

A power struggle in the taxi industry: a challenge for Uber and Lyft regarding their Service clauses¹

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ABSTRACT

The term « Uberization » is generally used to describe the phenomenon by which a startup or a new model linked to digital economy can threaten an old model of the “traditional” economy². Uber is the company behind this recent term and is bringing about a revolution on the sharing economy. However recent companies start occupying more and more importance in the taxi industry, such as Lyft in America, or Didi Chuxing in Asia, putting shadow on both traditional taxi companies and the current leader in the industry, namely Uber. In this paper, we will focus on main attributes of each company to analyze if one would be able to dethrone the American taxi platform.

Key Words: Taxi industry, pricing war, service clause, vehicle types, mobile app, customer support.

INTRODUCTION

It is 3 in the morning; no more subways, or bus available to take you home. Going home by foot? No conceivable, it is more than 5 kilometers far. You are thinking of your colleague, 2 days ago, who talked about two “great mobile phone applications” which enable you to hire a private driver to pick you up and take you to the destination you want. One is called “Uber”, the other “Lyft”.

Launched in San Francisco in 2009, Uber has become “the most recognized alternative to traditional taxi cabs”³. The company is valued at \$62.5 billion, and the number of rides “raised

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² Bathelot, B. 2016, “Uberisation”, *Definitions Marketing*, < <https://www.definitions-marketing.com/definition/uberisation/> >

³ Gil, P. 2017, “How Uber Works and The Pros and Cons”, *Lifewire* <<https://www.lifewire.com/how-does-uber-work-3862752>>

by 150% from 2015 to 2016”⁴, ranking the company as the leader of the alternatives to taxi cabs. These new economic actors claim sharing and solidarity values, and the creation of social link between citizens. Nevertheless, these companies based their service on a platform, so do not need to pay for any shop. They are often accused of unfair competition with traditional taxi companies.

Recent scandals tarnished the Uber’s image, in particular the price of the rides and the payment of the drivers. In opposition, its main recent American competitor “Lyft” created in 2012 -proposing similarly the same service- starts gaining ground on the market share with its \$5.5 billion valuation. We can also discover that “Lyft is now doing over 1 million rides per day”⁵, and has 325,000 drivers in the United States.

At first sight, both companies have the same goal: putting riders in contact with private drivers via a mobile phone application. Those without smartphones -a percentage of the population that shrinks each year- will prefer calling for cabs. For the rest, the decision to choose one company from the other looks to be subjective or may be based on unfounded arguments. Nevertheless, recent data and surveys show us that Lyft starts being chosen by more users after the evaluation of different criteria detailed in their Service clauses. These clauses “comprise mobile applications and related services, which enable users to arrange and schedule transportation, logistics and/or delivery services and/or to purchase certain goods”⁶.

This paper is going to look at the position of the two American companies -Uber and Lyft- and the possible newcomers that could disrupt the leader position of Uber, Lyft and the traditional services proposed in the taxi industry. Then an analysis of the rank of these characteristics will be realized in order to know which one is the most important for users.

Considering this, we will be able to answer the question:

- Since the explosion in growth of taxi companies’ platforms in the last few years, is it possible for Uber to keep its leader position regarding the characteristics detailed in its Service clause?

⁴ “Uber : le chiffre d’affaire bondit”, 2017, *Le Figaro* <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2017/08/23/97002-20170823FILWWW00329-uber-a-encore-perdu-645m-au-t2-mais-les-reservations-augmentent.php>>

⁵ Welch, C. 2017, “Lyft is now doing 1 million rides per day”, *The Verge*
<<https://www.theverge.com/2017/7/5/15923610/lyft-1-million-daily-rides-announced>>

⁶ UBER, CGU, “U.S Terms of Use”, 2017, <<https://www.uber.com/fr/legal/terms/us/>>

METHODOLOGY

Development of the feasible alternatives

As said earlier, this paper has a main goal: analyzing the situation of traditional and platform taxi companies to find evidence that Uber will prevail. All taxis companies' platforms allow a person to book a ride from his smartphone. But Uber is known to be bigger than Lyft for the moment in being located in America, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

Nevertheless, recent data and surveys show us that Lyft starts being chosen by more and more users after the evaluation of different criteria detailed in their respective contracts. Moreover, traditional Taxis still occupy an important place in the market. Finally, that new comers from Asia appear to be impressive.

From these statements, we can consider 4 alternatives/hypothesis:

- ***Uber will prevail***
- ***Lyft will prevail***
- ***Taxis will prevail***
- ***Another competitor will enter the market with a new/different strategy and prevail***

Development of the outcomes and cashflows for each alternative

1. The first alternative ***Uber will prevail*** means that even some goods characteristics of Lyft, Uber keeps its leader position in the taxi industry.

- **Coverage areas**

As said previously, Uber is located quasi all around the world with more riders and drivers than Lyft. From that perspective, Uber's riders can expect rides anywhere they go.

⇒ Lyft cannot defeat Uber and loses this round.

- **Vehicle options**

Uber caters to businesspeople and professionals, and has a broad range of vehicles to choose from.

UberPOOL	This is the cheapest ride option available. Riders share rides going along the same route.
UberX	Another budget option, an everyday car with room for up to 4 people will come and pick you up.
UberXL	An SUV with seating for up to 6 people will come and pick you up.
UberSELECT	This is a 4 door luxury sedan with seating for up to 4 passengers.
UberBLACK	Uber's original car service, these rides feature high-end luxury vehicles with seating for up to 4 passengers.
UberSUV	The most expensive service Uber offers, a high-end SUV with seating for up to 6 passengers will pick you up.

Lyft, on the other hand, offers less vehicle options than Uber.

Lyft Line	Riders share rides going along the same route. The cheapest option available to riders.
Lyft	The budget option of the group, an everyday car with room for 4 passengers comes to get you.
Lyft Plus	This is also a regular vehicle to get you, but with room for up to 6 passengers.
Lyft Premier	These are rides in higher quality vehicles than the other Lyft options. Seating up to 4 passengers.

If a consumer is looking for a “friendly ride with social interaction, then Lyft is the company to choose.”⁸

However, if the consumer wants to go from point A to point B in few minutes, then Uber is the company generally chosen. Moreover, Uber offers more types of rides available: “UberPOOL, UberX, UberXL, UberSELECT, UberBLACK and UberSUV”.

⇒ Uber is again the leader for that characteristic.

2. The second alternative **Lyft will prevail over Uber** means that elements proposed by the company will attract more users and will enable Lyft to overtake Uber in the long run. So Lyft can lean on its strengths to validate this alternative.

- **Price**

Globally, each application sets similar pricing. Nevertheless, a variable need to be taken into account when comparing the 2 companies: “the surge pricing”, which is an increase of the

⁸ Rydester Staff, 2017 “Uber vs Lyft: A Side-By-Side Comparison”, *Rydester*, <<https://www.ridester.com/uber-vs-lyft/>>

price for the passengers when demand for rides is higher than the number of drivers on the road. “Uber oftentimes increases their price about 7X or 8X what the original price would have been, while Lyft has been known to increase their prices at least 2X”⁹.

Uber X:	
Booking/Service fee	\$1.85
Cost per minute	\$0.15
Cost per mile	\$0.90
Minimum charge	\$5.35
Cancellation fee	\$5.00

Lyft:	
Booking/Service fee	\$1.80
Cost per minute	\$0.15
Cost per mile	\$0.90
Minimum charge	\$3.50
Cancellation fee	\$5.00

Comparison of the fee structure for a basic ride with UberX and Lyft¹⁰

⇒ Insofar as both companies set comparable prices on a normal day, Lyft makes the difference on its smaller surging pricing.

- **The app: booking a ride**

Both applications estimate the user’s ride cost and how it will take after he has put his destination. Lyft differentiates itself in proposing a “waypoint”¹¹ along your route, if it is

⁹ Rydester Staff, 2017 “Uber vs Lyft: A Side-By-Side Comparison”, *Rydester*, <<https://www.ridester.com/uber-vs-lyft/>>

¹⁰ Branman, M. 2015, “Uber vs.Lyft: This is the ultimate ridesharing app showdown”, *Digital Trends*, <<https://www.digitaltrends.com/cars/uber-vs-lyft/>>

¹¹ Branman, M. 2015, “Uber vs.Lyft: This is the ultimate ridesharing app showdown”, *Digital Trends*, <<https://www.digitaltrends.com/cars/uber-vs-lyft/>>

needed to drop someone off for instance, and another option to schedule a pickup for a later time.

⇒ Lyft adds value to the booking-a-ride step

- **Customer support**

After reading forums and comments, it appears that Lyft is a bit “more helpful in solving problems than Uber”¹² in taking time to answer each question. A user said: “Lyft representatives seem more friendly [...] and Lyft support typically dives a little deeper into the issue.”¹³

⇒ Lyft earns points in being friendly and helping users solving issues more in depth than Uber.

3. Taxis will prevail is the third alternative

Recent limits and scandals from Uber tarnished its image. In France, some measures have been taken by the Government to reduce the power and importance of the American company in prohibiting for instance “to drive on A1 highway reserved for taxis between Roissy airport and Paris”¹⁴. Moreover, many critics arise from the Uber’s drivers, claiming “deterioration of their conditions”¹⁵. In decreasing dramatically its prices to attract more riders and increasing the commission percentage taken on each ride, some drivers “earn less than 4 euros per hour”¹⁶.

⇒ Taxis look on that situation with a favorable eye. For long rides, Taxis are more recommended, and especially when the demand is high on Lyft or Uber’s platforms.

^{12 9 10} Rydester Staff, 2017 “Uber vs Lyft: A Side-By-Side Comparison”, *Rydester*,
<<https://www.ridester.com/uber-vs-lyft/>>

¹⁴ BFMTV, 2017 “Les VTC ne pourront plus utiliser la voie réservée aux taxis sur l’autoroute Roissy-Paris”<<http://www.bfmtv.com/planete/les-vtc-ne-pourront-plus-utiliser-la-voie-reservee-aux-taxis-sur-l-autoroute-roissy-paris-1281123.html>>

¹⁵BFM, 2016 “VTC en colère : «Uber n’est pas une concurrence aux taxis. Uber écrase les taxis »”<<http://rnc.bfmtv.com/emission/vtc-en-colere-uber-n-est-pas-une-concurrence-aux-taxis-uber-ecrase-les-taxis-1072501.html>>

¹⁶ Europe1, 2016 «Uber : beaucoup de perdants pour peu de gagnants » < <http://www.europe1.fr/economie/uber-beaucoup-de-perdants-pour-peu-de-gagnants-2930276> >

- **Prices**

Taxis offer interesting prices to go to airports; discounts for students like “Night Cab” in Paris, enabling 15 to 25 year-old-students to “have discount of 20% from Thursday to Saturday between 10 pm and 5am”¹⁷; or “original offer of shared taxis to airports as well as touristic places of the capital city”¹⁸.

- **The app**

Even some Taxi companies try to innovate in developing app where it is possible for the riders to memorize his banking information in the mobile app, they are still late compared to recent companies like Uber or Lyft.

- **Coverage areas**

As Taxi companies practice their jobs all around the world, we can expect that users could easily find a ride wherever they want.

⇒ Traditional versions of Taxi can keep their previous leader position of days gone by, mainly thanks to some attractive “price packages” for a few categories of people and for their capacity to propose taxi services all around the world.

4. Another competitor will enter the market with a new/different strategy and prevail

A big new comer, created in 2015 in Asia, should be taken seriously by American platforms and traditional taxi companies: Didi Chuxing. In 2016, “Uber sold its business in China to rival Didi Chuxing after losing \$1 billion a year to compete in the country.”¹⁹

- **Coverage areas**

This “Uber of China virtually owns all of China’s taxi-hailing market, with 99% market share, and 87% market share when it comes it hailing private vehicles”²⁰. With partners such as Lyft, Ola and Grab, Uber should be worried about this raising new comer, operating in “over 400 cities across the region [...] and booking 1.43 billion rides in 2015 alone.”²¹ This partnership

¹⁷ Drouin, P. « Taxi ou VTC ? Que choisir ? », *Guide Taxi & VTC* <<http://www.taxi-vtc.eu/taxi-vs-vtc> >

¹⁸ Drouin, P. « Taxi ou VTC ? Que choisir ? », *Guide Taxi & VTC* <<http://www.taxi-vtc.eu/taxi-vs-vtc> >

¹⁹ Fiegerman, S. 2017, “As Uber stumbles, rivals mobilize abroad”, *CNN Tech*
<http://money.cnn.com/2017/08/15/technology/business/uber-vs-world/index.html?iid=EL>

²⁰ Johnson, M. 2017, “Who Are Uber’s Biggest Competitors?”, *Zacks*,
<https://www.zacks.com/stock/news/279108/who-are-ubers-biggest-competitors>

²¹ Johnson, M. 2017, “Who Are Uber’s Biggest Competitors?”, *Zacks*,
<https://www.zacks.com/stock/news/279108/who-are-ubers-biggest-competitors>

shows “how serious it is about developing a distinctly anti-Uber “open mobility platform” where rides across all of these services are shared with drivers from all of these platforms”²².

⇒ The company extended its influence on five continents, and “is clearly making fast moves against Uber in Europe and has its eyes set on Africa too”²³

- **Customer support**

Contrary to Uber where solving an issue is possible in sending an email and expecting a fast reply, Didi gives the opportunity to the customers to “call the customer service center and get real-time reply”²⁴.

- **The app**

The apps of Alibaba and Tencent -the two most important internet companies in China and parents of Didi- exist in “every smartphone in China, embedded with the links to Didi. The connection can bring numerous users to Didi with basically no cost. Uber only has connection with Baidu in China.”²⁰

- **The price**

If prices of both Chinese and American companies are quite the same, passengers of Didi Chuxing are recently subjected to the raise of the fees for their trips. In 2016, “the price for Didi Hitch in Beijing has gone up 20 per cent”²⁵. We can discover that “the starting rate for Didi’s hitch service in Beijing is now 1.5 yuan per kilometer, with a minimum cost of 12 yuan. Last month the starting rate was 1.3 yuan per kilometer with a minimum cost of 10 yuan.” After paying 45.3 yuan with Didi’s ride sharing service, a user said that “A few weeks ago, I only needed to pay Didi about 30 yuan for the same route.”

⇒ The raise of the price may play in Didi’s Chuxing’s disadvantage facing Uber.

- **Vehicle options**

Didi Chuxing provides different services including “taxi hailing, private car hailing, Hitch (social ride-sharing), DiDi Chauffeur, DiDi Bus, DiDi Test Drive, DiDi Car Rental, DiDi Enterprise

²² Lusha, 2016 “What are the competitive dynamics between Uber and Didi in China?”, *Quora*, <<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-competitive-dynamics-between-Uber-and-Didi-in-China#!n=12> >

²³ Hong, J. 2017, “How China’s Ride-Hailing King DiDI Is Taking Over The World Before Uber Can“, *Forbes* <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jinshanhong/2017/08/03/how-chinas-ride-hailing-king-didi-is-taking-over-the-world-before-uber-can/#36012f253fd8> >

²⁴ Lusha, 2016 “What are the competitive dynamics between Uber and Didi in China?”, *Quora*, <<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-competitive-dynamics-between-Uber-and-Didi-in-China#!n=12> >

²⁵ Huifeng, H. 2016, “Ride hailing giant Didi Chuxing raised prices in China’s biggest cities”, *South China Morning Post* <<http://www.scmp.com/business/china-business/article/2015137/ride-hailing-giant-didi-chuxing-raises-prices-chinas-biggest>>

Solutions, DiDi Minibus, DiDi Luxe and bike-sharing to users in China via a smartphone application.”²⁶

The China’s answer to Uber spent “\$200 million in an online platform” -RenRenChe- “for trading used cars”²⁷, directly connects “individual car sellers with buyers.”²⁵ In doing so, Didi owns a maximum of business linked to transportation. "selling cars is a lot more profitable than selling rides [...] RenRenChe's services will soon be available on Didi's app, exposing the used car platform to the ride-hailing company's more than 17 million drivers.”²⁵

- ⇒ In order to overtake Uber, Didi uses cars offer to grow its empire.
 In this way, Didi Chuxing appears to be one the most dangerous “newcomer” to the field, possibly capable of deposing the biggest, namely Uber.

Selection of one or more criteria

Selection Attributes	UBER	LYFT	TAXIS	DIDI CHUXING
Price	0	1	1	0
The app	1	1	0	1
Customer support	0	1	0	1
Coverage areas	1	0	1	2
Vehicle options	1	0	0	1

Scoring model: MADM Non-Compensatory model

- As you can see a **(0)** is placed when the selection attribute of the company is “poor”, and indicated in **RED**.
- **(1)** is placed when the selection attribute of the company is “fair”, and indicated in **YELLOW**.
- **(2)** is placed when the selection attribute of the company is “good”, and indicated in **GREEN**.

²⁶ Wikipedia, “Didi Chuxing” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didi_Chuxing>

²⁷ Pham, S. 2017, “Why China’s Uber is investing in used cars”, *CNN Tech*
 <<http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/25/technology/didi-invest-used-car-renrenche/index.html>>

Scoring development:

The acceptance criteria eliminating any obvious poor alternatives are the followings:

- 1) Coverage areas: helping a company to occupy a leader position thanks to its position worldwide.
- 2) Customer support: as Uber is a giant located on all continents, competitors can overtake it in playing their “social” aspect that Uber has not, and providing deep help to users.
- 3) The App: raising companies are taxi’s mobile platforms, their apps play an important role in their success.

Considering the Scoring Model table and the selected criteria, we will eliminate alternatives with more than 2 red marks: taxi companies and Lyft.

FINDINGS

Analysis and comparison of the alternatives

This is a reminder of the different alternatives:

- ***Uber will prevail***
- ***Lyft will prevail***
- ***Taxis will prevail***
- ***Another competitor will enter the market with a new/different strategy and prevail***

As developed earlier, **Uber will prevail** thanks to its app, coverage areas and vehicle options.

We developed a second alternative, saying that **Lyft will prevail** over Uber thanks to its small surging price, its user-friendly app, and its reliable customer support.

However, **traditional taxi companies** can remain efficient mainly thanks to their strength to be available anywhere.

Finally, the **new comer from Asia -Didi Chuxing-** is entering the market and may prevail in some points: its performing app, its customer support, its coverage areas, and its vehicle types.

Selection Attributes	DIDI CHUXING	UBER	LYFT	TAXIS
Price	0	0	0.5	1
The app	1	1	1	0
Customer support	1	0	1	0
Coverage areas	2	1	0	1
Vehicle options	1	1	0	0
TOTALS	5	3	2.5	2

Relative Weighting

Applying this approach, we can see that Ube, with a total score of 3, is 1.2 time “better” than Lyft (3/2.5); Didi Chuxing is 1.7 times “better” than Uber, and 2.5 times “better” than traditional taxis.

Selection of the preferred alternative

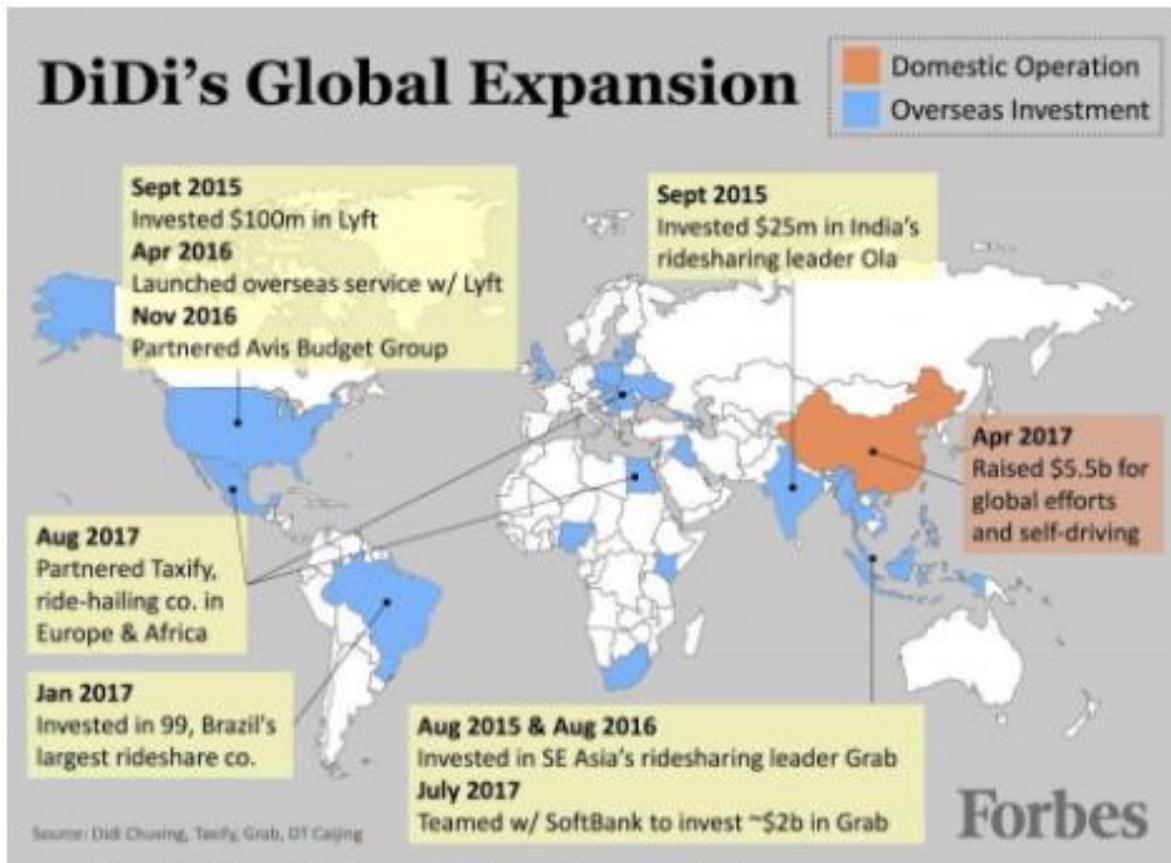
By using the Compensatory model, a ratio scale enables us to tell by how much one company is beating the other. Using Didi Chuxing and Uber as examples, $5/3 = 1.7 \times 100 = 170\%$. We can conclude that Didi Chuxing is a beating Uber by 170%, which means that our recommendation would be that Didi Chuxing will prevail.

Thanks to this method, we can consider one main alternative: ***another competitor will enter the market with a new/different strategy and prevail, called Didi Chuxing.*** Based on its main strength criterion -coverage areas- the Asian company will prevail over other taxi companies and platforms like Uber.

Performance monitoring and post evaluation of results

We selected the last alternative: **Didi Chuxing will prevail**, via its global expansion. “DiDi is clearly making fast moves against Uber in Europe and has its eyes set on Africa too [...] where there is a lot of consumer loyalty to be won.”²⁸

²⁸ Hong, J. 2017, “How China’s Ride-Hailing King DiDi Is Taking Over The World Before Uber Can“, *Forbes* < <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jinshanhong/2017/08/03/how-chinas-ride-hailing-king-didi-is-taking-over-the-world-before-uber-can/#36012f253fd8> >



Map of DiDi's Global Strategy (Jinshan Hong/Forbes)

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The company increases its global presence also in Southeast Asia: with Japan's Softbank, they inject around \$2 billion into its partner Grab and Uber's competitor. "In order to fulfill our long-term vision, we will put more energy and resources in the international market to explore the frontier technology, innovate new models of business, and seek link-minded partners."²⁸

From that analysis, the chosen alternative can be followed to be good. Contrary to its main competitor, Didi Chuxing increases its local and global presence; outperforms Uber in Asia. Indeed, Didi (\$50 billion) is cooperating with Grab (\$6 billion) and Ola (\$3.5 billion), and is approaching the overall valuation of Uber (£70 billion)²⁸. The company extends its soft power, thanks to its technology and innovation, initiating a mobile payment solution GrabPay²⁸. And from that perspective, is playing in the long run.

²⁹ Hong, J. 2017, "How China's Ride-Hailing King DiDi Is Taking Over The World Before Uber Can", *Forbes* <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jinshanhong/2017/08/03/how-chinas-ride-hailing-king-didi-is-taking-over-the-world-before-uber-can/#36012f253fd8>>

CONCLUSION

2009 was the year which revolutionized the taxi industry with the creation of Uber. This transportation application disrupted the norms and the habits of the traditional taxi industry in particular with its prices, its app and its vehicle options. However, the supremacy of the American company has been put into question recently when it faced protests from riders and drivers, tarnishing its image. Competitors -like Lyft- entered little by little in the market, putting pressure on the services the company offered. These new rivals challenge Uber on different attributes described in their Service clauses of their contract: the price, the app, the coverage areas, the customer support or the vehicle types.

From that point, the question of the position of new comers and traditional taxi companies is at the center of the debates, wondering if Uber could keep its leader position. Our analysis - based on studying websites in order to have an overview of the taxi companies and global experiences of users through the analysis of forum- led us to the conclusion that Uber has serious reasons to worry regarding its leader position with the new comer from Asia. Indeed, Asia is particularly a source of fear for Uber with the arrival of Didi Chuxing in 2012, now known as the “world’s second most valuable venture-backed start-up after Uber”³⁰. In gaining more and more market shares, the Asian company is gradually bringing about major changes, especially thanks to its capacity to innovate and to deploy its market over areas all around the world in a little bit of time.

However, Didi Chuxing cannot forget that its growth potential relies on its collaboration with other companies, presented in the paper as other alternatives - Lyft and traditional taxi platforms - which have been rejected in not performing the acceptance criteria, namely the coverage area. So, platforms like Lyft, Ola and Grab cannot defeat Uber alone, but all together with Didi Chuxing to be the big winners of this industry.

From that perspective, in a context of globalization, the analysis of different companies working individually to defeat big ones could have limits, so the collaboration of plural entities warrants to be considered and analyzed more in detail.

Finally, after assessing that Didi Chuxing is the alternative chosen to prevail over Uber, the tracking is possible in a few weeks or months to see the evolution of the current position of both Uber and Didi companies; in gathering feedbacks of users in new domestic or oversea areas (Europe and Africa); in calculating the figures of the companies ‘evolution; and finally in computing a new ratio scale for Didi Chuxing and Uber to analyze if the Asian company is still

³⁰ Hong, J. 2017, “How China’s Ride-Hailing King DiDi Is Taking Over The World Before Uber Can“, *Forbes* < <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jinshanhong/2017/08/03/how-chinas-ride-hailing-king-didi-is-taking-over-the-world-before-uber-can/#36012f253fd8> >

beating the American one by 170%, based on the evaluation of the following attributes: the coverage areas, the customer supports, and the mobile application.

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Anne Jacquet is a French student in Paris, specializing in a MSc Project and Programme Management and Business Development at Skema Business School. After getting her A-level, Economic option, passed with honors, she studied two years in Preparatory classes for competitive entry to business schools with also an Economic Specialization. Her first year License spent in Lille at Skema Business School enabled her to enter the Norwegian School of Economics for one year.

She is now doing her second year Master's degree in Paris. To further pursue and improve his knowledge on the project management topic, she trained and successfully passed 2 professional Certifications: Prince2 Foundations and AgilePM Foundations. She began a first experience in January 2018 as an assistant project manager during a 6-month-internship at Webhelp in Paris, a company leader in business process outsourcing.

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