

Open Data Benefits Tourism Research Australia



TRA Overview

Country: Australia
Industry: Tourism

Customer Profile

Tourism Research Australia is the leading provider of quality tourism intelligence across both international and domestic markets. TRA's data underpins government tourism policy and helps improve the performance of the tourism industry.

Business Situation

Stakeholders and key tourism bodies relied on the delivery of data but it was going out late and not always in a user-friendly format. Administration overheads were increasing and demand for services were hard to keep up with.

Solution - SuperSTAR Suite

An online self-service option powered by Space-Time Research's SuperWEB2. Users from universities, industry organisations, business, government and media can access their chosen information from a huge range of TRA and external sources.

- > **SuperWEB2** Self-service access to unit record data
- > **SuperCROSS** Internal reporting and analysis desktop tool
- > **SuperDataHub** Interactive dashboard tool for users of the general public

Benefits

- > TRA seen as being at the cutting edge for information delivery
- > Improved standing in the tourism and research industries
- > Reduction in service delivery times and less resourcing
- > Increased job satisfaction for TRA staff
- > 24 hour access to TRA data in real time



In creating more powerful and accurate reports using SuperCROSS, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) was in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. Demand for tailored research and reports increased and the TRA team faced a deluge of requests from its clients.

When Rod Battye, TRA's Manager of National Surveys, joined TRA he discovered that the organisation had invested in the powerful SuperCROSS open data tool but was not using it to its fullest extent. "Our stakeholders and key tourism bodies relied on the delivery of data but it was going out late and sometimes incorrectly prepared. It was not a good feeling" said Battye.

Enlisting help from Space-Time Research, creator of SuperCROSS, Battye set about putting a training program in place to help users get the fast, accurate results they needed. The success of Battye's approach was apparent when TRA experienced a sharp rise in demand for information. This success presented new problems: "We were fielding an enormous number of requests for data and our team was stretched to its limit. Administration overheads were increasing as we worked to keep up with demand."

It was clear that web-based access to data had the potential to ease the pressure on the TRA team. Battye reviewed and shortlisted the available products, asking vendors to provide a proof of concept with a selection of TRA data. Importantly, TRA needed to be able to work with its own data rather than relying on outside help. Some of the options reviewed required vendor intervention and to Battye, this was not an option. SuperWEB2 handled the test comfortably, demonstrating how TRA could perform the required tasks themselves rapidly enough to please even the most demanding users.

"Some products couldn't perform the tasks needed and others were clunky and took seven to ten days to provide results. It was different with Space-Time Research. We have to have things turn around fast, we can't wait for results," commented Battye.

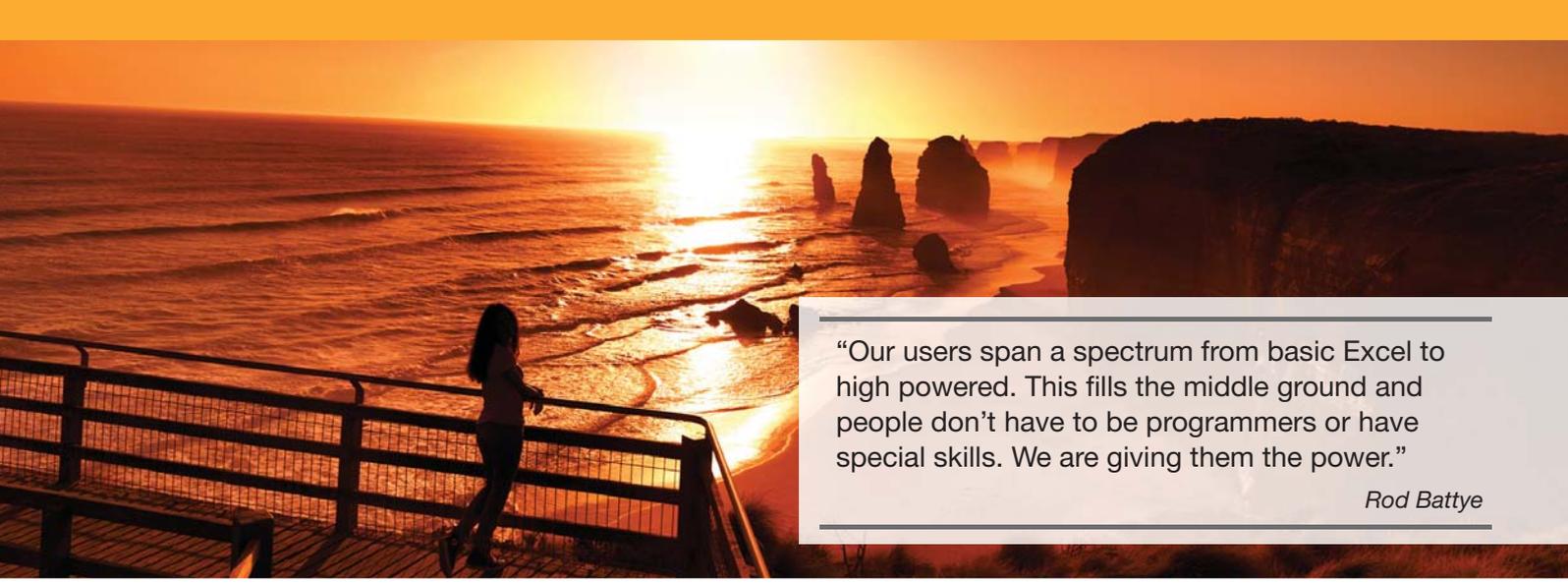
The data TRA provide is market focused; it covers economic benefits, growth markets, trends of what's happening globally and third party forecasts. SuperWEB2's user-friendly format presents the data in a way that is easy to navigate and easy to understand.

While keeping SuperCROSS for around sixty of TRA's "power users", Battye set about implementing an online self-service option powered by Space-Time Research's SuperWEB2. This was to allow users from universities, business, government and media to access TRA data using any device on-line and perform their own ad-hoc queries.

Not only does self-service remove an enormous administration burden; it also gives users the freedom to perform research when and where they need, creating beautifully visualised results in an instant. Choosing from a range of integrated charts, maps and metadata, those using SuperWEB2 can help themselves to insights using their preferred browser. Performing queries is simple and users can select to save their results in one of several open standard outputs. The web-based ad-hoc tabulation means that users can perform analysis across millions of table cells instantly.



SuperWEB2 showing mapview



“Our users span a spectrum from basic Excel to high powered. This fills the middle ground and people don’t have to be programmers or have special skills. We are giving them the power.”

Rod Battye

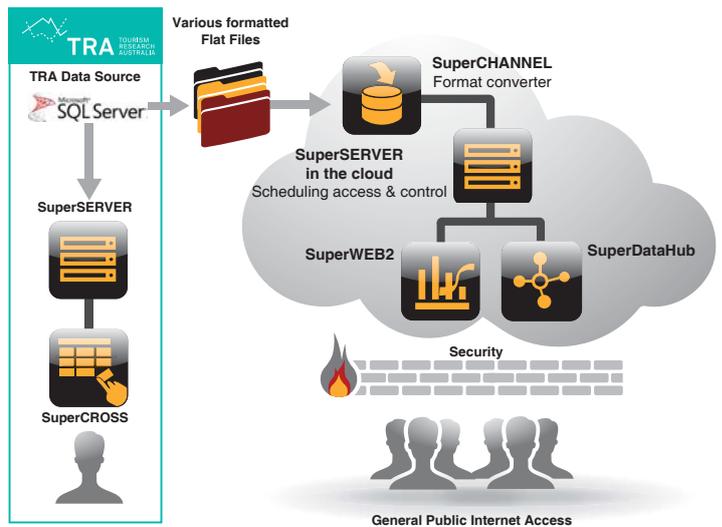
How the TRA team are managing their data

The data arrives as a flat-file format and Rod’s team manage and cleanse the data. TRA then create the main dataset and any multi response datasets and these files are imported into Microsoft SQL Server using scripts. Classification labels from the metadata are also imported into the Microsoft SQL Server database. Changes to the databases are easily made by adjustment to the SQL script. This ensures that clean data is put into MS SQL Server and stored in a star-schema format which is a common best practice approach for database systems. The star-schema file is then read by SuperCHANNEL which allows the TRA to build the SXV4 columnar-store database resulting in a quick and easy dissemination. The main datasets are used by TRA’s major stakeholders to disseminate the survey data. Smaller less detailed versions are also created during this process to cater for TRA’s online clients.

Using SuperCROSS, Rod and his team double check the database before they supply reports to the minister and the general public. TRA also prepares a multitude of existing data requests and provide an enquiry service where the database is the main dissemination tool. Furthermore, the various power users from tourism research organisations and other tourism bodies utilise the tool to create quarterly reports for their websites and the majority of their other requirements.

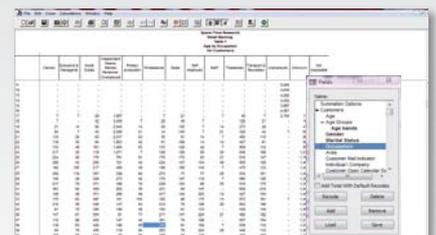
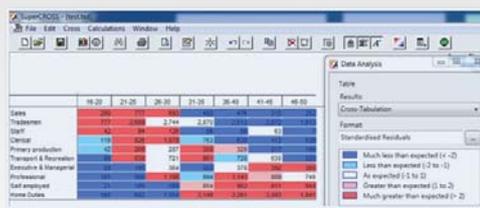
Accessing the data is of limited use unless the resulting information is understood correctly and this is where SuperWEB2 empowers users. Rich metadata offers additional information about datasets, clearly communicating helpful material that enhances understanding for users. This greatly reduces the chance of data being incorrectly interpreted and guides users to the insights they seek. Rod’s team provides these users training once a year in each capital city around Australia.

Internally, everyone has access to SuperCROSS so that they can quickly provide answers to any question that is asked of them via phone or email. This can range from simple queries to more complex definitions of data. Additionally, SuperWEB2 is connected to the SXV4 file to provide the public with a subscription service to the data as well as a free version model.



The success of the program has meant that policy makers and marketers bring in additional data that can be integrated with TRA’s own resources to dig deeper into the factors that influence tourism numbers and satisfaction rates. Importantly, an enormous number of requests happen without TRA’s staff having to intervene – users simply help themselves to the information they need. TRA has been able to launch special subscription programs for 3,000 regular users, helping to fund further enhancements to the program.

By implementing the SuperSTAR Suite, TRA has reduced their administrative overheads and alleviated time consuming manual tasks by providing stakeholders with a convenient self-service option.



SuperCROSS, SuperWEB2 and SuperDataHub make the dissemination of TRA data to the public and stakeholders a simple and convenient process.

Talk to Space Time Research about how your organisation can implement the SuperSTAR suite to help you achieve your data dissemination goals and projects.