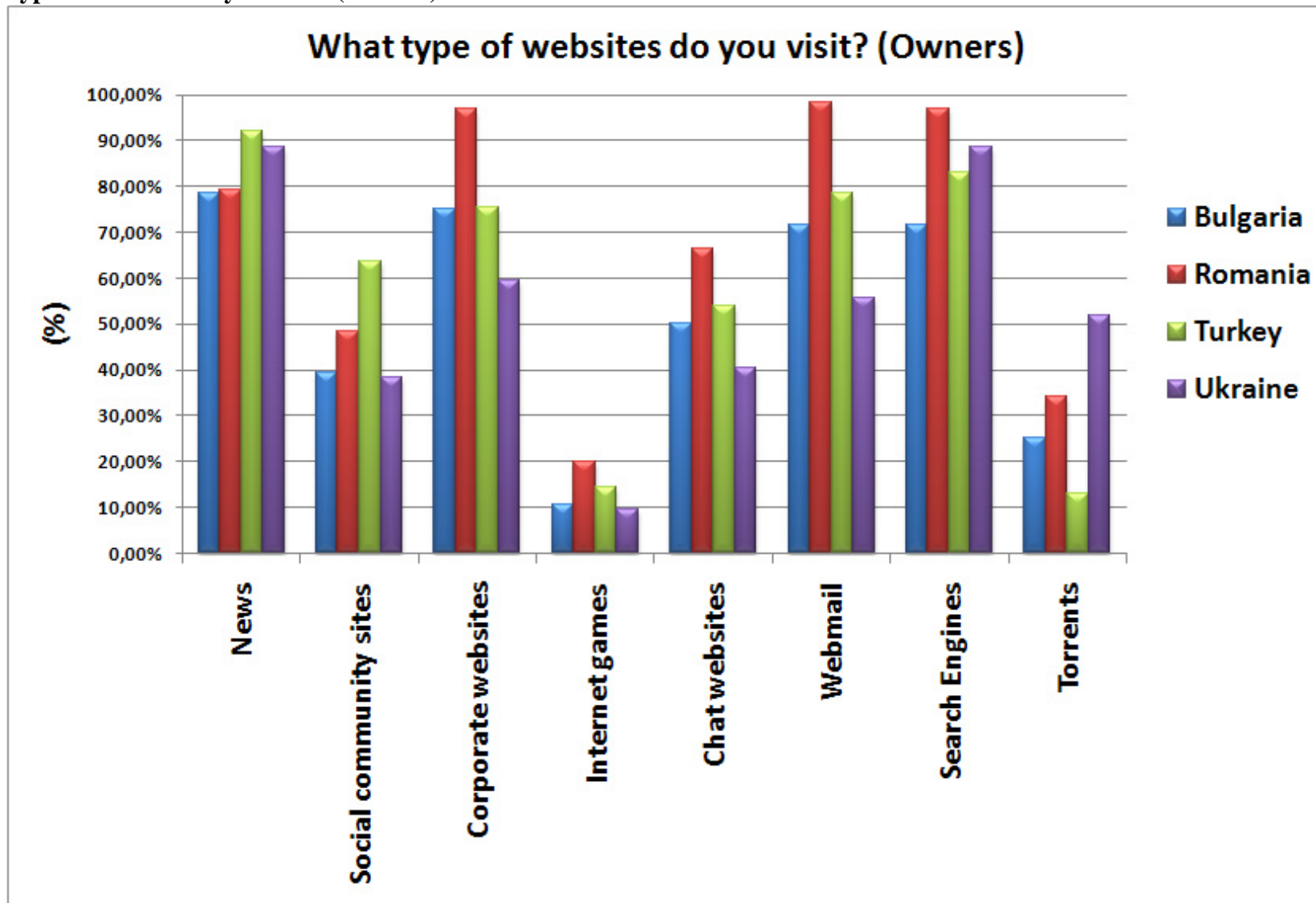
4. Why do you use the Internet? (Owners)



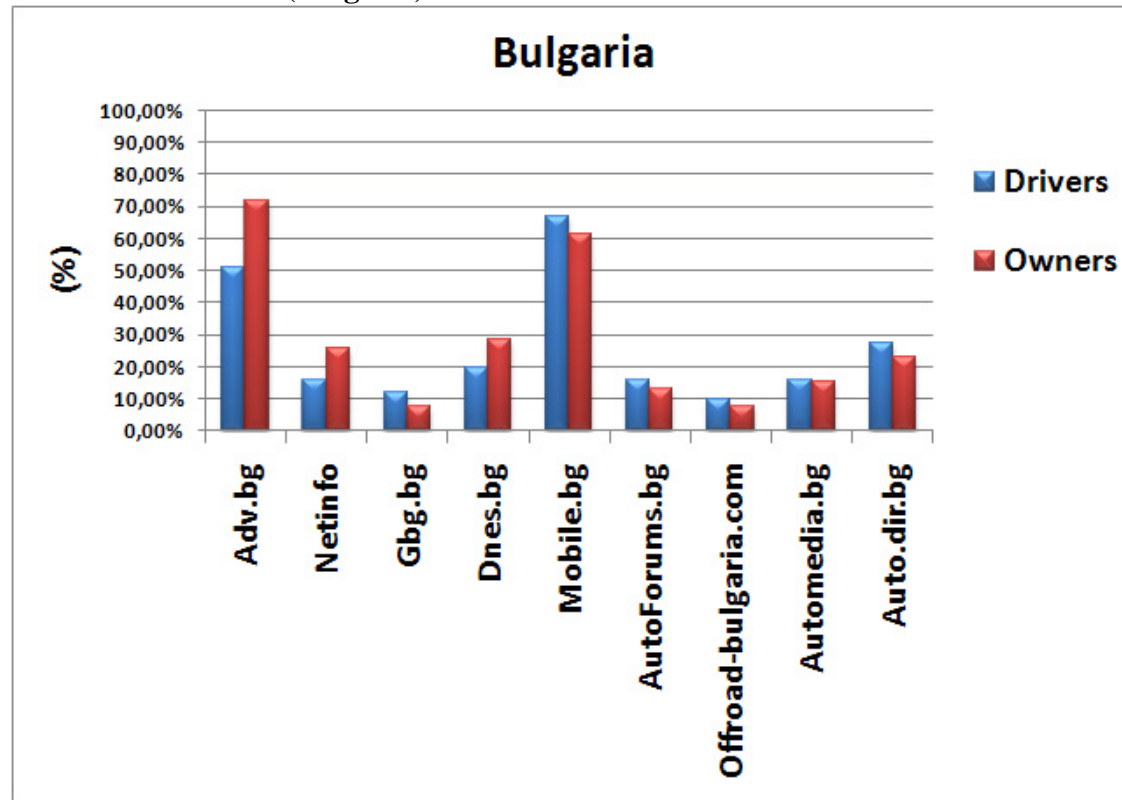
5. What type of websites do you visit? (Drivers)



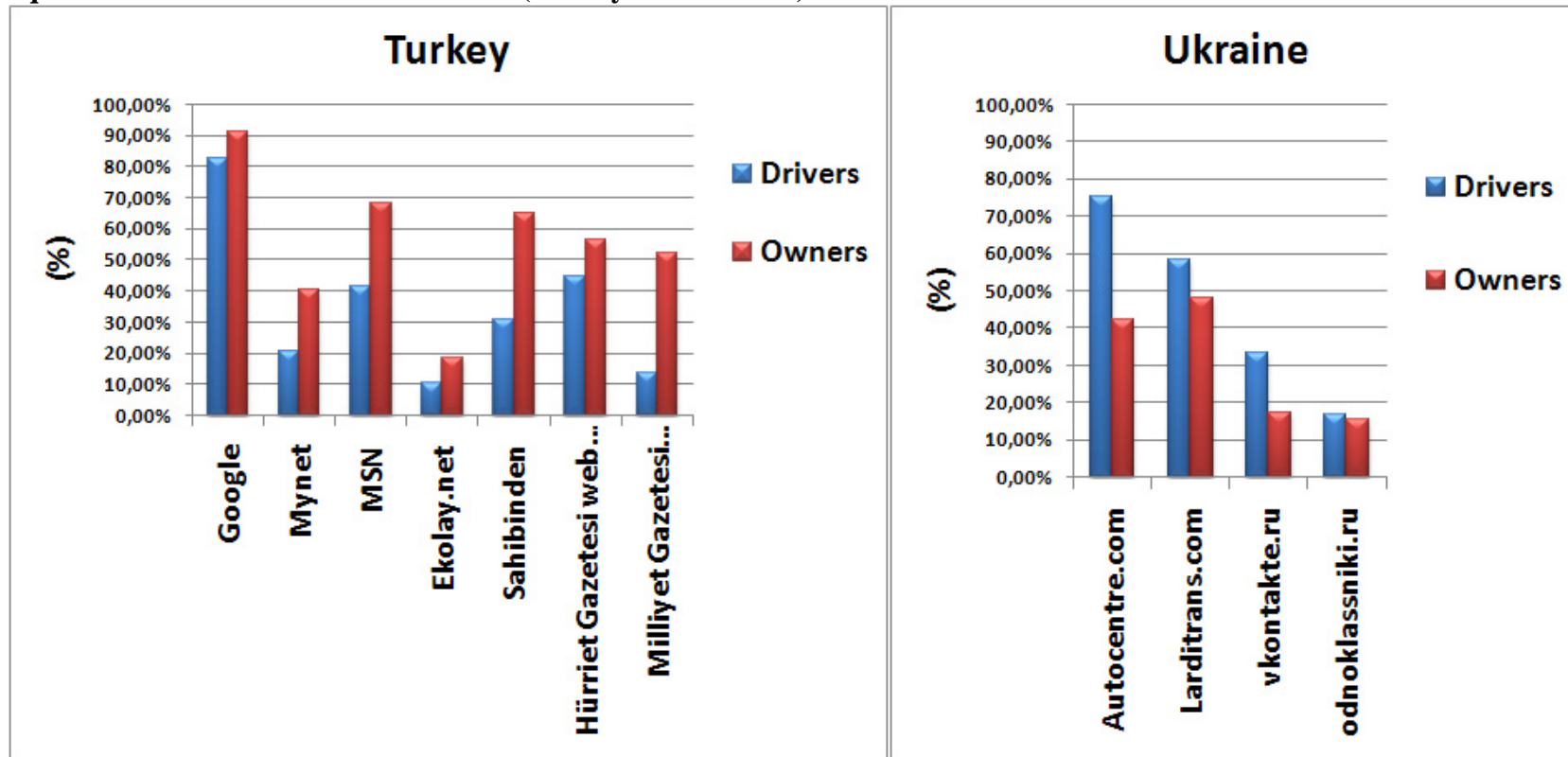
5. What type of websites do you visit? (Owners)



6. Local question about the most used websites (Bulgaria)

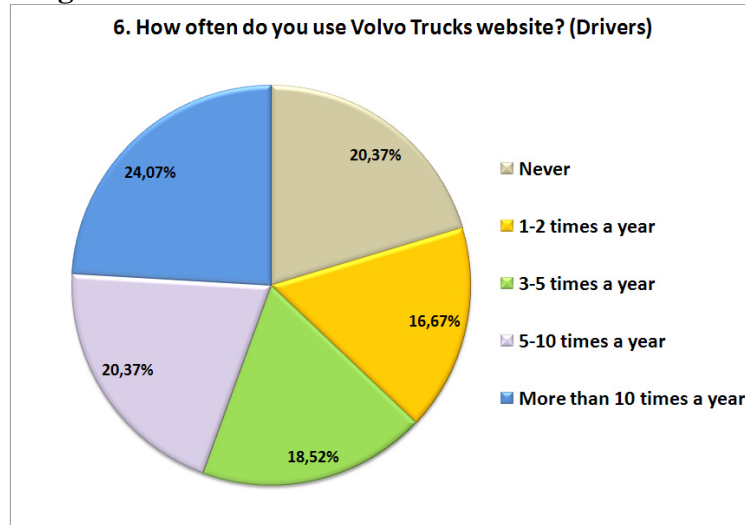


6. Local question about the most used websites (Turkey and Ukraine)

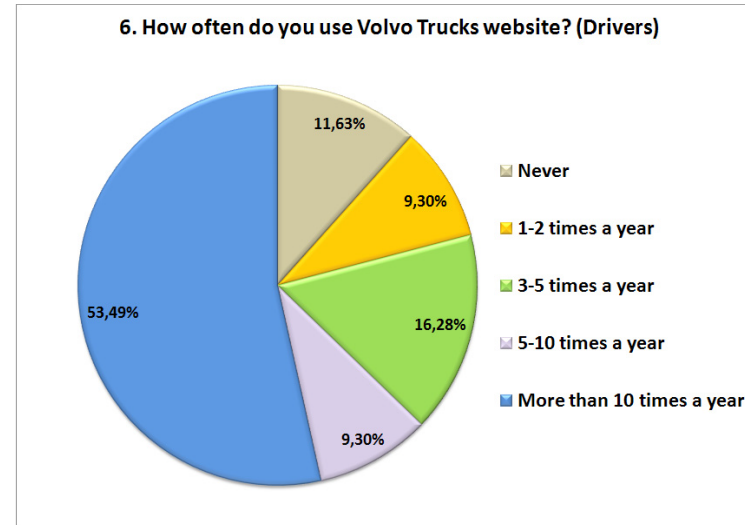


7. How often do you visit Volvo Trucks website? (Drivers)

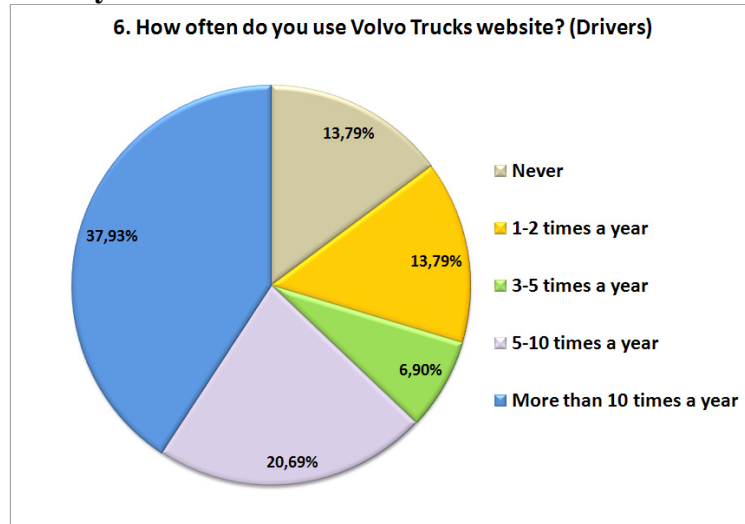
Bulgaria



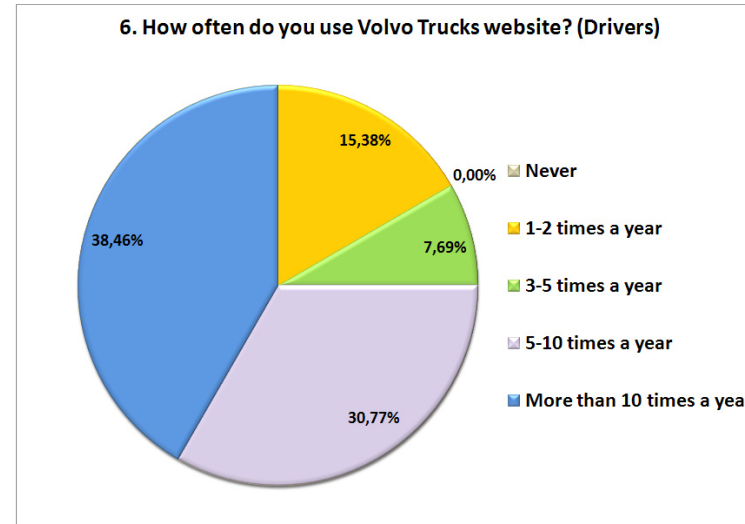
Romania



Turkey

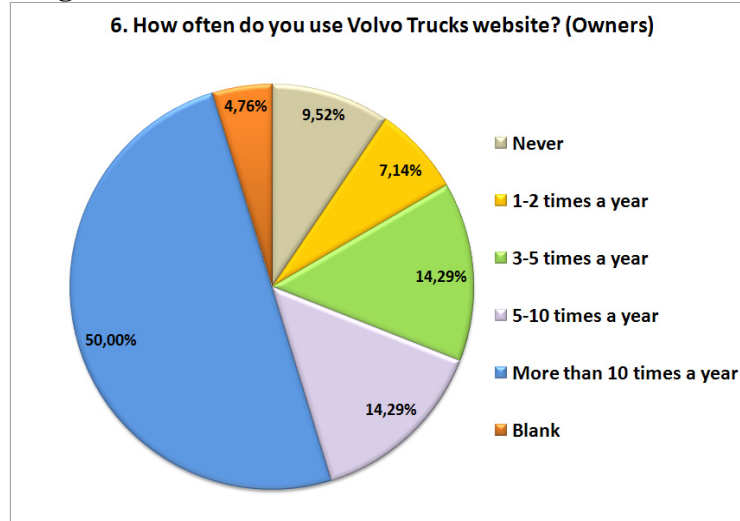


Ukraine

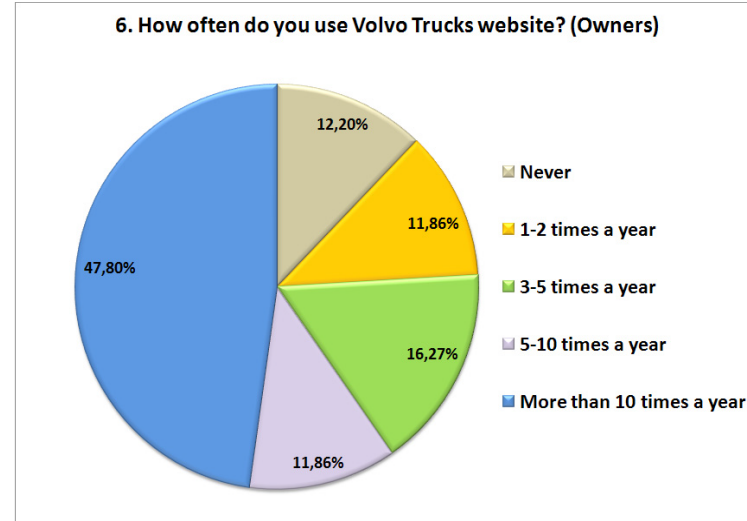


7. How often do you visit Volvo Trucks website? (Owners)

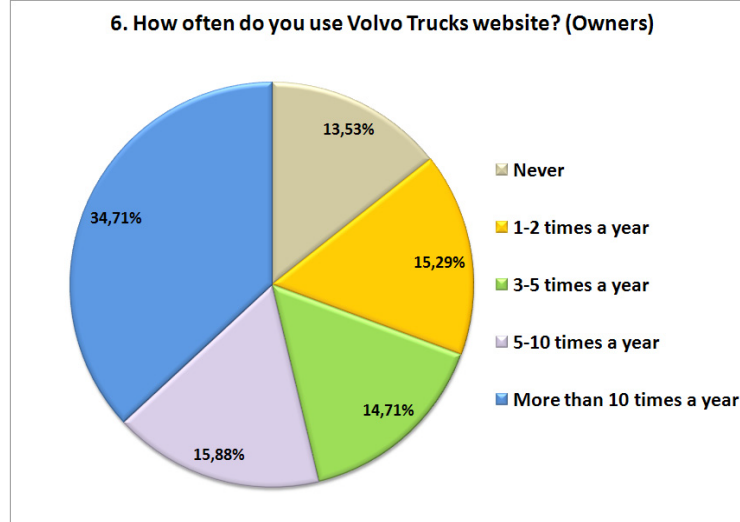
Bulgaria



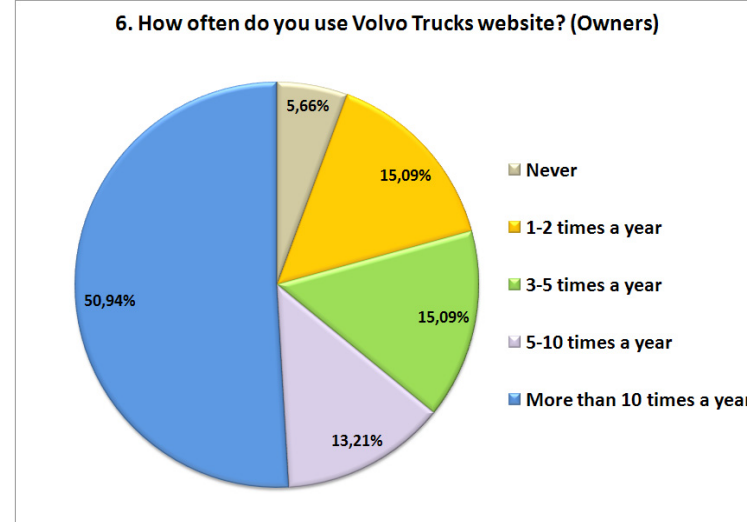
Romania



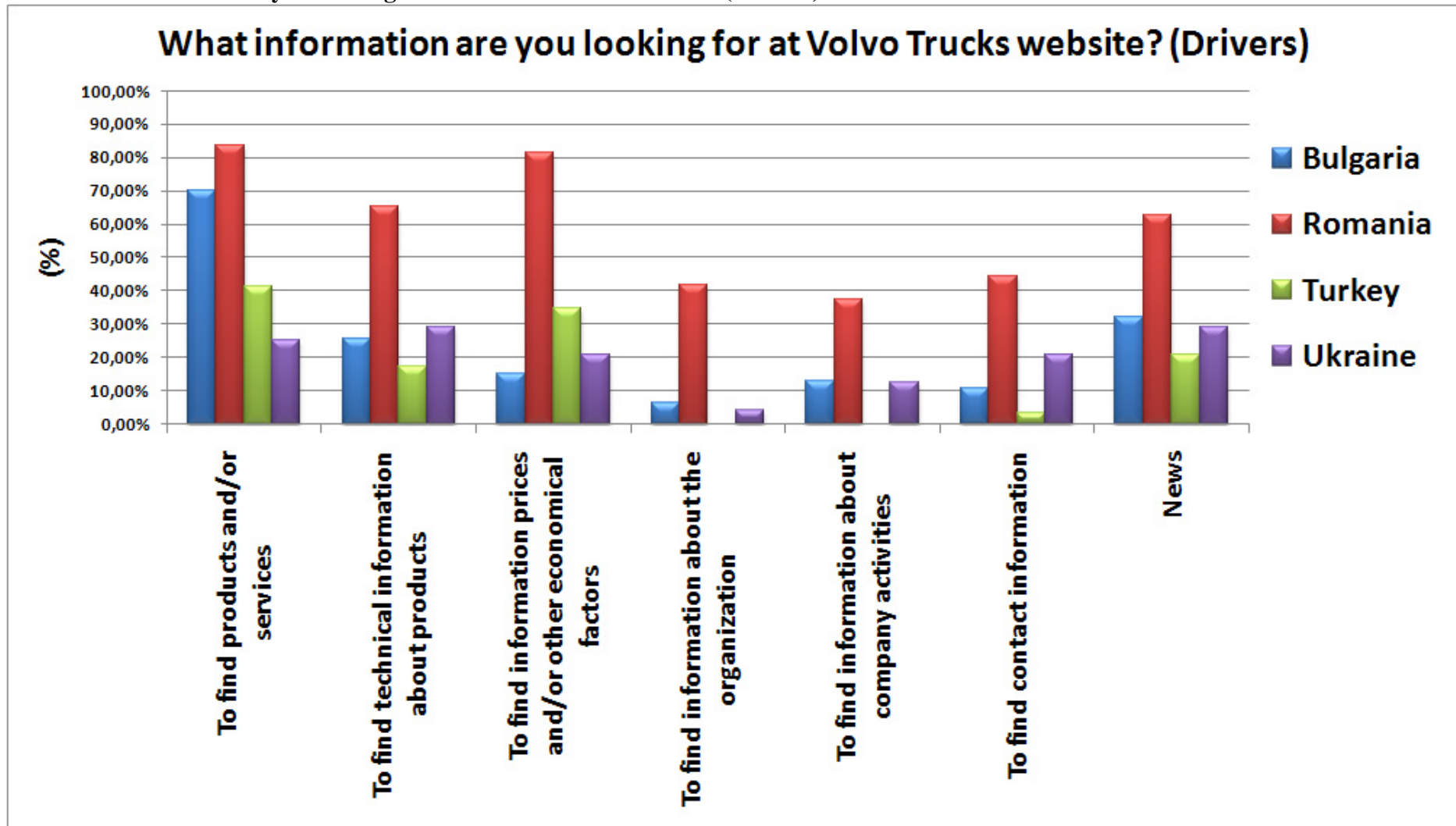
Turkey



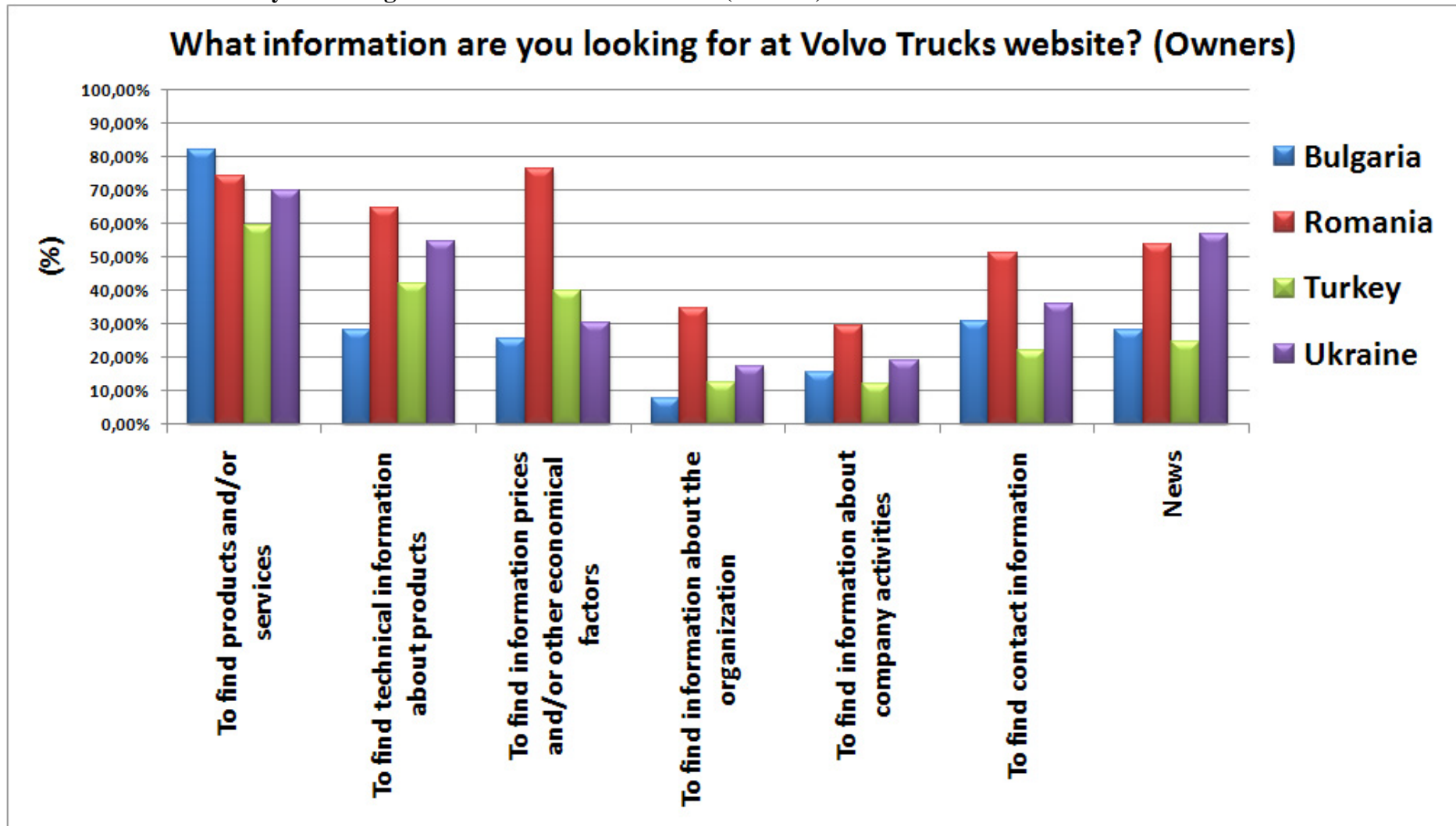
Ukraine



8. What information are you looking for at Volvo Trucks Website? (Drivers)

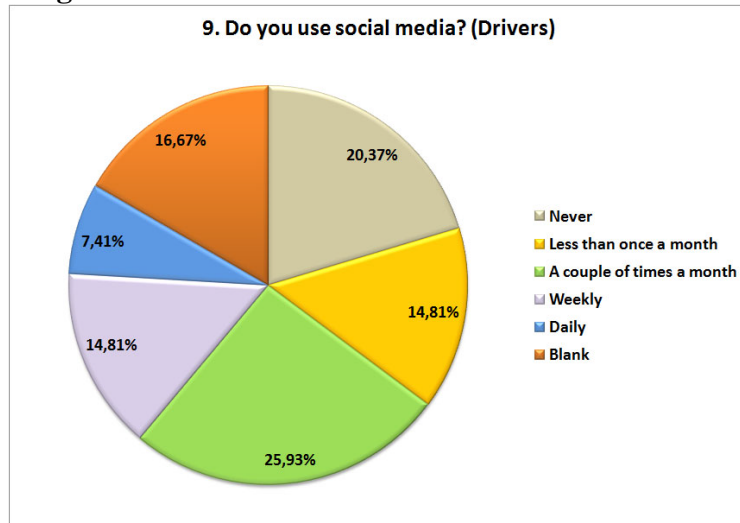


8. What information are you looking for at Volvo Trucks Website? (Owners)

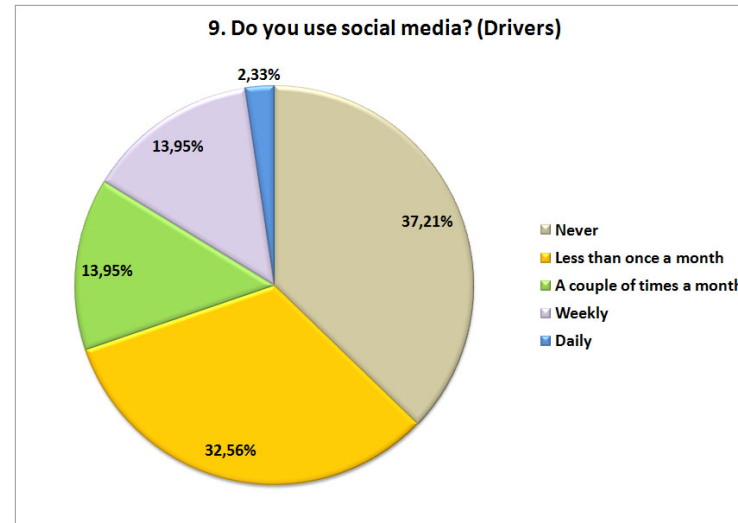


9. Do you use social media? (Drivers)

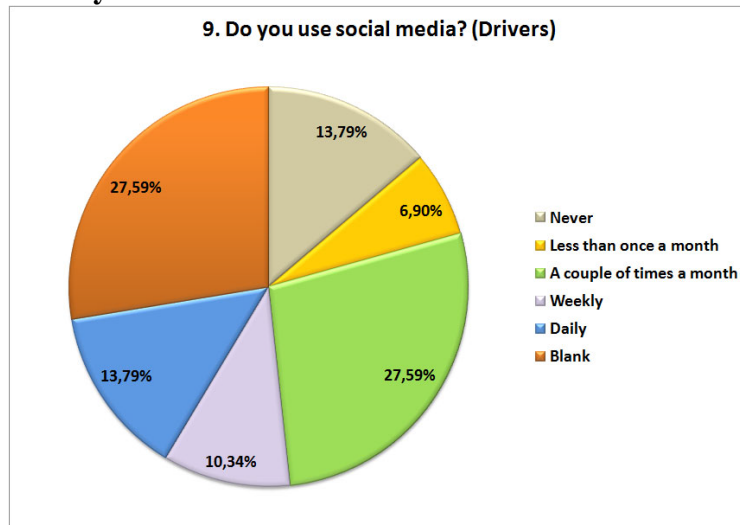
Bulgaria



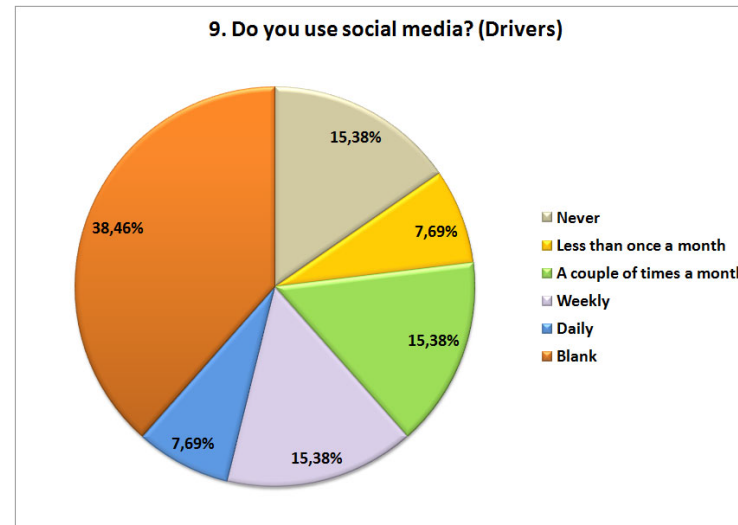
Romania



Turkey

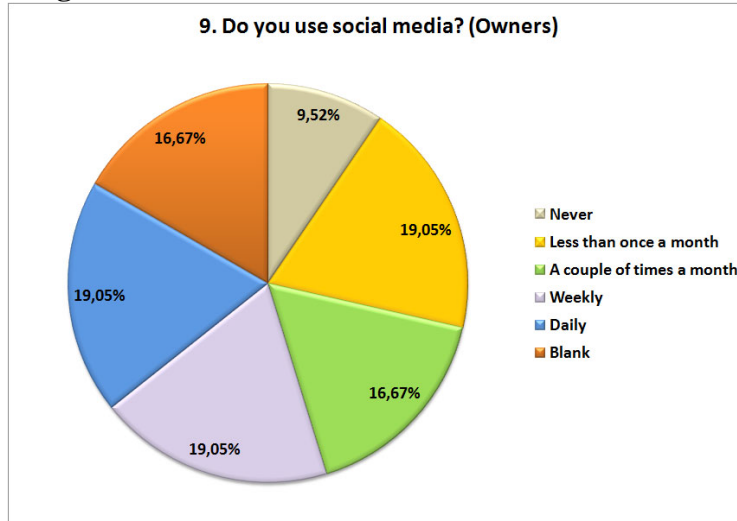


Ukraine

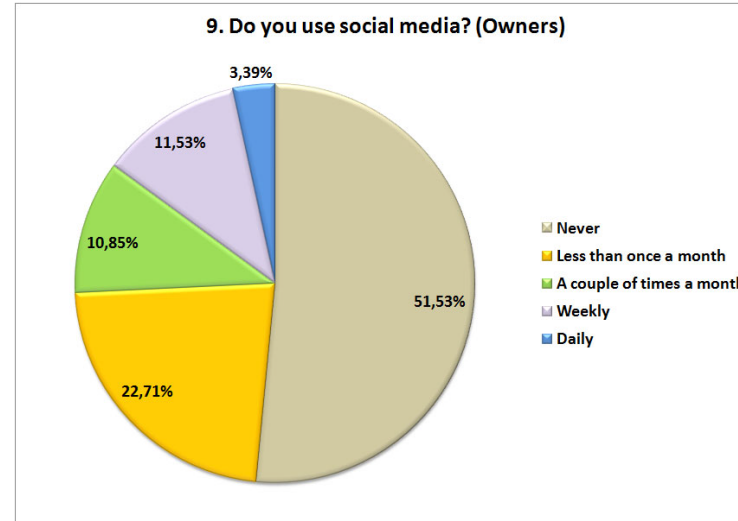


9. Do you use social media? (Owners)

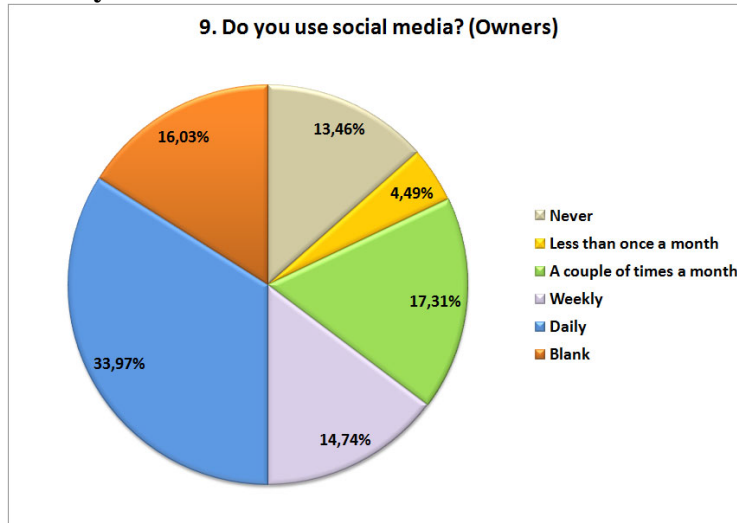
Bulgaria



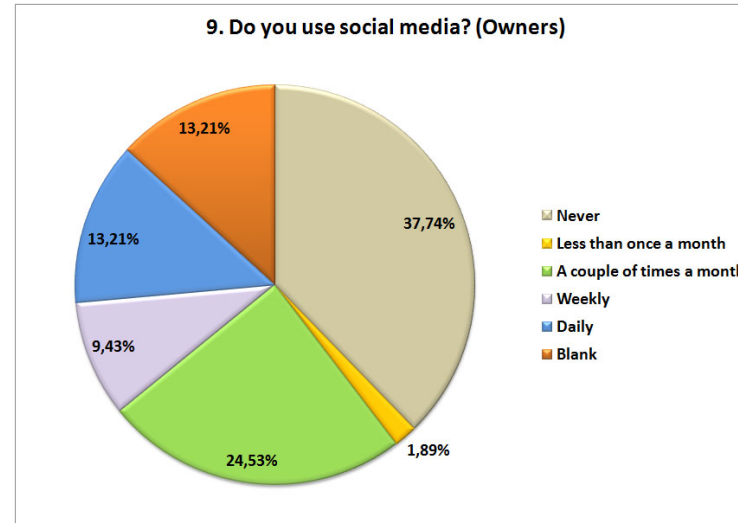
Romania



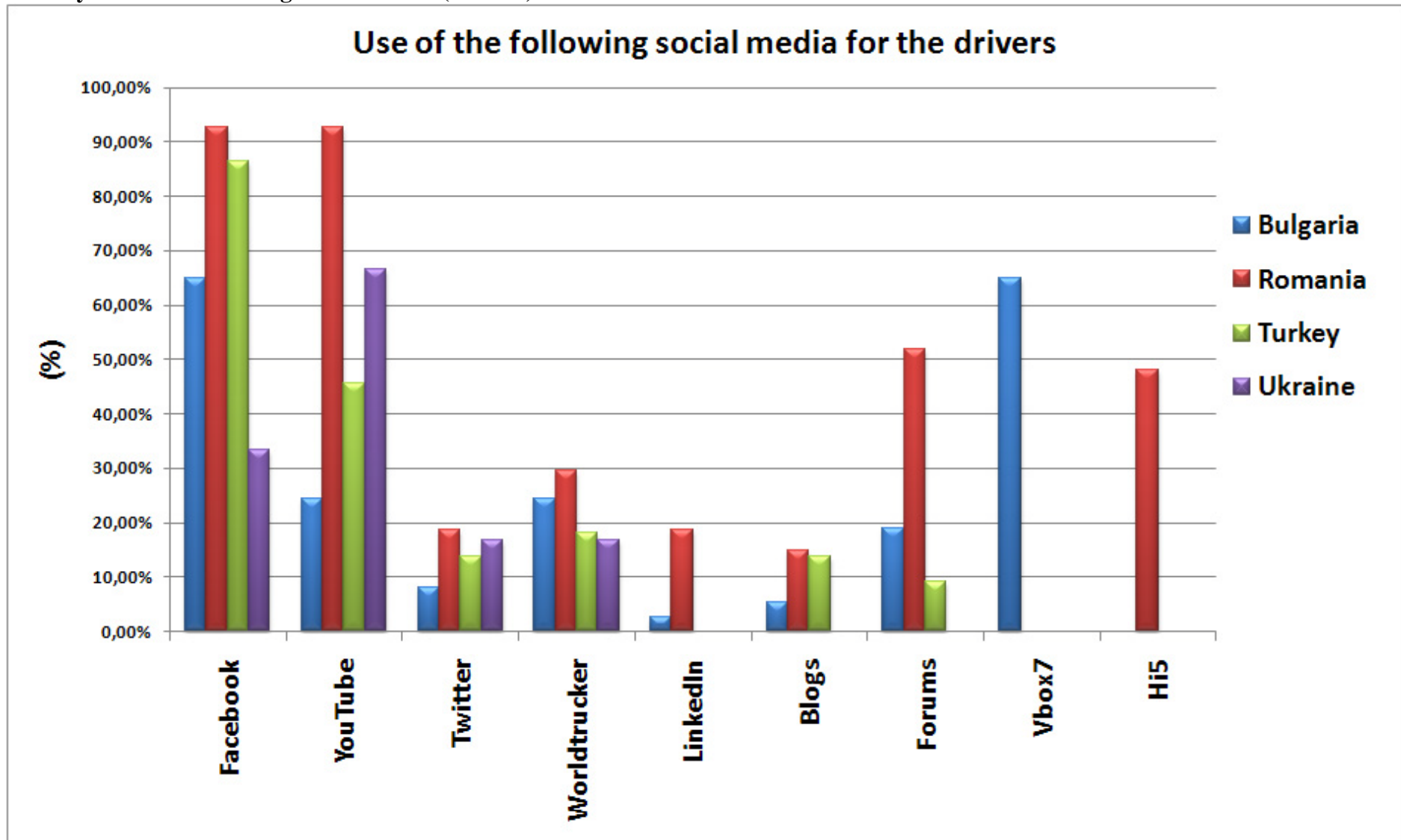
Turkey



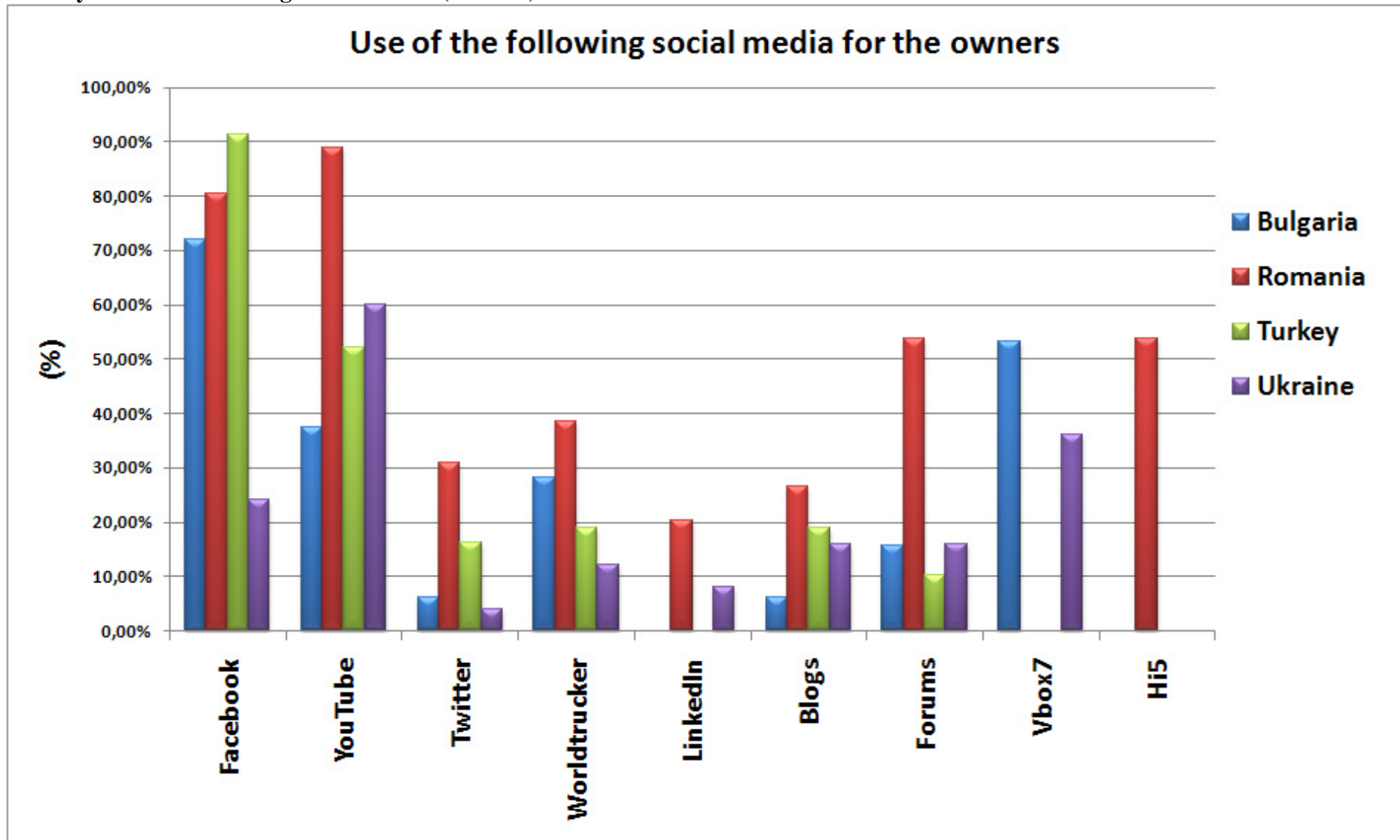
Ukraine



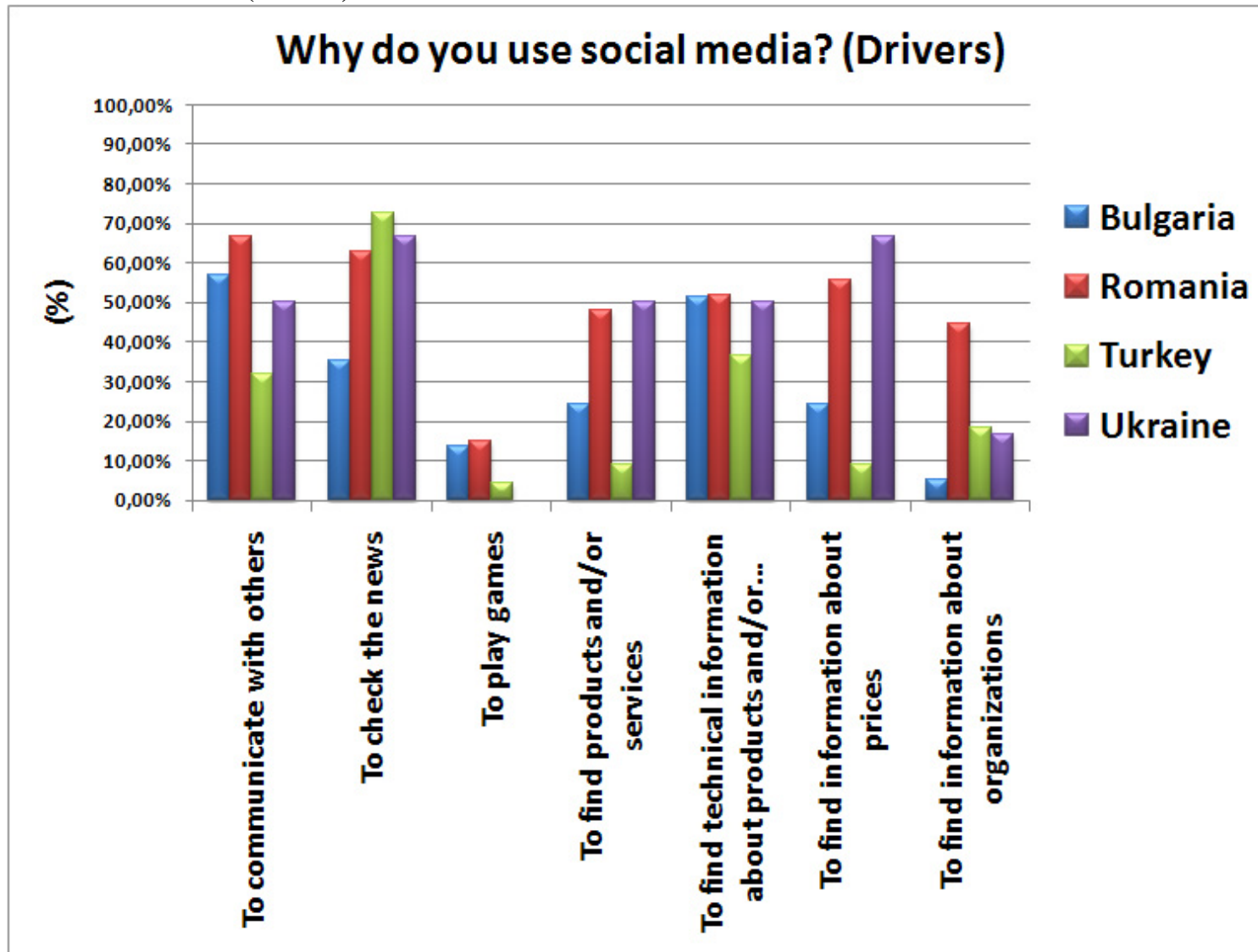
10. Do you use the following social media? (Drivers)



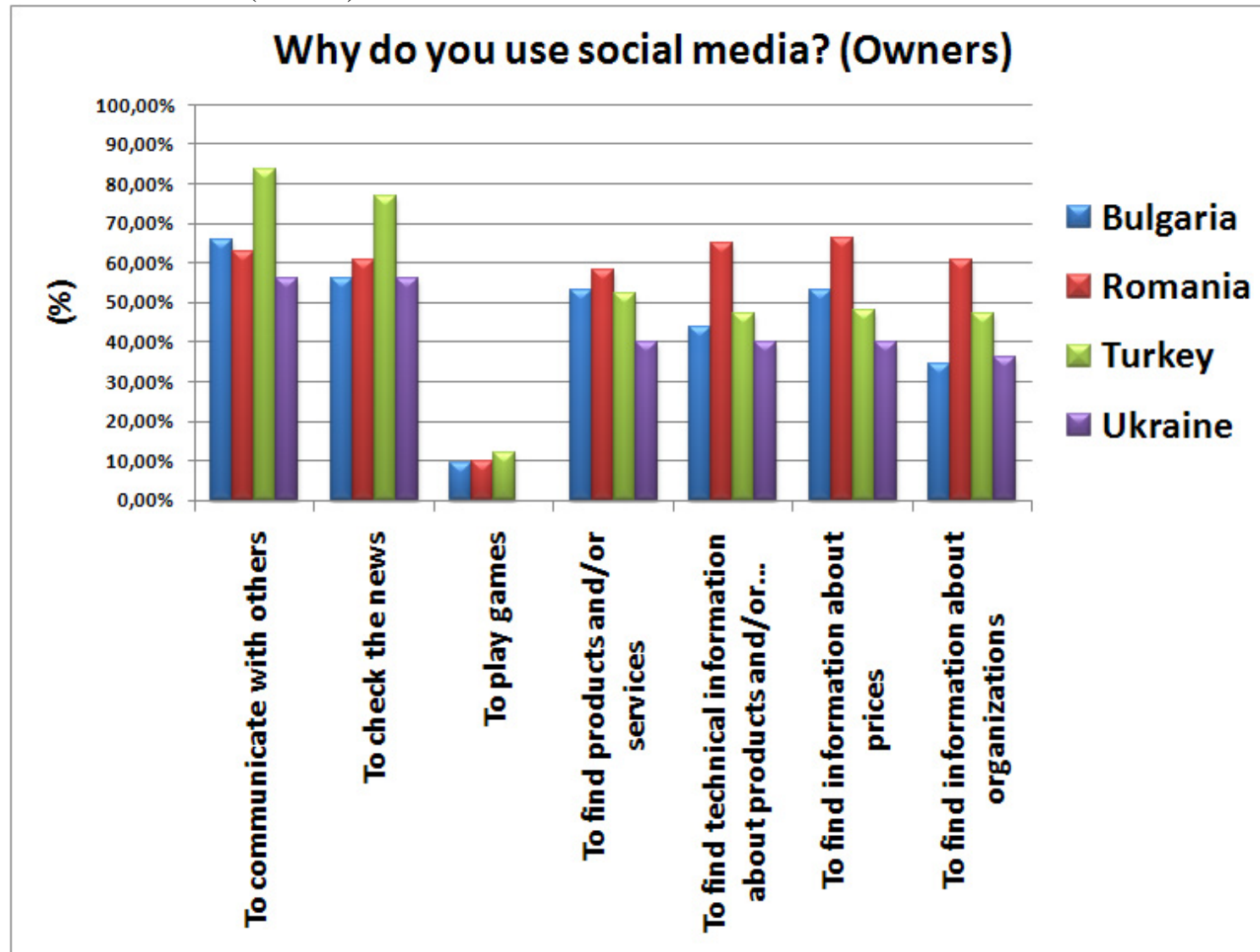
10. Do you use the following social media? (Owners)



11. Why do you use social media? (Drivers)

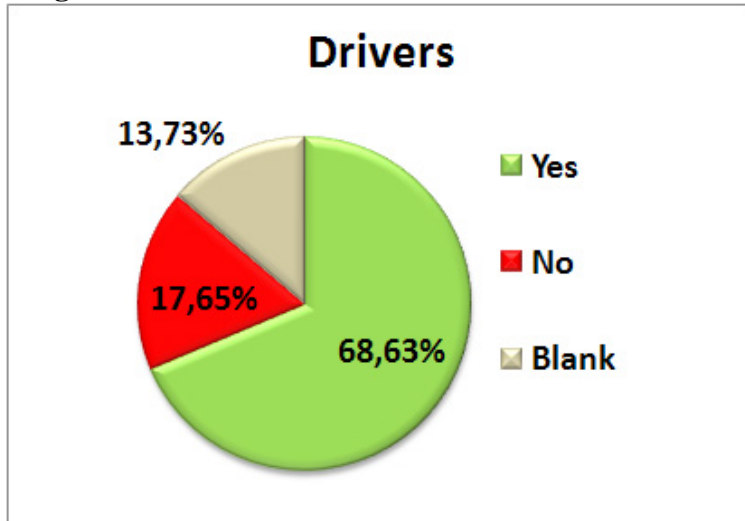


11. Why do you use social media? (Owners)

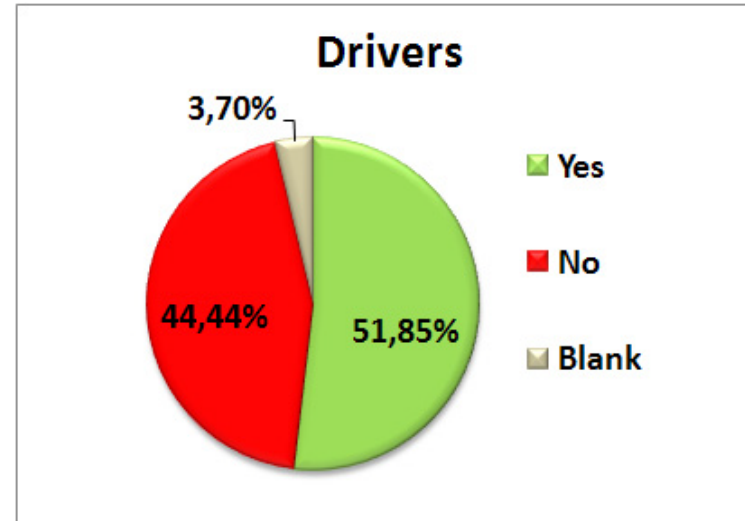


12. Would you like to communicate with colleagues through social media? (Drivers)

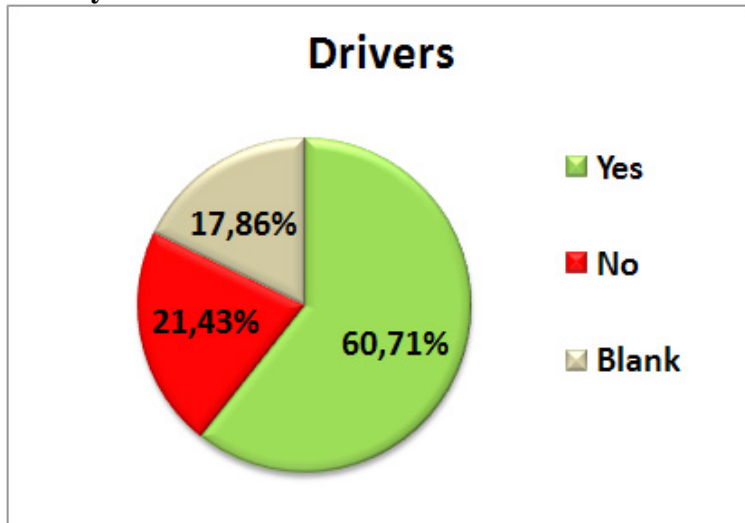
Bulgaria



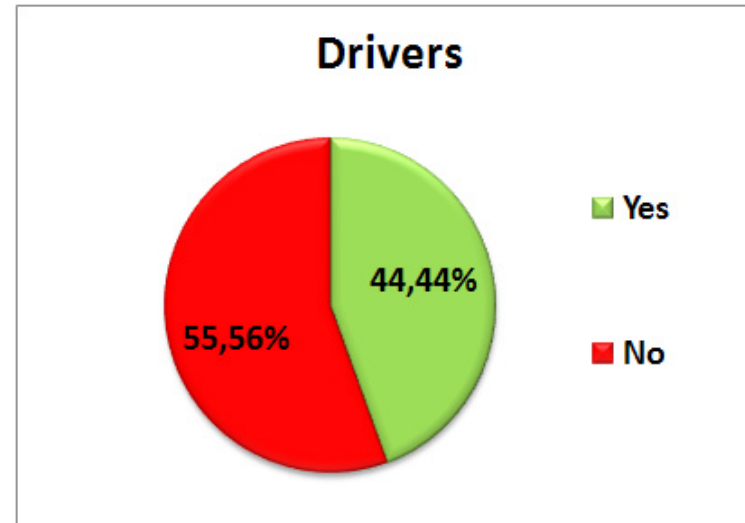
Romania



Turkey

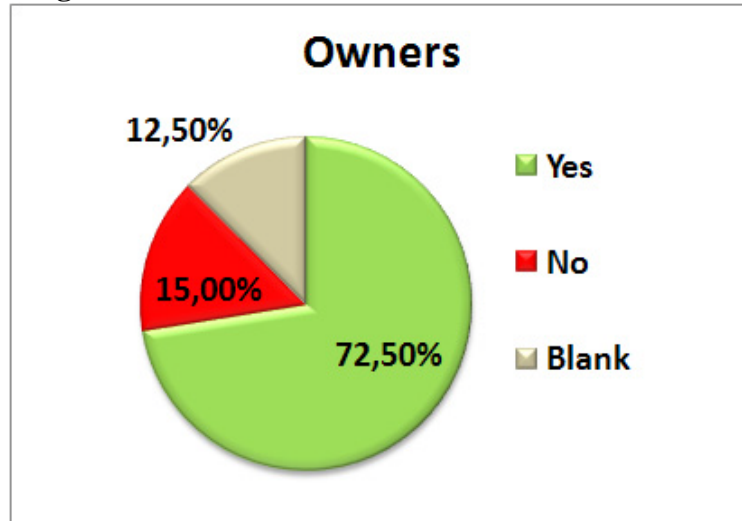


Ukraine

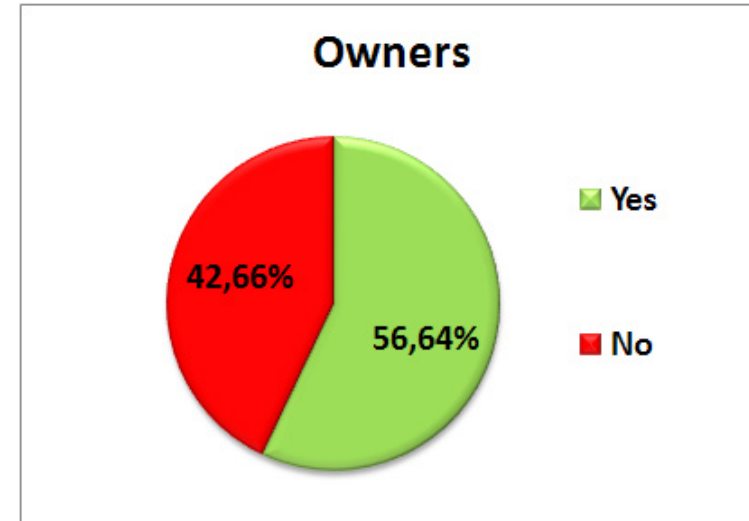


12. Would you like to communicate with colleagues through social media? (Owners)

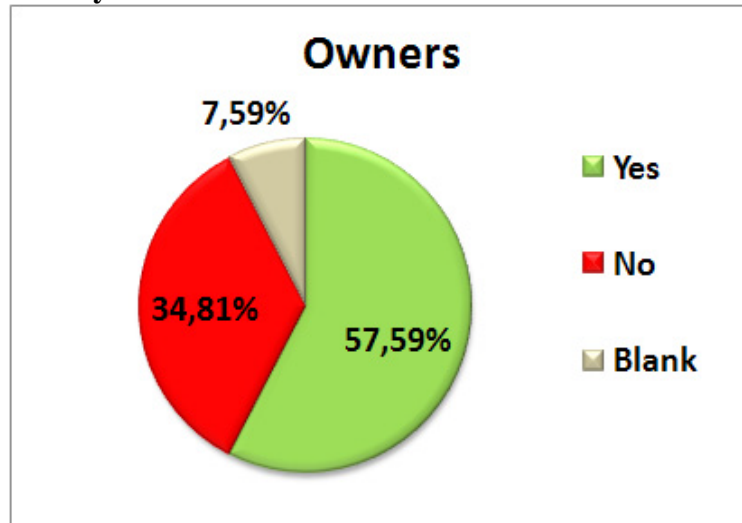
Bulgaria



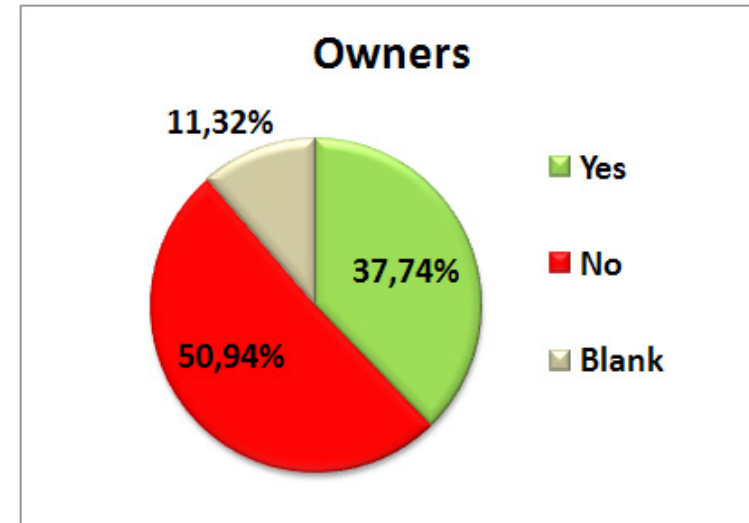
Romania



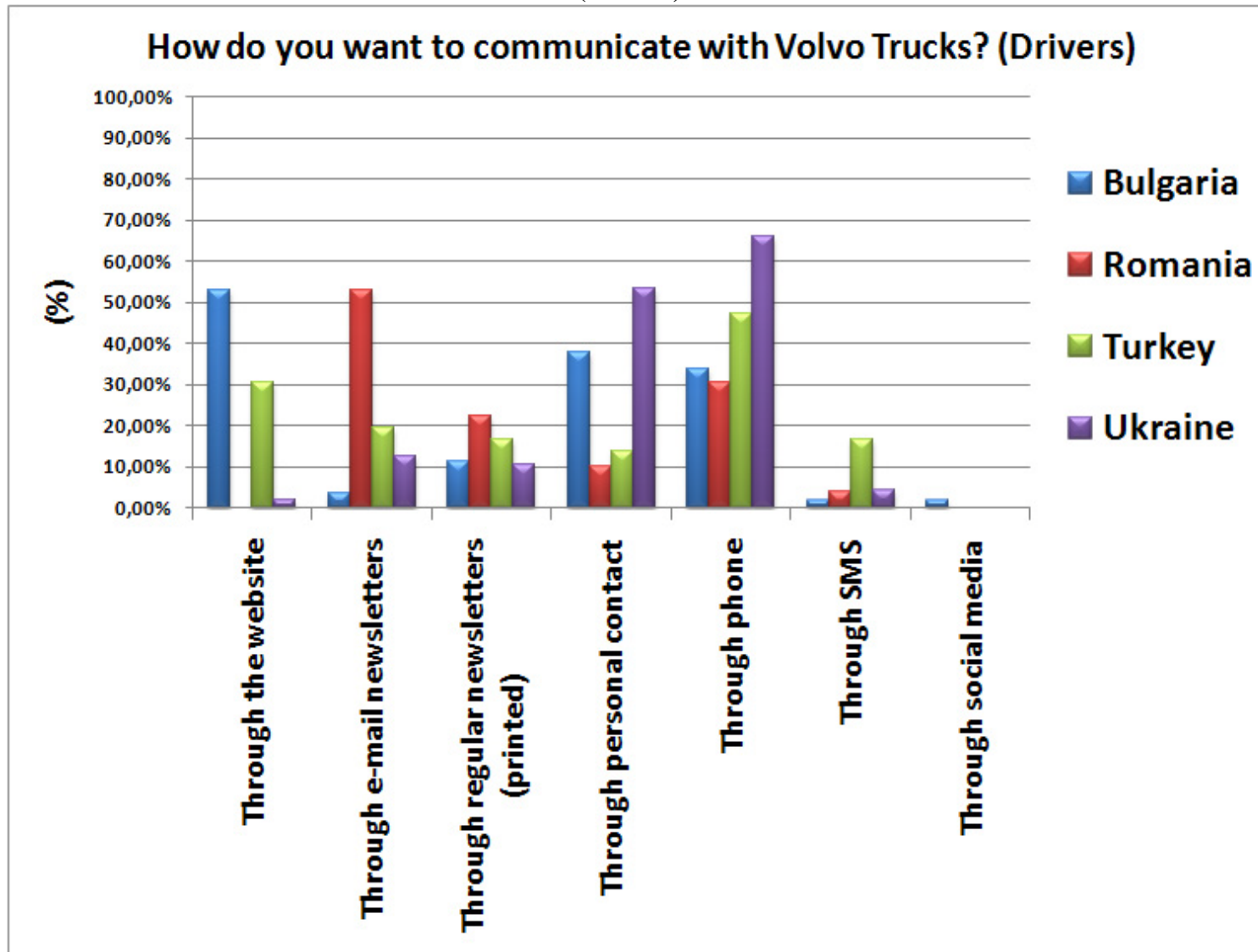
Turkey



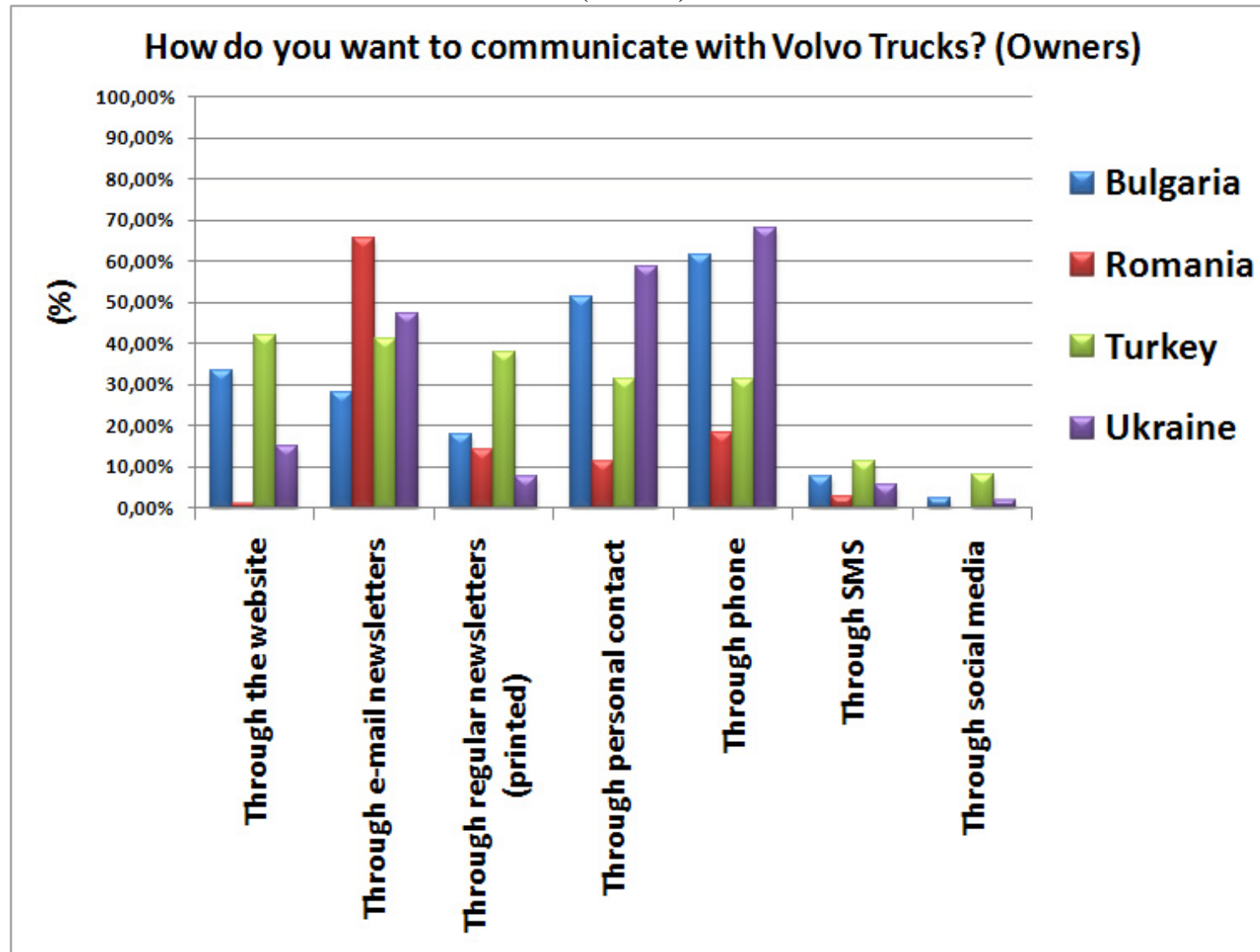
Ukraine



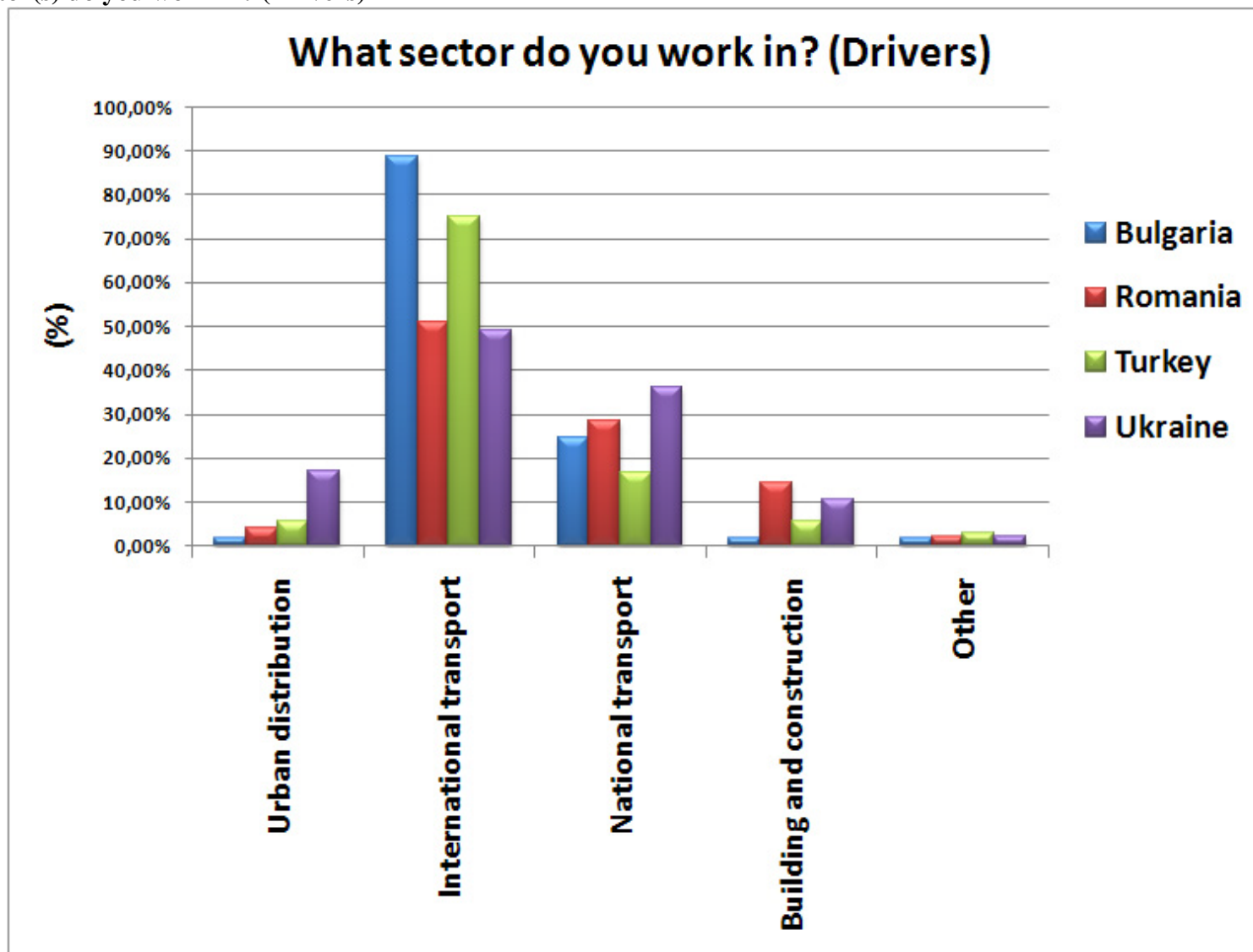
14. How do you like want to communicate with Volvo Trucks? (Drivers)



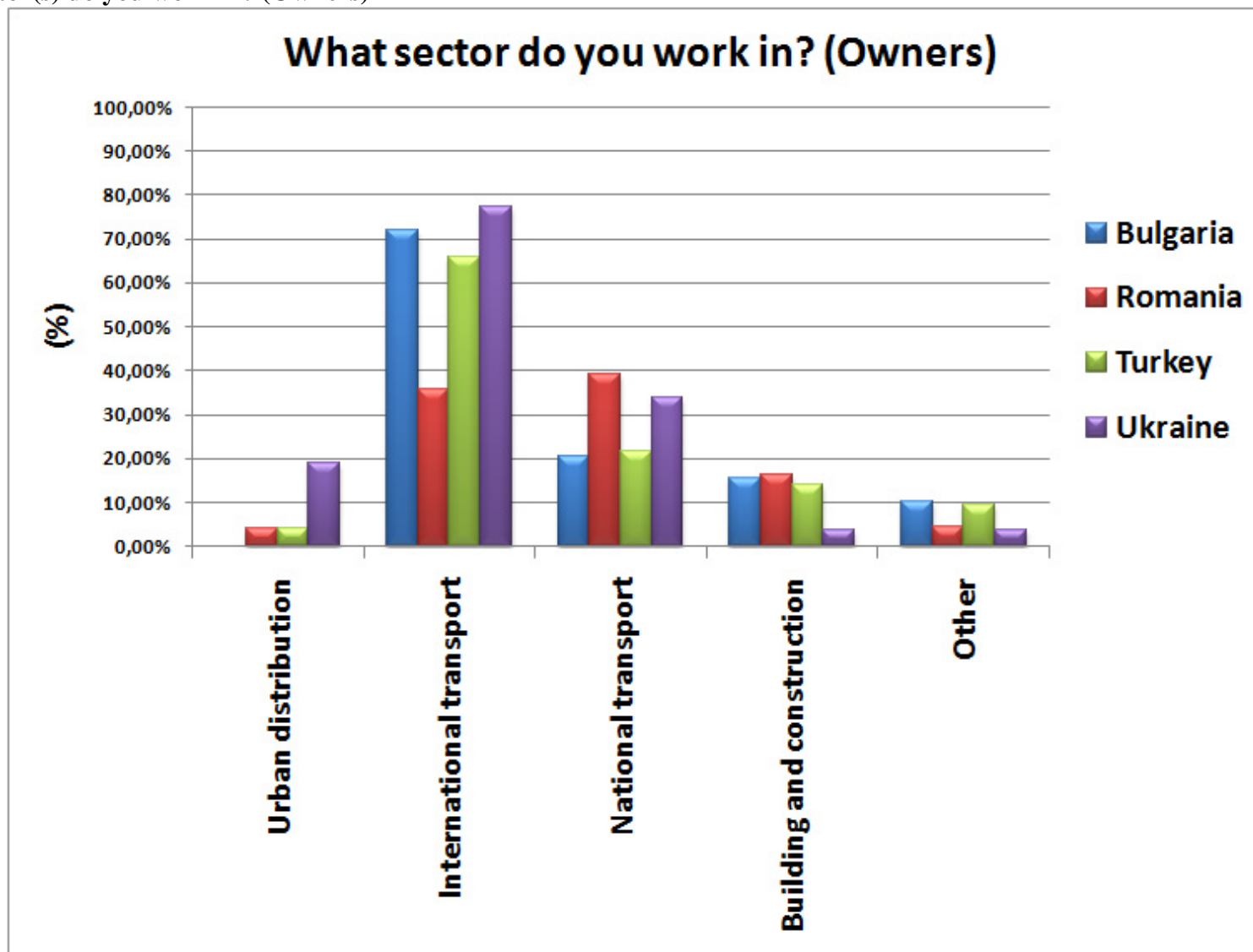
14. How do you like want to communicate with Volvo Trucks? (Owners)



15. What sector(s) do you work in? (Drivers)



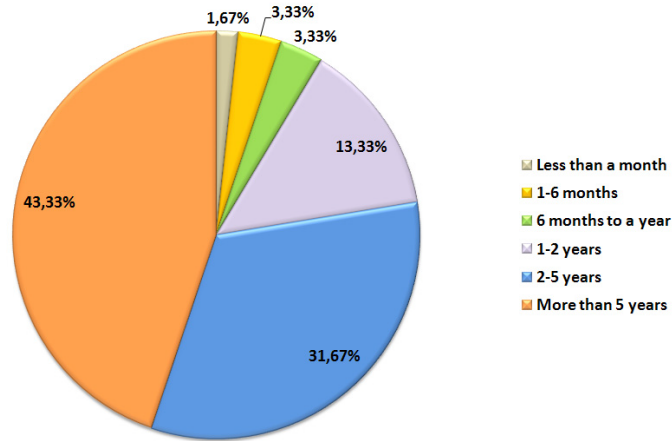
15. What sector(s) do you work in? (Owners)



16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Drivers)

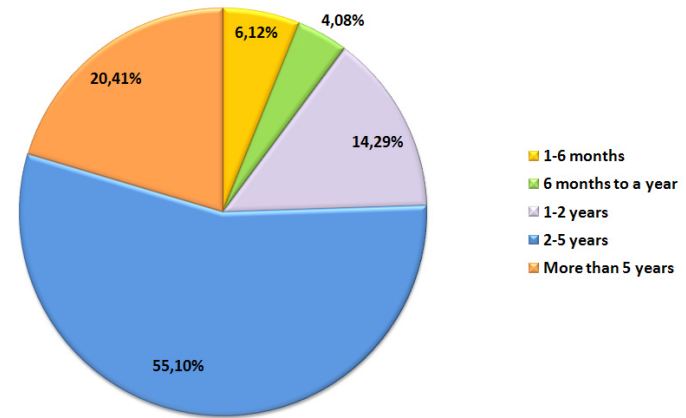
Bulgaria

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Drivers)



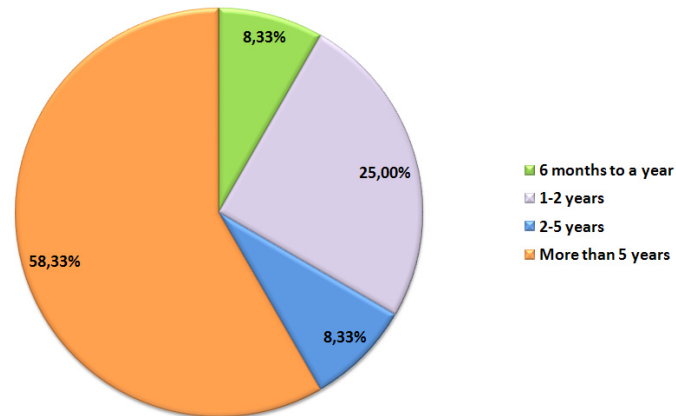
Romania

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Drivers)



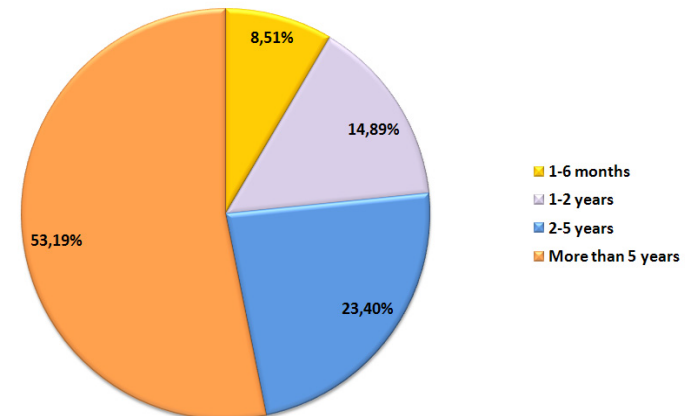
Turkey

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Drivers)



Ukraine

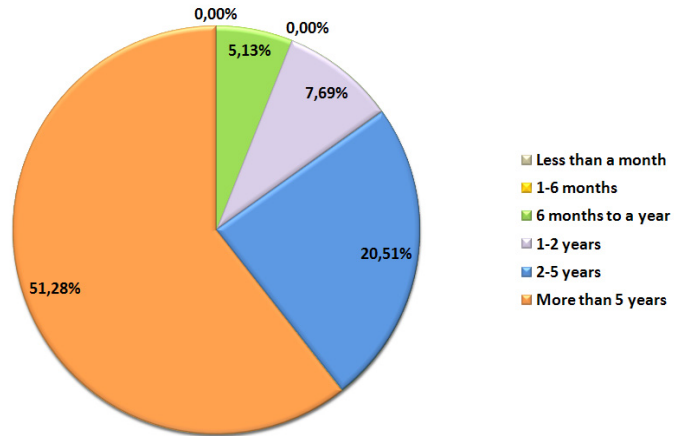
16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Drivers)



16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Owners)

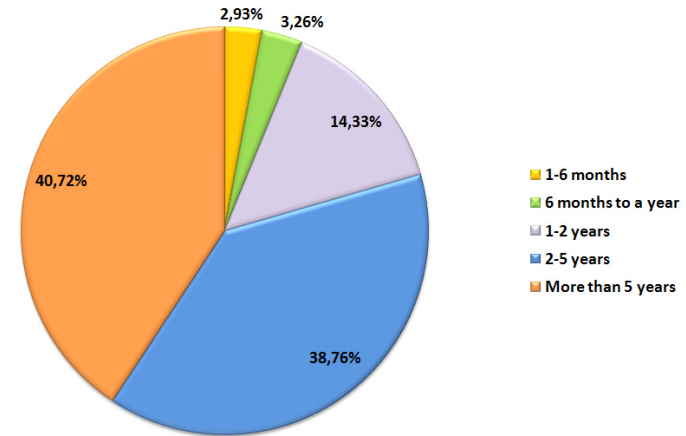
Bulgaria

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Owners)



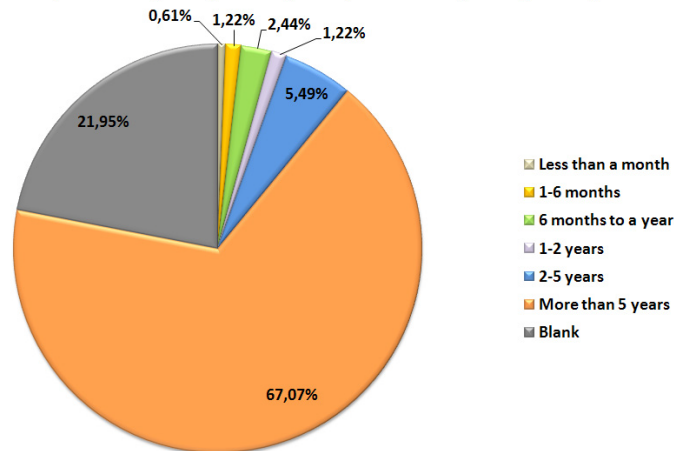
Romania

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Owners)



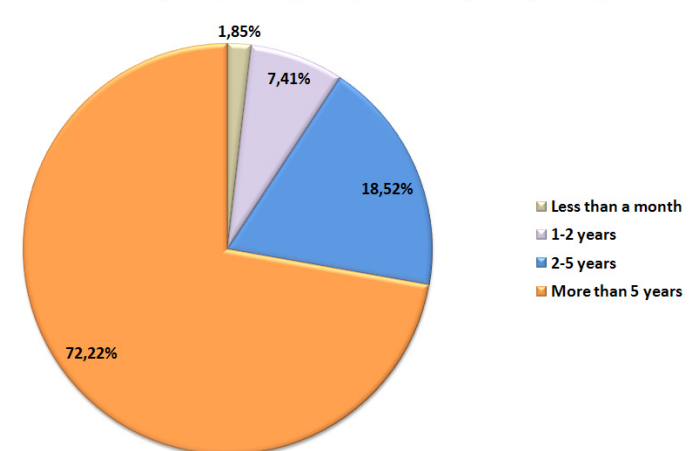
Turkey

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Owners)



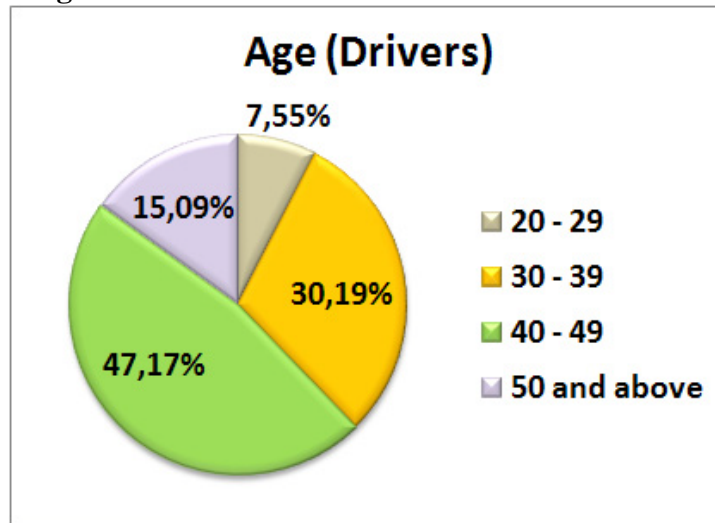
Ukraine

16. If you are using Volvo, how long have you been doing that? (Owners)

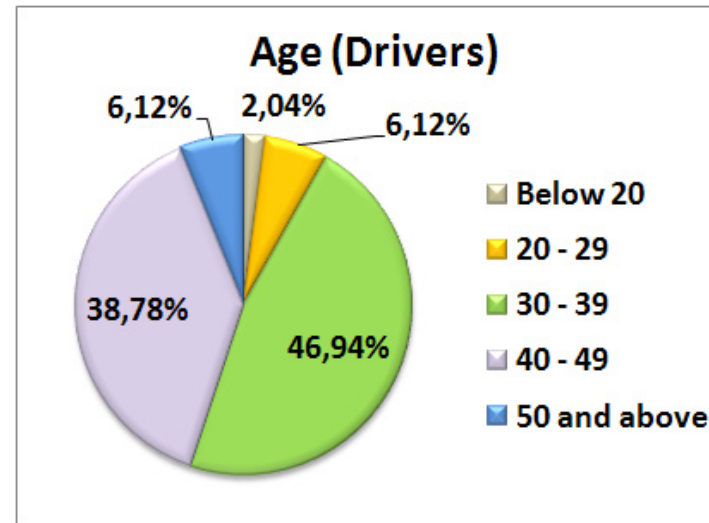


Age (Drivers)

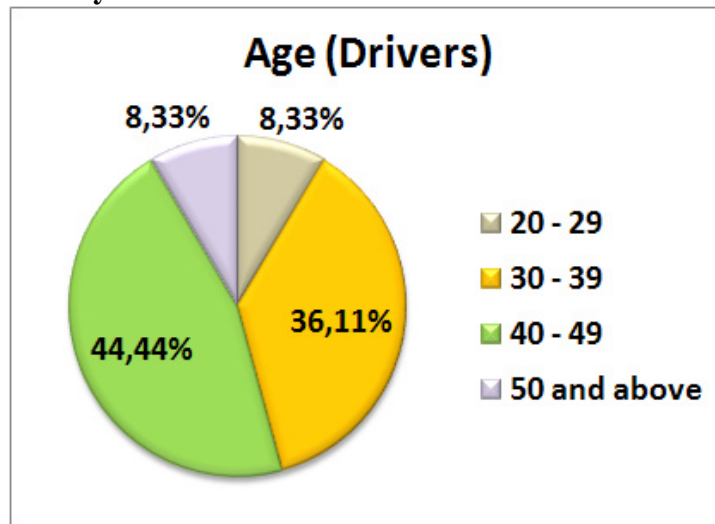
Bulgaria



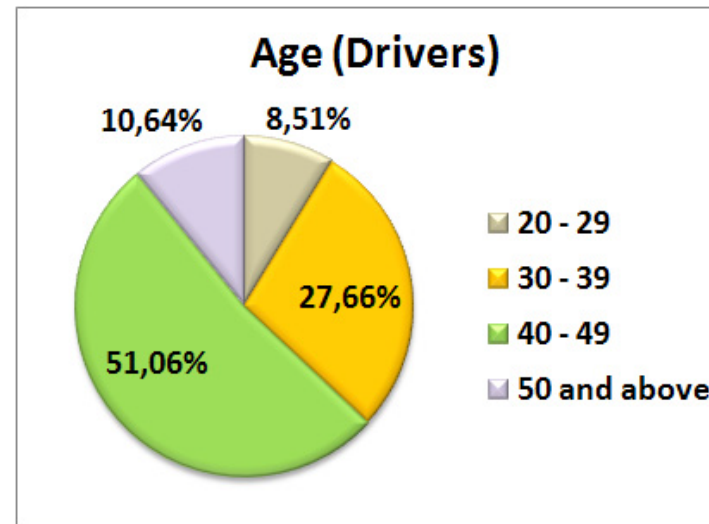
Romania



Turkey

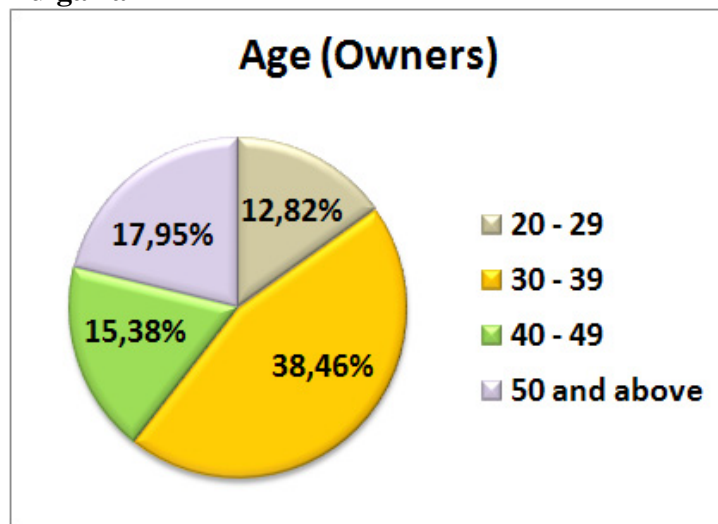


Ukraine

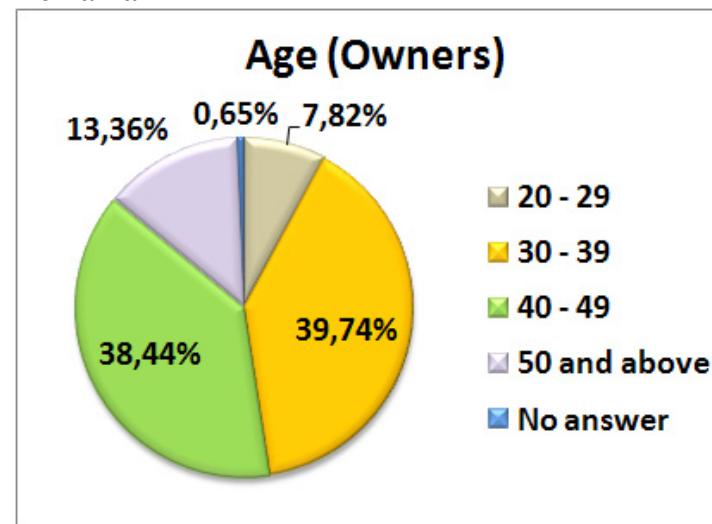


Age (Owners)

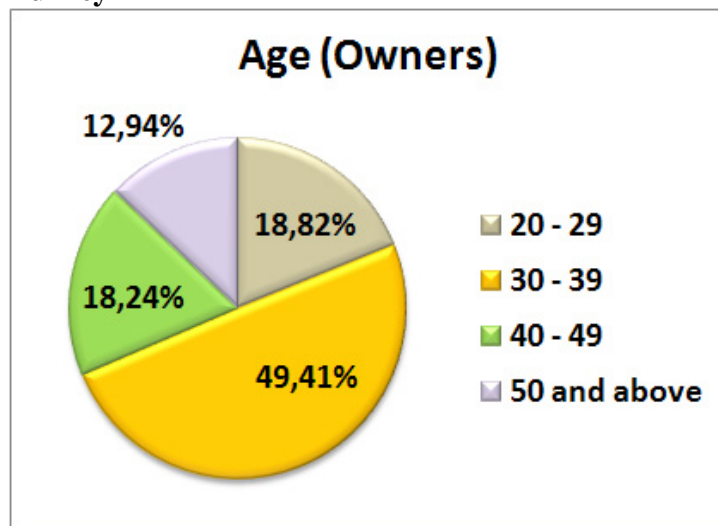
Bulgaria



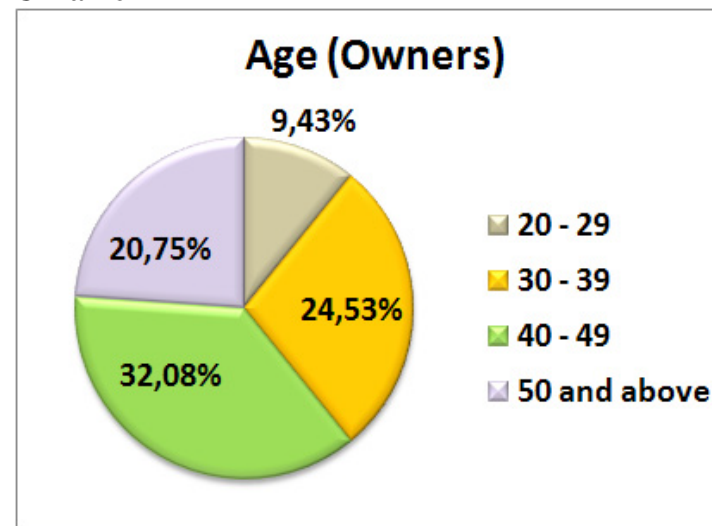
Romania



Turkey

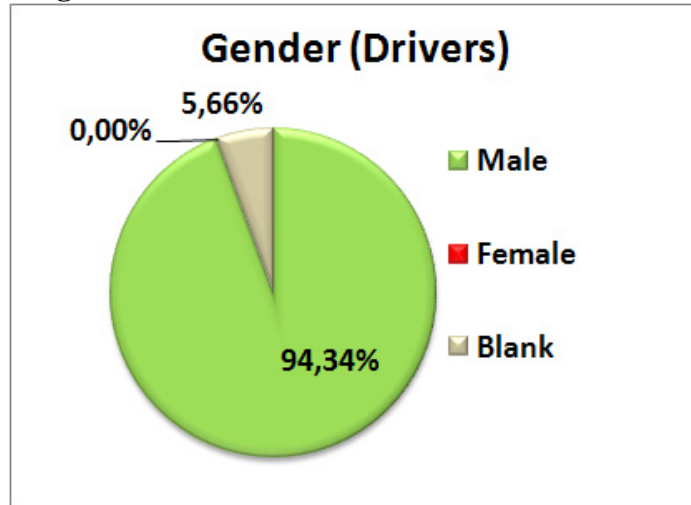


Ukraine

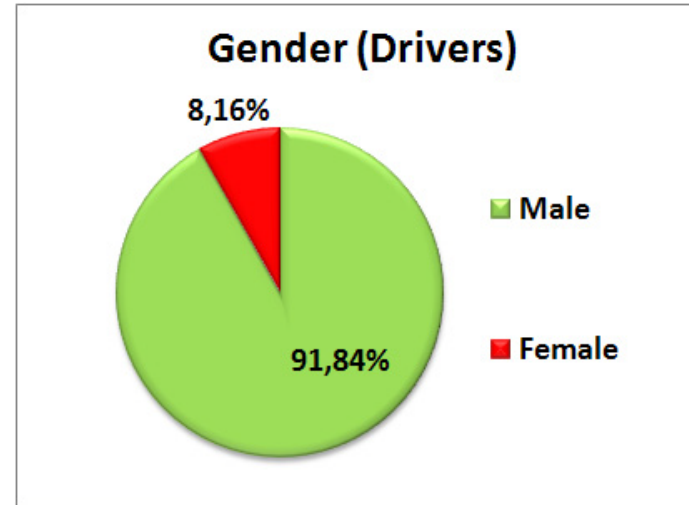


Gender (Drivers)

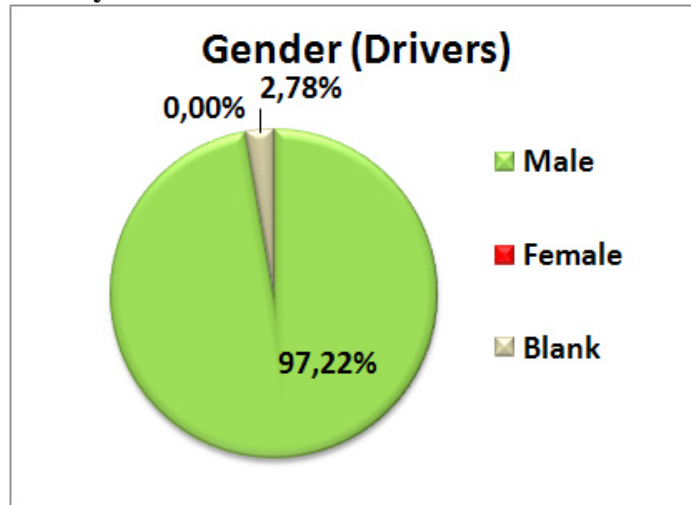
Bulgaria



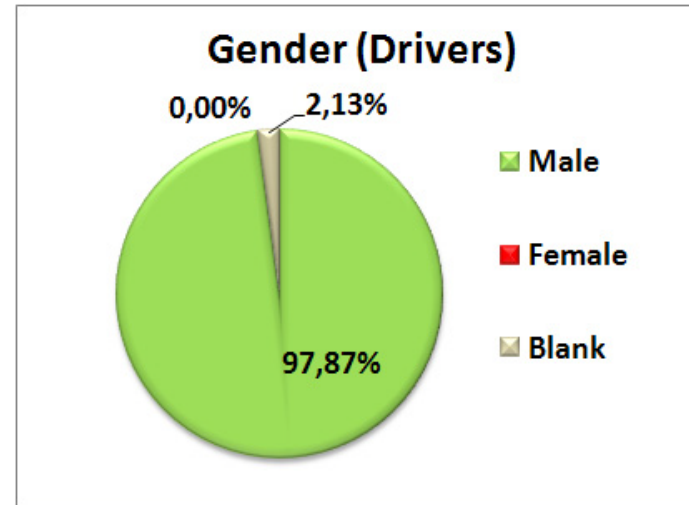
Romania



Turkey

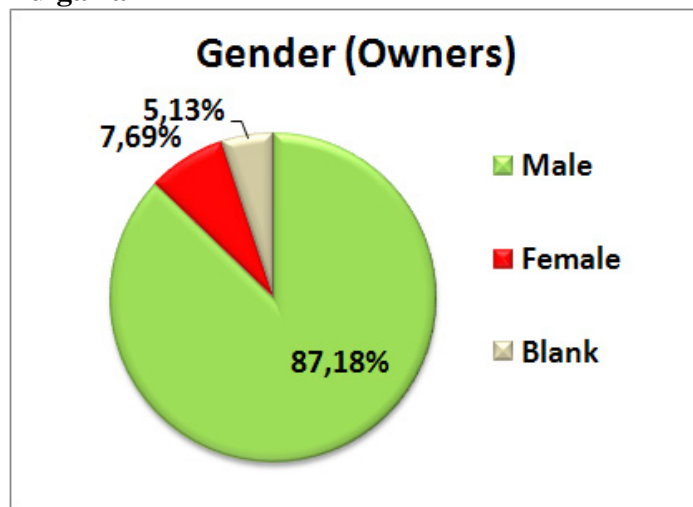


Ukraine

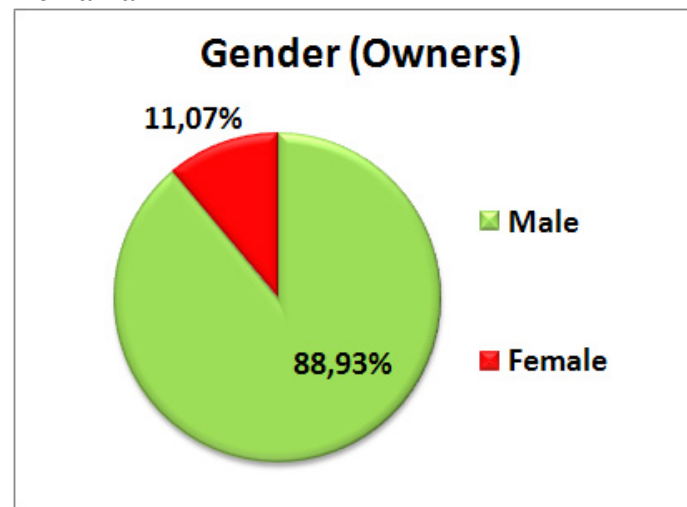


Gender (Owners)

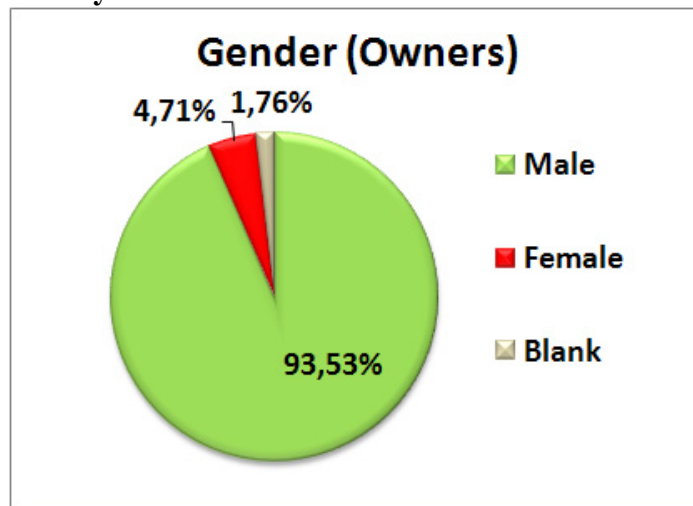
Bulgaria



Romania



Turkey



Ukraine

