

## **Attendance Up 40 Percent at 2014 Destination Summit**

Organizers of the 2014 Destination Summit announced a 40 percent increase in attendants to the annual gathering of mountain travel and marketing technology executives held this year in Denver from May 12-15. Now in its second year, Destination Summit is produced by DestiMetrics in conjunction with marketing and technology firms Inntopia, based in Stowe, Vermont, and Ryan Solutions based in Ohio and Edwards, Colorado.

Together the three firms represent the foremost entities serving the mountain travel industry with big data coupled with new technology and leading knowledge-base assessments of the operational landscape. Joined by more than 20 other technology enablers, the event drew over 250 attendees from around US and Canada.

“In just its second year, Destination Summit has now firmly established itself as the forum for the advancement of travel marketing technology within the mountain travel industry, and we couldn’t be more pleased with this year’s presentation and the positive feedback we’ve received from attendees,” says Garrison.

Garrison adds that DestiMetrics’ participation in the Destination Summit is part of its Knowledge Base initiative and joins The ASSEMBLY, held each January in conjunction with the SIA Snow Show. The two events complement DestiMetrics’ quarterly webinars and monthly briefings, as part of its strategy to help industry leaders turn data into information, and then to extract the knowledge that produces results.

Among their four workshops, DestiMetrics team went LIVE with a simulcast presentation of industry-wide mountain lodging performance data from the 2013/14. Normally presented exclusively to DestiMetrics subscribers via webinar, the simulcast also provided a fact-base preview of the 2014 summer season based on advance reservation data.

Garrison and DestiMetrics’ Tom Foley added knowledge-base commentary on the greater market forces at play with insight on the potential impact to mountain travel. In short, winter business was up about 10 percent, driven by improving economic conditions, and weather proving favorable, except in the far west, where drought conditions contributed to declines in destination lodging of 8 percent. Looking forward, summer business is up across the board continuing a trend set several years ago.

## **Big Data Meets Marketing Technology**

The agenda of 48 educational sessions explored best practices in guest loyalty, online and offline sales, marketing, consumer content, social media, packaging, and reservation fulfillment. Also known as a "Travel Technology Boot Camp," the Summit is

a tactical, hands-on conference, focusing on areas such as enabling technology, marketing automation, big data, and customer loyalty.

Included on the list of featured speakers was Ian Arthur, CMO for Intrawest. In his general session presentation, Arthur provided a case study demonstration of the tools available to marketers today including Intrawest's progressive use of data and analytics to further reach consumers with its brand message. A seasoned guru, Arthur highlighted the transformation of marketing from being predominantly an art form in years past, to now being an effort that is much more reliant on big data, science, and technology, thus further defining an evolution from old-school to Modern Marketing; the title of his closing comments and a fitting synopsis of the Summit's theme.

### **Ski Area Visits Decline 1.3 Percent in 2013/14**

Meanwhile, David Belin, director at Boulder-based ski industry research firm RRC Associates, joined Foley and Garrison in kicking off the conference with a market update and seasonal synopsis. The general session provided a recap of Winter 2013/14 based on various destination lodging metrics coupled with ski area visitation and other consumer trends. While lodging visitation was up, nationally, ski areas posted 56.2 million visits this season, down 1.3 percent from 2012/13. Visits to the Rocky Mountain region were up 6.4 percent and relatively flat in the Northeast region that posted a 0.6 percent gain.

### **READ RELATED ARTICLE HERE:**

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<http://blogs.denverpost.com/thebalancesheet/2014/05/13/resort-communities-see-lodging-revenue-visitation-grow-2013-14/11966/>

Other highlights of the conference included a presentation by Per Caroe of Silverpop, a digital marketing technology provider that unifies marketing automation, email, mobile, and social media channels. Caroe outlined how his firm helps clients build brand loyalty and consumer relations by uniquely engaging each individual based on their behaviors, and then automating personalized experiences that increase revenue, improve ROI, and deepen brand loyalty.

Also Pete Comeau, senior director of sales for PhoCusWright, unraveled the matrix of multiple channels, websites, and devices that travelers employ when planning a vacation. Comeau underscored that to be relevant today, suppliers and destinations need to develop strategies for being active in a host of “points of influence” to help guide and engage consumers during the travel planning stages.

Meanwhile Bruce Rosard, executive vice president of Mountain Travel Symposium, moderated a panel discussion on developing a mobile marketing strategy that included Mark Danemann, president of Siriusware, John Lilley, digital marketing consultant for

Aspen Skiing Company, Matt Schwartz, vice president of digital solutions and strategy for Intrawest, and Albert Ferrando, founder and CEO of Spolio president of sales and marketing.

Erica Kaehly, president of Guest Service Solutions, outlined the process of selecting the best products, services, and training available when building a reservation sales force, and Laird Sager, founder of Red Sky Travel Insurance, spoke of building brand loyalty through travel insurance.

### **Hyperactive #Hashtag**

What do you get when you gather 250 marketing and technology-minded, smart phone wielding mountain travel executives in the same convention space? About 784 Tweets and 256 photos shared via Instagram, for a total of nearly 1 million potential impressions. By following the hashtag #DSummit, social media practitioners could follow the commentary and reactions of Destination Summit attendees including quotes from the speakers. A prize was awarded for the best photo shared via Instagram.

*This is just a quick editorial snapshot of Destination Summit 2014. Find more information online at [www.Destination-Summit.com](http://www.Destination-Summit.com) . We hope you'll join us again next year for Destination Summit 2015. Watch for more details to be announced in the months to come.*