



Digital platforms will be Critical to Revive Tourism Sector in India: IAMAI

New Delhi 28 September, 2020: While the entire travel and tourism sector is witnessing an economic downturn, the first green-shoots are being witnessed by the digital platforms, who have a critical role to play in the revival of the sector. This was the emphatic message from all panelists in the Webinar on Digital Roadmap to Invigorate Micro-Entrepreneurs in Tourism Sector, organized by the Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI].

Speaking at the event, **Smt. Meenakshi Sharma, Director General (Tourism)** in her key note address said that given tourism sector contributes close to a 5% to our GDP, any downturn in the sector significantly affects the whole of the economy. Smt. Sharma highlighted the various initiatives being undertaken by the Government to revive the sector and suggested that domestic tourism is going to be the backbone for recovery and get the sector moving for the time being. She also exuded confidence on the digital platforms suggesting “Digital provides expertise and can provide good solution, which is the need of the hour.”

Mr. Manish Amin, Co-founder & CIO, Yatra reiterated the importance of domestic tourism and highlighted that how in coming times it will help the sector to grow. He also pointed out ‘Staycation’ as one of the primary things has led the sector to grow and will lead on to do the same.

The event witnessed the launch of a report titled "Homestays in India: A Functional and Economic Impact Analysis", that finds the homestays’ contribution to the Indian economy was nearly Rs 2600 crore in 2019. The report also finds that digital platforms have played a phenomenal role in helping the homestay sector evolve in India, with 90% homestay owners reporting increase in customer outreach via online platforms, and 79% reporting increase in revenues. Digital platforms have also helped raise peak season occupancy (75% respondents) and increase in tariff rates (60% respondents). In fact, 67% of homestay owners reported that they originally started their business offline but later shifted to digital platforms given the benefits, while for many others online platforms enabled them to kickstart their journey as a micro entrepreneur.

According to the report, nearly 75% homestay hosts welcome tourists in their homes where they reside with their families and for nearly 50% this is the primary or sole source of income. Thus homestay are a critical value add to the rural economy and the government should provide special incentives to the micro entrepreneurs for supporting homestays.

Highlighting the role of homestays in India, **Mr. Amanpreet Bajaj, General Manager - Airbnb India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan** said micro-entrepreneurs such as homestay owners play an important role in the socio-economic sustenance of local communities and promoting homestays hosts will help generate livelihood for millions. He added “As the government embarks on re-calibrating and formulating policies to revive the sector, we believe that special emphasis and support should be extended to homestays and online travel platforms as they can play a critical role in the revival of tourism in the country.”

Other speakers at the event included Mr. Vipul Prakash, COO, MMT, James Lambert, Oxford Economics and Ms Mridula Tangirala, Head Tourism, Tata Trust.

About IMAI

The Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAI] is a young and vibrant association with ambitions of representing the entire gamut of digital businesses in India. It was established in 2004 by the leading online publishers, and in the last 16 years has come to effectively address the challenges facing the digital and online industry including mobile content and services, online publishing, mobile advertising, online advertising, ecommerce and mobile & digital payments among others.

Sixteen years after its establishment, the association is still the only professional industry body representing the online industry in India. The association is registered under the Societies Act and is a recognized charity in Maharashtra. With a membership of nearly 300 Indian and overseas companies, and with offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata, the association is well placed to work towards charting a growth path for the digital industry in India.

For queries please contact:

Nilotpal Chakravarti – AVP- IMAI

nilotpal@iamai.in / +91-98106-72906

Vishwapriya Bhattacharya

Vishwapriya@iamai.in / +9184471-66068