



ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MARINE AND COASTAL RESOURCES: IMPACT ON COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND LIVELIHOOD STABILITY*

คุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและวัฒนธรรมของทรัพยากรทางทะเลและชายฝั่ง
: ผลกระทบต่ออัตลักษณ์ชุมชนและความมั่นคงในวิถีชีวิต



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Abstract

This research article aims to explore the economic and cultural values of marine and coastal resources in Krabi Province, Thailand, by examining the impact of these resources on community identity and the sustainability of local livelihoods. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with 12 community members who are actively involved in coastal activities. The research focuses on three key aspects: traditional fishing, tourism, and supplementary income-generating activities related to the coast. Content analysis was employed to process and interpret the data.

The findings revealed that marine resources served as fundamental pillars of both economic sustainability and cultural heritage. Traditional fishing practices emerged as crucial bearers of intergenerational knowledge and sustainable resource management techniques, while tourism, particularly ecotourism, provided significant economic opportunities while presenting environmental challenges that required careful management. The study also identified how

*Received May 6, 2025; Revised May 21, 2025; Accepted May 25, 2025



marine-based cultural events and festivals strengthened community bonds and environmental stewardship, and how economic diversification through activities such as aquaculture, marine product processing, and handicrafts enhanced community resilience. The research demonstrated that successful coastal community development required a delicate balance between preserving cultural traditions, promoting economic growth, and ensuring environmental conservation. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on marine resource management and offer practical insights for policymakers and community leaders working to develop integrated approaches to coastal development. The study concluded that sustainable management of marine and coastal resources demands careful consideration of local cultural practices, economic needs, and environmental conservation to ensure the long-term viability of coastal communities.

Keywords: Economic and Cultural Significance; Marine and Coastal Resources; Community Identity; Livelihood Stability

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจคุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและวัฒนธรรมของทรัพยากรทางทะเลและชายฝั่งในจังหวัดกระบี่ ประเทศไทย โดยพิจารณาผลกระทบของทรัพยากรเหล่านี้ต่ออัตลักษณ์ของชุมชนและความมั่นคงในวิถีชีวิตของคนในพื้นที่ การวิจัยใช้วิธีเชิงคุณภาพผ่านการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับสมาชิกชุมชน จำนวน 12 คน ที่มีส่วนร่วมในการดำเนินกิจกรรมชายฝั่งอย่างเข้มข้น การศึกษาเน้นประเด็นสำคัญ 3 ด้าน ได้แก่ การทำประมงพื้นบ้าน การท่องเที่ยว และกิจกรรมเสริมรายได้ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับชายฝั่ง โดยใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาในการประมวลผลข้อมูล

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ทรัพยากรทางทะเลมีบทบาทเป็นรากฐานสำคัญของความยั่งยืนทางเศรษฐกิจและมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมของชุมชน การทำประมงพื้นบ้านเป็นแหล่งถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้ระหว่างรุ่น และเป็นแนวทางในการจัดการทรัพยากรอย่างยั่งยืน ในขณะที่การท่องเที่ยว โดยเฉพาะการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ ได้สร้างโอกาสทางเศรษฐกิจอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ แต่ก็มีผลกระทบด้านสิ่งแวดล้อมที่ต้องได้รับการบริหารจัดการอย่างรอบคอบ นอกจากนี้ งานประเพณีและกิจกรรมทางวัฒนธรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับทะเลยังช่วยเสริมสร้างความสัมพันธ์ในชุมชนและจิตสำนึกในการอนุรักษ์สิ่งแวดล้อม ขณะเดียวกัน การกระจายรายได้ผ่านกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ เช่น การเพาะเลี้ยงสัตว์น้ำ การแปรรูปผลิตภัณฑ์จากทะเล และงานหัตถกรรม ยังช่วยเพิ่มความสามารถในการปรับตัวของชุมชนอีกด้วย งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า การพัฒนาชุมชนชายฝั่ง



อย่างยั่งยืนจำเป็นต้องสร้างสมดุลระหว่างการอนุรักษ์ประเพณีวัฒนธรรม การส่งเสริมการเติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจ และการอนุรักษ์สิ่งแวดล้อม ผลการศึกษานี้จึงมีส่วนเสริมองค์ความรู้ด้านการจัดการทรัพยากรทางทะเล และให้ข้อเสนอเชิงนโยบายที่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้กำหนดนโยบายและผู้นำชุมชนในการพัฒนาชายฝั่งแบบบูรณาการ

คำสำคัญ: คุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและวัฒนธรรม; ทรัพยากรทางทะเลและชายฝั่ง; อัตลักษณ์ของชุมชน; ความมั่นคงในวิถีชีวิต

Introduction

Marine and coastal resources play a vital role in sustaining the livelihoods of coastal communities worldwide, where the sea serves not only as a source of economic activity but also as a cornerstone of cultural identity and social cohesion. In these regions, traditional fishing, tourism, and aquaculture collectively support economic stability while preserving local customs and community bonds. However, increasing environmental challenges and the pressures of globalization have underscored the urgent need for sustainable management strategies to protect both natural ecosystems and the social fabric of coastal communities (Elliott et al., 2023; Fleming et al., 2023; Fudge et al., 2023; Mattiro et al., 2023; Novita & Isma, 2023; Qian, 2023). Traditional fishing practices represent not only a primary source of income for many coastal communities but also embody generations of knowledge and heritage. The techniques, beliefs, and rituals associated with fishing are often deeply intertwined with local identities, reflecting a harmonious relationship between people and their environment. By preserving these practices, communities maintain a cultural connection to their heritage while contributing to a sustainable, low-impact economy (Alieva et al., 2023; Bai et al., 2023; Boateng et al., 2024; Boonrukvanit et al., 2023). Furthermore, tourism is another significant area of focus, as coastal regions often attract tourists drawn to their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique ecosystems (Albuquerque et al., 2009; Lacher et al., 2013; Onofri & Nunes, 2013). While tourism can drive substantial economic growth, it also introduces challenges, including environmental degradation and the risk of eroding cultural authenticity. Balancing tourism with sustainable practices is therefore essential to protect the very resources that make these regions attractive to visitors (Baloch et al., 2023; Dias, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2023). In addition, coastal activities such as



aquaculture, beach maintenance, and community-led conservation initiatives further highlight the relationship between marine resources and local livelihoods. These activities contribute not only to income diversification and economic stability but also to community cohesion, as people come together to protect and utilize their shared resources. The economic benefits of these activities can help buffer communities from economic shifts in other sectors, underscoring the value of a diversified economy grounded in sustainable resource use (Ferrol-Schulte et al., 2013; Novita & Isma, 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2023; Shifa, 2024).

Given their vital role, this study investigates the cultural and economic significance of marine and coastal resources in Krabi, Thailand, with a focus on traditional fishing practices, tourism, and other coastal activities that shape community identity and economic resilience. Krabi, known for its distinctive limestone landscapes, clear waters, and ecological richness, depends heavily on these resources for both livelihood and heritage preservation. Traditional fishing sustains not only local economies but also intergenerational knowledge and a deep cultural connection to the sea. Meanwhile, tourism capitalizes on Krabi's natural appeal, offering economic growth while posing environmental challenges. Through in-depth interviews with local residents, this study captures the complex interplay between marine resources, daily life, and community values. The findings aim to inform sustainable, culturally sensitive policy and management strategies that reflect the lived realities of Krabi's people, reinforcing the need for community-centered approaches to marine conservation in similarly situated coastal areas.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the cultural and economic importance of marine and coastal resources to local livelihoods in Krabi, Thailand

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore the cultural and economic significance of marine and coastal resources in Krabi, Thailand. The focus was on traditional fishing, tourism, and other coastal activities central to



local livelihoods and identity. The design emphasized in-depth exploration of lived experiences and cultural meanings through interviews and documentary analysis.

2. Populations

The target population consisted of adult residents (18 years or older) of Krabi who were actively involved in traditional fishing, tourism, aquaculture, or handicrafts. All participants were long-term residents with firsthand experience and knowledge of local cultural and economic practices. Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants had direct, relevant experience. Criteria for inclusion also included willingness to participate and ability to communicate effectively in the local language.

3. Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was semi-structured in-depth interviews, which offered a balance of consistency and flexibility. This allowed participants to share personal stories and detailed insights while ensuring coverage of all key themes. Audio recordings were made during interviews for accuracy in analysis. Additionally, documentary analysis of local reports, policies, and cultural records served as a secondary instrument to provide context and support triangulation.

4. Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted in the local language, promoting participant comfort and authenticity of responses. A total of twelve participants were interviewed, selected based on their active engagement in the identified sectors. The interviews were supplemented with documentary analysis of local materials to enrich understanding and provide broader contextual insights.

5. Data Analysis Statistics Used to Analyze the Data

The study employed content analysis, a qualitative method used to systematically categorize interview transcripts and identify recurrent themes, patterns, and insights. This technique enabled the researcher to draw meaningful connections between marine/coastal resources and community livelihoods. No statistical software or quantitative statistics were used, as the analysis focused on thematic interpretation and qualitative pattern recognition rather than numerical data.



Results

The findings on the cultural and economic significance of marine and coastal resources to local communities revealed several important aspects: traditional fishing practices, tourism and ecotourism, community identity and social cohesion, and economic stability and diversification.

Traditional Fishing Practices

The interviews revealed that traditional fishing in Krabi is not merely an economic activity but a deeply embedded cultural practice that embodies intergenerational knowledge, environmental awareness, and community identity. Participants emphasized that fishing techniques such as net weaving, trap setting, and seasonally adjusted harvesting are intricately adapted to local marine conditions and passed down through storytelling and apprenticeship. This knowledge transfer from elders to youth reinforces a lifestyle in harmony with nature and promotes a collective ethic of marine stewardship. The community's conscious avoidance of overfishing and harmful practices illustrates a sustainable approach rooted in cultural values. For Krabi's coastal residents, the sea is a shared resource whose health is directly tied to both their livelihood and their way of life. This theme highlights how cultural continuity and environmental sustainability are interwoven, reinforcing the resilience of the community in the face of ecological and economic change.

Tourism and Ecotourism

The interviews revealed that ecotourism plays a pivotal role in Krabi's coastal communities, offering substantial economic benefits while simultaneously presenting environmental challenges. Community members recognized ecotourism as a source of livelihood, with activities like snorkeling, kayaking, and guided nature tours stimulating the local economy through small enterprises, homestays, and employment opportunities. However, participants also voiced concerns over the ecological strain caused by unregulated tourist activities, including coral degradation, pollution, and habitat disruption. This tension underscores the need for sustainable tourism practices that protect the natural resources on which the industry depends. The community's call for responsible visitor management, environmental education, and stricter regulations reflects a collective awareness that the long-term viability of tourism hinges on ecological



preservation. Thus, ecotourism is not merely an income-generating venture it is a vital strategy for maintaining both environmental integrity and community resilience.

Community Identity and Social Cohesion

The interviews illuminated how marine and coastal resources are not only vital for livelihoods but also central to the cultural and social life of Krabi's coastal communities. Festivals, spiritual ceremonies, and collective environmental efforts serve as key expressions of community identity and unity. Events like fishing festivals and rituals honoring water spirits reflect longstanding traditions that bind generations and reinforce cultural heritage, while simultaneously nurturing environmental values. These gatherings provide platforms for intergenerational knowledge transfer and offer economic benefits through tourism and local participation. Additionally, practices such as beach clean-ups underscore the community's active role in environmental stewardship, promoting a shared sense of responsibility and pride in preserving marine ecosystems. Such culturally rooted practices strengthen communal bonds and highlight the inseparable link between tradition, social cohesion, and sustainable marine resource management.

Economic Stability and Diversification

The interviews reveal that Krabi's coastal communities engage in a range of marine-related economic activities beyond fishing and tourism, including aquaculture, marine product processing, and handicrafts. This diversification broadens income sources and strengthens the community's ability to adapt to environmental and market changes. Sustainable aquaculture practices provide reliable revenue while safeguarding marine biodiversity. Processing marine products adds economic value and supports local employment. In addition, handicraft production, rooted in cultural traditions and local materials, reflects community identity while generating income, especially through tourist markets. However, these livelihoods are interdependent with the health of the marine ecosystem, highlighting the community's deep awareness of environmental sustainability. This diversified economic model reinforces both economic security and cultural continuity, positioning the community to better withstand external pressures while preserving their marine heritage.



Discussion

The study's findings reveal the multifaceted relationship between marine and coastal resources and the livelihood stability of Krabi's coastal communities, encompassing four key dimensions: traditional fishing practices, tourism development, community identity, and economic diversification. Traditional fishing practices are highlighted as essential bearers of cultural heritage and environmental knowledge. This finding aligns with the work of Alieva et al. (2023) and Bai et al. (2023), who emphasize the cultural significance of traditional fishing methods in coastal communities. In Krabi, these practices go beyond economic activities; they represent a deep understanding of local marine ecosystems and sustainable resource management. The intergenerational transfer of fishing knowledge preserves cultural heritage while promoting sustainable resource use, resonating with Boateng et al. (2024) findings on reconciling traditional practices with sustainable management. Furthermore, tourism, particularly ecotourism, presents both opportunities and challenges for Krabi's coastal communities. While it generates substantial economic benefits through job creation and business opportunities, it also poses potential threats to the environmental resources that draw tourists. This tension reflects Baloch et al.'s (2023) observations regarding the delicate balance between tourism development and environmental sustainability. In addition, the community's focus on sustainable tourism practices demonstrates an awareness that long-term economic success depends on preserving the natural environment, aligning with Wu et al.'s (2023) findings on sustainable tourism. Moreover, Marine resources further contribute to community identity and social cohesion through cultural events, festivals, and collective conservation efforts. These activities foster social bonds and environmental stewardship, supporting Mattiro et al.'s (2023) findings on the integration of maritime cultural values in coastal community development. The blend of traditional ceremonies with modern conservation practices shows how Krabi's communities adapt while maintaining their cultural identity. Additionally, economic diversification through activities such as aquaculture, marine product processing, and handicrafts emerges as a crucial resilience strategy. This finding aligns with Novita & Isma's (2023) research on coastal resource-based entrepreneurship for enhancing community quality of life, demonstrating that



diversification provides economic stability while deepening the community's connection to marine resources through various value-adding activities.

This study provides valuable insights into the cultural and economic importance of marine and coastal resources in Krabi, Thailand, while recognizing key limitations. These include limited generalizability due to a small sample size, the absence of longitudinal data, and the need to better integrate traditional knowledge into modern conservation. Future research should consider mixed methods, broader geographic scopes, and quantification of economic impacts. Exploring community resilience to climate change and developing predictive adaptation models can further inform sustainable coastal management policies.

Conclusion This study confirmed that marine and coastal resources are central to both the economic stability and cultural identity of Krabi's coastal communities. The findings reveal a dynamic interdependence between traditional fishing practices, tourism development, community cohesion, and economic diversification all rooted in the sustainable use of marine resources. Traditional fishing preserves cultural heritage and supports resource sustainability, while tourism provides economic opportunities that require careful environmental management. Community events tied to marine life foster social cohesion and environmental consciousness. Furthermore, the diversification of marine-related livelihoods enhances community resilience by promoting economic adaptability without severing cultural roots. These insights highlight the need for integrated management strategies that simultaneously support economic growth, cultural preservation, and ecological conservation. Krabi's ability to balance tradition with modern development offers a model for similarly situated coastal regions. Ultimately, sustainable marine resource management hinges on harmonizing cultural values, economic imperatives, and environmental responsibilities to secure a viable future for coastal communities.

Body of Knowledge

The body of knowledge derived from this study emphasizes the multifaceted significance of marine and coastal resources in sustaining the cultural identity and economic resilience of coastal communities, particularly in Krabi, Thailand. Traditional fishing sustains livelihoods and fosters knowledge transfer



and environmental care. While ecotourism provides income, it also poses ecological risks, calling for sustainable practices. Community rituals and conservation efforts strengthen social bonds and shared identity. Economic diversification through aquaculture and handicrafts improves adaptability. The findings emphasize the need for integrated management that balances culture, economy, and environment, advancing sustainable development and community-based conservation frameworks.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Policymakers should develop integrated coastal management policies that balance cultural preservation, economic development, and environmental sustainability, while recognizing traditional resource rights.

Operational Recommendations

Communities should promote sustainable tourism, protect traditional fishing rights, and build local capacity to adapt cultural practices to modern environmental and economic challenges.

Recommendations for Next Research

Future research should explore the interplay between traditional knowledge and coastal sustainability and contribute to theoretical advancements in adaptive management and community-based conservation.

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