

Integrating technology vital to improve travel industry : Flight Expert President

-A Monitor Report

Date: 16 September, 2023



Dhaka : In today's age, the country's travel industry is undergoing a significant transformation, primarily driven by the growing prominence of Online Travel Agencies (OTAs). These digital platforms have swiftly carved out their niche in the market, redefining how travellers plan and book their journeys. In this paradigm shift within the travel industry, one pioneering OTA has been playing a pivotal role and that is Flight Expert.

"As of now, OTAs occupy 35-40 per cent of the total travel market share in Bangladesh, but projections suggest that this figure could soar to 60 per cent by 2026," said M A Rashid Shah Shamrat, President of the OTA, in an interview with The Bangladesh Monitor, held at his office in the capital recently.

Flight Expert, a stalwart in the realm of online travel services, has experienced remarkable year-on-year growth, largely propelled by its commitment to incorporating cutting-edge technology into its operations.

The company has emerged as a beacon of change, championing the adoption of technology to streamline and enhance the travel experience for both consumers and traditional offline travel agencies, he added.

The digital revolution in the travel industry gained further momentum in the wake of the Covid-19

pandemic.

In Bangladesh, the surge in card and online transactions became particularly pronounced, providing fertile ground for OTAs to thrive.

The President of Flight Expert M A Rashid Shah Shamrat asserted that this trajectory of growth in online transactions is a clear indicator that OTAs are poised to shape the future of travel.

Flight Expert's portfolio of services includes air ticketing for both domestic and international travel, as well as international hotel bookings.

Recently, the company expanded its offerings to include visa processing services and plans to introduce domestic hotel booking options in the near future, informed Shamrat.

Flight Expert has positioned itself as a versatile player, catering to both B2C and B2B segments.

Its technological prowess not only simplifies travel for end consumers but also streamlines the operations of traditional brick-and-mortar travel agencies when they serve their clientele, also claimed the President.

Flight Expert's vision extends beyond its own success; the company is committed to fostering the growth of the entire travel industry in Bangladesh, expressed the Flight Expert Chief, adding, "Flight Expert is always in an effort to revolutionise its services rendered to agents and consumers alike."

He further mentioned, "In pursuit of this goal, Flight Expert has introduced several initiatives to facilitate seamless collaboration with other travel agencies. For instance, travel agencies can now effortlessly make payments to Flight Expert through bKash, an innovative approach that aims to automate and expedite travel bookings."

Despite the rapid digitalisation of the industry, a substantial segment of travellers, including group travellers, corporates, VIPs, labourers, students, pilgrims, and first-time flyers, still relies on offline travel agencies.

"Flight Expert aims to bridge this gap and make the travel booking process more convenient and time-efficient for these travellers," he also claimed.

While talking about what the OTA has in its pipeline for the coming days, its President mentioned that Flight Expert is currently working on adopting the New Distribution Capability (NDC) programme launched by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

It may be mentioned here, NDC is a travel industry-supported programme launched by IATA for the development and market adoption of a new, XML-based data transmission standard (NDC Standard).

The NDC Standard enhances the capability of communications between airlines and travel agents and is open to any third party, intermediary, IT provider or non-IATA member, to implement and use.

"Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines and many other airlines are coming onboard as NDC shows great promise to be the future of travel and Flight Expert will not be behind," stressed Shamrat.

During the interview, Shamrat highlighted Flight Expert's another key concern-security.

"All the transactions are made using Flight Expert is 3-D secure. Hence, till now, Flight Expert has not lost any money due to any fraudulent incident as we do not allow any transaction which is not 3-D secure," claimed the Flight Expert President.

However, Flight Expert's current success is a testament to its resilience, as the early days of its establishment in 2017 were marked by significant challenges.

The Bangladeshi market at that time had limited awareness of digital, online, and card transactions. Flight Expert faced an uphill battle in educating and familiarising the market with its services.

With the support of its banking partners, the OTA managed to raise awareness and establish itself as a thriving travel agency. Flight Expert's pioneering initiatives have paved the way for subsequent OTAs to enter the market without encountering skepticism.