

Didi, SoftBank set up taxi-hailing joint venture in Japan

July 19 2018, by Yuri Kageyama



Vice President of Strategy at Didi Chuxing Stephen Zhu, left, CEO and President of Softbank Mobile Corp. Ken Miyauchi, second left, President of Didi Chuxing Jean Liu, second right, and deputy division head at Softbank Mobile Keigo Sugano shake hands during a press conference announcing their joint venture in Tokyo Thursday, July 19, 2018. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Chinese mobile service giant Didi Chuxing and Tokyo-based SoftBank Corp. have set up a joint venture for taxi-hailing in Japan.

The companies announced the plan Thursday for a service that will use artificial intelligence and data analysis on a technology platform available for free to all taxi companies in Japan.

The service will roll out later this year, starting with a free trial run in Osaka, and expanding to Kyoto, Fukuoka, Okinawa and Tokyo, they said.

The move marks the arrival of a major Chinese mobile transportation platform in a nation that has resisted ride-sharing businesses and protected its traditional taxi companies.

The joint venture is mainly targeting the growing legions of Chinese tourists in Japan.

Didi President Jean Liu told reporters she has long been impressed with Japanese cab services and stressed the Didi [service](#) in Japan was "inclusive and collaborative," not disruptive, and will work as a plus for taxi drivers.

"I'm a big fan," she said of Japanese drivers, who she said were charming.

"We look forward to developing extensive collaboration with all industry players to assist in smart city programs in Japan and Asia."



Stephen Zhu, left, vice-president of strategy of Didi Chuxing, Ken Miyauchi, second left, CEO and President of Softbank Mobile Corp., Jean Liu, second right, president of Didi Chuxing, and Keigo Sugano, right, deputy division head at Softbank Mobile, shake hands during a press conference on their joint venture in Tokyo Thursday, July 19, 2018. Chinese mobile service giant Didi Chuxing and Tokyo-based SoftBank Corp. have set up a joint venture for taxi-hailing in Japan.(AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Didi and SoftBank announced their partnership in February. Didi already has alliances with global ride-sharing services including Grab, Lyft, Uber, 99 and Taxify.

It says its ride services, including car-sharing and food delivery, cover 30 million drivers using the platform and 550 million users.

SoftBank offers mobile and internet services. The SoftBank group also has IoT, robotics and energy businesses and is an investor in Grab, the

leading ride-hailing [company](#) in Southeast Asia.

"I believe the [joint venture](#) can provide new value to both consumers and taxi companies in Japan," says SoftBank Chief Executive Ken Miyauchi.

Uber has set up shop in Japan but has not gotten far with car-sharing because of regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles. It is instead pushing Uber Eats, its food delivery business. Uber sold its China business to Didi, and holds a stake in Didi.

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