

Biman needs advanced personalised retailing tech to enhance traveller experience, drive profitability

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Dhaka : Bangladesh's travel industry is on a speedy growth trajectory, with increasing travel demand. There has been a significant increase in both outbound and inbound passengers, and associated capacity increases from airlines. As Bangladesh becomes an increasingly important player in global tourism, airlines and travel companies need to adopt advanced technologies to stay competitive.

Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions Airline Sales of Sabre Corporation-a leading global travel technology provider-said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor in a virtual interview recently.

According to him, airlines which accelerate their digital transformation, and embrace the kind of AI-powered, modular technology that has been the talk of the town currently, will be those with a competitive edge in

Bangladesh's growing tourism economy.

"The market is ripe for technological advancement, and I believe that travel providers in Bangladesh have an incredible opportunity to harness the power of AI and personalised retailing to enhance the traveller experience and drive profitability," added Rakesh.

To this effect, Sabre offers multiple cutting-edge solutions to support airlines, according to Rakesh. Sabre is continuously innovating to help airlines in Bangladesh and beyond to streamline operations and enhance efficiency.

At the core of this strategy is their commitment to robust, comprehensive systems like the Passenger Service System (PSS), which serves as the backbone for managing key customer-facing functions, including reservations, inventory control and departure management.

Sabre's PSS is trusted globally by airlines such as American Airlines, LATAM Airlines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, Oman Air, Virgin Australia, Lion Air, and Bangladesh's own Biman Bangladesh Airlines, claimed Rakesh.

Biman has been a SabreSonic PSS customer since 2022 and has seen significant benefits since migrating to Sabre, with growth in e-commerce, passengers boarded, and ancillary revenue, as well as cost savings.

Rakesh claimed, thanks to SabreSonic PSS, Bangladesh's flag carrier has seen double digit growth in revenue-because of the better auditing capabilities it has offered Biman as well as better processes, revenue integrity, increased conversion rates and many more.

However, Biman has opportunity to do more, claimed Rakesh, adding, the next step for the national airline would be to take up NDC (New Distribution Capability). On a positive note, Rakesh informed, Biman has already inked an agreement with Sabre to integrate NDC by 2025.

If Biman wishes, in four months, it can also adopt Sabre's AI and ML to offer more relevant and compelling offers to travellers. Furthermore, after five years, the airline would be in a position to implement full offer and order of SabreMosaic-the next best technology, explained Rakesh.

"Personalisation is currently at the forefront of retailing needs, as

passengers today expect tailored offers that reflect their individual preferences. To address this, Sabre has introduced SabreMosaic, powered by Sabre Travel AI, which allows airlines to create dynamic, personalised offers," he said.

SabreMosaic is built for the future of airline retailing, designed to move beyond the limitations of traditional PNR-driven systems. What sets it apart is its open, modular, and AI-powered foundation, Rakesh explained.

Unlike legacy systems that can be rigid and monolithic, SabreMosaic gives airlines the flexibility to adopt and scale individual modules based on their needs and readiness. This open, PSS-agnostic architecture allows airlines to integrate SabreMosaic into their existing technology stack without needing to overhaul their entire system, he further mentioned.



INTELLIGENT RETAILING BY DESIGN

A big differentiator is Sabre's partnership with Google, according to Rakesh. Sabre Travel AI, developed through their ongoing partnership with Google, powers the platform with advanced AI capabilities, ensuring that airlines are not just reacting to the market, but proactively shaping it through intelligent, data-driven retailing decisions.

In the model of offer and order, airlines move away from fare classes and static PNRs, creating more dynamic, tailored offers that reflect the individual needs of travellers. The offers, whether for flights, ancillaries, services, or associated offers and experiences, are bundled into a single order that can be serviced throughout the journey.

With SabreMosaic's offer-order capabilities, airlines can not only create highly personalised offers but also simplify the fulfilment process,

ensuring that each order remains consistent from booking through to post-trip servicing. This results in a more streamlined and satisfying traveler experience, while also opening new revenue opportunities for the airline.

At the moment, no airline in the world has implemented offer and order fully. However, airlines are on their respective ways to it, rejoiced Rakesh. Virgin Australia, in 2024, became their flagship SabreMosaic customer to make a transition from traditional PNR-based operations to modern retailing under an offer-order model.

Most of the airlines in the world are planning to implement offer-order by 2030, while Rakesh expects the entire ecosystem to go into offer-order gradually in the next 15 years.

For an airline like Biman, considering its size at the moment, the return on investment would not be very attractive. So, there is still time for the country's flag carrier to start considering offer and order, opined Rakesh.

Another product of Sabre that has helped Biman greatly is its revenue integrity, mentioned Rakesh. For a long time, passengers of Bangladesh have been suffering from reservation syndicates of Biman.

However, Rakesh informed, the flag carrier recently implemented Sabre's revenue integrity feature which has reduced reservation abuse, fictitious booking and blocking of seats for malpractices. As a result, revenue leakage has also come down by millions of US dollars, said Rakesh.

Nevertheless, eventually it all comes down to the man behind the machine, sighed Rakesh. For that purpose, it is essential to train the staff accordingly. Proper processes must be enforced, further claimed the Vice President and Regional General Manager of Asia Pacific.

Biman's manpower challenges have always been apparent. However, it is essential for the airline to be regularly infusing itself with new blood as professionals retire after a certain tenure. "There are plenty to choose from in Bangladesh. It is only a matter of execution now."

Also investing in their proper training is another area the airline must prioritise, suggested Rakesh, adding, technology will turn out to be a

challenge if you do not constantly upskill the staff.

To this effect, Sabre has offered to provide Biman officials with necessary training. "We have informed Biman that we are always available. Our staff is always on the ground to help the airlines," shared Rakesh, adding, "We also constantly look into how we can add more solutions on top of the current technologies."

Sabre also has a consulting team to help airline executives strategically or tactically to improve business performance. Biman is already receiving such support from Sabre, claimed Rakesh.

Nevertheless, now is the time for airlines in Bangladesh to capture the value of modern retailing. It is up to the individual airlines to decide how quickly they want to move.

Even without full transformation like SabreMosaic, airlines can add solutions like Sabre's Dynamic Availability, which creates incremental revenue opportunities for airlines by leveraging real-time marketplace insights.

Hence, meanwhile, Biman should try Sabre's Dynamic Availability feature for revenue management as it is estimated to result in 2-3 per cent increased revenue for the airline, suggested Rakesh.