

# A growing niche market

## Young Penang-based entrepreneur tapping into picture frame business

By DAVID TAN  
davidtan@thestar.com.my

A YOUNG Penang-born entrepreneur has drawn up a business plan, which includes developing a mobile application for Apple iOS devices to tap into the growing picture frame market in the country that is currently estimated to be around RM34mil.

The market size of the picture frame market is derived from the total volume of real estate transactions for 2011, which was 430,403, with an RM137.8bil transaction value, according to the Property Market Report 2011, published by the National Property Information Centre (NAPIC).

The company aims to corner a percentage of the RM34mil market with online sales of its customised picture frames.

Frambie founder Ray Beh said if each of the 430,404 properties were to buy a RM80 picture frame, this would translate into approximately RM34mil.

According to the NAPIC report, about 62% of the transactions are for residential properties, while the remainder are for commercial and industrial properties.

To carve a slice of the RM34mil market, Beh, 25, said the company was now developing a mobile application to be launched next year for smart phone users to place orders for Frambie's picture frames.

"The mobile software application will contain user friendly features for users to order the picture frame of their choice, the layout and the theme to go with the photographs, make payment, and edit the photos.

"Once they upload their orders to our website, it will take not more than five days for us to make a picture frame with the appropriate layout and theme.

"If you were to order a customised picture frame today, it will take about two weeks for the frame to be readied," he said.

Beh said the mobile application would be sent to Apple soon for qualification and endorsement under its software kit development programme opened to developers worldwide.

Market size of picture frame market in the country is around

**RM34mil**

Frambie started off with an initial investment of

**RM20,000**

Frambie is targeting a revenue of

**RM137,000**

in the next 12 months

Since the launch of Frambie in June this year, Beh has sold some 500 picture frames via its web portal ([www.frambie.com](http://www.frambie.com)), which are priced between RM80 to RM280 each.

Beh said Frambie produced 50% of its picture frames and outsourced the other half to local picture frame makers in the northern region.

The frames can be made from solid wood or aluminium or a combination of both materials.

Frambie will also design and make picture frames for photographers and graphic artists to show case their photos and artwork.

Frambie is also targeting the sales of its picture frames for the graduate student population in the country, which is a sizeable market.

"For example, in 2010, there were about 989,404 students enrolled in local tertiary education institutions in the country, according to the higher education ministry website.

"The number of students graduated in 2010 was around 194,885.

"To capture the graduate student market,



**The variety factor:** Beh is keen to look beyond traditional frames.

we are developing picture frames with the relevant logos, colours, and layout theme of the universities as the backdrop for the graduation photographs," he said.

Frambie is targeting a revenue of RM137,000 for the next 12 months, according to Beh.

Beh started Frambie with an initial capital of RM20,000.

"The capital for the business came from the prize money I won from the Young Entrepreneur Award (YEA) in Singapore, presented by Canon Singapore and MediaCorp. The prize money was S\$15,000 (RM37,573)," he said.

Beh won YEA award for submitting the best business plan with a special focus on prototyping, developing business and financial solutions, business model, marketing plan, and implementation of strategies.

"I was attracted to the business because there are few companies in the country specialising in making customised picture frames. There are many standard picture frames in the market.

"But there are very few companies specialising in making customised frames with a wide range of choice for layouts and themes to go as background for the photos," he said.

Frambie's specially customised products, include pre-arranged and multi-opening picture frames of different shapes.

"These frames can turn your living room into an instant gallery. The pre-arranged frames allow an eclectic display of photos and artwork to tell a personal story.

"The multi-opening frame, made from solid hardwood with matte board mounting, allows multiple display of pictures, creating beautiful picture collage in the frame," he said.

All Frambie's picture frames are equipped high quality anti-glare glazing glass and mounting matte board that significantly enhance the visual sensation of the frame and the picture.

"My father used to run a customised picture frame company in Sungai Bakap in Penang in the 1980s and 1990s.

"He used to make the frames manually with the help of a frame mould chopper equipment.

"I learnt some the skills of making customised picture frames from him, which has helped me to start the new business.

"To reduce the time to make the frames about five days from two weeks, I further invested in new imported joiner and matte board cutter machine," he said.

Beh graduated from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) last year with a degree in entrepreneurship.

### The big picture:

Beh with his assistant Tiffany Lo, 25, (right) at their working station in Taman Gemelan Indah in Sungai Bakap, Nibong Tebal, Penang.

