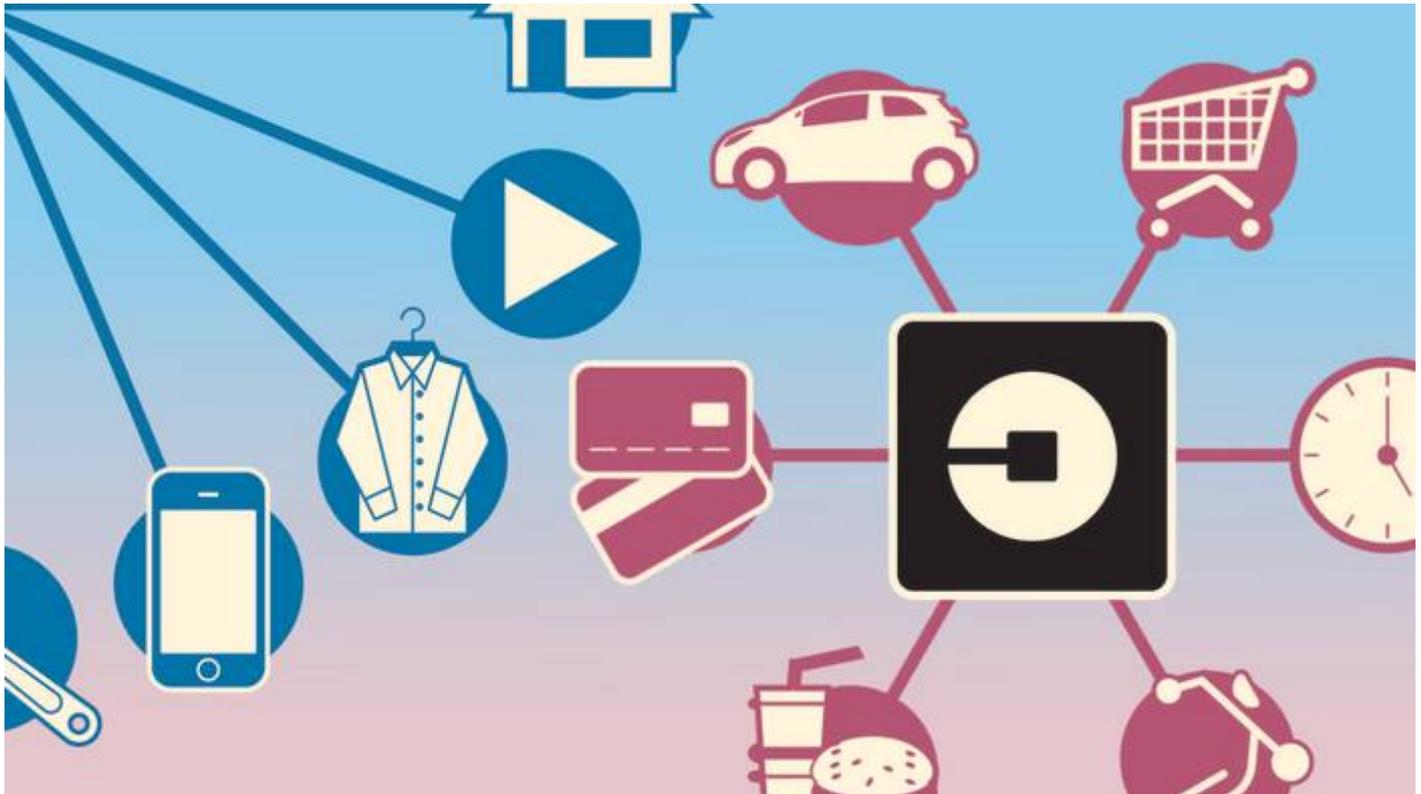


**Uber Technologies Inc****Uber's quest to become the west's first super-app**

Ride-hailing app seeks to follow the example of WeChat and Gojek by spreading its tentacles



Patrick McGee 3 HOURS AGO

In 2015, Gojek launched its motorcycle taxi app with hopes of being the Uber of Indonesia. Now, the tables have turned: Uber is betting it can become a Gojek of the west.

The US group has long seen itself as more than just a ride-hailing app. Four years ago it launched Uber Eats to connect customers with on-demand takeaway food in cities across the United States. In 2018, [it acquired Jump](#), and bright red e-bikes proliferated around Europe.

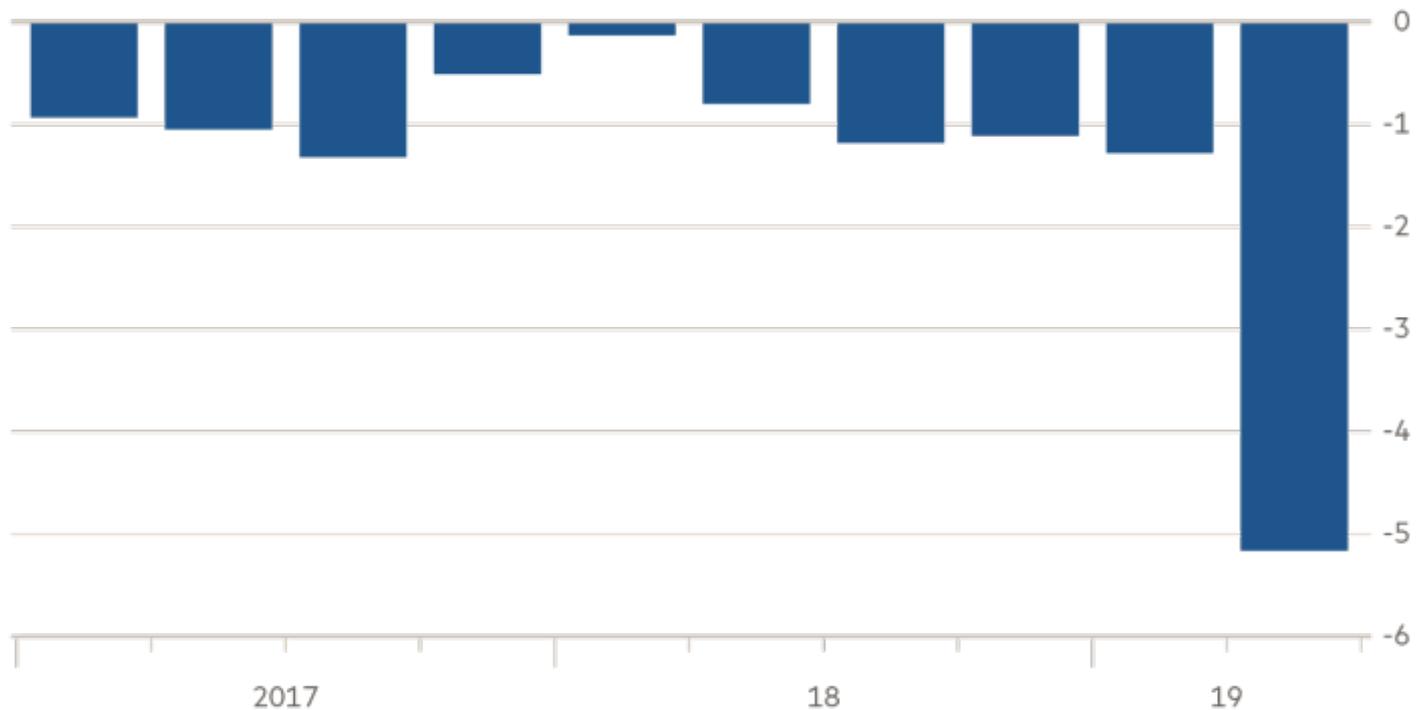
But now, having posted a \$5.2bn loss last quarter and with its mainstay business coming under threat from regulatory burdens, it is looking to expand its vision even further. “We want Uber to be the operating system for your everyday life,” said chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi in September.

This month, Uber purchased Cornershop as part of a push into delivering groceries. In Mexico, it

offers bank cards. In San Diego, it is testing food delivery by drone. In Chicago, it is connecting people with temporary shift work. In lower Manhattan, it offers \$200 [helicopter rides](#) to JFK airport. Even snuggling-as-a-service has emerged in dozens of cities via Uber Kittens, letting users book 15-minute “play dates with adorable kittens at the tap of a button.”

## Losses are pouring out of Uber

Net loss (\$bn)



Source: Bloomberg  
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The idea is for Uber to provide, within a single app, access to transport, groceries, hot meals, banking and more. In short, it wants to be a “super-app” modelled on apps like Gojek, whose food and payments features have already overtaken its transport business by revenue.

It’s an ambition that Jason Davis, professor of entrepreneurship at Singapore-based business school Insead, describes as “a product diversification strategy on steroids”.

## The ‘operating system for everyday life’

Uber’s rivals in Asia have already provided a path to follow. Gojek — partly funded by Visa, Google

and Tencent — now offers 20 services to its 25m users, including video streaming and digital payments. Grab, a Malaysian competitor with investment from SoftBank's Vision Fund, has expanded into business loans and insurance.

Connie Chan, a partner at venture capital group Andreessen Horowitz, said popular ride-hailing apps are in good position to become super-apps because they already have both key ingredients: a large audience of frequent users, and embedded payments. The challenge for Uber, which has 100m users across 60 countries, is to learn from Asian companies which tend to be three to five years ahead on mobile innovation.

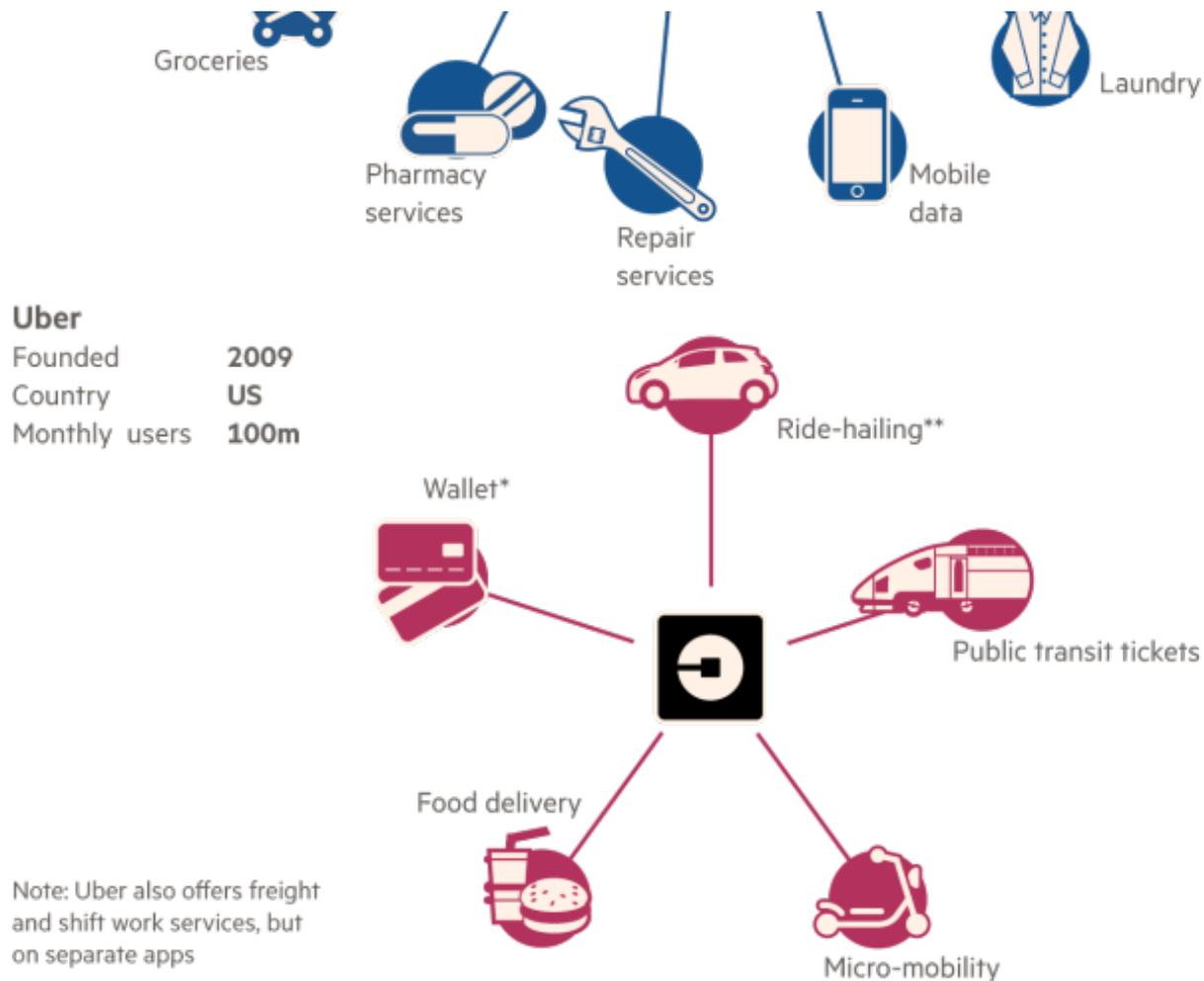
## Anatomy of a super-app: Uber vs Gojek

While Uber expands into services beyond mobility, Gojek, its Indonesian rival, is far ahead on product diversification

### Gojek

Founded **2010**  
Country **Indonesia**  
Monthly users **25m**





Until recently, Uber's food delivery, scooter and bike services were offered in different apps, but now the functions are embedded into one. This "one-app strategy" signals a massive shift, following in the wake of apps like WeChat and Alipay, the popular Chinese platforms that combine messaging and social media with shopping, delivery and gaming.

One lucrative area for Uber to expand further is in banking, particularly for its 3m drivers. While Uber struggles to prove that ride-hailing can ever be profitable, the data that business generates could give it a big advantage towards making money through loan services.

Whereas banks rely on monthly credit scores, Uber has almost real-time financial information on its drivers — including how much they earn, how often they work and the speed they drive.

Providing more features could couple this information with spending habits, including petrol costs and rent or mortgage payments.

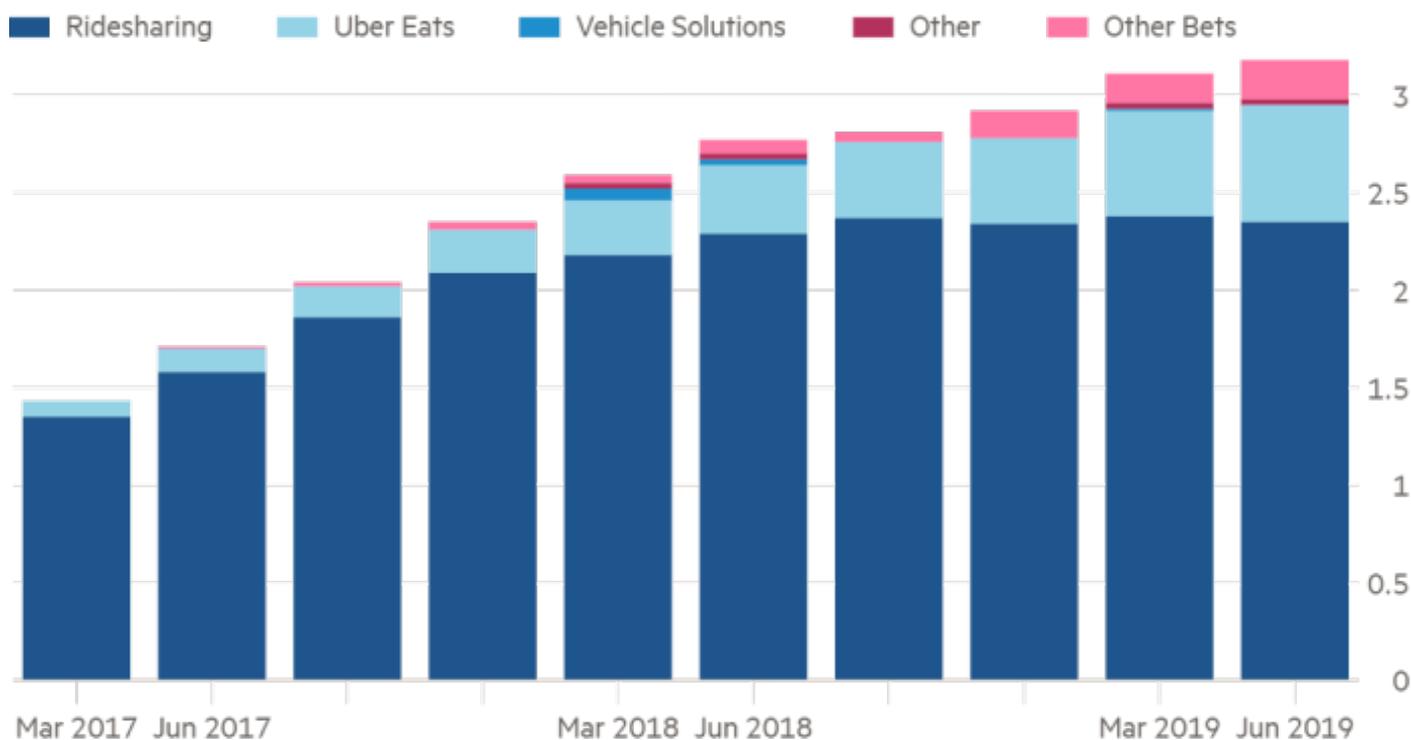
At its keynote last month, Uber payments head Peter Hazlehurst hinted at its future ambitions when he said: “If you consider everybody’s human needs of financial stability, and their health, and their independence as a core asset that we want to help them with, what we do in the payments team is unlock some of those potential ideas.”

Uber has already partnered with BBVA in Mexico to let drivers and their family members access debit cards and a financial platform to offer products such as loans, discounts on certain items and reimbursements for petrol purchases.

“The idea is simple,” the companies said in July. “To save time and stress for Uber’s drivers, and make their business and day-to-day banking easier — by aggregating their financial lives within one app.”

### Uber's ride sharing revenues are stagnating

Sale (\$bn)



Source: Bloomberg  
© FT

According to people familiar with the matter, Uber is already in talks with BBVA to expand these services to Colombia and Argentina.

These emerging markets are likely to be the biggest opportunity. In Mexico, for instance, 42m people — more than half the adult population — lack a bank account.

But developed markets are also an opportunity. In the US, the driver loyalty and rewards programme Uber Pro already exists in more than 20 cities. It uses incentives, such as tuition repayment and discounts on car maintenance, for Uber drivers to clock up the miles and maintain high customer ratings.

On the consumer side, Uber's move into food and grocery delivery indicates that it is positioning itself alongside apps like Go-Jek and Meituan. It already incentivises users to store Uber Cash as well, turning the app into a “digital wallet” that could be used for third-party payments.

## The super-app race

A big risk for Uber is that Facebook is making similar moves. This year Mark Zuckerberg laid out a vision to develop “businesses, payments, commerce, and ultimately a platform for many other kinds of private services” within Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram.

With 2.6bn users on those three platforms, Facebook could be better positioned to become the west's first super-app. However, whereas Facebook currently lacks the key ingredient of embedded payments, Uber has users' credit card information and it processes far more transactions than the social media giant.

Average revenue per user last quarter was \$31.60 at Uber, versus only \$6.40 at Facebook, and the vast bulk of Facebook's revenues — around 90 per cent — were from advertising.

As Uber looks to diversify services and boost revenue, a potential problem is that users who simply want to hail a ride find it too cluttered, said Charles Golvin, analyst at Gartner.

“Part of Uber's success is attributable to good design that focuses on doing one thing very well,” he said, adding that “given their spotty record on data privacy, customers might be quite reluctant to allow Uber to use their payment information for third-party payments.”

Ms Chan, however, said placing the various functions into a single app is the whole point.

“Companies in the west have historically focused on clean design — one clear feature, one clear

marketing message,” she said. “Only now are they realising the power of their distribution.”

*Additional reporting by Laura Noonan*

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