

Catalyzing Sustainable Tourism through Airbnb

In Emerging Economies, Cross-Sector Collaboration Can Unlock the Benefits of Airbnb's Platform for Underserved Communities

Emerging economies'^[1] share of international tourist arrivals increased from 30% in 1980 to 47% in 2012. By 2030, their share is expected to reach 57%, surpassing 1 billion arrivals every year.^[2] While many emerging economies are seeing influxes of tourists, representing a major economic opportunity for local communities, the benefits of tourism are often unevenly distributed with underserved communities^[3] largely getting left out. This is where Airbnb comes in -- as a way to distribute the economic benefits of the tourism boom directly to people who have not traditionally benefited from tourism in the past.

Calls are increasing for new tourism models that benefit all of society and preserve natural resources as well as cultural treasures. Tourism is linked to every UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and specific tourism targets have been included in SDGs 8 (inclusive and sustainable economic growth), 12 (sustainable consumption and production), and 14 (sustainable use of oceans and marine resources). To raise awareness for the importance of the tourism sector in achieving the SDGs, the UN has designated 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development, which Airbnb is proud to support.

The sharing economy can play a unique and critical role in scaling sustainable tourism. Airbnb's platform for home sharing and experiences is democratizing tourism by expanding opportunities for ordinary people, providing affordable travel options for those who often lack them, and allowing people to use their homes to earn needed extra income. Airbnb's services link to all aspects of the UNWTO's holistic definition of sustainable tourism – from economic empowerment, to social inclusiveness, to resource efficiency, promotion of cultural values and diversity, and the fostering of mutual understanding, peace and security.

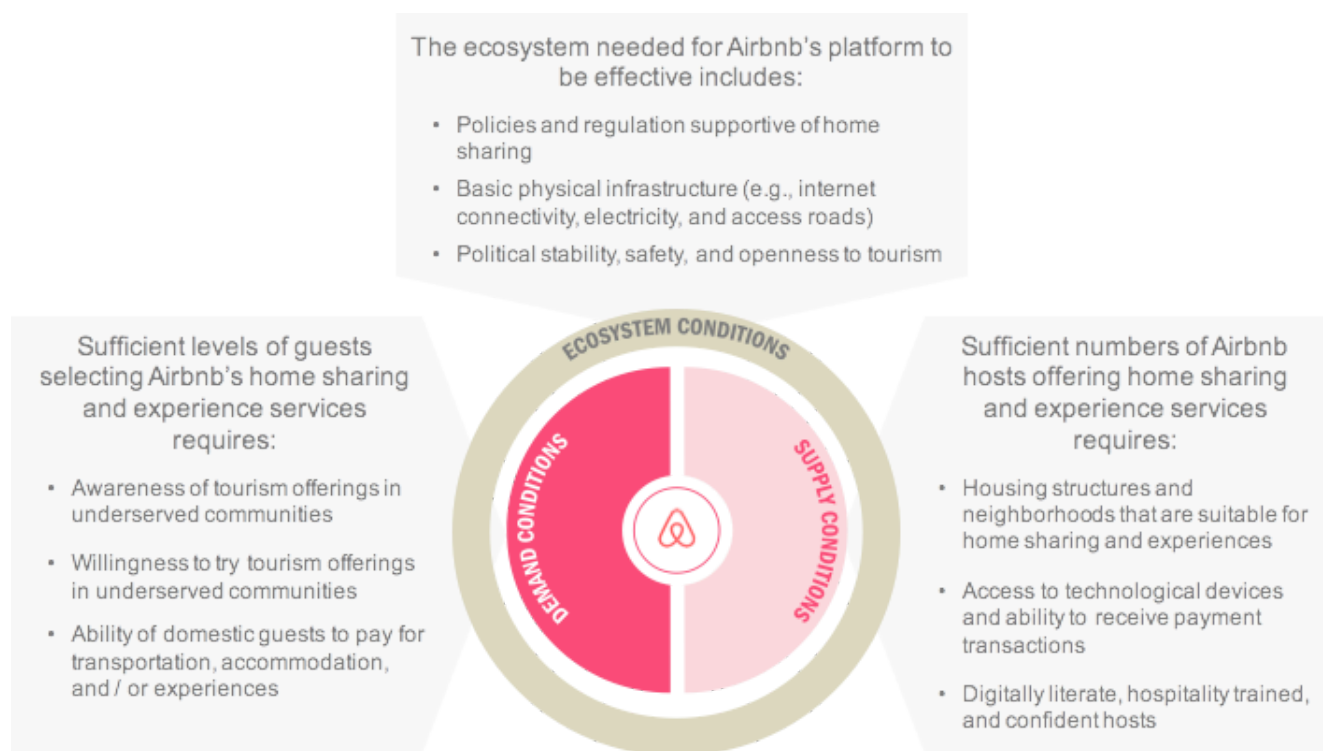
To this end, Airbnb is currently partnering with local NGOs to pilot three programs for underserved communities in South Africa and India:

- Airbnb and Ikhaya Le Langa, a social enterprise in Cape Town, are bringing Airbnb to Cape Town's Langa Quarter, the oldest historically black township in the Western Cape. The partnership aims to leverage Airbnb's platform to give local women with existing listings a broader reach by targeting international travelers.
- Airbnb and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a two million-member trade union of rural women in India, are partnering to empower women in rural Gujarat by listing their homes on Airbnb's platform. SEWA members hope to attract domestic city dwellers looking for a quiet, stress-free vacation as well as international development volunteers.
- Airbnb, Open Africa and the South African College for Tourism (SACT) are partnering to create technology-enabled livelihood opportunities for women and young people in rural parts of South Africa's Western Cape. Partners are providing tailored two-week trainings to prospective hosts that allow them to list their homes on Airbnb's platform.

Despite the potential of the sharing economy to foster sustainable tourism, populations who have the most to gain from these models often face the greatest barriers to using them. This is particularly true in the case of emerging economies, where uptake of sharing economy models has been slower despite populations being more disposed to sharing^[4].

While underserved communities in emerging economies stand to benefit from Airbnb's platform, unlocking its potential requires meeting three sets of *readiness conditions* around demand, supply, and the broader ecosystem (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Readiness conditions for benefiting from Airbnb's home sharing and experiences platform



The report describes how sharing economy companies, policy makers, international development organizations, and local NGOs can use their unique assets, resources and expertise to help ensure the above-mentioned readiness conditions in emerging economies.

Finally, we propose the Collective Impact^[5] approach to facilitate collaboration between these stakeholders in order to fulfill the conditions needed for Airbnb's platform to benefit underserved communities in emerging economies. Successful Collective Impact initiatives typically are marked by five elements that, together, produce alignment amongst stakeholders: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations.

[1] Classification based on the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

[2] UNWTO. Tourism Highlights – 2016 Edition. 2016.

[3] We use the term *underserved populations* to describe communities with limited access to economic opportunities and reduced upward mobility. In emerging economy contexts, women are more likely to be underserved than men, and they are the focus of Airbnb's efforts to date.

[4] Dalberg, a development consulting firm, estimates that on average, people in emerging economies are 40-50% more likely to engage in digital sharing – given access to the right tools – than people in the US and Western Europe.

[5] Kramer, M. & Kania, J. *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. 2011.