

# Hindustan Times - Business

## PHOTOFINISH HOME DELIVERED PRINTS IN VARIOUS FORMATS COME FASTER, CHEAPER

# Digital photo business hots up with choices

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CHEAPER AND better – and now in tremendous variety. Photo-printing and digital cameras are coming together in new ways to help consumers, creating an emerging multi-billion-dollar industry in ways to print and deliver photos, not only on paper, but also on things like T-shirts and mugs.

When the photo film gave rise to digital images, a big gap yawned in the way people viewed and appreciated them. But now, companies have emerged to tap the gap. Last week, Bangalore-based Merasnap.com was acquired by printer-leader Hewlett-Packard Co's Snapfish unit to confirm the significance of the new service industry that goes well beyond neighbourhood digital print shops.

"Factors such as lower cost of small format printing, convenience and ease of use and the option of having a picture printed across a va-

Company	Photo print size	Price per copy
iTasveer	4 x 6	Rs 2.90
Zoomin	4 x 5.3	Rs 4
Snapfish	4 x 6	Rs 2.95



### PHOTO PRINTS GO PLACES

- Revenue generated from photo printing amounted to \$15 billion in 2008 of which non-printed merchandise was less than half
- By 2011, the overall market is expected to generate revenues worth \$ 20 bn with customised merchandise contributing a majority of it
- Players in India already allow users to get photos printed across mugs, posters, calendars, mousepads and photo books amongst others

riety of media are contributing to the growth of online photo printing," said Vishal Tripathi, Principal Research Analyst, Gartner India.

No wonder venture capitalists, brands and entrepreneurs are taking the space seriously.

Photographs uploaded on the Internet through sites like Merasnap, iTasveer and Zoomin can be delivered to family and friends – even

those based overseas. You can have a digital printed 4 x 6 inch photo printed starting Rs 2.90 onwards while the same will cost you at least 50 per cent more at a local retailer.

However, one needs to pay an extra amount for shipping (anywhere between Rs 25 to Rs 100), which makes these portals more value-for-money only for bulk delivery or international orders. The other advantage that

these online portals have over offline printers is that orders are delivered to your doorstep like pizzas.

"Merasnap had a customer base of about 1,00,000 people and we have made a customer acquisition," said Bala Parthasarthy, managing director of SnapFish. SnapFish has about 2 lakh users on its own in India and has its network across 23 countries that allow you to get your pictures and merchandise delivered in these countries.

There are flexible options to help customers. iTasveer which was set up in April 2006 has even introduced cash-on-delivery model for those who may not possess a credit card. The company tied up with Microsoft and Windows Vista edition launched in India will offer a link to printing pictures using iTasveer. "Price isn't a differentiator for us, it is more about how quick the delivery is made and how many options a customer gets to play around with his pictures," said Nishant Kyal, one of the founders of iTasveer.