

# Predominant way to lure tourists is with photos

By Kathryn Reed

Eye candy – it's what people are looking for first when they start thinking about a vacation.

That is in large part why websites like Instagram and Pinterest are so popular. And those are the social media venues millennials are using in greater numbers than Twitter and Facebook.

People want to see pictures of pretty places and people doing the things they want to be doing while on vacation. And photos – even videos – of hotels (inside and out) are ways to get people to book a room.



Carol Chaplin with the LTVA and B Gorman of the chamber talk tourism on April 15. Photo/Lesia Witkowsky

All of this information was dispensed at the annual tourism conference April 15 that was put on by Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce. More than 70 people attended the event at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe.

Michael Thomas with Nobel Studios talked about five technology trends that will impact travel. His company created LTVA's website nearly three years ago so it would be photo-centric, include blogs from people playing on the South Shore, events and more. It has content from the visitors authority and from users.

The trends are:

- People are starting their travel itinerary with visuals. "We as a destination need to make sure we have photos on the web," Thomas said.
- People are going to travel to eat. Thomas said there are people who deliberately travel for food, some who are opportunistic by finding good places to eat when they get there, and others who are accidental. "If you can talk farm to fork, and about wine and beer your area produces, you will get the deliberate traveler," Thomas said. No one in the audience is a member of the World Food Travel Association, which he said offers certification for restaurants.
- People will stay in homes more than hotels. Airbnb usage is skyrocketing. Thomas said the valuation of the home rental site is at \$10 billion. This compares to Hyatt at \$8.43 billion and Wyndham at \$9.39 billion.
- Hotels will be more photogenic. Thomas said it is imperative hotels create a visual experience.
- Hotels will be renting workspace. "It is really, really not a good strategy" to charge for Wi-Fi, Thomas said. In today's world people expect to work on vacation. Even leisure hotels are starting to provide people space to work outside their hotel room.

Other speakers included Eric Dunn with Duncan-Channon. That firm does the ad campaign for LTVA. Water sports will be a big part of the summer promotion.

Carol Chaplin, who heads the LTVA, and B Gorman, the chamber's leader, spoke of a recent excursion to Park City to learn about how that mountain town is able to attract visitors.

Reliable transportation with drivers who are more like tour guides, culinary options that range from one to five stars, public art and responsive government are the four main things they and others who traveled to Utah took away from the experience.