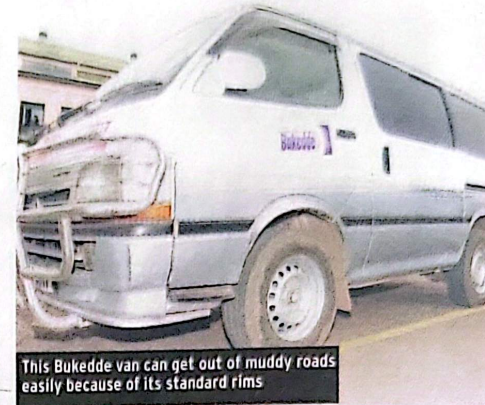




This Etiax pick-up with steel-plated rims can handle rough and muddy terrain very well



This Bukedde van can get out of muddy roads easily because of its standard rims



Alloy rims add beauty to the car

BY DOUGLAS NAGIMESI

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT RIMS

The rim on any vehicle is one of the most important parts. Its biggest role is to be the point of connection between the wheel hub assembly and the tyre. It basically connects the tyre to the car.

A bad rim will provide a bad connection whose repercussions may be catastrophic to the vehicle and its occupants.

The two common types of rims are the steel-plated rim and the alloy rim. Both rims provide an almost identical function in the operations of the vehicle but will differ in the car handling, depending on external factors.

By analysing the steel-plated and the alloy rim, a vehicle owner can make an informed decision when changing their rims.

Steel-plated rims

These are your usual rims that come as standard on most basic cars. They are more popular with cars used

for rough roads, especially upcountry and for projects in hard-to-reach areas. Such rims spend more time on bad or muddy roads.

The steel-plated rims are cheaper and are plain in design, adding little beauty to the vehicle. Extra beauty is added by opting for wheel covers or caps to cover their plainness.

Steel-plated rims are recommended for off-road vehicles as their heavy weight and usually small width provide better handling in mud than on tarmac.

They are also tough and strong and rarely break.

Their biggest advantage over alloy wheels is their low price

STEEL-PLATED

DISADVANTAGES

➤ Their major disadvantage is the extra strain they put on the vehicle caused by their weight.

➤ They also lead to poor handling in emergency situations, especially on dry surfaces as the surface area of tyre on this rim is usually small.

and countrywide availability, even in the most remote of areas.

They are even used as school bells in some rural schools.

Alloy wheels/ sport rims?

Alloys or sport rims, as they are usually called, are made of aluminum, a light weight metal, as the main component, but combined with various light but strong metals, the reason they are referred to as alloy (mixed) wheels.

They have been trendy in motoring for a long time. Alloy wheels usually provide more width of the tyre than their steel-plated counterparts.

Larger tyres in turn improve vehicle handling by

decreasing braking distances; and will make the vehicle more stable in corners as a result of a wide tyre. This helps explain why most rally cars have alloy rims.

Cons of alloy wheels

Alloy wheels are more expensive than steel-plated rims.

More care needs to be taken by drivers of vehicles with alloy wheels as they are more likely to be damaged by pavements and other hard obstacles.

Where low-profile tyres are mounted on the alloy wheels, they provide driving discomfort as a result of a stiffer sidewall of the tyres.

Larger surface areas in muddy conditions provide

CHOOSING RIMS

Whatever the case, choose the right rim for your appropriate motoring condition.

less traction than a smaller surface area provided by a tyre with a smaller width. This makes it harder to steer out of a muddy road.

A Range Rover with a low profile tyre on an alloy rim will struggle in a muddy area compared to the same kind of vehicle fitted with a thinner steel-plated rim and tyre.

The writer is a motoring enthusiast