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TASMANIA

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Tourism Tracer app tracks path to success with licensing agreement

Cutting-edge Tasmanian research that tracks tourists in real-time will continue to deliver benefits to the local tourism industry thanks to a licensing deal struck with a Tasmanian tech company.

Since it was launched in 2016, the University of Tasmania's award-winning Tourism Tracer technology has attracted worldwide attention as the first research program to profile and track tourists as they travel.

After earlier trials that provided participating tourists with mobile phones, researchers at the University worked with Hobart-based Ionata Digital (Ionata) to create the downloadable Tourism Tracer app.

The app tracks tourists in real-time as they move around Tasmania and surveys them at points along their trip to capture demographic and other information, providing invaluable data for tourism businesses, the sector more broadly and the State Government.

Ionata created spin-off company Tourism Research Technology Pty Ltd (TRT) to meet the growing demand for the product.

The University has granted a commercial license to TRT to provide it with the rights to take the technology to market, while allowing the University to continue its research into new applications.

"This is a perfect example of how the University of Tasmania works directly with industry to develop local solutions, which also have great promise on a global stage," Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Brigid Heywood said.

"A Tasmanian idea, backed up by Tasmanian research that benefits one of our most important industries, is now being taken to market by a brand new Tasmanian company in a way that ensures we can continue delivering valuable research."

Ionata Managing Director Martin Anderson said Ionata's investment in the new technology would enable further growth and development.

"This partnership is a logical extension of the long relationship we have had with the University and the Tracer team," he said.

“It will allow the University to continue its ground-breaking research in Tasmania and abroad, while also facilitating our development of a cost-efficient tool to service the global tourism industry.”

Project leader Dr Anne Hardy, co-director of the University’s Tourism Research and Education Network (TRENd), said formalising the relationship with Ionata would allow the Tourism Tracer project to flourish in Tasmania.

“Since 2016, we have been working towards developing a business plan to scale up the Tourist Tracking Program research project into a sustainable program,” Dr Hardy said.

“The commercialisation of the technology is the realisation of this plan, which will also continue to provide ongoing benefits to Tasmania’s tourism industry.

“In fact, the Tourism Tracer data has just been used to assess tourists’ movements on the West Coast, providing invaluable insights for tourist operators.

“The data is still free for Tasmania and we are still collecting data and visualising it in almost real time with the royalties from the commercialisation helping to fund further research projects.”

The Tourism Tracer app is the first stage of development of the technology.

The app supports evidence-based decisions that will allow a broad range of stakeholders to optimise the impacts of the increasing number of tourists which have chosen Tasmania as a destination.

The complex data collected through the app are visualised through a dashboard, and converted into useful formats that help guide decisions about how to support Tasmania’s tourism industry.

Since 2017, the free data and dashboard have demonstrated the huge potential of this innovative new tool kit to both government and industry supporters.

View the site here: <https://tasmania.tourismtracer.com/>

About the Tourism Tracer

The initial Tracer pilot study was funded, to the value of \$500,000, through the Sense-T partnership between the University, CSIRO and the Tasmanian Government, which was also supported by the Australian Federal Government. The aim was to develop new technologies and methods to deliver much-needed information to the Tasmanian tourism industry and policy makers.

In 2017, a second phase of the study was funded (to the value of \$410,000) by the University, Federal Group, the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government with a view to identifying additional industry uses for this type of application, developing a dashboard to make the data available to the Tasmanian community, and securing a sustainable operating model going forward.

Media opportunity:

Dr Anne Hardy and Martin Anderson (Ionata) will be available for interviews/photos today at 1.30pm. Meet outside the Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania's Sandy Bay Campus.

For media enquiries contact: Anna Osborne, University of Tasmania
Communications Officer, 0439 665 734.

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office
University of Tasmania

+61 3 6226 2124

Media.Office@utas.edu.au

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