

# Pro-Poor Tourism as an Antecedent of Poverty Alleviation: An Assessment of the Local Community Perception

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**Abstract** *Tourism is a creative instrument for poverty reduction. Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) provides economic, socio-cultural and even environmental benefits to the globally impoverished community. The main goal of this study is to demystify the constructs of Pro-Poor Tourism and investigate the local community perception regarding the role of tourism in poverty alleviation. The present study attempts to understand the development of pro-poor tourism from social, cultural and economic dimensions by delving into the perceptions of the locally disadvantaged community providing tourism services in the Kashmir region of India. Primary and secondary data have been collected from the targeted respondents through a structured questionnaire for conducting this research. The study areas that have been selected for conducting the present study are Gulmarg (Study Area A) and Pahalgam (Study Area B) from the Kashmir region. The data collected were analysed through descriptive statistics, factor analysis and regression analysis to draw reliable and representative interpretations. The findings of this study may help the strategy makers and other community groups develop effective policy interventions for developing creative tourism practices as an anti-poverty programme that has local and global implications for promoting tourism for Poverty alleviation, ensuring sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *Pro-Poor Tourism, Tourism Development, Poverty Alleviation, Local Community*

## INTRODUCTION

Poverty alleviation has become one of the foremost issues for many countries, including India. To eradicate it is one of the most significant global challenges. In many countries, tourism is an essential contributor to economic development and accomplishing the Millennium Development Goal (UNWTO, 2011). It is one of the foremost economic sectors, contributing to the development of world trade and boosting prosperity. When poverty reduction became a significant challenge for the world, the United Nations came up with Millennium Development Goals in the 1990s to reduce the world's extreme poverty level to half by 2015 (Zhao, 2016). In the Millennium Development Goals, several targets are set for some of the significant dimensions of poverty like hunger, access to drinking water, daily income, maternal

mortality, education and a range of other priorities (UN GA, 2000; World Bank, 2005). Poverty means a lack of essential capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a clinic or school to go to, not having the land to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities (IMF & IDA, 1999).

## PRO-POOR TOURISM: MEANINGS

Pro-Poor Tourism argues that tourism has a broad range of impacts on the poor (Winters et al., 2013). Amongst those, financial, livelihood, access to human, physical, social and natural capital, cultural values, optimism, pride and

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participation and vulnerability to risk and exploitation are some of the aspects which need to be considered. (Ashley et al., 2001). Pro-Poor Tourism is broadly defined as “tourism that generates net benefits for the poor (Manwa & Manwa (2014)). This encompasses economic, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions” (Ashley et al., 1999; WTO, 2002). It is neither a product nor a sector. Any form of tourism can be pro-poor. DFID (1999) report argues that PPT is not necessarily an appropriate intervention for poverty alleviation in all countries. This indicates that developing countries with high potential for tourism development can apply tourism as a poverty alleviation tool; however, it will be feasible only when there is a high level of community participation in the tourism process.

Local Community involvement plays a pivotal role in tourism development, as it has a symbiotic impact on the community towards employability and revenue generation (Kishnani, 2019). This helps alleviate the poverty of other stakeholders involved in the tourism process, either directly or indirectly. In this study, the main emphasis is laid on tourism managed and controlled by the community. With the active participation of both the community and the industry, there is a high impact on the community’s livelihood and local ways of life. These local people boost their economy and generate employment (Bansal, Kansal & Walia, 2018).

Attempts have been made to link tourism with poverty reduction efforts in many countries like Africa, South America and the Caribbean, as observed from the studies of Folarin and Adeniyi (2019), Mthembu and Mutambara (2018) and Zhao et al. (2019). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies in the context of Jammu and Kashmir. As per the findings of the Tendulkar Committee, there was a decrease of 2.8% in the population living below the poverty line in Jammu and Kashmir from 13.2% in 2004-05 to 10.4% in 2011-12 (Jyoti, 2013). Due to the contribution of the service sector, especially the tourism industry, poverty has mitigated to some extent in Jammu and Kashmir. Based on this, the study investigates the host community perception regarding the role of tourism in poverty alleviation in Jammu and Kashmir. Very few studies have reported local community participation in poverty alleviation.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

Tourism is considered an influential supporter of socio-economic development, particularly in developing countries (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2006; Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Although tourism has been adopted as a universal developmental option, still it is a subject of intense debate, the extent to which economic and social benefits inevitably follow the introduction and promotion of the tourism sector (Hall, 2007).

The most compelling reason for adopting tourism as a developmental strategy is its potential contribution to the local or national economy, as well as to the balance of payments (Stabler, Papatheodorou & Sinclair, 2010). Pro-poor tourism refers to the development of tourism so that it contributes to the cause of poverty alleviation. It has been defined as “tourism that results in increased benefits for poor people (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004). Further, it explains pro-poor tourism in terms of the type of local benefits achieved like economic, other livelihood benefits (such as physical, social or cultural), and less tangible benefits (Gans, 1971). Zhao and Ritchie (2007) propose an integrative framework for Pro-Poor Tourism, which states that any effort for development to be effective should consider three factors, i.e., opportunity, empowerment and security. Pro-Poor Tourism is not a specific product or sector of tourism, rather an overall approach that aims to unlock opportunities for economic gain, other livelihood benefits or engagement of the poor in the decision-making process (Ashley, Roe & Goodwin, 2001). Pro-Poor Tourism tries to provide a chance to the poor for their involvement in the tourism market by investing in it through human resource involvement or skill (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008; Zhao et al., 2019). Therefore, Pro-Poor Tourism aims to open up access for the poor to the tourism sector, thereby providing them with a vital source of income (Ashley et al., 2001).

Tourism is also widely considered a labour-intensive industry and hence an effective source of employment in destination areas, whether as direct employment in hotels, restaurants, or through indirect and informal employment (Scheyvens, 2002). For tourism to provide more jobs, entrepreneurship, and income generation, collaboration is required between the local businesses and policymakers to ensure faster tourism development (Mthembu & Mutambara, 2018). In some cases, poor people are not the beneficiaries of tourism. Instead, those already in a tourism system position take advantage of PPT-related opportunities (Truong, 2013). Besides economic development and employment, tourism also brings infrastructural development to destinations (Gupta & Vijay, 2013). The growth of tourism creates a need for improved infrastructure in developing economies. In African countries, tourism development has a high-level impact on poverty alleviation and has been considered a potential poverty reduction tool for the future (Folarin & Adeniyi, 2019). Modernised transportation systems, water supplies and improvement in sanitation arrangements; better access to roads, airports, telephone systems, and other public utilities may have to be extended to realise the benefits of PPT in these countries (WTO, 2002b).

More often than not, the government and community representatives operate in asymmetric organisational structures. For community actors to acquire some leverage in their negotiations with the administration, they have to

organise themselves into larger collectives to bridge the local and regional or national interests (Garg, 2017). It could be argued that all negotiation processes reflect prevailing power relations, and a community-based management model could mitigate such conflict, facilitate participation between communities and authorities at all levels and, eventually, benefit enterprise creation (Boonzaaier, 2012). Public-Private Partnerships are essential tools to ensure stakeholder engagement in a burgeoning economy, especially between government, large enterprises, and the local community (Panday & Joshi, 2016).

## SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY (SET) AND INTERACTIONIST THEORY

Social Exchange Theory holds that people or communities tend to trade their support for projects in exchange for the benefits they stand to get from those initiatives. In other words, the residents' support for tourism will depend mainly on the benefits that they get or are likely to get from tourism. Hence, by weighing the economic, social, cultural, and environmental concerns, residents of a community decide whether to support tourism ventures. This is cited in the study by Panday and Joshi (2016).

Interactionist Theory focuses on meaning, identity, social relationships, and sub-cultures at a destination. It is based on the idea that human beings interact with one another, give meaning to themselves, others, and the world around them based on earnings to make decisions and take action in their everyday lives. According to Interactionist Theory, humans do not passively respond to the world around them. There should be a collaboration between the different tourism stakeholders to better the local community and the poverty alleviation of the community (Gore, 2019).

## STUDY AREA: NATURE AND SCALE OF POVERTY

According to the 2011 Census, Jammu and Kashmir rank 19<sup>th</sup> in population with 12541302 souls, i.e. 1.25 crore. Its area is 222236 Sq. Km. The state is agrarian and backward in the industrial sector (Sofi, 2014). The share of agriculture and allied sector has also decreased from 51.05% in 1980-81 to 31.51% in 1999-2000, 27.11% in 2005-2006 and 22.89% in 2010-2011 (Digest of Statistics, 2013).

As per the findings of the Tendulkar Committee, 10.4% of the population were living below the poverty line in Jammu in 2011-2012. The eastern part of the state accounts for a large part of its impoverished population. The three districts of Gulmarg, Kupwara and Pahalgam together account for one-third of the total poor (Bhandari & Chakraborty, 2016). Tendulkar Committee report reflected the impoverished conditions of J&K both in rural and urban settings along

with other Indian states based on NSSO 61<sup>st</sup> round 2004-2005. Jammu and Kashmir have 13.2% of the population living below the poverty line. Against this backdrop, this study tries to locate the role of Pro-Poor Tourism in the poverty alleviation of the local community.



Source: www.travelinkashmir.com

Fig. 1: Study Area Map

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the theoretical understandings of pro-poor tourism as a sustainable tourism practice.
- To measure the underlying dimensions of pro-poor tourism.
- To study the perception of the local community about the role of pro-poor tourism as an intervention to alleviate poverty.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study combines exploratory, qualitative, quantitative and descriptive methods and examines qualitative and quantitative data collected by adopting a mixed approach research design. This study aims to understand Pro-Poor Tourism as a creative touristic practice and gain support for the theoretical underpinnings by conducting an empirical investigation into the areas identified for carrying out the study and empirically check the impact of PPT on poverty alleviation.

## SURVEY DESIGN

The study was carried out in Gulmarg (Study Area A) and Pahalgam (Study Area B) of the Kashmir region in India. Both the areas are known for their tourism resources and

offer rich tourism products to tourists like pilgrimage tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, leisure tourism, wellness tourism, and sports tourism. These destinations are simultaneously inhabited by poor communities, whose livelihood directly or indirectly depend on touristic activities and tourism income (Gupta & Raina, 2009; Najar, 2018).

Tourist arrivals to Kashmir were 611354, 316424 and 43059 in 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively, during August to December. In 2019 from August to December, tourist arrivals in Kashmir were reduced by 86% due to political instability (Bhat & Choudhury, 2019; The WIRE, 2020). These destinations possess tremendous tourism potential, but they fail to attract high tourist arrivals (Najar & Saini, 2018).

**Table 1: Tourist Arrivals in Kashmir**

Year (During August -December)	Tourist Arrivals
2017	611354
2018	316424
2019	43059

Source: Bhat and Choudhury (2019).

## SURVEY INSTRUMENTATION

Besides conducting interviews, 170 self-structured questionnaires based on a 5-point Likert scale were used to analyse the respondents' perceptions (local villagers, tea stall owners, food outlet retailers, provisional stores, pony operators, roadside vendors, and guides. These sample units were selected based on their main contribution towards the various tourism services at these destinations. These service providers belong to the local community of Pahalgam and Gulmarg. The sample size was based on the Krejcie, and Morgan (1970) sample size calculation formula, by which the sample size calculated was 170 respondents to appraise the effect of tourism on poverty alleviation. Since the respondents were spread across the length and breadth of the destinations and give an equal representation, the random sampling method was used to select the respondents. Out of 170 responses, only 100 responses were found useful for the analysis.

The self-structured questionnaire was developed based on the interactions with the local community and other stakeholders and some other similar studies undertaken by Wang (2006); Panday and Joshi (2016). The instrument comprises two sections. Section A consists of demographic information, and Section B consists of the statements to evaluate the effect of tourism on poverty alleviation. The scale is ranged from 1 to 5 (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2

= disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree). The validity of the developed scale was checked after cross-checking it with tourism industry stakeholders and tourism academicians.

For the qualitative assessment, in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the grass-root level perception. The objective of conducting open-ended interviews with six categories of the local community regarding tourism's contribution to poverty alleviation and employment opportunities was to enrich the current study and strengthen the investigation of the community perception regarding the role of tourism in poverty mitigation. The interview checklist was prepared after thorough literature scanning and review of the study of Yin (2011) to reach the ground level inferences. The idea of conducting a qualitative investigation was to support the quantitative assessment conducted in the study's first phase.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis and interpretation estimate the significance of the results concerning the research problem. It is the organisation of raw data to extract useful information. The analysis of the data has been done by using SPSS version 17.0. The statistical tools used in the study to measure the various constructs are the mean score, standard deviation and percentages. The dimension evaluation is done to identify the most critical areas where the intervention is indispensable. To identify the underlying dimensions of Pro-Poor Tourism, Factor Analysis has been performed. Regression Analysis has been used to achieve the research objectives and understand the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable.

In Study area A, Male and females constitute 82.4% and 17.6%, respectively; 3.5% are aged up to 18 years, 50% aged between 18-30 years, 39.4% respondents aged between 30 to 50 years and 7.1% respondents aged above 50 years. About 28.2% of the respondents have a monthly income of less than Rs 10,000, 40% have an income of Rs 10,000 - Rs 20,000 and 26.5% have an income of Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000, and 5.29% of the respondents had a monthly income of above Rs 30,000. In Study Area B, Male and females constitute 79.4% and 20.6%, respectively; 5% are aged up to 18 years, 40% are aged between 18 to 30 years, 35% respondents aged between 30 to 50 years and 20% respondents aged above 50 years. About 40% of the respondents have a monthly income of less than Rs 8,000, 30% have an income of Rs 10,000 - Rs 20,000 and 25% have an income of Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000, and 5% of the respondents had a monthly income of above Rs 30,000.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Economic Interventions as pro-poverty measures	4.4512	.24331	1
Socio-Cultural interventions as pro-poverty measures	4.0221	.27979	3
Environmental interventions as pro-poverty measures	4.0647	.35492	2
TOTAL	4.1793	.20549	

Source: Primary data.

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 include the mean values of recognised factors of Pro-Poor Tourism. From analysing the data, it can be incidental that respondents agree that tourism helps in reducing poverty. According to the respondents' opinion, economic interventions are the most significant factors for alleviating poverty in the area. Environmental and socio-cultural interventions are the second and third significant and contributing factors.

## RELIABILITY AND NORMALITY ANALYSIS

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.793, which is greater than 0.50; hence, it is reliable.

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.793	16

Source: Primary data.

In addition, the normality test conducted with all variables passed the range of -1.96 to +1.96 for both skewness and kurtosis. Thus, the data follows the normal distribution.

## FACTOR ANALYSIS

The measures of effects of Pro-Poor Tourism were evaluated by Factor Analysis. Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to examine the appropriateness of Factor Analysis. High value (.665 > 0.5) indicates factor Analysis is appropriate.

**Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.765	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	293.810
	Df	120
	Sig.	.000

Source: Primary data.

Factor analysis of 20 items of pro-poor tourism was done to check the grouping of responses into the hypothesised quality attributes, and later on, these 20 items were reduced down to 15 items

**Table 5: Factor Analysis Results for Pro-Poor Tourism**

Name of the Factor	Factor Wise Dimension	Factor Loading Values	Communalities	Eigen Values	%age of Variance
<b>1. Economic interventions as pro-poor measures</b>	a. Tourism has increased the purchasing power of local people	.749	.721	7.873	27.218
	b. Tourism has increased the employment opportunities for local people	.651	.611		
	c. Tourism has increased investment opportunities in our area	.712	.571		
	d. Tourism has led to better infrastructural facilities in our area	.767	.661		
	e. Tourism has improved the level of income of local people	.601	.713		
<b>2. Socio-cultural interventions as pro-poor measures</b>	a. Tourism has brought positive attitudinal change	.671	.634	2.249	12.679
	b. Tourism has reduced social conflict in the local area	.761	.612		
	c. Tourism has led to the protection of the local heritage	.527	.673		
	d. Tourism has empowered the local women in the area	.531	.755		
	e. Tourism has led to mutual understanding between the guests and hosts	.537	.541		

Name of the Factor	Factor Wise Dimension	Factor Loading Values	Communalities	Eigen Values	%age of Variance
3. Environmental interventions as pro-poor measures	a. Tourism has increased the awareness about the importance of natural environment in the local area	.891	.876	1.376	8.012
	b. Tourism has contributed to the conservation initiatives of the natural resources of area	.918	.868		
	c. Tourism has reduced the dependence on the forest resource in the local area	.909	.871		
	d. Tourism increased the natural appeal of the local area	.581	.521		
	e. Tourism has led to better waste management facilities in the local area	.749	.681		
Cumulative %age of Variance			65.352		

It is apparent from the Factor analysis given in Table 4 that three (3) major factors have been identified that impact pro-poor tourism.

**Table 6: Regression Model for the effect of Pro-Poor Tourism on Community's Poverty Alleviation (Model Summary)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.638 <sup>a</sup>	.512	.513	.35847

a. Predictors: (Constant), the effect of pro-poor tourism on community's Poverty alleviation.

**Table 7: Regression Coefficients**

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Effects of pro-poor tourism on community's poverty alleviation	.0637	25.568	.0000

The results revealed in Table 5 and Table 6 suggest that poverty alleviation is a function of Pro-Poor Tourism development. The dependent variable is poverty alleviation, and the independent variable is Pro-Poor Tourism development based on the mean values. The results indicate that for a 1% increase in Pro-Poor Tourism development activity, the poverty alleviation accelerates by 51.2% (R Square = 0.512). The results further reveal that for a one-unit increase in Pro-Poor Tourism development, the poverty alleviation accelerates by 0.637 units as indicated by the  $\beta$  value ( $\beta$  value = 0.637). The results suggest a positive effect of Pro-Poor Tourism development on poverty alleviation.

In the qualitative assessment of the study, the data was collected with the help of a designed interview checklist, and the interviews with 06 stakeholders were conducted. The views obtained through the interview were transcribed in English from Hindi and local languages. The objective

of conducting open-ended interviews with some of the participants was to enrich the presents study and strengthen the investigation of the community perception regarding the creative role of tourism in poverty mitigation. The idea of conducting the qualitative evaluations was to support the quantitative results.

## QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

### Perceived Impacts of Tourism as an Anti Poverty Intervention

Tourism has positive and negative economic, environmental and social implications for the destination. The following part of the study reveals the notions of tourism as an anti-poverty tool as held by some of the participants at the study site.

### Economic Interventions as Anti Poverty Measures

Data received from the local community has revealed that the local community appreciates the economic impacts of tourism. The respondents believed that tourism benefits them in both direct and indirect ways. Residents believed that the local community gets more job opportunities due to tourism, which has triggered the economic development in that region (Isaacs, 2018). Infrastructure development and livelihood improvements of local people are the significant tourism contributions highlighted by residents.

### Akbar, a tea stall owner as well as the resident of Gulmarg, stated that

"Tourism has made good contributions in the development of his village. The tourism operations of Gulmarg have been framed in such a way that they benefit the locals of the destination. All the showrooms here (Gulmarg) are of small

scale, just like other shops, so that there may not be any unequal distribution of wealth among rich and poor. There were only small houses here in the past, but now big buildings can be seen due to the tourism industry's contribution. Even some selected houses in villages near Gulmarg have been converted into guesthouses with the government providing necessary facilities under homestay scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India".

#### **Abdul Aziz, a local driver, shared that**

"We do not allow tourists to visit local places of Gulmarg in any non-local transport. They are bound to hire local vehicles for the purpose. The non-local transporters drop them (tourists) at Tangmarg, and after that, they have to hire the local transportation to visit the different places here (Gulmarg). Even though the hotels ought to receive the guests, they must use 50% of the local transport besides their own. We have high hopes and positive outlook of developing tourism in our region".

### **Socio-Cultural Interventions as Anti Poverty Measures**

The local community perceives positive effects about the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Locals indicated that tourism has contributed to improving their livelihood and preserving religious and cultural heritage in their village. However, many respondents are very much concerned about the negative impacts of tourism, like changes in traditional culture and the influence on the younger generations. Nevertheless, on the whole, its benefits outweigh losses.

#### **Afaq, a food outlet retailer, stated that**

Tourism has created more positive cultural exchange between inbound tourists and we people (residents). Tourists love to eat our traditional food items, particularly Wazwan. Tourists also purchase dry fruits, walnuts, apples and carry them to their countries.

#### **Nazir Ahmad, a local guide, stated that**

Tourism in the region has developed a network with people from different countries; as a result, local people sometimes receive support from these tourists. For example, sometimes tourists provide money and clothes to children. Tourists love to mix up with we people (locals) and inculcate our culture during their stay. They (tourists) are fond of Kashmiri handicrafts, Shawls, phirans and purchase them as well. We often see tourists dressed up in Kashmiri traditional dresses.

### **Environmental Interventions as Anti Poverty Measures**

As far as environmental impacts are concerned, the locals believe that tourism supports their natural heritage. However, traffic congestion and noise were found to be the negative aspects of tourism. The tourism operations of Gulmarg have a thrust on eco-tourism. For the accommodation of the tourists, eco-friendly structures have been developed by the local hoteliers. The significant adverse environmental impacts reported by the respondents were waste management problems.

#### **View of Jahangir Ahmad, the trekking guide from Gulmarg**

Waste materials such as mineral water bottles, beer bottles, cans and plastic bags left by the tourist groups hurt the local environment. However, some local measures are taken to minimise these impacts. Periodic village cleanup programmes are taken up, and the rubbish bins have been placed at appropriate locations.

#### **The observation of Mr Abdul Karim, a local lodge operator**

Waste materials of the hotels are properly treated through Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), and every effort is being made to preserve and protect the natural environment. Before few months some constructions were being made here, which were later demolished to avoid congestion. Vehicles causing pollution are not allowed here.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study is based on examining qualitative and quantitative data collected by adopting a mixed research design approach. A theoretical framework was developed based on an extensive review of published literature and identifying the research gap. The study was envisaged to understand the role of Pro-Poor Tourism as a sustainable approach towards poverty alleviation. This was facilitated with underlying three main objectives: (a) to explore the theoretical understandings of pro-poor tourism as a sustainable tourism practice, (b) to measure the underlying dimensions of pro-poor tourism, (c) to study the perception of the local community about the role of pro-poor tourism as an intervention to alleviate poverty. To achieve these objectives, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted. Review of published literature and interaction with prominent professionals, academicians, and industrialists remained instrumental

in designing questionnaire and interview checklists. The interview checklist was administered among different local vendors.

An empirical investigation is done to study the relationship between Pro-Poor Tourism and Poverty Alleviation. A survey instrument (self-structured questionnaire) was developed based on validated constructs, and qualitative analysis was carried out in support of quantitative assessment. It was administered among a selected sample of local community stakeholders, which include local vendors. The survey instrument was deliberated, pre-tested through face validity and instrumental validation. The instrument items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 100 stakeholders actively participated and responded to the survey instrument. It can be concluded that Pro-Poor Tourism positively contributes to poverty alleviation of impoverished communities of study areas A and B, and it plays a significant role in improving the quality of life of the local community.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the quantitative regression results, it can be concluded that Pro-Poor Tourism has a positive effect on poverty alleviation of poor communities, as it is also consistent with the Social Exchange Theory, which states that the residents' support for tourism will depend on a large extent on the benefits that they get or are likely to get from tourism. Therefore, in support of this theory, the pro-poor tourism activities are being supported by the local community to better their lives, which is verified with the regression results. Also, the Interactionist Theory is based on the idea that human beings interact with one another, give meaning to themselves, others, and the world around us based on earnings to make decisions and take action in their everyday lives. All the touristic activities and services are maximally handled by the involvement of human beings or brigades. This interaction only happens when there is constant up-gradation, involvement and development of all segments of the society. The local community should be involved in tourism decision making. Then only there can be proper interaction and collaboration between the different stakeholders of tourism that can help in poverty alleviation and has a win-win situation at the destination for all.

Destinations across the world are seeking alternative solutions to shared challenges in the development of tourism. The same is the case with Kashmir. Kashmir is a naturally and culturally rich tourist destination. Tourism is a vital component of the Kashmiri economy, which is embedded with many resources that throw up scope for practising creative processes in tourism in the framework of pro-poor tourism development. Against the above backdrop,

this study recommends utilising tourism creatively to build it on more pro-poor lines in Kashmir.

It is quite possible to include marginalised stakeholders in delivering tourism services like establishing tea stalls, handicrafts kiosks, and marketing of indigenous products. To address the proposition of poverty alleviation through tourism, it is imperative to create a high-level awareness of tourism potential and enhance the knowledge of stakeholders across the entire spectrum towards the importance and role of PPT practices. The government involvement at every level of the tourist cycle is necessary, including the local community supporting the tourism development to harness its benefits. Without alterations in policymaking, pragmatic pro-poor tourism measures will bring only limited benefits if there is no practical involvement at the ground level. In addition to this, local communities must train and upgrade their skills to better their interests.

## SCOPE FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATION

Due to the lack of time and resources, the research could not cover more destinations or a more significant number of research participants and is limited to the perceptions of limited respondents only and can be conducted to include the perception of other stakeholders like hotels, travel bodies, DMOS. The study has been conducted at the Kashmir division only and can be explored further in other parts of the state or country.

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