



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	A Phenomenological Study of Transformation through Forest Bathing
Author(s)	張, 宜欽
Description	この博士論文の全文は利用可能日以降に公開されます。利用可能日以前の閲覧方法は https://www.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dissertations/copy-guides/ をご参照ください。
Degree Grantor	北海道大学
Degree Name	博士(学術)
Dissertation Number	甲第16811号
Issue Date	2026-03-25
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/doctoral.k16811
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/99656
Type	doctoral thesis
File Information	ZHANG_Yiqin_abstract.pdf, 論文内容の要旨 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/



学位論文内容の要旨

博士の専攻分野の名称：博士（学術）

氏名：張 宜欽

A Phenomenological Study of Transformation through Forest Bathing

（森林浴による自己変容経験に関する現象学的研究）

In contemporary society, tourism has become increasingly intertwined with the pursuit of wellbeing, human flourishing, and overall life satisfaction. Cross-border mobility—particularly travel—has emerged as a prominent means for individuals to enhance both physical and psychological health, fostering a thriving niche market centered on wellness-oriented experiences. Rather than merely seeking sensory stimulation or short-term pleasure, tourists today increasingly value experiences that facilitate self-development and personal growth, fueling the growing interest in transformative tourism.

Within this broader context, nature-based health tourism—especially Japan’s practice of forest bathing (*shinrin-yoku*)—has attracted scholarly and practical attention for its capacity to cultivate mindfulness and wellbeing through immersive engagement with natural environments. Such practices offer fertile ground for exploring how sustained, embodied encounters with nature may give rise to subtle yet enduring forms of personal transformation. However, existing theoretical approaches remain limited in explaining the mechanisms through which such transformation unfolds. Educational models tend to conceptualize transformation as emerging from interpersonal openness triggered by pre-travel dilemmas, while existential perspectives emphasize anxiety and self-confrontation during extraordinary experiences. Yet, forest bathing often involves neither. Participants are rarely motivated by crisis; instead, empirical evidence suggests that forest environments induce calm, comfort, and positive affect rather than existential anxiety. Although anxiety may arise, it does not adequately capture the full spectrum of affective change observed in forest-based practices. Consequently, a new perspective is needed to understand transformation as a process emerging from tranquility, sensory immersion, and temporal continuity rather than disruption or crisis.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine how tourists achieve transformation through sustained engagement with forest bathing. Specifically, it pursues three objectives: (1) to clarify how individuals experience personal transformation through prolonged participation in forest bathing; (2) to identify the environmental and emotional dimensions that underpin this process; and (3) to construct an alternative narrative framework capable of explaining the temporal and affective unfolding of such transformation. By consciously integrating descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenological approaches, the study investigates transformation from two complementary perspectives: longitudinally, by tracing how participants interpret successive experiences over time; and cross-sectionally, by identifying the specific environmental elements that evoke emotional resonance conducive to transformation. Employing online and on-site focus group discussions combined with the photo-voice method, the study captures participants’ lived experiences while maintaining methodological consistency with phenomenological inquiry.

The findings reveal a distinction between transformative experiences—fleeting moments of self-realization—and transformation as a gradual, cumulative process shaped by repeated engagement with forest environments. This process is driven by three interrelated atmospheric dimensions of forest bathing: solitude, empathy, and “being opened.” Together, these atmospheres create affective conditions in which immersion in nature elicits positive emotions, prompting deeper reflection and self-integration

over time. The proposed model highlights the dynamic interplay between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, suggesting that initial pleasure and calm serve as emotional entry points for more profound, eudaimonic growth. This challenges the dichotomy in tourism literature between epiphany and gradual evolution, showing instead that transformation often unfolds imperceptibly yet culminates in moments of sudden self-recognition, when tourists realize they have already changed.

Through conceptual elaboration, the study develops a theoretically grounded and empirically informed framework that situates transformation within the broader narrative of self-development. Drawing on the concept of narrative identity, it interprets transformation not as a singular reflective moment but as a temporally extended trajectory of becoming. While acknowledging the significance of pivotal moments, it contends that transformation is primarily rooted in everyday affective experiences that accumulate and reorganize meaning over time. Accordingly, it proposes that embedding storytelling and narrative co-creation within tourism design enhances the potential for meaningful, personalized, and enduring transformation.

This process-oriented perspective advances a holistic understanding of transformation that integrates embodied, aesthetic, and narrative dimensions of forest-based tourism. It demonstrates that transformative change emerges not from exceptional experiences but from sustained affective engagement with nature, where sensory immersion and meaning-making reciprocally reinforce one another. By locating transformation within tourists' lived temporalities, the study shifts attention from peak moments to continuous processes of attunement, reflection, and value reorientation.

From a managerial perspective, these insights call for a paradigm shift—from designing static products or isolated wellness programs to cultivating iterative, atmosphere-centered experiences that promote both immediate wellbeing and long-term self-growth. By intentionally fostering the atmospheres of solitude, empathy, and “being opened,” tourism practitioners can encourage sustained visitor engagement and facilitate the gradual internalization of change. Integrating storytelling and co-creation into experience design further enables destinations to connect individual transformation with local narratives, deepening emotional resonance and fostering a sense of belonging.

Ultimately, the proposed framework contributes to broader tourism scholarship by reconceptualizing transformation as a cumulative, relational, and narratively mediated process that links embodied encounters with ongoing meaning-making. This processual approach not only enriches theoretical discussions of transformative experience but also offers actionable guidance for developing nature-based and wellbeing-oriented tourism that nurtures sustainable forms of personal and collective renewal.