

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Embracing social media, photo sites stay in the game

Bangalore, Sep 4: Someday the Kodak moment may be called the "Facebook" or "Twitpic" moment, but old-school photo management services are fighting to stay in the picture.

People have been flocking to popular social networking sites like *Facebook* and *MySpace* to share images with friends and family, ditching sites like *Flickr*, *Snapfish*, *Photobucket*, *Shutterfly Inc* and *Picasa*. But with over 20 billion pictures uploaded to "traditional" photo-sharing sites, they can't be counted out. In particular, when it comes to prints and personalised services, photo-sharing websites are still holding sway.

Photo-sharing sites let you create photobooks, calendars, cards, posters and mugs. At the same time, they know that consumers want to be able to share photos online. Photo-sharing on *Facebook*, whose investors include Microsoft Corp, is growing nearly three times as fast as the top photo-shar-

ing websites, figures from market researcher *comScore* show. *Facebook* has more than 250 million users, while *Snapfish* has 70 million members and *Flickr* has 40 million registered users.

Still, Toronto resident *Kate Wienburg*—a *Facebook* user since 2006—prefers a site like *Yahoo's Flickr* for sharing photos because of the quality of the website and the photos.

"I like *Flickr* best because it has such a huge (photo) community around it," she said. "There are groups for everything from sports events to cupcakes to people jumping."

With that in mind, most of traditional photo sharing companies are now looking to incorporate social media tools and tying up with the social networking sites.

Picasa's latest version includes several social media tools. Other sites like *Kodak*, while sticking to their key revenue drivers, have been

adding social media applications. *Shutterfly* allows users to share photos uploaded on its site with blogs and social networks like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. *Flickr*, which has the most social-networking feel of the photo-sharing sites, has an active user community.

Hewlett-Packard's napfish offers photo-sharing with *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Google's Blogger* platform

and *Typepad*, said *Ben Nelson*, worldwide general manager, *Snapfish*. And some websites allow users to buy prints from the *Facebook* photos they upload.

However, users are becoming wary of the difference in quality. For instance, *Facebook* photos are typically smaller and lower resolution making them ill-suited for enlargements and posters. *Reuters*