

GRAB TESTING 'AUTO-ACCEPT' FEATURE IN MOBILE APP

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 11 Apr 2018 · B1 · By Roy Stephen C. Canivel @roycanivel_INQ

Grab Philippines is considering to introduce an auto-accept feature in its mobile app amid numerous consumer complaints about Grab drivers' tendency to cancel bookings if the destinations are far or where traffic congestion is bad.

In a public hearing last week, Grab country head Brian Cu said the feature was first being tested with 5,000 drivers across the platform for the time being.

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) held the public hearing to discuss Grab's regional takeover of rival Uber.

During the hearing, officials asked Grab executives if they had plans to incorporate some features from Uber, such as how the latter books rides, regardless of the destination.

Cu said that Grab has already placed an auto-accept feature in some drivers. This practice was already being done in Indonesia, he said.

The feature, he said, was placed even before the GrabUber transaction.

"So even before this transaction was consummated, we already placed a feature that we're testing called the autoaccept feature where drivers are automatically allocated," he said.

"Even when they see the destination, the job is automatically allocated to them, which they have to automatically go to," he added.

Cu called this a "soft launch," noting that an immediate roll out could not be done yet. "As with a system of this scale, we can't roll it out immediately to everyone. So we're doing a soft launch. We're testing it across 5,000 drivers in the platform," he said.

He said they would roll out the feature to the rest of their driver partners when it became "stable." Cu did not elaborate.

PCC is currently reviewing the Grab-Uber deal for possible anticompetitive concerns.

In the meantime, both ride-hailing firms were ordered to operate independently from each other so as to preserve the integrity of the review.

Cu, however, said in a recent press conference that Grab was already shouldering the costs of Uber's extended operations.

It remains to be seen how this would affect PCC's review, especially since Uber and Grab were supposed to work separately from each other as they were prior the deal.