Beat: Lifestyle

An Uber Experience

Find out how the app works.

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USPA NEWS - Taxis have long been criticized for being a monopoly in the market, occasionally providing mediocre service and overcharging unsuspecting tourists. Uber solves the issue of security by verifying its drivers and providing contact and vehicle information to passengers for peace of mind.

The heavens opened and graciously nurtured the land with rain from early in the morning without pause. It was 5pm and I wanted to get back to the residential suburbs, but lacked the will to fight for space on public transport for the better part of one and a half hours in inclement weather. A colleague agreed to split the fare with me on an Uber ride so I requested a ride right after surge pricing subsided.

We asked our driver, Ming, a few questions and got a pretty good idea of how the Uber system worked for drivers even though this was our first ride. "˜I drive using Uber if I get to get off work early, it´s nice, I get a little extra before I get home so I can buy nice treats for my wife and kids every now and again.´ He told us. "˜You know you have a real good deal today, this is an UberBlack car but I couldn´t find any passengers using that so I´m willing to charge UberX prices.´

When I told him that I requested a ride right after surge pricing for UberX of 2.1 times the regular fare ended he said, "˜I wouldn´t ride if surge went over two times the price, I might if it was 1.5-1.7 times the price, but definitely not double.´ What he said made a lot of sense, after all UberBlack was only about 1.8-2 times more expensive than UberX, and you´d have to be a fool to pay more for less. Though surge pricing may be sound from an economics theory perspective, I was told that "˜drivers usually wouldn´t go into a surge pricing area unless it lasted for a significantly long duration´ since there was a risk that surge pricing would end by the time the driver arrived in the area, so it wasn´t worth the extra effort.

Taxis have long been criticized for being a monopoly in the market, occasionally providing mediocre service and overcharging unsuspecting tourists. Uber solves the issue of security by verifying its drivers and providing contact and vehicle information to passengers for peace of mind. Ming told me that mothers regularly request Uber drivers pick up their kids from school and drive them home so the mothers don´t have to go collect the kids themselves. Using the Uber app, the parent can see exactly where the car is along a predetermined route, and payment by credit card also eliminates the risk of children needing to carry large amounts of cash.

Uber drivers are also unable to do something that unscrupulous taxi drivers do regularly; profile passengers based on physical stereotypes and refuse to carry them. The Uber app automatically assigns passengers to the nearest driver and doesn´t tell them of their destination until the passenger has boarded the vehicle, effectively eliminating discrimination by location and distance as well.

As for finances, Uber takes 25% and the driver keeps 75% of the fare. I got to my destination in half the time it takes by bus and 30% cheaper than by hailing a taxi. Though I loved the experience, it´s probably the first and last time I´ll be using Uber after work, I´m claiming it as a journalistic expense after writing this article.

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