

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM IN KRABI PROVINCE: POTENTIAL IN COASTAL FISHERY AREAS

Suwanan Chuthungyor¹, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pongsak Laudee²,
Asst. Prof. Dr. Weerasak Kongrithi³

¹Graduate Student, Faculty of Environmental Management, Prince of Songkla University

²Lecturer, Faculty of Innovative Agriculture and Fisheries,
Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus

³Lecturer, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Management Sciences, Prince of Songkla University,
Surat Thani Campus

*Corresponding Author E-mail: yaynong0801@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to examine the potential and management models of community-based tourism (CBT) based on fishery resources in Krabi Province. The qualitative data on area potential, human potential, management potential, and participation potential of three coastal fishery areas in Krabi were collected from key informants through interviews and focus group discussions. The survey data were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The results reveal that CBT grounded in fishery resources serves as a key mechanism for generating income while simultaneously conserving local resources. The framework is composed of four main components: Area Potential - the area is distinguished by its abundant coastal resources, including seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and active traditional small-scale fishing practices. Human Potential- the community possesses rich local knowledge of traditional fisheries, which has been passed down through generations and is currently adapted for tourism activities such as crab breeding, crab trapping, and coastal ecosystem studies. Management Potential- the community features an established tourism committee, transparent income management systems, a community fisheries charter, and collaborative resource-restoration initiatives like blue swimming crab banks. Participation Potential- the community actively engages in collective decision-making, establishes regulations for resource use, monitors impacts, and ensures fair benefit sharing. Collectively, these potentials can be developed into ecotourism sites that align with the BCG economic model and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: *Community-Based Tourism, Coastal Fisheries Areas, Potentials.*

Introduction

Currently, community-based tourism (CBT) is widely recognized as a development approach that promotes a balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions, with communities playing a central role in determining the use of local resources (Goodwin, 2016). This form of development is

particularly important for coastal areas, which are ecologically sensitive and serve as traditional livelihoods for local communities. In the context of fishing communities, which rely on marine resources both for subsistence and as a cultural foundation, CBT requires consideration of multiple interrelated dimensions, including social, geographical, and economic aspects.

Krabi Province possesses diverse natural resources and maintains rich, environmentally friendly ecosystems. The provincial economy is driven by two main sectors: 1) tourism and 2) agriculture and fisheries. Fishing has been a traditional occupation for residents due to the province's geographical location along the Andaman Sea. It provides both household food and primary income for fishing families. Traditional fishing practices reflect the community's way of life, using local knowledge and ingenuity to construct fishing gear from locally available materials, following sustainable practices that coexist with nature. By adapting and communicating these practices, they can be transformed into community-based tourism activities, generating supplementary income, as contemporary tourists increasingly show interest in authentic experiences and traditional ways of life (Khongkun, Treesuk, & Chairerk, 2025).

Furthermore, knowledge of community-based tourism serves as a tool for resource management by the community and for the community, while also acting as a bridge between the community and tourists. This facilitates the exchange of cultural knowledge, fosters local pride, and ultimately promotes sustainable well-being (Krabi Provincial Administration, 2024).

Community-based tourism that leverages fisheries resources in Krabi is a strategy that promotes the conservation of natural resources and generates income for local communities. It plays a critical role in supporting the local economy and preserving local identity. Following the decline of the COVID-19 pandemic, communities have collaborated to revive the economy through tourism activities, aiming to promote tourism and create income opportunities. In addition, Krabi Province has implemented a five-year tourism development plan (2023–2027) to establish itself as a high-value, internationally recognized destination based on sustainable management with the participation of all stakeholders (Krabi Provincial Tourism and Sports Office, 2021). By enhancing community capacity to adapt to tourists, communities have demonstrated enthusiasm in developing community-based tourism attractions and preparing related enterprises. However, CBT still faces challenges, such as managing tourism impacts and ensuring sustainable development. Therefore, the participation of all stakeholders, including support from relevant agencies, is essential to promote sustainable CBT in Krabi (Priyanat Buathongchan et al., 2023).

Given these factors, studying Community-Based Tourism in Krabi Province: Potential in coastal fishery areas. Such research helps to understand the potential of area potential, human potential, management potential, and participation potential. This article aims to examine the potential of fisheries-based community tourism in Krabi Province, providing fundamental information for the sustainable development of CBT in coastal fisheries areas over the long term.

Research Objectives

To study the potential of community-based tourism grounded in fisheries resources in Krabi Province.

Theoretical Framework

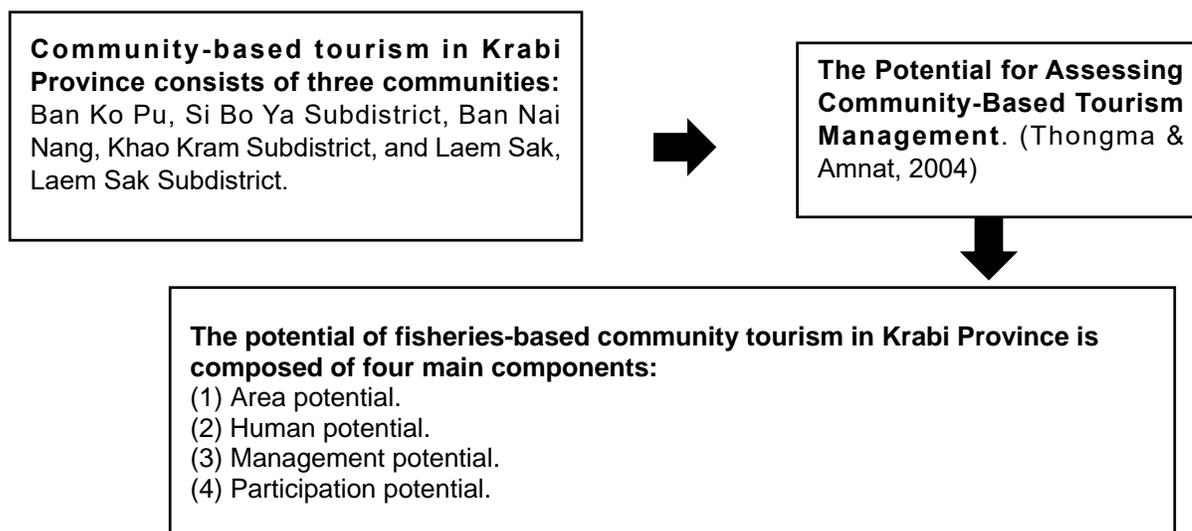


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

Study areas: Ban Ko Pu, Si Bo Ya Subdistrict, Ban Nai Nang, Khao Kram Subdistrict, and Laem Sak, Laem Sak Subdistrict, Krabi Province.

Representative samples: Qualitative data for this study were collected through interviews with the study was conducted in three coastal communities in Krabi Province: Ban Ko Pu, Si Bo Ya Subdistrict (8 participants), Ban Nai Nang, Khao Kram Subdistrict (8 participants), and Laem Sak, Laem Sak Subdistrict (8 participants). A purposive sampling strategy was used to select 24 participants with diverse roles and expertise relevant to fisheries-based community tourism. The participants were categorized as follows:

1) Community Leaders: Individuals with knowledge of fisheries-based community tourism and at least five years of residence in the community: 1 person per community.

2) Tourism Development Officers/Subdistrict Administrative Organization Officials: Individuals involved in local tourism policy with at least one year of professional experience: 1 person per community.

3) Local Knowledge Experts: Community elders with traditional knowledge of fisheries and a minimum of 20 years of residency: 1 person per community.

4) Local Fishermen Involved in Community Tourism: Individuals knowledgeable about traditional fisheries and local tourism resources, with at least one year of experience managing tourism routes: 2 persons per community.

5) Community-Based Tourism Entrepreneurs: Operators of tourism-related businesses such as shops, homestays, restaurants, or accommodations with at least one year of operational experience: 3 people per community.

6) After obtaining information on tourism management potential from interviews with key informants, the data were compiled and summarized for use in formulating recommendations through a focus group method. The activity emphasizes community participation and aims to reach a consensus on the information gathered.

Data analysis: This section presents the information obtained from interviews regarding community-based tourism potential, which comprises four key components: (1) area potential, (2) human potential, (3) management potential, and (4) participatory potential (Thongma & Amnat, 2004). To ensure that the data best aligned with the research objectives, the researcher compiled and processed information obtained from interviews, observations, and focused group discussions, organizing the data and employing triangulation to verify its accuracy. Once the raw data were collected, they were analyzed to identify the factors contributing to success by using content analysis and concluding.

Research Results

General Information on Krabi Fisheries-Based Community Tourism.

The fishing settlements in Krabi Province - particularly Ban Nai Nang, Laem Sak, and Ban Koh Pu - have deep historical roots shaped by long-standing connections to the sea. The early settlers, consisting of Thai, Chinese, and Malay groups originating from Penang, Malaysia, migrated to the area aboard sailing junks in search of livelihood opportunities in fisheries. Their migration was motivated by the abundant marine resources, including blue swimming crabs, shrimp, shellfish, and various fish species. A defining characteristic of these communities is their cultural diversity, as three ethnic groups - Thai, Chinese, and Muslim - have long coexisted. These groups have exchanged cultural practices and local knowledge related to everyday life, especially traditional fishing skills such as constructing crab traps, operating nearshore trawl nets, and using seasonal fish-catching techniques. Historically, livelihoods were based solely on small-scale subsistence fishing using non-destructive gear, which contributed to the long-term abundance of marine resources in the area.

In contemporary times, these communities developed resource management approaches that integrate with community-based tourism. Tourists are invited to participate in conservation-oriented activities such as crab breeding, constructing artificial fish habitats, and mangrove reforestation. These initiatives not only generate supplemental income but also reinforce conservation awareness within the community.

The Potential for Fisheries-Based Community Tourism

Area Potential: Based on interviews, it was found that Krabi Province is a coastal area along the Andaman Sea, distinguished by its abundant marine natural resources, including coral reefs, seagrass, and

mangrove forests. In particular, the communities of Laem Sak, Ban Nai Nang, and Ban Koh Pu have developed community-based tourism centered on fisheries resources, while preserving a long-standing tradition of local fishing livelihoods. Fisherfolk in these areas have adapted from relying on commercial fishing to using marine resources as cultural and ecological capital to generate income through educational and conservation-focused tourism. This has led to the development of community-based tourism management rooted in fisheries resources, which aligns with the concepts of Bioeconomy, emphasizing the maximization of value from biological resources; Circular Economy, focusing on optimal resource use through reuse and recycling; and Green Economy, aiming for balanced economic, social, and environmental development while minimizing impacts on the planet. Evidence from key information:

“The Nai Nang community is a local fishing community that has transformed its unique identity into a community-based tourism model. The community is home to coastal resources, mangrove forests, a small beach, and a rock art heritage site (Khao Garos), which attracts visitors and supports activities that showcase local fishing practices. In addition, the community has a network of community enterprises that manage tourism programs and homestays.” [Interviewee No. 2]



Figure 2: Environmental Abundance of the Area

Human Potential: Interviews revealed that community-based tourism centered on fisheries resources is a process that prioritizes community-led management, as local residents possess knowledge, wisdom, and cultural practices directly related to fisheries resources and the coastal environment. In Krabi Province, the Ban Nai Nang, Ban Koh Pu, and Laem Sak communities exemplify fishing communities that have successfully adapted from subsistence fishing to community-based tourism management. The “potential of community members” is a key factor in promoting sustainable tourism development. Most community-based tourism initiatives follow a co-management approach, with communities taking the lead in determining development strategies and managing tourism resources in collaboration with external

organizations, including subdistrict administrative organizations and government tourism agencies. Evidence from key information:

“Laem Sak community connects fishery resources with experiential tourism by organizing activities that allow visitors to learn about crab trapping, releasing aquatic species, and boating to observe coastal ecosystems. Community members play a central role in planning, managing, and operating tourism activities, to create sustainable benefits for the community—economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally” [Interviewee No. 4]



Figure 3: Wisdom of net sewing

Management Potential: Interviews revealed that tourism management in all three communities stemmed from a community-based awareness of marine resource conservation and the potential for generating alternative income, using a community-based tourism approach. The communities established a tourism management committee, elected by the villagers, to oversee and guide the development of tourism based on fisheries resources. The committee's responsibilities were clearly divided among the homestay group, the seafood group, the tour boat group, and the youth volunteer group. Tourism revenue was managed transparently, with a portion allocated to a marine resource conservation fund, including activities such as releasing aquatic animals and maintaining the coastline. A key strength of the three communities lies in the cooperation and participation of local people, as well as support from government agencies, local administrative organizations, and educational institutions. Furthermore, the communities established a fishing community charter to serve as a guideline for the conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources. Evidence from key information:

“Ban Koh Pu community focuses on processing seafood products to increase economic value. However, the community also regulates access to resource areas and designates specific zones for tourism activities to prevent degradation of the marine ecosystem. The community has a transparent management system and clear rules on revenue sharing, ensuring fair distribution of benefits within the community” [Interviewee No. 15]



Figure 4: Establishment of a Blue Swimming Crab Bank

Participation Potential: Interviews revealed that community participation in tourism resource management is central to sustainable community-based tourism development, as communities are the owners of the areas and are directly affected by tourism activities. Therefore, participation does not simply involve taking part in activities; it also entails having the power to make decisions, plan, manage, and monitor the use of their own tourism resources. Evidence from key information:

“The Nai Nang community has established a community-based tourism enterprise group to oversee visitor services, tourism activities, and the allocation of tourism revenue. All members of the group participate in decision-making and play active roles in setting directions, planning, and designing tourism activities.” [Interviewee No. 8]



Figure 5: Community participation

All three communities share similar models of community-based tourism development, based on fisheries resources, which operate under the core principles of community management and the sustainable use of local resources. However, each community possesses distinct strengths shaped by its local context

and existing social capital. The Ban Nai Nang community excels in its unique regional identity and strong community participation, reflected in robust group formation and collaborative tourism management. The Laem Sak community highlights its expertise in knowledge management and experiential tourism development by incorporating traditional fishing knowledge and coastal ecosystem insights into tourist learning activities. Finally, the Ban Ko Pu community stands out for its systematic resource management and the creation of added economic value from fisheries resources through product processing and clearly defined resource-use regulations.

The development of community-based tourism in Krabi Province, based on fisheries resources, reflects the systematic integration of four key areas of potential. Community participation serves as the fundamental foundation guiding development, fostering transparency, unity, and a sense of shared ownership. This is followed by management potential, which promotes systematic operations and supports strong and sustainable development. Spatial potential, functioning as ecological capital, enhances the distinctiveness of tourism through the area's rich and diverse marine resources. Lastly, human potential, representing intellectual and experiential capital, supports knowledge transfer and the implementation of learning-based tourism activities. The integration of these four areas of potential enables the three communities to develop tourism models that align with the BCG economic framework and effectively contribute to long-term sustainable development.

Conclusion

The research findings reveal that the settlement and fishing livelihoods in Krabi Province, particularly in the Nainang, Laem Sak, and Ko Pu communities, are rooted in a long historical development closely tied to a maritime way of life. The pioneering populations, consisting of Thai, Chinese, and Malay ethnic groups, migrated from Penang State in Malaysia. This settlement led to the formation of culturally diverse communities whose multicultural heritage has become a natural asset that supports the development of community-based tourism (Khongkun, Treesuk, & Chairerk, 2025). This diversity also fostered the exchange of local wisdom, especially traditional fishing knowledge such as crab trap making, beach seine fishing, and seasonal fish trapping. These practices reflect a resource-use system that does not harm the ecosystem and align with the concept of self-reliance based on local resource management (Berkes, 2018). In the present day, these fishing communities have adapted from subsistence fishing toward integrating traditional fishing knowledge into Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Tourists are encouraged to participate in conservation activities such as crab breeding, artificial fish homes, and mangrove planting. These activities generate supplementary income while simultaneously fostering environmental awareness within the communities. This adaptation is consistent with the principles of CBT, which emphasize community benefit-sharing and sustainable resource use (Goodwin, 2016).

The Potential of Fisheries-Based Community Tourism in Four Aspects:

The potential of fisheries-based community tourism can be understood through four key aspects: the area potential, reflected in rich marine resources-coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests-supported by long-standing traditional fishing livelihoods and aligned with the principles of the Bioeconomy, Circular Economy, and Green Economy (OECD, 2020); the human potential, grounded in local knowledge, cultural identity, and fisheries-related wisdom that empowers community members as leaders in tourism management, in line with the CBT empowerment framework (Scheyvens, 1999); the management potential, demonstrated through democratically elected tourism committees that uphold participatory governance consistent with Ostrom's (1990) principles for managing Common-Pool Resources, including clear roles, transparent monitoring, and income systems such as conservation funds; and the participation potential, which extends to shared decision-making in planning, rule-setting, revenue distribution, and transparency, reflecting findings by Keawchaum et al. (2023) on the critical role of local stakeholder engagement in sustainable tourism development.

Interview results emphasize that participation is the core of community-based tourism, as the community owns the territory and directly experiences the impacts of tourism. Participation in decision-making and governance is therefore essential for sustainability, aligning with Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Participation, which stresses that genuine participation occurs when communities hold real power in shaping development directions. In the case of all three communities, residents play roles in planning, managing, monitoring, and driving the development of fisheries-based community tourism. This participatory approach enables sustainability across the three dimensions of economy, society, and environment.

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