05 / DECISION BRIEF

A translated booking tool is not yet a Japan proposition.

Public-source observations checked 20 Nov 2026. The business brief is illustrative; named companies are research subjects, not VCS clients.

RECOMMENDATION

Investigate a narrow operational use case before funding broad localisation. Generic booking, reminders and basic payments already face established local alternatives, including free entry plans.

The commissioning situation

The founder of an overseas scheduling SaaS is considering Japan. The modeled product supports appointment and class bookings in English. The team wants to know whether translating the interface is enough, what it must compete with and which product questions justify further research.

Proposed starting segment - hypothesis	Decision required
Small operators with international customers: classes, workshops or similar bookable services. This segment has not been validated.	Approve customer discovery and competitor demonstrations; defer a full localisation commitment.
Modeled workflow: 200 bookings/month, three staff, occasional prepayment.	Test the whole workflow, not just the software price.

Read published alternatives p2; workflow comparison p3; economics p4; product proof p5; entry gates p6; sources p7. No accounts were opened, software tested or customers interviewed for this sample.

05 / EXHIBIT 01 / COMPETITOR BASELINE

There is already a credible local starting point.

Alternative	Published reference	Implication for a new entrant
AirRESERVE [S1]	Free ¥0; Basic ¥5,500/month; Standard ¥11,000/month, tax included.	A basic scheduling proposition competes against a local free entry route and paid support/features.
RESERVA [S2]	Free: 50 bookings/month. Blue: 200 bookings, ¥3,850/month equivalent annually or ¥5,500 monthly.	A 200-booking use case already has a defined local price and capacity reference.
STORES Reserve [S3]	Free: 50 bookings. Small: 200 bookings, ¥9,790/month annually. Team: 300 bookings, 3 staff, ¥19,690/month annually.	Staff scheduling and operating depth can matter more than the cheapest entry plan.

Compare total required configuration

Annual and monthly billing are different commitments. A free plan may be inadequate for the required volume; a low-price plan may omit staff or workflow features. The correct comparison is the lowest configuration that completes the client's required workflow, including add-ons and service costs.

Reference prices are not functionally equivalent quotes. STORES' annual figures assume the published upfront payment basis; the alternative multi-month route has different prices and a minimum term [S3]. Tax treatment follows the source labels.

05 / EXHIBIT 02 / WORKFLOW SCREEN

A feature tick does not prove the workflow works.

Buyer requirement	Published evidence	What must be demonstrated
Reminders and calendar handling	AirRESERVE lists reminders and Google Calendar integration in Basic [S1].	Create, reschedule and cancel a booking; check both operator and customer notifications.
LINE communication	RESERVA lists LINE at ¥3,300/month; STORES lists LINE mini-app integration at ¥4,400/month from Small [S2-S3].	Eligible plan, message allowance, setup and the actual customer journey.
Staff allocation	STORES Team lists three registered staff and 300 monthly bookings [S3].	Availability, substitutions, shared resources and conflict handling.
International-customer journey	Not resolved by the inspected pricing pages.	Language continuity through payment, reminders, changes and refunds; do not label competitors “unsupported”.
Data portability	AirRESERVE Standard lists CSV export with a specific email-address limitation [S1].	Required fields, consent, migration and export format; review the actual configuration.

For a commissioned study, each “demonstrate” item becomes a reproducible task with a pass condition and evidence record. The current screen identifies where to investigate; it does not award an untested product a competitive advantage.

A feature may be restricted by booking type, plan or merchant eligibility. Unknown means not established in this review, not absent from the product.

05 / COMMERCIAL LOGIC

The price premium must pay for a specific job.

A buyer-value hypothesis

For an operator serving international customers, fewer manual language-related messages and easier booking changes could be useful. That is a research hypothesis. It becomes a sales claim only after the existing workflow, time spent and willingness to switch have been measured.

Illustrative SaaS economics

MODEL: monthly net subscription ¥8,000; variable support/infrastructure ¥2,500 per account; acquisition cost ¥25,000; one-off localisation cost ¥600,000. No trial revenue, churn, expansion revenue or tax is modeled.

12 months, all accounts live from month 1	10 accounts	20 accounts
Subscription revenue	¥960,000	¥1,920,000
Variable service costs	(¥300,000)	(¥600,000)
Acquisition cost	(¥250,000)	(¥500,000)
Localisation	(¥600,000)	(¥600,000)
Remaining before fixed payroll / overhead	**-¥190,000**	**¥220,000**

Monthly contribution is ¥5,500 per account; acquisition payback is about 4.5 months before fixed costs. If accounts arrive gradually, first-year revenue is lower than this deliberately simple full-year scenario. A modest customer count is not automatically a viable local operation.

These are decision thresholds, not Japan market-size or conversion estimates. Replace every commercial input with the company's actual retention, support and acquisition evidence.

05 / PRODUCT PROOF

Test one complete journey against the alternatives.

Demonstration task	Evidence to capture	Why it matters
Book and pay	Create the same class/session, price and cancellation rule in each tool.	Exposes differences hidden by headline feature lists.
Change an appointment	Customer reschedules; staff receives the change; capacity is released correctly.	Tests the daily operational job, not presentation quality.
Handle an exception	No-show, refund, failed payment and staff absence.	Reveals support and manual-work costs.
Operate bilingually	Switch language; check emails, payment and policy comprehension.	Tests the proposed segment advantage end to end.
Leave the product	Export the required customer and booking data.	Switching friction and portability affect adoption.

Record facts at the configuration level

Save plan, booking type, optional modules, device and test date alongside each result. A limitation in one configuration should not be attributed to the whole product. Ask vendors only the questions the test could not settle; do not copy marketing claims as verified usability.

Payment cost needs a current merchant-specific quote

STORES' current pricing page points to conditional starting payment rates and a detailed fee article [S3-S4]. Older descriptions show a different structure. Do not reuse an old flat fee across every merchant or assume the lowest advertised rate will apply.

This page specifies the next research protocol. It is not a record of completed testing.

05 / ENTRY GATES

Spend in stages tied to evidence.

Gate	Required evidence	Approval decision
1. Buyer problem	Interviews with operators fitting a narrow segment; existing tools and recurring pain documented.	Proceed if a consequential problem is repeated and the buyer controls budget.
2. Competitive advantage	Same-task demonstrations in the proposed tool and local alternatives.	Proceed if the advantage remains after fair configuration and is meaningful to buyers.
3. Paid validation	A clearly scoped, supportable pilot with real operators and explicit terms.	Assess paid adoption, usage, support time and retention signals.
4. Local operation	Service ownership, product readiness, payment setup, privacy/security review and sustainable economics.	Approve broader localisation only after the operating burden is funded.

Initial interview questions

What happened the last time an overseas customer changed or cancelled? Which tool and workaround were used? How much time did it take? Who decides on software? What would block switching? Ask for specific recent events before discussing the proposed product.

What would overturn the cautious recommendation

Existing inbound demand from Japanese operators, a proven specialist workflow or strong retention in comparable users could justify faster investment. A low competitor subscription price alone neither proves a market is unattractive nor validates a premium entrant.

Client inputs: product demonstration, existing customers/use cases, security documentation, support capacity, unit economics and localisation budget. This is desk research, not a software procurement or security certification.

05 / SOURCE RECORD

Plan-level facts, with explicit gaps.

[S1] AirRESERVE: pricing and plan features

Free, Basic and Standard plan prices; selected features and payment conditions. Published capabilities, not a product test.

airregi.jp/reserve/cost/

[S2] RESERVA: business pricing

Business plan fees, reservation limits, optional LINE integration and card rate. The business page is used instead of the education-sector variant.

biz.reserva.be/price/

[S3] STORES Reserve: current plans

Reservation/staff limits, billing terms and selected add-ons. Current page takes precedence over older cached descriptions.

stores.fun/reserve/pricing

[S4] STORES Reserve: advance card-payment fees

Detailed current conditions behind headline starting rates. Eligibility, contract and card brand affect the applied fee.

reserve-faq.stores.jp/hc/ja/articles/28713741105945

Research scope

Official public pricing and feature documentation reviewed 20 Nov 2026. Three alternatives were selected to test a generic booking proposition against free entry, volume limits, staff handling and local workflow options. The set is not exhaustive and no market-share ranking is implied.

Evidence standard

Published capabilities are recorded as vendor-stated facts. Workflow advantage, buyer demand and willingness to pay remain hypotheses until demonstrated. Scenario economics are independent VCS calculations.

Prepared by Vladimirov Maksim. Independent sample; no relationship with the named providers is implied. powermaxta@gmail.com.