

Boom in e-commerce leads to OTA era in travel

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Dhaka : Tina Jabeen, MD and CEO of Startup Bangladesh while participating in the seminar, organised by The Bangladesh Monitor, said that technology is driving the unprecedented growth in travel industry of Bangladesh. Clients and the business community of the tourism sector are currently starving for online services. Hence there is a huge market for technology implementations in travel and be commercially sustainable, making it the right time for OTAs to emerge.

She observed that the pandemic has pushed us towards e-commerce, thus OTAs has been growing with a promising future in line with e-commerce as a whole. In 2020 alone, the e-commerce market witnessed a growth of 2.1 billion with 1200 new e-commerce companies and 60 thousand SMEs.

She informed that 39 Hi-tech technology parks are being built all across the country with an aim of bringing giant technology companies to our market. This will generate more inbound business travel, which in turn could lead to a higher number of leisure travel in the country as a pastime activity of the business travellers. The OTAs can tap into this upcoming huge market.

Leisure travel among women has also increased both domestically and internationally. OTAs can provide dedicated services to that target group.

However, Tina said, digital transactions and interoperability of sites in Bangladesh are two areas that still require development. "To our delight, eKYC has been made mandatory in digital transactions making them way more secured".

To further strengthen OTAs and such e-commerce operations, availability of affordable bandwidth, tools and digital devices are a must, she said and added that the government must come up with policy support to make the nation digitally enabled. It cannot flourish without developing digital literacy among people. Change of mindset to shift from offline to online is key.

Branding Bangladesh through tourism, technology, and manpower in the global arena is another vital work to-do, Tina said.

Startup Bangladesh steps up in this regard. It is a venture capital firm sponsored by the Bangladesh government. The firm has been allocated with BDT 500 crore by the government with the aim of funding and supporting startups in the country including OTAs.

Tina informed that OTAs can seek help from Startup Bangladesh to prosper in the new digital era of travel. The firm provides BDT 50 lac to BDT 5 crore of funding along with all kinds of strategic knowhows and advises.

It can be mentioned here that Startup Bangladesh also has a grant programme of BDT 10 lac taka. Travel technology startups can apply for it in order to excel in the new digital era of tourism.