

Urban Park as a Mindful and Wellness Tourism Attraction in Jakarta: Introducing Forest Bathing as an Alternative to New Tourism Activities

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Abstract: *Jakarta is a densely populated urban area, so the need for green open space is very high. Currently, there are 2,556 green open spaces in Jakarta that are used for parks, green lanes, urban forests, nurseries, and wildlife parks. Urban parks are the main attraction for people to carry out outdoor activities with the aim of recreation, seeking a quiet and calm atmosphere and aims to improve wellness. Forest bathing, better known as shinrin-yoku, is a short and relaxed walking activity in the forest area (can also be in a park) with the aim of relaxation, and reducing anxiety, stress, anger, or fear. This activity is not for an adventurous experience, nor is it for exercise purposes. Forest bathing tourists only need to activate all five senses and blend with nature for 1-2 hours, with the help of a professional guide or self-guided. In urban areas, the practice of forest bathing can be carried out in urban parks with criteria free from noise and pollution. This study aims to identify the potential of urban parks in Jakarta as forest bathing locations. The research method uses qualitative methods. Data collection through literature study and observations. The results show that there are 1,446 potential urban parks for forest bathing activities, and it is predicted that this number will continue to grow in the next few years. The development of urban parks by the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government is divided into two concepts, namely: green open space (Ruang Terbuka Hijau) and a joint advanced park (Taman Maju Bersama).*

Keywords: *Urban Park, mindful tourism, wellness tourism, forest bathing, natural attraction, shinrin-yoku*

Introduction

Jakarta is a capital area that has a high population density. Data released by the Central Statistics Agency of DKI Jakarta Province states that in 2021 the population of Jakarta will be 10,609,681

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people with an area of 664.01 km². The high population density in Jakarta causes traffic congestion problems throughout the day from 6 am to 9 pm on weekdays (Ratnaningtyas et al, 2021); urban crime rates such: murder, rape, assault, kidnapping, arson, vandalism, theft, fraud, narcotics abuse, and demonstrations (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Jakarta, 2020); and high air pollution which causes Jakarta's air quality to be categorized as unhealthy (IQ Air data: 23 August 2022). The high population is followed by the density of residential areas and the massive construction of high-rise buildings for office facilities, government buildings, shopping centers, and others. This encourages the emergence of the need for the availability of public spaces that can be easily accessed by the community to carry out social interactions as well as become tourist locations at affordable costs (Setiawan, 2011).

As one of the big cities in Indonesia, Jakarta is actively involved in building tourist destinations to attract foreign and domestic tourists from outside Jakarta. However, if analyzed more deeply, Jakarta is more often the hub (entrance) for foreign tourists who want to vacation in favorite destinations such as Bali, Yogyakarta, Lombok, and others. For domestic tourists, Jakarta is often a transit destination for other cities. That is, not all Jakarta's tourists choose Jakarta as the main tourism destination. Looking at these facts, we can see that actually, the potential market segment for Jakarta tourism products is the residents of Jakarta itself.

High population density, traffic congestion, high air and noise pollution, rising unemployment rates, tight demands for financial survival, and low social security have turned Jakarta into one of the cities with the highest stress levels in the world. The results of the research report entitled *The Least and Most Stressful Cities Index 2021* show that Jakarta ranks 9th as the city with the highest stress level in the world. The level of stress that accumulates will affect a person's mental health. Efforts need to be made to reduce the level of stress, one of which is through tourism activities. Urban people tend to need more travel than people who live in suburban or rural areas. But in fact, they have difficulty finding affordable places to travel both in terms of distance, time, and cost. Urban communities can only travel on holidays, while tourist destinations in Jakarta will certainly be full of visitors during peak season. Those who decide to travel outside the city of Jakarta to avoid crowds still have to face traffic jams that become inefficient in terms of time, cost, and energy.

During the new normal, outdoor activities will become a new trend that is popular with the public. This is because nature is believed to be able to provide great benefits for health, provide space for the implementation of physical distancing (Kemenparekraf, 2021) and be able to increase wellness and mindfulness. In addition to being more nature-oriented, current travel preferences also prioritize health factors. The purpose of traveling is no longer only to seek pleasure and existence, but also to form a healthy body and soul. Fitness tourism activities such as trekking, hiking, running, cycling (Kemenparekraf, 2021) and, yoga/ meditation are also starting to become a trend – supported by a healthy lifestyle (Kemenparekraf, 2019).

Forest bathing (or in Indonesia better known as healing forest) is a combination of nature-based tourism and wellness tourism, it needs to be immediately introduced to tourists as a new tourism alternative (Aisyianita et al, 2022) to answer the needs of tourists living in urban areas, especially in the new normal. Forest bathing (*shinrin-yoku*) was popularized in Japan in 1980 as a health therapy activity for patients who have health problems, both physically and mentally. Currently, Forest bathing is mostly packaged in tour packages so that it can reach all

age segments. Forest bathing is an activity of walking in the natural environment (forest or another natural environment) slowly while uniting all five senses to connect with nature. Forest bathing activities for 120-300 minutes a week are proven to be effective for increasing body immunity (White, 2019), reducing anxiety, depression, stress, and anger (Kotera, 2020), and improving physical and spiritual health (Wen, 2019). Forest bathing is not only seen from a health point of view but can also be seen from a tourism point of view, this activity has the potential to develop tourist experiences (Farkic, 2021).

The forest bathing activity is very suitable to be introduced to the urban community segment such as in Jakarta. Although it is called forest bathing, the practice of forest bathing does not have to be done in forest areas only. Green open space that is free of pollution and noise can also be used as a forest bathing location (Rahmawati, 2019). Green open space is a type of outdoor public space that can be accessed by everyone. In urban areas, the development of green open space can be implemented in several forms, such as urban forests, green belts, green lanes, pedestrian spaces, and urban parks. Data released by the Central Statistics Agency of DKI Jakarta Province noted that in 2014 there were 2,151 city parks spread throughout Jakarta with a total area of 1,937,436.67 m². This study will discuss how the potential of city parks in Jakarta for forest bathing activities.

Literature Review

Forest Bathing comes from the Japanese term in 1982, namely *shinrin-yoku*, meaning *shinrin* (forests) and *yoku* (to bathe) which if translated literally into Indonesian becomes "forest for bathing". Forest bathing slowly began to be widely practiced in Japan. They hope to get healing and rejuvenation from forest bathing (Garcia, 2020). In Indonesia, this activity has been developed by Hikmat Ramdan since 1990 and is known as "Bathing Forest" (Forestdigest, 2020) or also known as healing forest (Ramdan, 2021).

Today's tourists no longer make tourism activities just to have fun. Tourists hope that through tourism activities they can also feel the effects of recovery and balance between body, mind, and spirit (Kemenparekraf, 2019) – or often referred to as wellness. Smith (2017) states that the wellness element consists of 5 dimensions, namely: physical, mental, environmental, spiritual, and social. Several studies have shown the benefits of forest bathing for human health. Research conducted by Huan-Tsun Chen et al on middle-aged women in Taiwan showed that after doing forest bathing, they experienced a decrease in the level of negative emotions (feeling confused, tired, angry, tense, and anxious). In contrast, the positive emotional side (a sense of enthusiasm) experienced a significant increase (Chen et al, 2018). Research with young adult respondents in Guiyang, Southwest China shows that today's young generation also tends to have high levels of stress due to financial problems, romantic relationships, anxiety about the school environment, and pressure to pass school exams. After doing forest bathing in the urban forest, respondents experienced a decrease in their level of anxiety (Chen et al, 2018). In Indonesia, forest bathing has been proven to be able to reduce stress, anxiety, and excessive fear (Wahyudi, 2021) against viruses, death, and the impact on the economy. Furthermore, Ramdan (2021) states that the practice of forest bathing has 6 functions for health, namely: (1) improving health (promotive); (2) disease prevention (preventive); (3) disease healing

(curative); (4) recovery (rehabilitative); (5) health maintenance (preservative); and (6) treatment of high-risk diseases (palliative).

Li (2018) stated that the difference between forest bathing and nature tourism lies in their activities. Forest bathing is an activity to take a leisurely walk enjoying nature, leaving all forms of distractions (such as gadgets), interacting with nature (Firdhani, 2009), and trying to activate all five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to connect with the natural atmosphere. Forest bathing is not a sport or adventure that is tiring and adrenaline-pumping (Li, 2018) so the activities should be calm, such as enjoying the natural scenery, listening to birds chirping, smelling the scent of wet soil, holding leaves or grass while walking leisurely (Yu, 2017).) and can also be added by tasting the freshwater of the river or the sweetness of honey on flower plants. These activities will be fulfilled if supported by the right location. Forest bathing is ideally done in the forest, but it can also be done in green open spaces that are free of pollution and noise (Rahmawati, 2019) as has been practiced in several forests and urban parks in China, Japan, and Korea.

Green open space is defined by the Regulation of the Minister of Public Works No. 5 of 2008 concerning Guidelines for the Provision and Utilization of Green Open Space in Urban Areas as an elongated area/clustered lane, the use of which is open space in an urban area filled with plants, plants, and animals. vegetation either growing naturally or intentionally planted. Green open space has several functions, namely security, comfort, welfare, and urban beauty. One form of green open space can be a city park. A city park is a park that is intended to serve residents of a city or part of a city area, which is equipped with sports and recreational facilities and is open to the public (Asti et al, 2021).

Methodology

This research was conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia. Data collection by literature studies and field observations. The literature study focused on previous research that discussed the topics of forest bathing, wellness tourism, urban tourism, and nature tourism. The author conducted a literature review. The results that research on forest bathing is still more focused on the health benefits of forest bathing. While in this study, researchers want to look at forest bathing from the point of view of tourism. Forest bathing is a combination of natural and wellness tourism. The literature review also focuses on research that discusses the practice of forest bathing in areas other than forests, especially parks. Statistical data related to the number, total areas, and location of urban parks in Jakarta are supporting references for writing this article. After completing the literature study stage, the author made observations at several parks in Jakarta which were considered suitable for forest bathing locations.

Findings & Discussion

Forest bathing was first introduced by Qing Li in the 1980's. He is a doctor from China who uses forest bathing as a therapy for sick patients. Currently, forest bathing is not only for patients but anyone who needs mindfulness and wellness. This chapter will describe the results of the analysis carried out by researchers through literature studies and field observations, including criteria for forest bathing locations, the potential for city parks in Jakarta for forest bathing, and

guidelines for implementing forest bathing in city parks. This research is a preliminary study so further research is needed with a more in-depth analysis.

1. Criteria of Forest Bathing Location

Ideally, as the name, forest bathing is suitable to be applied in forest areas. However, if an area does not have forests, you can look for locations that have a micro-climate resembling a forest, for example, urban forests, city parks, and others. The minimum area of 4.5 ha consists of 2.5 ha for natural ecosystems and the rest can be used for facilities, infrastructure, and other forest bathing activity areas. Some environmental parameters that must be considered for the selection of forest bathing locations are (Ramdan, 2021):

- a. The area has a moderate to dense vegetation density.
- b. Temperature and relative humidity (RH) can provide a comfort effect for the body.
- c. The slope level of the area is flat to gentle (0% - 15%).
- d. Noise threshold < 50 Db.
- e. Wind speed < 1 m/sec.
- f. The negative ion content of the air is > 1000 ions/cm³.

In the case study of urban parks in Jakarta, of course, it will be difficult to find urban parks that meet all of these criteria, considering that the location of the city park is in the middle of a densely populated, densely populated area, and busy traffic. As a suggestion, visitors can choose a time of the visit that allows the fulfillment of these criteria. For example, to obtain the appropriate temperature and relative humidity, visitors can visit in the morning or evening when the sun is not shining too hot and the wind speed is not too strong. To avoid noise, visitors can choose a time when the traffic flow around the park is not too crowded. To meet the criteria for areas with moderate to dense vegetation density, visitors can choose a city park that is dominated by tree vegetation, not just grass and ornamental plants.

2. The potential of Jakarta Urban Parks for Forest Bathing

Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of DKI Jakarta Province, it is stated that in 2014 there were 2,151 city parks with an area of 19,237,436.67 m² with a distribution of 596 in South Jakarta, 425 in East Jakarta, 436 in Central Jakarta, 329 in West Jakarta, and 365 in North Jakarta. The government is gradually starting to rearrange urban parks to become comfortable public spaces for residents.

For example, Tebet Eco Park in Tebet, South Jakarta which reopened on August 15, 2022. After renovation they have several zones such as: childrens playground, recreation zone, sport zones, and others. Before entering the park, visitors are asked to register through the JAKI Apps to control the numbers of visitors. A crowded park will certainly not be comfortable.

Taman Suropati which is located in Menteng can also be an alternative location for forest bathing. The density of vegetation in it tends to be dense and becomes a habitat for pigeons. In the afternoon visitors can see a flock of pigeons. In addition, Taman Suropati also has a fountain. The sound of gurgling water can help visitors find serenity, mindfulness, and wellness.

3. Guide to do forest bathing in urban parks

Forest bathing is ideally done with the direction of a professional guide. But as a first step, visitors can do self-guided forest bathing. The steps are as follows:

- a. Choose a location that matches the criteria for a forest bathing location
- b. Eliminate all forms of distraction (such as gadgets)
- c. Take off your footwear to be more connected to nature
- d. You can walk slowly enjoying nature, sitting on the grass or a comfortable place, hugging a tree, soaking your feet in the water, listening to the sound of birds and insects, or occasionally taste nectar on flowers. Wellness tourism activities such as yoga or meditation can also be done.
- e. The duration of the forest bathing is 1 - 2 hours per activity and can be repeated 2-3 times a week to be able to feel a significant positive impact

Conclusion

This research is a preliminary study that proposes the use of an urban park as a forest bathing location. Further research still needs to be done, especially research on the assessment of city parks by the criteria for forest bathing locations.

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