Uber was forced to pay $20m to settle allegations that the company duped people into driving with false promises about earnings.

The Federal Trade Commission claimed that most Uber drivers earned far less than the rates Uber published online in 18 major cities in the US.

Former Uber engineer Susan Fowler went public with allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination, prompting the company to hire former US attorney general Eric Holder to investigate her claims.

Waymo, the self-driving car company owned by Google’s parent corporation Alphabet, filed a lawsuit against Uber, accusing the startup of “calculated theft” of its technology.

The suit, which could be a fatal setback for Uber’s autonomous vehicle ambitions, alleged that a former Waymo employee, Anthony Levandowski, stole trade secrets for Uber.

Uber later fired the engineer.

It is easiest to think of the firm as a holding company, lying somewhere between Warren Buffet’s private equity firm Berkshire Hathaway and the massive conglomerate that is General Electric.

Like the former, Alphabet won’t have any consumer facing role itself, instead existing almost as an anti-brand, designed to give its subsidiaries room to develop their own identities.