

Popular Get Taxi Company Slammed for Russifying Asian Drivers' Names

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The company's founder, Shakhar Vaiser, told news site The Village on Saturday that the initiative had been an "experiment" to see whether Russified names improved clients' perception of the taxi service's quality.

Popular Russian taxi company GetTaxi has provoked the ire of a Kremlin-backed human rights watchdog and its own customers for Russifying the names of its drivers with Asian or Caucasus roots.

"This shows a lack of respect for the ethnic groups that live on the territory of the Russian Federation and neighboring countries," Alexander Brod, a member of the Presidential Human Rights Council, said in comments carried by the Govorit Moskva radio station on Saturday, adding that the practice was "unethical."

A recent Facebook post by Moscow State University ethnologist Dmitry Oparin drew attention to the company's controversial practice.

"I'd like to know who is behind GetTaxi's recent initiative of changing the Asian or Caucasus

names of their drivers," Oparin wrote on Friday. "Who decided that Damir would be Daniil, and Yerdzhanik — Yevgeny? The drivers themselves don't even know their own nicknames. This is worse than a taxi company advertising that all its drivers are Slavs."

In an interview published on the website of the Open Russia foundation, a representative of the company admitted that it modifies names that are "difficult to read." He also added that GetTaxi would reverse its automatic Russification of drivers' names if a certain driver objects to his name being changed.

The company's founder, Shakhar Vaiser, told news site The Village on Saturday that the initiative had been an "experiment" to see whether Russified names improved clients' perception of the taxi service's quality. Vaiser also said the company would consider whether to abandon or maintain the practice.

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