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Emerging Business Models and Service options for Motorcycle Taxis: Insights from 10 Cities in Sub Saharan Africa

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Abstract

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) the rapid and market-driven spread of the motorcycle taxi in the last two or three decades has made it the dominant means of (intermediate) transport in most urban (and rural) settings. Using primary data collected in five SSA countries, as part of a VREF study, this paper investigates the various MCT business models that have emerged and their implications for the overwhelmingly male operators, opportunities for introducing female operators and for the role of policy-makers to regulate, modernize, formalize and support the sector. Opportunities for key stakeholders and policy makers to learn from each other – both ‘best practice’ and what does not work – remain limited at national level, let alone at regional level. This study shows that there are – despite some differences – many similarities between the MCT sector’s operational model and their challenges, so there should be ample opportunity to learn from each other to improve the quality of this now essential mobility service

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1. Introduction

By 2030 more than 50% of Africans will live in a city, up from one in three Africans in the year 2000 (Kumar & Barrett, 2008). This rapid urbanization in African cities, combined with rising living standards, constitutes a strain on its already over-burdened transport systems (Agbibo, 2019). According to Kumar & Barrett (2008), due to inadequate planning, most African cities are unable to cope with growing motorization resulting in the congestion of often already substandard roads. Significant changes in the transport systems of these African cities are required, to react adequately to changing and increasing mobility needs of urban populations. However, this is not to say that developments in the African transport sector are not occurring. In many developing countries, against a background of limited public sector investments in the transport sector, market forces have given rise to informal transport systems responding to demand. Small-scale operators serve areas that are unserved by formal transport services and provide mobility opportunities, especially for the poor (Cervero & Golub, 2007; Agbibo, 2019). These services act as a key driver of economic and social development, supporting access to jobs, goods, and services (Candiracci et al., 2010). In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the exponential increase in motorcycle taxis (MCT) in the last two or three decades has resulted in it becoming the dominant means of (intermediate) transport in most urban (and rural) settings. Using primary data collected in five SSA countries, as part of a Volvo Research and Educational Foundations (VREF) study, this paper investigates the various MCT business models that have emerged, their implications for the overwhelmingly male operators, opportunities for introducing female operators and for the need and role of policy formulation in regulating and supporting the sector.

2. Literature review

Despite efforts of some governments and municipal authorities to limit or even ban MCTs operating in urban areas, most SSA cities have experienced continuous and exponential growth in the number of MCTs, and more recently, motor tricycles on their roads (Afukaar et al., 2019). Most SSA capital cities are plagued by traffic jams, with more and more secondary cities also becoming affected. For instance, as highlighted by both Raynor (2014) and Zanule (2015), Kampala, like so many other cities, is suffering from an increase in the volume of vehicles due to population and wealth growth, narrow roads, poor road maintenance and planning, and improper road use. MCTs are versatile, flexible, and associated with reduced travel times compared to conventional transport services (Oteng-Ababio and Agyemang, 2015). In more and more SSA cities MCTs are now the most readily available and accessible means of public transport (Diaz Olvera et al. 2016). MCTs are also appreciated for their ability to navigate bad roads and provide door-to-door services at relatively affordable rates (Kumar, 2011). They support livelihood activities and facilitate access to essential services, such as health, markets and education. While the owner of the MCT – who often is not the same person as the operator of the motorcycle – may enjoy a good rate of return on his or her investment, MCT operators too typically earn more than a mere subsistence wage (Diaz Olvera et al., 2016). That said, one should be careful not to generalize. For instance, Kisaalita et al. (2007) argue that in Kampala MCT operators struggle to make a living from their profession, due to taxation. As such the sector provides millions of direct and auxiliary jobs, absorbing large numbers of unemployed youths by providing a source of livelihood for them (Oteng-Ababio and Agyemang, 2012; Ehebrecht et al., 2018). While several studies assessing the MCT sector have emerged in the last decade or so, the phenomenon remains relatively under-researched. This is starkly apparent if one takes into account the size of the sector and its impact on urban socio-economic development. Furthermore, most (but not all) of the studies are single-country or single-city case studies, which, while providing in-depth knowledge, may lose out on the ability for comparative analysis.

3. Methodology

The data for this study was collected in 10 cities in five sub-Saharan African countries (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, and Liberia). In each country, two cities - typically the capital and a secondary city - were selected for the study. The researchers collected data via an MCT operator survey and key-informant interviews. There were about 15 short survey questions posed to approximately 30 MCT operators in each city. Across the study, this resulted in a bank of approximately 300 surveys, plus qualitative interviews with approximately 60 key informants. These key informants were representatives of bodies, identified via country-specific literature reviews, such as the MCT union, traffic police, market boards, city councils, transport sector regulatory bodies, and urban planning departments. The

survey data were analyzed descriptively with frequency tables, matrix ranking and graphical representation while the interview data were analyzed thematically. In addition to the ‘emerging business models and service options’ which is the focus of this paper, the fieldwork covered data collection for three additional VREF themes: ‘user needs and practice, equity issues’; ‘governance, politics, institutions and finance’ and ‘safety, health and the urban environment’, which are outside the scope of this paper. Our study’s findings on the theme ‘safety, health and the urban environment’ have already been published in Ntramah et al. (2023).

4. Findings

The costs of a new motorcycle – that is, the model typically used by motorcycle taxi operators – is on average between US\$800 and \$1200 (subject to import and transportation costs). This amount is generally beyond the means of the average MCT operator. Hence, a common means of acquiring new motorcycles is to rent those purchased by businesspeople in exchange for a daily or weekly fee. The fact that the most common ownership model in the MCT sector in the surveyed cities is personal ownership, is an indication of the maturity of the sector. Many of the operators have paid off the costs owed for the motorcycles they operate and have become the sole owner. Additionally, there is also a large second-hand market for motorcycles, where they can be picked up from as low as US\$100, bringing them within the reach of operators who want to own their own motorcycle but lack the funds required to purchase a new vehicle. Nevertheless, some operators are still on hire purchase contracts, according to our data. The duration of such contracts varies but typically lasts a year in total. Under hire-purchase contracts the owner is usually responsible for insuring and registering the motorcycle (and of course for paying the purchase fee), while the operator is responsible for paying for daily fuel, repairs and fines. Renting of motorcycles on a daily or weekly basis happens when the main operator (whether he is the owner or on a hire-purchase

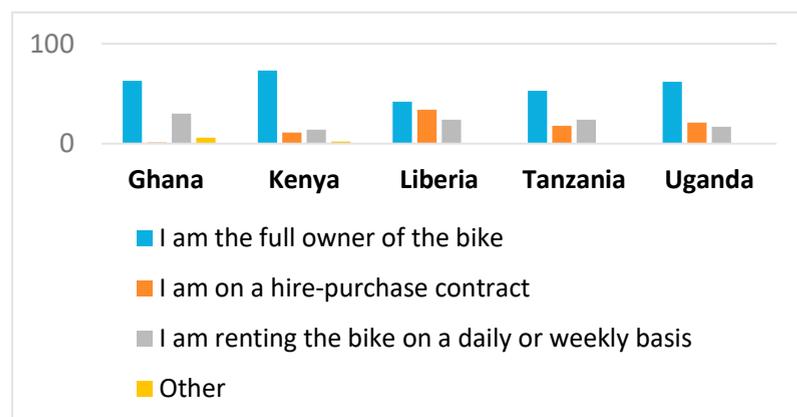


Figure 1 MCT ownership models in case study countries

contract) is taking one or more days off but still wants to earn some money. In such cases, the motorcycle is (sub-) rented out to another operator. For these ad-hoc operators this often acts as a first step into the motorcycle taxi sector. From Figure 1 it is clear that there are considerable differences between the case study countries. For example, Kenya is leading for personally owned bikes (73%), while Liberia has the lowest number of riders owning bikes (42%). In Kenya, the high percentage of riders who fully own their motorcycles can be attributed to the organization of MCT operators into a **Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCO)**. This has enabled them to acquire motorcycles through group savings and loans. In Uganda too, various cooperatives, the Post Bank, and SACCOs offer soft loan arrangements to riders and encourage them to complete payments so as to become full owners. The role of SACCOs in improving motorcycle riders’ ownership is also echoed by Nthiwa (2017), who found that MCT operators have embraced a savings culture. These opportunities are not available to Liberian MCT operators, limiting the number of owner-operators in the country.

Importantly, ownership status has an impact on riding behavior. The majority of respondents agreed that bike owners are more careful than those on hire-purchase contracts or those renting on a daily or weekly basis, as shown by the following comments: *“Owners are less pressured to pay rent and therefore do not rush to make as many trips as possible”* (MCT user, Tanzania); *“‘Riding to own’ and those who ride their bikes are more careful and less likely to be in trouble with the law...because the bikes are their own or soon [they will] own them”* (Law enforcement representative, Uganda); and *“The riders-only want profit very fast and are likely to overload, [and] over speed, etc. compared to the owner-operators”* (Motorcycle and tricycle union representative, Ghana). In other studies, the higher likelihood of non-owned motorcycles being involved in road traffic injuries is also reported (e.g., Ospina-Mateus et al., 2021; Francis et al., 2023). As mentioned, detailed findings on the theme ‘safety, health and the urban environment’ as part of the overall study have already been published in Ntramah et al. (2023).

As mentioned above, incomes earned from motorcycle taxi riding are generally good, and more so if the operator is also the owner of the motorcycle. The below table shows the results of our surveys asking to rank four attractive characteristics of being a motorcycle taxi operator. Clearly, the fact that it pays well is the most liked characteristic. Sixty-seven percent of the operators stated that they liked their current job of motorcycle taxi riding more than their previous job. A further indication of motorcycle taxi riding being a reasonably preferred profession is that a significant part of the operators have been involved in motorcycle taxi riding for a number of years. Fifty-one percent have been riding motorcycle taxis for between 3 and 10 years while 25% have been riding motorcycle taxis between 1 and 3 years. Only 7% of the operators have been riding for less than one year, which is less than half of the riders who have been operating in the sector for more than ten years (17%). That said, most of the operators, when asked if they see themselves still being motorcycle taxi operators in five years’ time, indicated that they hoped to move on to a better job. This view is captured by the following statement, which also questions if this is a realistic hope:

“Few riders take it as a sustainable job. Many say it is a temporary activity, and they are doing it because they have no other alternative jobs. Despite claiming that it is a temporary job, many end up riding for five years or more” (MCT user representative, Tanzania).

Table 1: What MCT operators like about their job

Responses	Ranking by Countries					Totals
	Ghana	Kenya	Liberia	Tanzania	Uganda	
It pays well	1	2	1	1	1	6
I am my own boss, working the hours I want	2	1	2	2	2	9
The job is not very physically demanding	3	3	3	4	4	17
I like my motorcycle and I like riding it	4	4	4	3	3	18
1- Most Liked; 4 - Least Liked						

The survey findings placing pay as the most liked aspect of being a motorcycle taxi operator is also underscored by the qualitative data, illustrated by the following comment: *“I do this job to take care of my wife, son and also support my brothers who are in school, so this job pays me very well (Motor tricycle taxi operator, Ghana).* While motorcycle taxi riding does provide a reasonable income, there are also associated challenges, as suggested by the following comment: *“This job is difficult, and we are often seen as bad people. But there are no jobs and I have not had any other job, so I like and respect my job because it enables me to provide for my family”* (MCT operator, Kenya). Police harassment and the risk of having an accident were listed as the most disliked aspects of motorcycle taxi riding, followed by being exposed to the weather and finally, long hours and sometimes poor pay.

The emergence of private sector transport providers – particularly from the 1980s onwards – is a direct response to a vacuum left by state-led public transport providers, often due to a lack of capacity and funds available (Ehebrecht & Lenz, 2019). While initially this vacuum was filled with all sorts of conventional transport providers, such as shared car taxis, and mini and midi-buses, in the last three decades or so the rise of the motorcycle taxi has been exponential. This has been made possible by the availability of low-priced Indian and Chinese-made models. Ever

since this growth, governments have played catch-up, trying to regulate and in some cases ban the sector, with varying degrees of success. As we have argued elsewhere, “While gradually acknowledging the presence and importance of the MCT sector, governments’ “engagement” with it typically focuses on enforcing compliance with administrative and legal requirements and has hardly matured into regulating *and* supporting the sector” (Peters et al. 2022).

The MCT operators were asked to rank six possible government actions to support the sector, from the most supportive (ranked as 1) to the least supportive (ranked as 6).

Table 2. Most useful government support to MCTs

Responses	Ranking by Countries					Totals
	Ghana	Kenya	Liberia	Tanzania	Uganda	
Provide free classes in road safety and traffic rules	2	1	1	5	4	13
Provide free safety equipment, such as crash -helmets and high-visibility jerseys	6	3	2	4	3	18
Provide access to credit so that we can buy our own motorcycles	4	2	3	1	1	11
Get away with motorcycle taxi bans (if in place)	1	5	4	2	6	18
Clampdown on police harassment	3	4	6	3	2	18
Provide infrastructure for motorcycle taxis, such as covered bike stands or special motorcycle taxi lanes	5	6	5	6	5	27
1=Most Useful Support; 6=Least Useful Support						

Clearly, receiving support in purchasing a motorcycle would be appreciated most by the MCT operators, closely followed by road safety and traffic rules classes. Both measures can reasonably be expected to reduce traffic accidents. Above it was discussed how MCT operators who own their motorcycles are less likely to be involved in an accident, which is often brought up as the primary reason to clamp down on the sector. Hence, governments can follow a two-pronged approach involving both regulation and support to address the high number of road traffic accidents associated with motorcycle taxis. There are some noticeable differences between the five countries: the free road safety classes are particularly appreciated by Liberian and Kenyan operators, but not deemed a support priority by Tanzanian operators. Getting rid of motorcycle taxi bans is deemed as the top supportive action the Ghanaian government could take (which should not come as a surprise given that commercial motorcycle riding is not allowed) but is considered less of an issue in other countries, where bans are typically limited to motorways or central business districts. Covered motorcycle taxi stands or special motorcycle taxi lanes seem to be of the lowest priority in nearly all the surveyed countries.

While the motorcycle taxi ‘revolution’ has effectively reduced the level to which physical distances pose a barrier, another ‘revolution’ – the rapid spread of mobile phone use and networks – has reduced distances in virtual space. Interestingly, these ‘revolutions’ seem to be somewhat complementary and have changed the lives and livelihoods in both urban SSA and arguably even more so in rural SSA. Porter (2013) describes the expansion of motorcycle taxi services as the most dramatic development in rural transport services since the introduction of motorised vehicles in the early 20th century, since for the first time, many rural dwellers are able to summon transport whenever they need it. With the rapidly increasing mobile phone ownership and network coverage, even in rural areas, a motorcycle is often no further than a phone call away.

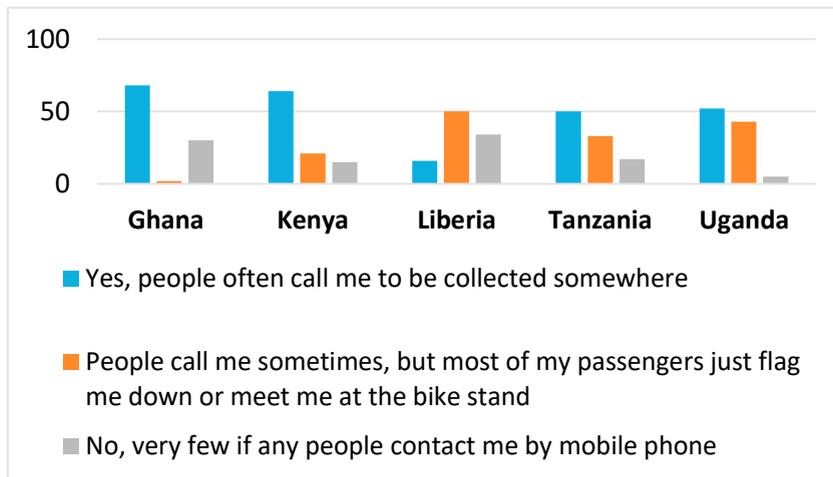


Fig 2. Mobile phone use in the MCT sector

The MCT operators were asked about mobile phone ownership and what role, if any, it has in their livelihood activities. Mobile phone ownership among the surveyed operators is very high across all study countries: 99% of the Kenyan MCT operators, 97% of the Ghanaian, 95% of the Liberian, 98% of the Tanzanian, and 100% of the Ugandan MCT operators own a mobile phone. These percentages are double the average mobile phone ownership: 46% of the population uses mobile telecom services in sub-Saharan Africa (GSMA, 2021). MCT riders use phones mainly to receive calls from clients booking rides or deliveries.

The overwhelming majority of motorcycle taxi operators are males. Above, it has been established that motorcycle taxi riding can offer a decent income, particularly when the operator is also the owner of the motorcycle. Women have thus hardly benefitted from a new and decent income-generating activity. That is, not as operators, as there may be auxiliary jobs associated with the motorcycle taxi sector, such as bike-washing, fuel selling or selling food and drinks at the motorcycle taxi stands, that involve women. Against a background of employment market challenges, a sector providing tens of millions of new jobs should ideally benefit both men and women. So why is this not the case?

First of all, is it indeed true that motorcycle taxi services are equally used by men and women? Our data showed some variations from country to country (see Figure 3). Furthermore, there can be substantial differences within a country. For instance, in Liberia 57% of the MCT operators in Ganta city indicated that they carry more women than men, while in Paynesville/Monrovia only 30% of the operators indicated that they carry more women than men. A possible explanation for this can be that Ganta city, located close to the border with Guinea and surrounded by rural/farming areas, sees a very high volume of (petty) trade in which women are generally heavily involved. Paynesville, a suburb of Monrovia, is also a location where a fair amount of trading activity occurs, but it also sees a lot of journeys undertaken by workers commuting to their place of work, which may skew the findings more towards ‘carry men and women in equal numbers’ or ‘carry more men than women’.

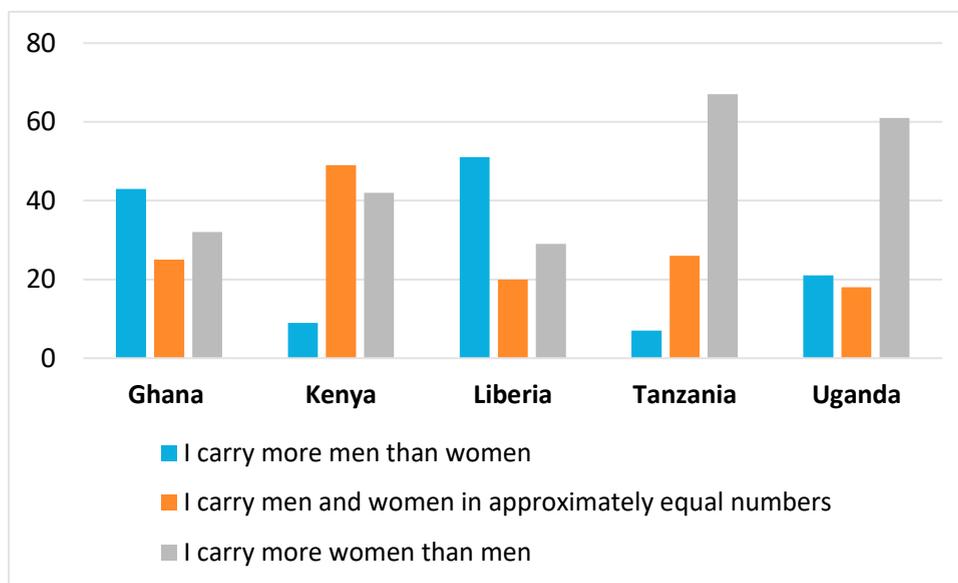


Fig.3. Gender of MCT clientele

It is worth looking in some detail why male MCT operators and other stakeholders believe that women can or cannot become motorcycle taxi operators. More so because there are substantial variations between the case study countries.

Table 3. Can women become motorcycle taxi operators?

Can women become MCT operators?	Ghana	Kenya	Liberia	Tanzania	Uganda
Yes, why not	46%	91%	28%	67%	61%
Yes, but they will find it difficult to find a business person willing to give them a bike on a hire-purchase contract	1%	4%	19%	8%	13%
No, you need to be strong to balance the bike, especially with heavy loads	9%	1%	40%	17%	13%
No, they would be harassed by the police and by male passengers	38%	0%	8%	8%	7%
No, because their boyfriends/husbands would not allow it	1%	0%	5%	0%	5%
Other	5%	3%	0%	0%	1%

In Kenya, the MCT operators surveyed overwhelmingly (over 90%) indicated that they see no reason why women cannot operate a motorcycle taxi. That said, even if they see no fundamental issue with female riding, it does not mean that they anticipate no challenges. For instance, a motorcycle taxi operator in Kisumu (Kenya) suggested that “*Women feel this job is risky since you never know where the client will take you to.*” Again, this does not preclude women from driving (note that none of the operators surveyed in Kenya indicated that women cannot become MCT

operators because they would be harassed by the police and male passengers, but it reflects the reasons why (male) operators believe that few if any women take up the motorcycle taxi operator profession. Some motorcycle taxi operators in Kenya stated that there were a few female motorcycle taxi riders who, according to them, got into motorcycle riding after their motorcycle taxi riding husband died. During a stakeholder focus group in Kisumu the belief was expressed that female motorcycle taxi riders were usually more careful on the road than their male counterparts and that they were more compliant in terms of licensing, insurance, and traffic rules *‘as they do not want to run into trouble with law enforcers’* (Stakeholder Focus Group Discussion 1, Kisumu).

In Liberia, female motorcycle taxi operators are almost non-existent. A UNDP-funded project to promote women to take up motorcycle taxi riding came to an end without establishing an enduring legacy (McMullin, 2019). Less than a third of the surveyed motorcycle operators stated that they saw no fundamental issue with women taking up the profession (compared to more than 90% in Kenya). The main reason the male motorcycle taxi operators believed that women are not well suited for the occupation is their perceived lack of strength, necessary to balance the motorcycle (especially on unsurfaced and badly maintained roads). It is perhaps no surprise that this was flagged up by the Liberia motorcycle taxi operators, due to a combination of bad (potholed and unpaved) roads and the heavy loads/multiple passengers typically carried. Such overloading often takes place due to limited or ineffective policing. Liberia was also the country where the highest proportion of respondents (19%) indicated they believed women could not become MCT operators because they would find it difficult to find a business person willing to give them a bike on a hire-purchase contract. This seems to be a self-perpetuating issue, as with no business person renting out to female operators, how would other business people gain the confidence that women can ride and provide the required return on the motorcycle?

In Tanzania, some women are active as motorcycle taxi riders, both in Dar es Salaam and Morogoro city (our two case study cities). Some of the interviewees suggested that these female operators benefited from NGO programmes promoting female riding, perhaps not dissimilar to the UN-funded ‘pink panther’ female riding project in Liberia. However, designing such an intervention and ensuring that it is sustainable remains a challenge. There is for instance the risk that a motorcycle assigned to/provided to a female operator, would end up with her partner, something Porter et al. (2012) observed for a project that handed out bicycles to women in rural areas to improve their mobility. As raised in the other study countries, cultural perceptions regarding motorcycle taxi riding also seem to act as a barrier in Tanzania. This is illustrated by the following comment of a female motorcycle taxi user in Tanzania who, at the same time, recognizes that this perception can be challenged:

“[How] will others perceive me If I ride a motorcycle? It appears as though this is not a woman's work ... However, if they are educated and a few of them thrive, many will join the industry. As with bus drivers, a single woman began driving buses and now there are numerous women drivers” (Female motorcycle taxi user, Tanzania).

In Ghana, close to half of the motorcycle taxi operators surveyed did not see any fundamental issues with women taking up the profession. However, close to 40% indicated that women would find it challenging to deal with police and male passengers’ harassment. Such a high number of respondents opting for this response, quite likely reflects the fact that motorcycle taxi riding is illegal in Ghana, so ‘harassment’ by police of commercial motorcycle operators is relatively commonplace. Also, like in the other case study countries, cultural perspectives on the gender division of labour also come into play, as illustrated by the following comment of a stakeholder: *“Already we are in a patriarchal society, where people believe that [in] everything man is more important than [a] woman. Men are supposed to be the head and they are supposed to be powerful, and people have misconstrued that to also mean that women are weak”* (Police Motor Traffic and Transport Department Official, Ghana). These cultural perceptions do not only reflect male thinking, but are also aired by women: *“[As] a female pillion rider, I will go in for a male rider instead of a female rider because I think it is safer to ride with a male than [a] female”* (Female motorcycle taxi user, Ghana).

Cultural perceptions affecting ideas about who can and who cannot ride a (commercial) motorcycle is perhaps best illustrated by the Ugandan data. Despite being a source of empowerment, several gender and cultural barriers impede women from driving MCTs in Uganda. According to various stakeholders, culturally, women’s bodies, sexuality, and physique are valued, honored, and respected as a locus of motherhood. In their opinion, driving MCTs de-feminizes women as it requires them to sit with their legs apart, a form of public indecency referred to as *“kwegayuyuya”* in local parlance. Avoiding MCT work, which is indirectly interpreted as disrespectful and

dishonorable, thus preserves their modesty. A stakeholder made the following forceful and unequivocal observation:

“From their physical makeup and the respect we give to women, I categorically cannot agree with someone who believes that it is right for them to join [the] boda-boda business. I am a Muganda man. Here in Buganda, a woman does not “kwegayuuya” in public...” (Key Stakeholder, Uganda).

Paradoxically, he posited that women cannot (practically) ride MCTs wearing dresses and that Kiganda (the way things are done by the Baganda) culture does not permit them to wear trousers: *“[We] don’t allow trousers here in Buganda.”* Hence, for him, women’s participation in MCT is foreclosed by the above cultural and gender considerations.

MCT is sometimes perceived culturally to be a masculine occupation or a “man’s job”. As noted above, whereas women’s *kwegayuuya* in public while riding MCTs is problematic, similar conduct by men is viewed as normal and is not stigmatized. This is exemplified by the following statement made by the Principal Commercial Officer of Mbarara City: *“When the woman is seen riding a MCT, the first question will be: what’s wrong with this woman? All these [factors] stop women from joining the industry”.*

5. Discussion

Informal transport providers play an essential role in city life across Africa. Their work enables the daily circulation of labour, information, supplies and goods and provides interconnectivity, which is particularly essential for the urban poor and marginalized groups. The MCT is a relative newcomer in the informal transport sector but has grown rapidly throughout Africa. Although there are key differences in MCT operators’ experiences, the MCT sectors in the five study countries operate in much the same way.

The most common business model for MCT operators is that of riders who own their motorcycles. This is an indication of a sector that is maturing and perhaps getting close to saturation. If on a hire-purchase contract, after a year or so, the operator will join the ranks of ‘owner-operator.’ Higher ownership levels have health and safety implications. According to the survey and interview data, most of the stakeholders and MCT riders believe that MCT operators who own their bikes ride more carefully than MCT riders who hire a motorcycle on a daily or weekly basis.

The majority of the MCT operators are more satisfied with their current job compared to their previous jobs. Still, MCT riding is mostly considered a temporary occupation rather than perceived as a long-term job. MCT riders hope to find better jobs in the future, mainly because of the risks and challenges associated with MCT driving. For example, road safety is low, the infrastructure is poor, and many riders must deal with police harassment. Hence, there is a clear need to identify and create new mechanisms to professionalize the occupation and improve the image of MCT riding while simultaneously offering pathways for MCT operators to move onward, for instance via vocational training opportunities tailored around the operators’ necessity to ride the motorcycle for parts of the day. The government has a role here in supporting MCT unions and riders. There is ample opportunity to learn best practices at a regional level, since if and how national governments support or frustrate the sector varies considerably from country to country. To illustrate, in Ghana, operating a motorcycle for commercial purposes is not allowed, tying the hands of the government behind its back as far as providing any support, something which was particularly noticeable during the COVID-19 crisis (Peters et al. 2022). In Tanzania, Kenya, and particularly Uganda, the governments have introduced a series of regulations for MCTs, while in Liberia, regulations concerning MCTs are arguably the least developed. Another role for the government could be to promote and create opportunities for female MCT riders. Very few, if any, women have become MCT operators. Our interviewees listed a series of reasons for this, although in most cases, they did not see any fundamental reasons why women cannot be motorcycle taxi operators. Most of the reasons brought up – if they are valid in the first place – can be overcome with specific training and support programmes that actively support women.

Lastly, the development and the modus operandi of MCTs in Sub-Saharan Africa go hand in hand with the expansion of mobile phone networks. The MCT operators in the various countries mainly use their phones to make appointments with regular customers. There remain barriers in place in some countries to the widespread use of mobile applications for payment and ride-hailing, often related to data usage costs and ride-hailing platform fees. However, if promoted and made more accessible, it could further support the commercialization and formalization of the MCT sector and could also contribute to safety (Peters et al., 2022). A good example of this is the pay-on-demand Safe Boda app, which recently expanded from its home market in Uganda into Nigeria (Kene-Okafur, 2021).

6. Conclusion

This study sought to understand business models and service options for the urban MCT sector in five SSA countries. Since this sub-sector occupies an important space in the urban transport landscape by supporting mobility, particularly in areas underserved by formal transport services, and given the growing demand for transport services due to urbanization, understanding the sector and thus being able to make evidence-driven efforts to regulate, modernize, formalize, and support the sector is essential. This is especially true if such efforts are to be made in an inclusive and pro-poor manner. Opportunities for key stakeholders and policymakers to learn from each other – about both ‘best practices’ and what does not work – remain limited at national level, let alone at regional level. This study showed that despite some differences across our study countries, there are many similarities between operational models and the challenges faced by the MCT sector. There should, therefore, be ample opportunities for cross-country learning that could improve the quality of this now essential mobility service.

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