

Future of travel in Bangladesh in digitisation : Experts at seminar

A Monitor Report

Date: 16 March, 2021



Dhaka : The panelists in the first panel discussion, of the seminar of Online Travel Agency, organised by The Bangladesh Monitor came up with suggestion that digitisation is a must for the future good of travel industry in Bangladesh.

Kazi Wahidul Alam, Editor of The Bangladesh Monitor, moderated the discussion while the panelists were Sadia Haque, Co-Founder of ShareTrip, Saiful Haque, Country General Manager and CEO of Sabre Travel Network Bangladesh, Ahmed Reza, Country Manager Bangladesh of Cathay Pacific, Arifur Rahman, Citi Bank Head of Cards and Daraz Mahmud, Area Manager, Travelport Bangladesh.

"Globally, OTAs are capturing the market by bringing convenience and comfort to the end users. Even though OTAs just emerged in Bangladesh, they have already started showing significant and dynamic shifts in service patterns with value addition and improvisations," Sadia Haque said in her speech.

She referred to ShareTrip's initiative of providing Covid-19 updates related to aviation and tourism globally including health protocols, safety and travel measures etc, to make the experience better for the end user.

To shed light on how airlines are seeing the emergence of OTAs in the country, Cathay Pacific's Country Manager Ahmed Reza, said, "Even though the business in aviation has gone down during the pandemic, the growth of OTAs have significantly risen. 50 airlines have registered in NDC of IATA. This will create a bridge between the airlines and OTAs to increase their online sales."

Travel is an expensive and high-end market which involves plenty of money. For an OTA to succeed, they have to build trust and security in the market, not individually but industry-wide. People in the recent years started trusting OTAs for managing their travel and banks for handling e-commerce transactions.

In this regard, Arifur Rahman, Head of Cards and Director of Sales and Marketing of City Bank said banks are now pairing up with OTAs in various campaigns and promotions to give better solutions and deals to the customers. The banks are helping OTAs in Digital Payment with internet banking and cards, subsequently supporting them to build trust in the market, Arifur added.

Daraz Mahmud, Area Manager of Travelport Bangladesh, highlighted the revolutionary benefits the country is embracing due to the emergence of OTAs. People can now log into 4-5 portals at once due to OTAs and compare prices. Whereas, in the earlier days of brick-and-mortar agencies, the process used to take several days and considerable amount labour.

It may be mentioned here that majority of the OTA platforms now are fully built and developed by local tech talents, indicating that our money is being spent on the development of our talent pool, keeping the money inside the country, which will not be the case if foreign outsourced products are used. Capitalising on the local tech talents is a key matrix for the OTAs.

And since the pandemic turned out to be a blessing in disguise for e-commerce, Saiful Haque, Country General Manager and CEO of Sabre Travel Network Bangladesh urged OTAs to grab the limelight as travellers now prefer contactless payment methods and digitised solutions.