Tracking the movements of wine tourists in Northern Tasmania

A study into the behaviour of wine tourists in Northern Tasmania has for the first time captured their precise movements using mobile and spatial technology, providing industry with detailed and accurate data that will support future planning.

"Tracking wine tourists in Tasmania: a pilot study" uses visitation data gathered from tourists while they travelled around the state as part of the award-winning Tourism Tracer project.

The data was collected from 86 participants visiting cellar doors in the Tamar Valley and Pipers River wine growing areas in 2016-17, using geographic information system (GIS) mapping technology in either a custom-built app or mobile phone.

Tasmanian School of Business and Economics researcher Dr Gemma Lewis, who led the pilot study, said the findings provided industry with a new level of detail and insight into wine tourist behaviour that had not been previously available.

"The wine industry is a significant industry for Tasmania, contributing around $115 million per annum to the economy. Of that, about $15 million is contributed through wine tourism and people visiting cellar doors and attending wine festivals and so forth," Dr Lewis said.

"The number of tourists that are visiting cellar doors continues to grow year-on-year, so it's really interesting and important to drill down into their behaviour and what types of cellar doors they're visiting in which areas."

Associate Professor Anne Hardy, who led the Tourism Tracer project, said she was thrilled that the data had been applied in this context to provide the wine industry with valuable insights.

"We can use the data to determine which direction tourists are travelling within the region, including how many cellar doors they visit and how long they spend there, and what other attractions they visit," Associate Professor Hardy said.

"Eventually, we hope to be able apply this research to other sectors and areas so that we can guide behaviour, as Tracer is currently doing in the Huon Valley region of Tasmania."

In comparison to the total Tourism Tracer data set, the average Tamar Valley and Pipers River wine tourist was found to be slightly older, more likely to be Australian, and somewhat wealthier. The study found the wine tourists could be grouped into four defined segments according to their travel behaviour and characteristics:

Indulgers: Tourists visited multiple cellar doors, all on one day. Most were in the Tamar and Pipers River areas for longer than one day but did not spread out their winery visits. More likely to be Australian couples.

Savourers: Tourists visited multiple cellar doors, over multiple days. More likely to be Australian couples in smaller groups and high-income earners and repeat visitors.

Shotgunners: Tourists were only in the area for one day, and only visited one cellar door. Larger groups.

Teetotallers: Tourists were in the area for multiple days, but only visited one cellar door. More likely to be from overseas and be in larger groups.

Dr Lewis and her team found that certain cellar doors attracted more wine tourists than others, potentially due to their location, their offering (including food), and their marketing and branding.

"Our results also suggest that collaborative marketing between cellar doors and possibly other attractions is beneficial, as several wine tourists in this sample visited more than one cellar door and patterns were apparent," she said.

"The advantage of our data is we can precisely see which other cellar doors tourists visited during their stay and how they moved between them."

The research was conducted by the University of Tasmania in partnership with Wine Tasmania.

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