

DATAQUEST

The Business of Infotech

Q&A

"It has been a phenomenal first year for Snapfish in India" /66



—Bala Parthasarthy,
MD, Asia Pacific, Snapfish, Hewlett-Packard

DATAQUEST
The Business of Infotech

Q&A

“It has been a phenomenal first year for Snapfish in India”

Bala Parthasarthy has been one of the co-founders of Snapfish and is a successful entrepreneur who has helped the business grow to become one of the world’s leading online photo services sites. Since the launch in India last year in October, Snapfish has witnessed a phenomenal response in the Indian market; and the 5 mn pictures stored online and a quarter million albums created are a testimony to this fact. In an exclusive interview with Dataquest, Parthasarthy provides an insight into the success of Snapfish India as the Indian consumer’s behavior undergoes a change. Excerpts

How did the idea of starting an online photo sharing service strike you?

The journey started way back in mid 1999 when the dotcom boom led to the formulation of a new idea of uploading film photos on the Web. Snapfish was formed with the idea to provide a superior service to consumers to help them upload their film photos on the Web. Consequently, our preliminary research was focused on identifying the key drivers for this space—who are the people clicking the maximum number of pictures? And, how are they clicking these pictures? The findings threw up some interesting facts which revealed that mostly it was women who were clicking the pictures, essentially using a film camera. Snapfish was subsequently launched in 1999 in the US with the objective of helping women who were not tech savvy, to upload their pictures on the Web.



—Bala Parthasarthy, MD, Asia Pacific, Snapfish, Hewlett-Packard

DATAQUEST

The Business of Infotech

How has the performance of the HP Snapfish been in the APAC market as compared to the US and other global markets?

Underpinned by the growing Internet penetration and rising digital camera sales, the APAC market holds huge potential. We have received unprecedented growth across the APAC region. Taking cognizance of the market potential and the evolving consumer preferences for online photo solutions, we launched HP Snapfish here last year. And as we celebrate our first anniversary, we already have over 5 mn photos uploaded on the website. Though we didn't do any formal research but we did leverage industry statistics, which illustrated the growing mobile and Internet penetration in India. We reckon that India will emerge as one of the most exciting markets in this space soon.

How has the customer response been in the last one year?

HP Snapfish has witnessed a phenomenal response in the Indian market over the last one year and has reaffirmed itself as the forerunner in the online photography space. The 5 mn pictures stored online and a quarter million albums created are a testimony to this fact. Also, with most of the gifting ideas getting stale, people are looking for newer and ore exciting ways of greeting their family and friends. I can say that we at HP Snapfish have the largest array of products in the online photography space with some of the product sales being seasonal. Like, this being the end of the year, photo calendars are hugely popular across the world. In India, with the onset of the wedding season, photobooks have been increasingly in demand. Collages however remain a favorite for all seasons.

How did the partnership with Huggies happen?

Huggies being a household name in India has been planning a lot of ini-

tiatives to engage young mothers and parents. The Huggies website (www.huggies.co.in), launched last month in India, is targeted at the Gen X moms—moms who are experimental, sophisticated and technology savvy. The co-branded photo center on the Huggies website is aimed at enabling Huggies moms to print, share and store unlimited number of photographs of their babies online. With young families forming the core of our consumer segment, we will be partnering with more companies targeting similar segments in the Internet space.

“ In terms of competition, there are a couple of small players in the Indian online photography space but with HP's legacy and Snapfish's proven track record we don't foresee any major competitions ”

Being in the online space, there must be a requirement to change and innovate your services continuously in order to keep pace with the rapidly evolving consumer segments?

Innovation is definitely the key for a company like ours. Always taking cognizance of the changing consumer trends, HP Snapfish has been continuously introducing product innovations, forming alliances in sync with the consumer preferences. Our alliance with IndiaPlaza was an endeavor to enable consumers visiting the world's largest India-centric online shopping destination to get the Snapfish experience through

the photo centers. Our photobooks, collage posters and canvas prints are some of the other innovation from the Snapfish stable which has provided a new meaning to digital photography altogether. Our latest addition has been the Picture Mover software, an innovative tool that allows members to effortlessly transfer photos from their digital cameras or memory card readers to both their PCs and Snapfish accounts without a single click of their mouse!

What are you future plans for the Indian market?

There are a whole bunch of activities in the offing driven by more collaborations, product innovations and changing market dynamics. It has been a phenomenal first year for Snapfish India with over 5 mn photos uploaded. We have been able to establish ourselves as the leader in an untreaded market. In the years ahead, HP Snapfish will continue to look for ways to deliver distinguished service to its customers and create an all-digital-photography landscape in India. In terms of competition, there are a couple of small players in the Indian online photography space but with HP's legacy and Snapfish's proven track record we don't foresee any major competition. Also, security being a big concern, people trust sharing their photos only with reliable brands such as ours. HP enjoying the undaunted faith among the Indian consumers makes Snapfish the ideal choice in the space.

With online photo sharing being a rage in India, word of mouth is working very well for us as Snapfish offers unlimited free photo sharing. We are advertising on the Web but haven't done print advertising. Collaborations have formed a key to our marketing initiative enabling us to reach our target audience in a streamlined manner.

—Stuti Das
stutid@cybermedia.co.in