

WEBINAR 3 - REPORT

SHARING ECONOMY: HOW TO RECOVER THE LOST INDIAN TRADITION OF SHARING TO FIGHT POVERTY?

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BACKGROUND

Sharing economies are systems whereby underutilized resources are shared to decrease waste, either for a fee or free. While the sharing of goods is nothing new, digital platforms have allowed the scale of sharing to expand dramatically, as individuals can now costlessly access collective resources with ease.

Sharing economy in its current state does not fully embody all values of a circular economy. Sharing allows more intensive use of resources, thereby decreasing waste--a fundamental principle of the circular economy.

As the sharing economy continues to grow, it will be necessary for legislators and companies alike to ensure that sustainability and cooperation are at the forefront of sharing economy's mission.

Sharing economies can create deep and lasting social transformation, have the power to lift people out of poverty through job creation, and create more sustainable, impactful modes of exchange.

Sharing Economy has the potential to service up to 90million jobs in India's non farm economy, transact over USD 250 billion in volume of work and contribute 1.25% to India's GDP. Approximately 56% of new employment in India is being generated by the sharing economy.

In the Post Pandemic world, societies and economies need to rethink and innovate more sustainable ways of doing business that is less extractive. The world has seen that interference with biodiversity has a significant impact on human health. Sharing economy combining the principles of Circular Economy offers an exciting possible avenue for increased sustainability and equity.

In this series of 6 webinars, the third webinar was interested in the Sharing Economy and: How to recover the lost Indian tradition of sharing to fight poverty?

SPEAKERS

DR. RAJNI KANT SINGH



Dean of Business Administration at JSPM, Pune

Dr. Rajni Kant Singh is the Dean of Business Administration at JSPM, Pune who has over a decade of teaching and research experience with specializations in Marketing Management, Digital Marketing and Distribution Channels. Dr. Singh is the author of research paper "Sharing Economy – A new way of consumption in general and in India" with sub-theme 'Sustainable Marketing & Strategies

BHASKAR PANT



Cofounder at Policy Monks, Delhi

Bhaskar Pant is the Co-Founder of Policy Monks, a Delhi based research and advocacy organisation, working on areas such as Platform Economy and Digital Ecosystems, ICTs for Sustainable Development, Artificial Intelligence and The Future of Work. Bhaskar has substantial experience in driving public policy, social impact and stakeholders' management with state governments and the central government. He has advised and worked with policymakers, multilateral institutions and MNCs on a range of policy and regulatory issues with a strong focus on technology. He recently co-authored a report on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Sharing Economy in India. Bhaskar is a Chevening Scholar and holds an MSc in Public Policy and Administration from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

KEY THEMES OF DISCUSSION

1. Defining Sharing Economy

Speakers discussed the definition of Sharing Economy. Dr Singh defined sharing economy as the economic system in which assets and or services are shared between private individuals, either free or for a fee, typically by the means of the internet. Mr Pant added that it is a socio-economic system built around the sharing of resources based on the access and utilization of platforms that enable this sharing.

2. Landscape

Speakers took us through various business and leading industries in the sharing economy namely transportation (ola, uber, Rapido), hospitality (air BnB, Oyo), food & beverages (Zomato, Swiggy). Emerging sectors in the sharing economy include health care, commercial services and groceries. This has been enabled by the on-demand innovative technologies that reduce transaction costs of the exchange of goods and services.

3. Characteristics of Sharing Economy

Dr Singh highlighted that sharing economies are largely market-based, enable high impact capital, operate on crowd-based "networks" rather than centralized institution hierarchies and expand the freelance, contract and consulting job market taking a detour from traditional 9-5 jobs.

4. Impact of COVID 19 on Sharing Economy Workers in India

Mr. Pant shared that during the pandemic in India, the mobility sector suffered the most and incurred huge losses. Businesses like Uber, Ola, Swiggy and Zomato collaborated with platforms to provide essential services to remote areas. Gig workers (work force of the sharing economy) were in an economic crisis and more worried about their livelihood than health.

5. Benefits and Impact of Sharing Economy in India

Mr Pant highlighted that India's sharing economy has the potential to service up to 90 Million jobs in India and transact over 250 Million USD. Dr Singh added that sharing economies enable better resource utilization, more job creation, social mobility via new jobs, flexibility to operate at one's skill and convenience, transparency of business and accountability.

QUESTIONS

1. With healthcare being the need of the hour due to the pandemic, Is there a way in which the ideas of sharing economy can be integrated into health care?

Bhaskar Pant: One of the main drivers of sharing economy in the future will be healthcare, especially when it comes to healthcare data. From the Indian context, it's still not a practice that is there structurally. Once we have shared databases of patients, health histories and records, that will play a huge role in combatting health crises.

Telemedicine is an example of sharing economy where through a platform, health advice and instructions are provided by professionals to patients using technology. For people who cannot access health services due to accessibility, improved internet penetration will enable telemedicine to play an important role in the future of healthcare in India.

2. How can local governments and municipal bodies play a role in the sharing economy?

Bhaskar Pant: Specific cities have specific legislations for sharing economy platforms. For example, in some German cities, Uber is not allowed to work. In the short term accommodation sector, certain European cities have specific policies and taxes that need to be adhered to. In India, Goa is planning to introduce policies that will regulate the hospitality sharing economy in the state. The regulation of sharing economy is still at a very nascent stage in India. The sharing economy itself keeps evolving, so it is difficult for policy makers to implement regulations at the same speed. The Code of Social Security introduced by the Central Government is a very welcomed step and policies of this kind are yet to be introduced in western countries.

3. How to improve the trust factor of gig workers and customers in the sharing economy?

Dr Rajni Kant Singh To improve the trust factor, the user interface needs to be made stronger, the quality of platforms will need consistent improvement, internet penetration needs to be increased. The government, businesses and other stakeholders need to actively work on the quality of internet data. Improvement in these areas will lead to a direct increase in the trust factor in the gig economy.

4. What is your stance on the role of gender in the sharing economy?

Bhaskar Pant: There is not a lot of literature that discusses the gendered impact of sharing economy in India. When it comes to numbers in the service industry, as part of the sharing economy, you'll see a lot more women gig workers compared to the mobility sector or food delivery sector. The flexibility offered by sharing economy is enabling reduction in the gender inequality in some sectors in the sharing economy.

5. Can you shed some light on the rural side of sharing economy?

Dr Rajni Kant Singh: The penetration of the internet has drastically increased in India, the amount of internet consumed in rural India is much more than what it was ten years ago. The price of the internet is being subsidised which is making the internet affordable to the masses and the possibility of introducing and increasing the sharing economy in rural India.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS



FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a non-profit German foundation committed to the values of democracy and social justice



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CHINTAN ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND ACTION GROUP

Chintan is a non-profit that works on sustainability through the lens of solid and hazardous waste, and air pollution.

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