

THE HINDU
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Online photo printing market rolls on

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Online photo printing is snowballing in India. Hewlett-Packard has dived in with its Snapfish service.

It began as a way to let expats share pictures by shipping prints to their home in India over the Internet. Firms such as Picsquare, Merasnap.com and ZoomIn.com have set up Web sites that allow users to upload photos from a digicam, click to order a print and pay online to courier them. By latching onto online photo sharing sites, printing outlets can shoot up the growth curve.

"Indians love prints; there is an un-stated potential for the Indian market," said Mr Sunny Balijepalli, Founder and CEO, ZoomIn. This site was launched on Tuesday.

"Many parents in India are not very tech savvy and pre-

fer physical photographs," added Mr Manish Agrawal, Managing Director, Picsquare, a Bangalore-based start-up. In a span of two years, his site has attracted 50,000 users and stores a million photographs.

"The rise in the use of image-capturing devices translates into huge opportunities for photo printing market in India, largely fuelled by the growth in digital and mobile cameras in the country. Snapfish has gained popularity globally and we expect to do the same in India. It will change the way consumers 'click-print-share' photos in India," said Mr Bala Parthasarthy, Vice-President - Online Imaging, Image and Printing Group, HP APJ, in a release. The company plans to establish 3,000 retail outlets with HP Retail Photo Solutions by 2010.

ZoomIn has tweaked its site to let dial-up users use the service. "Though late, we will raise the bar. We have built our site for India. So slow connections, where page reloads take time and uploading is a pain, have been considered. By placing a maximum number of options on the same page (they pop up when clicked), we reduce the number of page reloads. And for uploads, we allow users to tick what size of the original image they really need. For example, a photo that is 7 MB in size which is only being printed on a 4x6 can be shrunk dynamically while uploading," said Mr Balijepalli.

Picsquare offers users a free upload from reels or a CD mailed to the firm's corporate office.

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