

Integrated Tourism Activities to Forest Bathing Trip

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Abstract

Mindfulness is a way of dealing with stress that uses a variety of techniques. According to the impact of coronavirus disease, 2019 (COVID-19) which has changed tourists' priorities, values, and behavior, traveling as safety and healthier become a high priority. However, tourists' demand had been increasing after the COVID-19 expended for several years with a preference for natural areas and rural environments, offering authentic and regenerative experiences. Therefore, forest bathing is likely to be positively affected by the pandemic.

In the Thai context, forest bathing is also unclear for people to practice which is different from Japanese people. Since forest bathing is deeply rooted in the lives of Japanese people, who understand its health promotion effects empirically. Applying tourism activities to promote forest bathing in Thailand could be an opportunity not only to promote the concept of connecting with nature but also to create a new type of tourism products such as forms of wellness tourism, ecotourism, food tourism, agritourism, and rural tourism to inspire people to travel in post-COVID-19.

Keywords — Forest bathing, Mindfulness, Tourism Activity

1 Introduction

Mindfulness was attracting attention worldwide as a way to rest the weary body and mind after the impact of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) which has presented in the society with greater and potentially enduring mental health challenges. With the restrictions and limited opportunities for social interaction, and uncertainty around evolving circumstances.

COVID-19 has changed tourists' priorities, values and behavior, and travelling as safety and healthier as possible is now a high priority. The tourist preferences are shifting to less crowded tourist destinations, and in particular to rural, nature-based locations. Their awareness of the environmental and social impacts of their travel choices is a trend that had started before the pandemic (UNWTO, 2021).

According to the Global Wellness Tourism Economy (Global Wellness Institute, 2018), the global tourism market is expected to grow from about \$639 billion in 2017 to \$919.4 billion in 2022, mainly Asia and the Middle East. The integrated wellness market is expected to grow by USD 1.3 trillion by 2024. This could offer valuable opportunities for natural-based areas (Global Wellness study, 2021). Moreover, travel restrictions imposed by countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, demand has been increasingly oriented towards domestic and proximity tourism, with a preference for natural areas and rural environments, offering authentic and regenerative experiences. If well managed, these choices can represent opportunities for forest recreation. Within the leisure sector, the forest bathing is likely to be positive affected by the pandemic (UNWTO, 2021).

Forest bathing, as the Japanese practice of *shinrin-yoku* (森林浴) or *Arppa* (อารปปา) in Thai, has not only become a new wellness trend, but also a great potential for deeply immersive tourist experiences. Forest bathing is becoming increasingly popular worldwide (UNWTO, 2021). Forest bathing as a structured, mediated practice is considered to be one of the most accessible ways to reconnect with the nature world (Farkic, Isailovi, and Taylor, 2021).

Konu's (2015) suggest the concept of Forest-based wellbeing tourism that a practice of consuming natural resources with healing power, as well as providing tourist with pleasurable, comfortable and luxurious experiences. While there is a wealth of studies examining the positive effects of forest bathing focusing principally on its medical benefits, however forest bathing also was suggesting its has potential to offer a profoundly mindful experience

(Farkic, Isailovic, & Taylor, 2021).

2 Forest bathing in Thailand

Forest bathing was introduced in Thailand for several years before COVID-19. As a new concept, forest bathing facilitator is necessary, especially for tourist who are interesting in forest bathing but for people who heard the work forest bathing in the first time or unexperienced about this concept. On one hand, people who walk or view the forest alone without a guide or self-guided forest therapy provides an opportunity for self-reflection to focus on and think about one's inner self. On the other hand, guided forest therapy programs provide positive emotional changes and promoting social bonds through interaction with others. Therefore, because the effects that can be obtained vary depending on the type of forest therapy, participants can utilize forest healing to suit the desired outcomes (Kim and Shin, 2021).

Forest bathing is still new in Thai society. Interesting for not only people who want to go to forests to calm their minds and relieve stress. While forest bathing concept was publicized by doctor, academic, environmental foundation, family forest, community forest including public and private organizations that interest in this concept, forest bathing also was applied in tourism product but still limited within few tour operators and accommodations such as homestay and resort as a niche market. Providing the information, guideline, or facilitator needs to be introduced in order to allow

7.00 meet at Bangkok

10.00 arrival and meet the forest bathing facilitator at the border of Khaoyai National Park in Nakornnayok

Start orientation give lunch box and water to the participations

Walk to the forest around 30 minutes – 1 hour

Learn about nature around in that area

Practice connects to the nature by 5 senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch)

12.00 everybody selects their sit spot and spent time alone for 1.30 hour

13.30 start group discussion which participants to talk and reflect their opinion including A&Q

15.00 go back to the car and go back to Bangkok

18.00 arrival in Bangkok

Figure 1 Example of Forest Bathing Program in Thailand

the tourists connect to the nature. Especially for those who has a first-time experience in forest bathing. Forest bathing tourism in Thailand allowed the tourist to go out to the forest or green space where the forest bathing facilitator can invite the tourist slowly walk, notice their senses through sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Sometime listen to the bell, concern to the breath, and yoga could apply for grounding techniques. Forest bathing facilitator plays an important role in helping the tourist to exposure the nature connection. Figure 1 shows the example of forest program in Thailand and Figure 2 shows some photos during



Figure 2 Photos during Forest Bathing

forest bathing in Thailand.

However, forest bathing is still new and ambiguous in Thailand, most of forest bathing service providers created their own patterns without standard or any organization to set the concept of forest bathing for forest health and recreation policy, while forest bathing based and training facilitator of forest bathing and forest therapy guide by public sector in Thailand like other countries such as Japan, South Korea, China, USA, Australia, and Canada (Kotte, Li, Sop Shin, and Michalsen, 2019). In Table 1, the context of forest bathing and forest therapy in various countries are listed. In Thai context, forest bathing is also unclear for people to practice which

Table 1 Context of Forest Bathing and Forest Therapy in Various Countries

Country	Context of Forest Bathing and Forest Therapy
Japan	In 1982, the Japanese government introduced the concept of Shinrin-yoku or forest bathing. Since then, Japan has been at the forefront of scientific investigation into the links between forests and human health. Recently 62 designated forest therapy areas (Forest Therapy Base and Therapy Road).
South Korea	Forest-bathing, known in Korean as ‘salim yok’, is taken extremely seriously by the government and the Korean population. In 2014, the government invested \$140 million dollars in establishing a National Forest Healing Centre, and in 2015 the Law on Forest Welfare Promotion was enacted by the National Assembly. Recently, there are 37 Forest Healing area/Forest Therapy centers.
China	Forest therapy activities in China include forest rehabilitation and recreation, forest healthcare, forest tourism, forest experiences, and forest wellness. The commonalities among these activities are the forest environment, which provides the setting, and the goal of health promotion, while the differences are the paths used to achieve the goal.
USA	In 2012, the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs (ANFT). ANFT’s mission is to develop and disseminate the practice of forest therapy. It now has trained over 600 guides, who are currently conducting forest therapy walks and workshops in 46 countries across six continents.
Australia	Since 2016, several cohorts of Forest Therapy Guides have completed their training administered by the Institute of Forest Therapy (IFT) under the auspices of The International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA). INFTA has established itself as the leading voice for Forest Therapy in Australasia and continues to harness its collaborative partnerships to advocate for Forest Therapy to become the preferred preventive health practice for all Australians. The health and wellbeing outcomes of its people may be determined by better access to parks, and trails which support Forest Therapy in its natural landscapes, forests and bushland. Healthy Parks Healthy People originated in Australia and is now a global movement that harnesses the power of parks and public lands in contributing to a healthy civil society.
Canada	Working on forest therapy from three aspects of 1) the development of forest therapy industry and its policy around the world, particularly in Japan, Korea, China, the United States and Canada; 2) Forest therapy activities related to physiological and psychological effects on different targeted groups; and 3) The key elements tied to forest environments, such as negative ions, chemicals, and landscape/soundscape/lightscape and their impact on human health.

different from Japanese people. Since forest bathing is deeply rooted in the lives of Japanese people, who understand its health promotion effects empirically. Nature walks have been part of the lifestyle of all ages in Japan (Plevin, 2018; Oe and Yamaoka, 2021).

3 Conclusion

However, applying tourism activities to promote forest bathing in Thailand could be the opportunities not only for promote the concept of connecting with nature but also create new type of tourism product consisting of five elements of the physical plant, service, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement (Smith, 1994). Combined with tourism resources in Thailand which different from original background of Shinrin-yoku. It might be possible to create more tourism package in forms of wellness tourism, ecotourism, food tourism, agritourism and rural tourism in order to inspire people to travel in post COVID-19.

This study concerned that:

1. What kind of tourism activity could apply to forest bathing trip?
2. When is the appropriate time to add other tourism activities to forest bathing trip such as before, during, or after the process of forest bathing activities?
3. In order to apply other types of tourism activities to forest bathing program, the effect of physical and psychological for mindfulness are still exist or in which level?

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