

Profile

Wheels of ambition: A student's story

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DOROTHY
NAKAWESI

Bashil Hamis, a 21-year-old Senior Six student, has taken an unconventional path during his vacation. Rather than following the expected academic route, he works as a driver for multiple ride-hailing platforms—a surprising choice for a student pursuing Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics (BCM). Hamis's journey reflects the entrepreneurial spirit of many young Ugandans. Faced with a waiting period of over 10 months before joining higher-technical institutions, he chose to enter the job market and make productive use of his time.

"I wanted to get experience in the job market and make some money," Hamis says. He hired a vehicle and signed up with six ride-hailing apps: Uber, Safe Car, Farasi, Bolt, Little Agent, and Tinka.

According to him, each platform comes with its own advantages and drawbacks. Uber, the market leader, charges a commission of 27 percent, while Farasi offers the lowest rate at 10 percent. "It is all about understanding the terms and choosing what works best for you," he says.

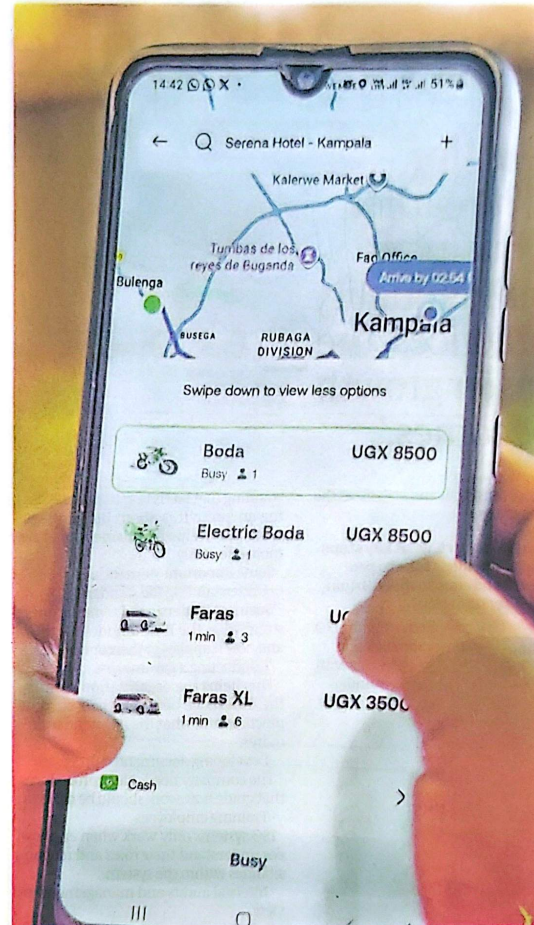
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To become a driver, Hamis needed a vehicle, a smartphone, and a Certificate of Good Conduct, which cost him Shs78,000 (\$22.2). He also had to register with the apps, undergo vehicle inspection, and obtain a National Identification.

Uber dominates the industry, but Hamis says, "Each app has its own advantages. Little is popular with corporate clients, while Safe Car is gaining traction with its competitive pricing."

As a driver, Hamis faces challenges like rude customers, traffic jams, and robberies, especially at night. However, he has found ways to adapt.

"When it rains, I make more money because people prefer cars over motorcycles," he says.



On a good day, Hamis can make between Shs120,000 (\$34.2) and Shs450,000 (\$128.5) after expenses. His most lucrative trips are to Entebbe International Airport and weekend rides.

A client uses a smartphone to book a car or ride hailing service in Kampala. PHOTO/MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

Hamis's story highlights the gig economy's potential in Uganda. With many young people waiting for exams or seeking opportunities, ride-hailing apps offer a flexible way to earn a living.

However, Hamis notes, "The apps need to be more driver-friendly. Sometimes, the commission rates are high, and we struggle with multiple cancellations."

Despite the challenges, Hamis plans to use his earnings to support his education and hopefully buy his own vehicle.

As Hamis navigates the roads of Kampala, he is learning valuable lessons about business, finance, and life.

"I'm making mistakes, but I am learning fast," he says.

Ride-hailing market

A 2024 study by Sagaci Research shows that ride-hailing app usage in Uganda has reached a penetration rate of 36 percent, reflecting growing adoption across the country. This is behind Kenya's 46 percent and ahead of Tanzania 34 percent.

The study further showed that Safe Boda the operators of Safe car launched in 2014 in Uganda and partially funded by Google, is becoming the market leader ahead of Uber and Bolt with its SafeCar and SafeBoda (motorcycle) services. It also has a significant presence in Kenya, ranking behind Bolt and Uber.

Uber has been operating in Uganda since 2016, and it is become a popular mode of transportation, especially in Kampala.

The app has created jobs for thousands of Ugandans, both as drivers and in other support roles.

Key takeaways

- A 2024 study by Sagaci Research shows that ride-hailing app usage in Uganda has reached a penetration rate of 36 percent, reflecting growing adoption across the country. This is behind Kenya's 46 percent and ahead of Tanzania 34 percent.

- Safe Boda the operators of Safe car launched in 2014 in Uganda and partially funded by Google, is becoming the market leader ahead of Uber and Bolt with its SafeCar and SafeBoda (motorcycle) services. It also has a significant presence in Kenya, ranking behind Bolt and Uber.

However, Uber's presence has also sparked controversy. Some taxi drivers have protested against the app, claiming it takes away their business. Others have raised concerns about safety and regulation.

Despite these challenges, Uber remains a popular choice for many Ugandans. The app offers a convenient and affordable way to get around, especially during peak hours or in areas with limited public transportation.

The ride-hailing market in Uganda is highly competitive, with multiple players vying for market share. Uber's competitors, such as Bolt and Safe Car, are gaining ground, offering drivers more options and better terms.

Each app has its unique features, catering to different user preferences and needs, making it easier for commuters to navigate the bustling streets of Uganda. Whether you prefer motorcycle taxis or traditional cars, there are plenty of options available to suit your travel needs.

Commission
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