



Airbnb

Airbnb’s home-sharing trainings

Since Airbnb’s founding in 2008, women hosts have earned nearly \$32 billion using the platform.¹ The income they generate has contributed to launching businesses that further support entrepreneurship, improve livelihoods for their families, and reinvest in local communities.

In 2018, the San Francisco–based hospitality platform partnered with the World Bank and the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, to hold home-sharing training sessions in India aimed at better equipping women to earn money by becoming hosts on Airbnb. The initiative sought to achieve the following:

- **Awareness** of the potential for entrepreneurial opportunities through home-sharing platforms, including providing extensive educational materials aimed at setting businesses up for success.
- **Learning** the rudiments of using platforms like Airbnb, particularly for segments with lower levels of digital literacy.

- **Upskilling** on the best practices in hospitality, allowing potential hosts to unlock the value of their homes as well as better understanding how to engage with guests.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Using Airbnb data, the World Bank² reports that emerging markets could be new growth centers for peer-to-peer accommodation platforms. The data showed that the number of guests staying in peer-to-peer accommodation in emerging markets increased by more than 4 million between 2014 and 2017, with close to half a million of those guests coming from India alone. The reasons for this include (a) increased number of low-cost airline carriers; (b) increased financial inclusion through expanded access to mobile technologies and digital banking; (c) improved trust through two-way reviews on booking platforms; and (d) a growing interest in more authentic travel experiences, including travel to more rural areas.

Recognizing the latter in particular, Airbnb polled existing women hosts in India about their experiences and learned that hosting had a disproportionately positive effect on their income and entrepreneurship potential; more than half responded that hosting on Airbnb had helped them afford their homes and provided supplementary income they relied on to make ends meet. However, the polling results suggest that platforms like Airbnb can do more to encourage more hosts to sign up and create more fulfilling hosting experiences, including (a) providing more proactive support to hosts beyond the onboarding phase and (b) tailoring training to be more inclusive of populations with limited digital literacy.

Quick facts about Airbnb

Airbnb is an online community marketplace for people to list, discover, and book accommodations around the world.

Founding year: 2008

Footprint: Global



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Coupled with the need for business model scalability as Airbnb expanded into more emerging markets, those issues made for a unique challenge, especially when considering women’s engagement on the platform. Through more targeted training and support, not only could Airbnb help women on its platform grow their businesses, learn new skills, and improve their livelihoods, but these women hosts could boost their own profits as well.

IMPLEMENTATION

Through India’s tourism authorities and the Rural Livelihood Mission of the state, Airbnb was able to identify locations that had both tourism potential and a strong pool of potential trainees who could benefit from the program. This included three districts in Konkan on the western coast of India: Sindhudurg, Ratnagiri, and Palghar.

- Palghar**
 Rural population of 52 percent.
 Potential tourist attractions: India’s first atomic power plant, Maharashtra’s largest fishing port, annual Chikoo Festival at Bordi Beach.
- Ratnagiri**
 Rural population of 88.67 percent.
 Potential tourist attractions: Arabian Sea beachfront, hometown to several Indian nationalists and political activists.
- Sindhudurg**
 Rural population of 87.41 percent.
 Potential tourist attractions: Unique cuisine (Malvani cuisine); forts, palaces, and temples (Sindhudurg Fort in Malvan, Vijaydurg Fort, Sawantwadi Palace), beaches.

Airbnb also partnered with a private bank, Yes Bank, to enable wider outreach for the program. In addition to helping to recruit new hosts, Yes Bank encouraged more bookings by partnering with Airbnb to offer a 15 percent discount for guests who were Yes Bank customers.

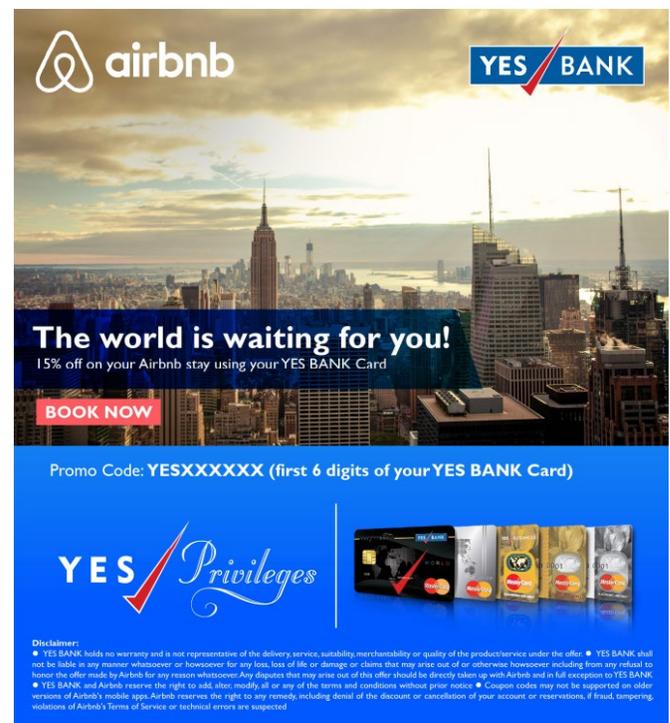
Table 1: Outreach numbers for program

	Outreach	Number of hosts attending workshops	Number of hosts onboarded	Number of workshops
MSRLM	250	120	32	5
Yes Bank	230	105	61	5

SOURCE: AIRBNB

NOTE: MSRLM = MAHARASHTRA STATE RURAL LIVELIHOOD MISSION.

Figure 1: Promotional ad to Yes Bank customers for Airbnb



THE BARRIERS

Airbnb quickly learned that most trainees had basic challenges such as lack of fluency in English (the language used in trainings) and a lack of digital literacy—both critical elements in developing an effective community program. Not only was most of the training content in English, including on digital apps, but also most trainees either did not have access to

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smartphones or may not have used a smartphone beyond making and receiving calls or messaging services.

There were also challenges in infrastructure. Some villages were not well connected by public transport and, in some cases, did not have tarred roads. Some areas did not have adequate internet and 4G broadband cellular connections, both of which are necessary to build a profile on the Airbnb app, to connect with potential guests and to complete online financial transactions.

The third infrastructural challenge was home upgrades: most homes in rural and remote areas had to be upgraded before they could host guests safely. Whereas most government agencies are happy to support training efforts, seed money required for home upgrades is often hard to come by or unavailable altogether.

Taking time to better understand the challenges of the context was a key issue, as were other lessons in implementation such as the following:

- **Multiday trainings:** Many trainees are often hesitant to speak up on the first day.
- **Workshop language:** Conducting workshops in local languages created a better atmosphere for learning than workshops that relied only on translation services.
- **Making trainings a family affair:** Airbnb was pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic participation of children in the training along with their mothers. In many instances, children happily took over and assured facilitators that they in turn would teach their mothers. This participation helped overcome some of the language barriers as well as helped create a lighter atmosphere that enabled faster learning among the trainees.
- **Follow-on support:** On-the-ground support for up to three months following training is critical to making the trainees self-reliant.

THE IMPACT

In 2019, Indian women earned more than Rs 100 crore (\$14 million) on Airbnb, where they now make up 34 percent of Airbnb's Stays hosts and 40 percent of Experience hosts.

Airbnb has hosted three follow-up workshops in the Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts and has hired a dedicated resource in Mumbai to coordinate partnership and implementation efforts.



AFTER ATTENDING HOME-SHARING TRAINING, GAURIBEN EARNS MORE IN A MONTH AS AN AIRBNB HOST THAN SHE DID IN AN ENTIRE YEAR OF HARVESTING CROPS.

Gauriben is one of the many women who started hosting after taking part in Airbnb's home-sharing training workshops. Her house lies in the village of Bakutra in Gujarat province and offers three small rooms with cots, topped with intricately hand-embroidered sheets. As an Airbnb host, she has welcomed guests from around the world and now earns more in a month from hosting on Airbnb than from an entire year of harvesting crops.

1. Airbnb, "Women Hosts Are Leading The Way on Airbnb," March 5, 2019, <https://news.airbnb.com/women-hosts-are-leading-the-way-on-airbnb/>.
2. World Bank, Tourism and the Sharing Economy: Policy & Potential of Sustainable Peer-to-Peer Accommodation, 2018, <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/161471537537641836/pdf/130054REVISED-Tourism-and-the-Sharing-Economy-PDF.pdf>.