

Innovative Ideas

AI travel bag

Japanese researchers and companies have joined forces to develop an innovative guidance robot called the "AI Suitcase" to help visually impaired travellers navigate their surroundings with ease.



Picture shows, Chieko Asakawa, inventor of the AI Suitcase, in Anaheim, California. The travel bag has an AI device mounted on the handle.

The groundbreaking assistive technology recently underwent its first overseas public trial, garnering significant interest and sparking discussions about its future practical applications.

The artificial intelligence suitcase was conceived by Chieko Asakawa, a top engineer at IBM Corp. and the current director of the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, or Miraikan, in Tokyo. Four companies, including Kyoto-based Omron Corp., are collaborating on development.

The AI Suitcase offers features that surpass those of traditional smartphone guidance systems, providing enhanced safety and environmental awareness. By staying one step ahead of the user, the self-propelled suitcase ensures seamless navigation, while its integrated sensors assess the surroundings.

Asakawa and her development team have conducted a series of tests of the technology at locations including Miraikan and Coredo Muromachi, a busy commercial facility in Tokyo's Nihombashi. Their decision to conduct public overseas trials stems from a sense of urgency to make the technology viable not only in Japan but also internationally.

"It is important to have people from all over the world understand the technology, so we go out and listen to what they have to say," she said.

Many opinions were shared during the trial, ranging from how individuals with diverse physiques can utilize the guidance technology to its operation in crowded spaces.

"There is still a lot of work to be done," Asakawa said.

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