China’s AI Giant Branches Into Autonomous Driving, AR

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Facial recognition specialist SenseTime is branching out into autonomous driving and augmented reality, according to one of its co-founders.

Speaking at a TechCrunch conference in Hangzhou, Xu Bing gestured toward the natural progression from facial recognition to autonomous driving. Both are driven by artificial intelligence-powered machine vision, with the latter enabling machines "to recognize images both inside and outside cars," Bing said.

Augmented reality, meanwhile, offers opportunities to apply SenseTime’s “knowhow in reading facial expressions and body movement” to machine vision technology that can operate through a given device’s camera and provide information overlays to users.

It’s another sign of the rapid growth of SenseTime, which announced earlier this year that it had become the world’s most valuable AI company after a series-C funding round that brought the company $600 million. More recently, the Alibaba-backed company established partnerships with Singapore Telecommunications, Nanyang Technological University, and Singapore’s National Supercomputing Centre concerning R&D into AI technologies.

To some extent, SenseTime’s success can be attributed to the Chinese government’s enormous appetite for facial recognition technologies, especially in the areas of policing and surveillance. But government authorities are also keen to promote the development of domestic AI in general, and it seems fair to expect SenseTime’s success to continue in these new areas.

Source: South China Morning Post