

Facebook to take on Asian rivals to reach billion user mark

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Chinese people surf the Internet using the wi-fi connection of a cafe in Shanghai in January 2010. Social networking giant Facebook is looking to Asia and Russia as it reaches for world domination, it was reported Thursday.

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The US-based site's founder and chief executive [Mark Zuckerberg](#) is eyeing China, Japan, [South Korea](#) and Russia as it strives to be the first social network to connect a billion people, the Financial Times reported.

"We are down to four countries that we are not the leading social network in," he told an audience of marketers in Cannes, France, on Wednesday.

"Now for the first time we are focused on doing some specific things in specific countries."

Facebook faces stiff competition from established local social network sites in Asia, such as Japan's Mixi and Tencent QQ in China. Russia is dominated by Vkontakte.

Speaking at the Cannes Lions advertising festival, Zuckerberg did not specify whether [Facebook](#) would be customised for these markets or whether acquisitions would be made.

The site has grown largely organically to build up almost 500 million members, he said, a figure he hopes to double.

"I think if we succeed," he said. "We have a good chance of being the company that brings ([social networking](#)) to one billion people."

Mobile networking in countries such as India is the big driver towards this goal, he said, and the company is "pretty close" to releasing a new mobile service rumoured to be called "Places" which would add location data.

"India's interesting because Internet use is relatively small there for the size of the population," he said in a clip on the organiser's website.

"We are getting our first crop of countries now that, interestingly, have more mobile usage than web usage. I think everyone thinks that it's only a matter of time before that starts happening more universally."

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