Chinese tech giant Baidu tests metaverse waters with new app

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Baidu joins brands such as Nike and Ferrari in experimenting with metaverse projects.

Chinese tech giant Baidu on Monday took its first steps into the metaverse industry with the launch of a virtual reality app, looking to test

the waters in what is considered by many to be the next phase in the internet's evolution.

The Beijing-based company joins brands such as Nike and Ferrari in rushing to experiment with [virtual goods](#) against a backdrop of predictions that the [metaverse](#) could one day overtake and replace the web of today.

The firm, nicknamed the Chinese Google, held a conference inside the virtual world of its new app XiRang, which means "Land of Hope". It can be accessed from a smartphone, computer or through virtual reality goggles.

It took place in front of Baidu co-founder and chief executive Robin Li and an audience of 3D avatars.

The platform, however, is still in its infancy and Ma Jie, a vice president at Baidu, told reporters at an earlier event that it could take up to six years for a full launch, according to CNBC.

XiRang allows users to create a digital character and interact with other users in a 3D world, for example a fictional city.

Baidu says it will allow up to 100,000 users to participate in the same digital space.

Users, who can only access the app in China, can take part in activities such as visiting virtual exhibitions or practising diving in a digital swimming pool.

The opportunities offered by the creation of a "new virtual world" are whetting the appetites of digital giants such as Facebook, whose parent company was re-baptised "Meta" in October to signal a strategic shift to

the metaverse.

Like Baidu, other Chinese digital giants have made inroads into the metaverse.

ByteDance, the owner of TikTok, has invested in several companies in the sector, including the maker of virtual reality headsets Pico.

And Tencent, aided by its expertise in video games, is developing its own metaverse platform.

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