

Facebook discretely fields China photo-sharing app

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Facebook's interest in China has led it to discreetly create a photo-sharing application released there without the social network's brand being attached.

"We have long said that we are interested in China, and are spending time understanding and learning more about the country in different ways," a Facebook representative said Friday in an email response to an AFP inquiry.

"Our focus right now is on helping Chinese businesses and developers expand to new markets outside China by using our ad platform."

A source close to the matter confirmed a New York Times report on Friday that Facebook took the unusual step of creating an app called Colorful Balloons and releasing it through a local [company](#) with no hint that the social network was involved.

Colorful Balloons has features similar to Facebook's Moments application.

Facebook has long been keen to find a way into mainland China, where the social network has been banned since 2009.

Google, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are among Silicon Valley stars not allowed to operate on China's tightly controlled internet.

Facebook chief and co-founder Mark Zuckerberg has made high-profile visits to China and met with political leaders there, and is even studying Mandarin.

Colorful Balloons was released early this year through a separate Chinese company, according to the New York Times. It quoted someone close to the matter who did not want to be identified, citing the political sensitivity of the situation.

Facebook is interested in learning how apps win fans in China, without having a prominent company name associated with it. This could help

explain the quiet approach.

Having a company in China distribute the application can be more efficient due to local business connections and familiarity with local rules.

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