

The Ski Resort of 2015

An "Ultra-Connected Experience"



By 2015, the ski industry had positioned itself to support the emergence of the next ski demographic. It was well prepared through an investment in technology and people to deal with the reality that the majority of the new skiers and snowboarders of 2015 -- and many existing enthusiasts -- were completely wired, mobile, and expecting a far more interactive ski resort experience. In doing so, the industry was keeping up with the massive societal change that was occurring as mobile technologies, social networks, and location-oriented “apps” came to change the very nature of the skiing / boarding experience worldwide.

By 2015, more than 80% of skiers and snowboarders were active on Facebook, and were constantly uploading pictures and video of their day at the hill to Twitter and Youtube. Their mobile devices were constantly being used to share, connect, and interact, both while on the hill and after they went back home and to work.

The ski resort of 2015 excelled at outreach to this new type of guest, and support of the expectations of the existing resort visitor, by providing both a technology infrastructure as well as an in-house communication team that supported and enhanced the communications that were ***already underway.***

In doing so, the ski resort of 2015 transitioned from one that provided one-way communications on upcoming events, to one that encouraged and facilitated the cultural mindset that existed within this new demographic - *open, two way and highly interactive communications among and between all ski and snowboard enthusiasts.*



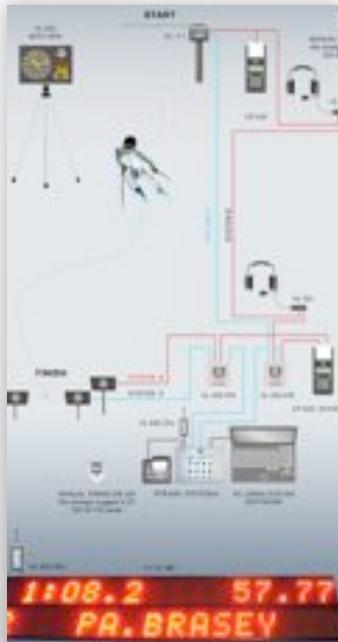
Virtual Peaks

By 2015, some 90% of skiers and snowboarders in North America carried some type of smartphone -- an iPhone, Android or Blackberry -- while “on the hill.” Not surprising - after all, the impact of being “constantly connected” was already shaping every aspect of their daily lives - from work to play.

And with changing demographics, it became clear that the majority of these Generation-X and Generation-Y members came to expect that their on-hill experience would be enhanced by technology. That was supported by leading edge iPhone, Android and Blackberry Apps.

For them, the sport had gone virtual - everything from the ability to check trail conditions on their mobile in the morning, to sharing photos they took through the day through the resort Facebook site, or uploading video for sharing to the resort Youtube account --showing that for this generation, their ski day didn't end when they left the hill. It had only just begun.





Schedule

Athletes

My Team

Lineup

Coach's Knoll

League Standings

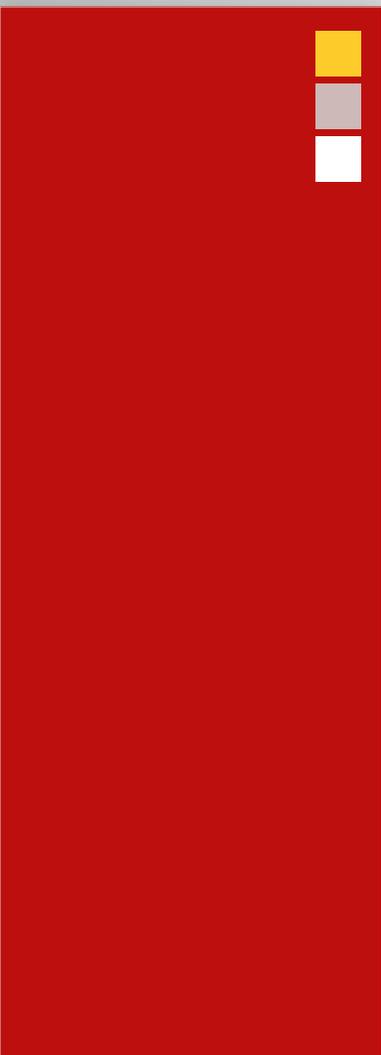
Real Time

Ski racing and snowboarding underwent a significant change through to 2015 at most ski resorts, as racers and teams came to demand the ability to instantly see their results, watch their runs, and receive fast feedback and tips from their coaches and teammates.

This capability was supported by the video infrastructure that was installed along each race hill and pipe / competition area. This saw the implementation of multiple Web cams along the hill, with instant capturing of all video feeds to a central server, and uploading to an online streaming service.

The result? Instant access, any time.

In addition, the ski resort supported the fast development of team mobile apps that allowed kids and adults to instantly share and communicate their great racing experiences throughout the ski resort - enhancing the concept of team membership.



Facilitating **Fitness**

By 2015, it was clear that a big demographic change had occurred at most ski resorts. While skiing and snowboarding were still “in”, so too was fitness -- in a big way!

From climbing the side trails through an “Elevation Club”, to snowshoeing and cross country, it was clear that for many of the newer skiers and snowboarders, their weekend experience included a regular fitness regime.

At least one family member was not regularly on hill - and recognizing and supporting that reality helped to swell the number of families committing themselves to skiing and snowboarding.

The Resort facilitated the fitness experience through electronic leader-boards, available via wireless devices, that let members record and share their Elevation climb. A Web site infrastructure that encouraged the formation of friendly fitness competitions. And social-communication facilitation that encouraged new members to find activities and other members that shared their interest in various fitness activities.





Enthusiast **Outreach**

By 2015, the ski resort had mastered the skill of how to quickly build effective relationships with new potential enthusiasts, ensuring a steady stream of fans of the Resort who might have an interest in spending more time at the hill.

Visitors signed into the Resort through their smartphone while en-route to the hill, or via the Resort Web site, which issued virtual lift tickets that were supported by near-field communications technology. The Resort automatically captured all of their contact information -- and at the end of the day, as they drove home or they went to their friends chalet, they had instant access to a variety of video and photos captured at the Resort by other members. It was an effective electronic hook, and proved to be a winning strategy in converting new people to the passion of skiing and snowboarding.



Find **me!**

By 2015, there wasn't a smartphone that you could buy that didn't have GPS capabilities built in. And location-intelligence had come to dominate the activities of people in North America -- almost every activity, from retail to highway driving to party planning had mobile mapping technology as a key part of the process.

So too it was with the typical ski resort - which made their App's with a "Find Me" feature built right in. Tap your contacts, venture out on the hill, and in instant you had an online, real time map of the hill.

The map shows that one of your friends was over near a particular lift ... and you scoot right over, finding them just as they start to get in line!



Facilitating **Progress**

What were the key investments that the typical Ski Resort make in order to keep up with, and get ahead of the new set of expectations of these new, highly wired participants, so they were ready for 2015?

First, they made a conscious decision that the capital budget should include an appropriate amount of investment for an I/T infrastructure that was leading edge, outward oriented - instead of limping along with technology that barely kept up with fast paced change.

But the second decision was to invest in human capital, by bringing on a staff member who was actively involved in, understood, and constantly supported the member communications which were already occurring. There was a fundamental recognition and acceptance that customer expectations of Resort communications were changing -- and that as the Resort accepted this reality, it also came to learn that this became one of the most powerful forms of new ski and snowboard enthusiast recruitment.





Science Fiction?

There's no doubt that we live in a time of massive transformation. Anyone who opens the newspaper knows that there are significant changes looming as social networking, mobile technology and location intelligence come to dominate both business and personal lives.

This document presents but a few ideas of the the typical ski resort of 2015.

With furious rates of change, the document might have erred in that its predictions might not be dramatic enough.

It's possible to read this document, and think that the ideas presented here are simple science fiction. That the Peaks would never be able to afford their implementation. That it should be all all about the skiing -- technology is secondary. That it is important that all capital funding be dedicated to on-hill activities.

Here's what you should know as you read this document -- *all of the concepts today are already being implemented at major ski resorts worldwide.*

Take a look at the Vail EpicMix iPhone App and other on/off hill activities in the following pages from newspaper reports of late 2010.



News Reports

RESORTS BETTING ON THE CHIPS High tech catches on at high altitude

30 November 2010

Denver Post

VAIL - Not so long ago, simply taking a cellphone out of your pocket was considered bad form on the ski slopes. Chatting on the chairlift or, heaven forbid, taking a call on the catwalk was a social sin akin to leaving your phone turned on in church.

But that was then (and oh, so 2007), before anyone in ski country had ever heard of Mark Zuckerberg and that silly Facebook fad, or folks like Lance Armstrong and Lindsey Vonn had launched Twitter accounts.

These days helmets have Bluetooth headsets and video camera mounts, every major ski resort offers a mobile app, and if you have a lift pass at Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone or Heavenly (Calif.), you're probably already a part of the EpicMix.

'From Day One, I'm definitely on board,' said John Johnson, 28, who was talking up the new social media app from Vail Resorts between runs on Vail's opening day. '(EpicMix) is already tracking your runs, vertical feet skied, days skied and powder days skied, but the website isn't up yet. By the time Christmas rolls around, though, you'll be able to tell all that.'

Johnson is a charter member of what could be considered the millennial ski Resort. A regular on Facebook and a smart-phone owner, he skied nearly 30 days last winter and plans to top that after buying Vail's multiresort Epic Pass this season.

What's more, he plans to brag about it all over the World Wide Web.

'I don't do Twitter, but (EpicMix) links up with your Facebook and all that,' Johnson said. 'It will even award you pins for different accomplishments: skiing this bowl or that bowl, all the different mountains. It should be pretty cool, so I'm excited about it.'

In tune with tech times

By now, it should come as no surprise that the skiing industry - just like all the rest - has gone digital. Ski and

snowboard apps are everywhere, whether it's GPS-based trail trackers, backcountry slope inclinometers or resort-specific info updates offering live feeds of on-mountain data.

What may come as a surprise, however, is that the skiing industry suddenly finds itself at the forefront of the digital highway. Making its debut in December, Vail Resorts' new EpicMix app is being lauded for setting the bar among participation sports as the first to combine social media with physical performance measures.

And the kids are loving it.

'This Epic Mix app for@vailresorts is super dope. Like Nike+ on another level. So stoked to use,' tweeted@chriskahle.

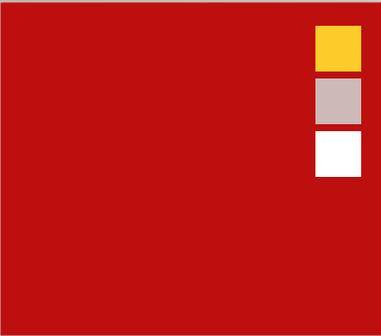
'This combines 3 of my favorite things: skiing, social media and technology,' added@adamseitz.

Sure, some may write off all-but-anonymous Twitter posts as so much cyber-gibberish. But there is no shortage of real-life jibbers out there who have grown up on technology and rely upon the tentacles of social networking the way previous generations shared stories or made ski dates through old-fashioned ski Resorts.

'There's already a whole term that exists in ski culture - apres ski - that's used to describe talking about your ski day, sharing tall tales by the fire. That type of socializing is just natural to skiing,' said Mike Slone, director of online marketing for Broomfield-

based Vail Resorts. 'Fast forward to this century and you see a lot of that happening on Twitter and Facebook. People still share, but the reach and ability to share on Facebook is so much easier. When you add in something like EpicMix, what we wanted to do is take that tall-tale, apres ski bragging and build it into that experience that people are already doing with Facebook and Twitter, enhanced with statistics you can share with friends and family.'

Enhanced experience



In a way, EpicMix turns skiing and snowboarding on the mountain into an interactive game that can be played both on and off the slopes.

Using the radio frequency (RF) technology Vail Resorts began experimenting with three years ago, data is automatically captured from RF-enabled chips embedded in season passes and PEAKS lift tickets every time skiers and snowboarders pass the scanners installed at 89 lifts across Vail's five mountain resorts (Arapahoe Basin and recently acquired Northstar-at-Tahoe are not part of the mix). By tracking lift rides, computers tally which days users are on the mountain and estimate the vertical feet skied, recognizing those who play along with commemorative digital 'pins' for various achievements.

Best of all, the passive technology doesn't require users to do anything but ski or ride, making it accessible to everyone with a pass around their necks - even those who don't know a text from a tweet.

'It was important to us not to interfere with the normal ski experience. We wanted to enhance it, but not take anything away,' Slone said.

Those who are skeptical of the entire process can have the RF chip removed from their ski pass with a simple hole-punch. But they will still need to have their passes scanned at the base of the mountain in order to access the lifts.

Predictably, not everyone is interested in joining the Resort.

Privacy's slippery slope

Some, like former Breckenridge ski instructor Jon Lawson, worry that RF tracking can somehow be used against participants, despite Vail Resorts' assurances of privacy. Rather than simply punching out the chip, however, he's selling \$16 sheaths he calls the 'Ski Pass Defender' that block the RF transmissions.

Others, like recent Penn State graduate Doug Adler, don't feel threatened by the technology. That's mostly because he doesn't see EpicMix as anything especially new.

'I think it's a cool idea, but I have a cellphone that has GPS on it and so I track all my information on there,' said Adler, 22, a fresh ski-season transplant living in Edwards. 'I think everybody with iPhones and Android phones and everything already have it covered. But we'll see how it's implemented.'

In addition to Facebook, Adler admits he's an avid reader of snowboarding Web forums and often uploads his helmet-camera video to sites like Vimeo.com.

'They already have helmet cameras now that have GPS built into them that do exactly what EpicMix does,' he said.

Just the same, he adds, "I'll probably check it out."

Tweet it from the mountains

4 July 2010

Sun Herald

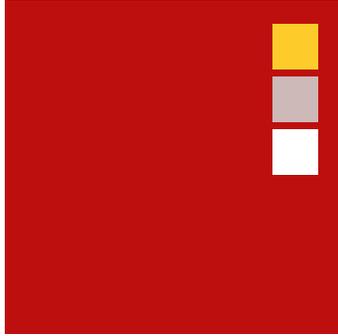
Real-time reports, high-tech lift passes and smart ways to clock your speed: technology has officially arrived, writes Rachael Oakes-Ash.

IF YOU'RE connected to the world with a mobile phone, an iPod or the internet, life on the snow just got a whole lot easier. Technology has officially arrived at the ski resorts of Australia and New Zealand and we're not talking automated snow guns and high-speed quad chairs.

Thanks to Twitter, snow lovers can see real-time snow reports with immediate images live from fellow skiers and snowboarders, which means the snow fields can no longer tell porkies about how much is on the ground.

Snowtweeters.com is an online community for Australian and New Zealand tweeters wanting to hear the latest bites from their favourite resorts and find other tweeters looking for someone to share the petrol on a ride to the slopes.

Taken a wrong turn on a ski run? No trouble; just download skimapsapp.com to your iPhone or BlackBerry. The application has maps from resorts around the world, including Australia and New Zealand, and will home in on your GPS location



and show you where you are on a ski run map so you can navigate your way back.

The resorts also offer their own communications with skiers and boarders. Perisher already has a mini site for mobiles (perisher.com.au/mobile) and has launched an iPhone application this season with the option to track your ski miles plus a Friend Finder to see where they are on the mountain. The application also includes the usual snow reports, accommodation and restaurant options.

Mount Buller (mtbuller.com.au) offers text message or email snow alerts when new snow has fallen and another for last-minute deals. Falls Creek (falls creek.com.au) has an e-news subscription service with snow dump alerts, while Thredbo (thredbo.com.au) allows customers to choose which days of the week to be alerted - text message the day of choice to 0411 553 689 for an up-to-date snow report. Also new this year to Thredbo is an online trip planner. Invite your friends online; each person books and pays online for their share of the trip so the organiser doesn't foot the bill (thredbo.com.au/tripplanner).

Across the ditch the notoriously wild Mt Ruapehu (mtruapehu.com) on the North Island takes the guesswork out of which days to ski, with bluebird text alerts for both Whakapapa and Turoa fields, plus a radio frequency lift pass for season-pass holders to breeze through the lift stations. On the South Island, family-friendly Cardrona (cardrona.com) resort has launched a new kids' website with interactive colouring-in books, videos, photos and storybooks.

NZ Ski (nzski.com) has followed the lead of the North Island and overseas resorts to produce its own radio frequency lift pass for Mount Hutt, Coronet Peak and The Remarkables. The "mypass" works like a ski lift credit card and users can pay for their lift passes online or top up at an on-site kiosk. This means no more queueing to buy a lift ticket. Snow statistics are stored on the mypass and can be viewed online to track and compare the vertical metres and number of runs completed each day.

Australia's leading snow community website, ski.com.au, offers a forum for people wanting to connect with like-minded holiday makers, for tips on where to go and up-to-date news from the industry. The website

(<http://m.ski.com.au> [<http://m.ski.com.au>]) can be viewed on internet-friendly mobile phones.

Mountainwatch.com launched last year and offers a webcam service for resorts. Visitors to the site can view live streaming video from resorts in Australia and New Zealand to make their own judgement on snow conditions. The Mountainwatch iPhone app is called Mountainwatch Snow and goes live this winter.

A snow widget is also available for download to desktops for three-day forecasts, conditions and the status of lifts.

Kiwi website snowreport.co.nz's iPhone application launched almost three years ago and soon became the most used snow application in that country. It is a free application monitoring all New Zealand fields, including Canterbury Resort fields, so skiers and boarders can stay on top of conditions, lift status and weather.

For the serious snow tragic, the ski-o-meter iPhone app will measure your speed while skiing downhill, with maximum speed, average speed and distance covered. Not enough? Then download the hangtimer.com app, which records how much time you spend in the air when making a ski jump in the terrain park or off a natural cliff jump; it will even place where in the world you did it.

Business News; Vail Resorts Announces Launch Schedule of EpicMix and Epic Holiday Gift Contest 20 November 2010

Marketing Weekly News

2010 NOV 20 - (VerticalNews.com) -- Vail Resorts, Inc. (NYSE: MTN) announced the launch schedule of EpicMix(TM), the revolutionary new online and mobile application that will allow skiers and snowboarders to digitally capture and share their ski and ride experience at Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone and Heavenly. Vail Resorts also announced a new contest based on the total vertical feet skied at its resorts, in which one lucky guest can win up to \$100,000 in a cash prize.

Beginning this Friday, Nov. 5, on Keystone Resort's opening day, the EpicMix scanners will capture guests' lift rides, calculating vertical feet and days skied. The scanners will continue capturing guests' lift rides with each of the other resort openings - Breckenridge on



Nov. 12, Vail and Heavenly on Nov. 19 and Beaver Creek on Nov. 24, 2010. The EpicMix website and mobile applications will be launched for guest interaction between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Guests will be notified by email when the EpicMix application goes live. While guests will have to wait until the application goes live to activate their EpicMix account and review and share their accomplishments with family and friends, EpicMix will be capturing all of their lift rides from the beginning of the season. When they first access the application, EpicMix will be loaded with their total days skied and their cumulative vertical feet since the beginning of the season and any special commemorative pins already earned.

In addition, starting with Keystone's opening day, the EpicMix website will feature a live running total of the cumulative vertical feet skied at each of Vail Resorts' five resorts by everyone using a season pass or PEAKS lift ticket. This will be the first time skiers anywhere in the world can view this statistic for a ski resort. To celebrate the launch of EpicMix, Vail Resorts will be giving an Epic Holiday Gift to one lucky guest selected at random on Dec. 29, 2010. The exact amount of this special gift will be set at \$1 for each 30,000 of vertical feet skied by all skiers and riders across Vail, Breckenridge, Beaver Creek, Keystone and Heavenly mountains, from the opening of each resort to the day the EpicMix application goes live, up to a maximum of \$100,000. Skiers and snowboarders will automatically be entered into the drawing when they activate their EpicMix account between when the application goes live and Dec. 28, 2010. For additional details and contest rules, visit www.epicmix.com [<http://www.epicmix.com>].

"We're excited to begin the process of launching EpicMix for our guests this winter to digitally capture their lift rides with the opening of Keystone Resort this Friday," said Heidi Kercher-Pratt, vice president and chief marketing officer of Vail Resorts. "We also look forward to watching, with our guests, the vertical feet totals at each of our resorts and offering our guests a chance to have a truly Epic New Year's with a cash prize of up to \$100,000."

EpicMix automatically captures the activity of guests throughout each of its resorts by leveraging Vail Resorts' state-of-the-art radio frequency (RF) scanners that have been installed at each of its 89 lifts across all five mountain resorts. An RF-enabled chip embedded in Vail Resorts' season passes and PEAKS lift tickets will automatically track guests' lift rides, calculating vertical feet skied and days on the mountain, and will recognize special achievements and accomplishments by granting guests commemorative, collectible digital pins. EpicMix will have hundreds of available digital pins for a multitude of unique experiences available at each resort.

EpicMix will allow guests the choice to "opt in" and share their statistics and accomplishments through updates on Twitter and Facebook and guests can create special EpicMix leader boards with their Facebook friends. The free EpicMix mobile application, which guests can download to their iPhone, Android or other smart phone, will alert guests when any of their Facebook friends are skiing and where they are on the mountain. The application will also allow guests to send messages to their private groups of Facebook friends on the mountain. The mobile application will also provide trail and grooming information, snow and weather reports, as well as resort news and traffic updates. EpicMix will also have a special website for kids under the age of 14, which will allow them to connect with their parents' accounts, but will have content designed specifically for them and unique pins only kids can earn. The kids' site also will have special privacy restrictions. Parents will also be able to use EpicMix to track the lift rides of their kids in real time.

The privacy of Vail Resorts guests is of paramount importance to the Company and no information collected through EpicMix will be shared unless a guest "opts in" and specifically chooses to share their information. All information collected through EpicMix is subject to the strict privacy policies of Vail Resorts. Guests can choose to disable the RF chip in their pass to prevent any scanning. Children under 14 participating in Epic-Mix will have limited features and a connection only to their parents' account.

Epic Mix and Vail Resorts Season Passes

EpicMix is available to all Vail Resorts guests who have a PEAKS lift ticket or a season pass. The Vail Resorts' Epic Pass, Epic 7-Pack, Summit Pass, Keystone and Arapahoe Basin Pass, Heavenly Pass and PEAKS Lift Ticket are all enabled with RF technology and allow guests to participate in Epic Mix. All Vail Resorts season passes are currently on sale now and the revolutionary Epic Pass(TM) is back for its third season providing unlimited, unrestricted access to eight world-class resorts, including Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone, Heavenly and Northstar-at-Tahoe, as well as at Arapahoe Basin and Sierra-at-Tahoe at \$629 for adults and \$329 for children (ages 5 to 12). New this year is the Epic 7-Pack(TM) (www.epicpass.com [<http://www.epicpass.com>]): A seven-day unrestricted ticket that skiers and snowboarders can use at any one of Vail Resorts' five mountain resorts and Arapahoe Basin anytime during the season at a price of \$479 for adults and \$239 for children, or almost 35-percent off of a single-day lift ticket price at the window. Also for the second year, The Summit Pass(TM) is available to purchase online at www.epicpass.com [<http://www.epicpass.com>] and provides unlimited, unrestricted lift access at the top Summit County resorts-Breckenridge, Keystone and Arapahoe Basin-at \$429 for adults, \$339 for teens (ages 13



to 18) and \$229 for children (ages 5 to 12). Also new this year is a Keystone and Arapahoe Basin Pass, which offers unlimited, unrestricted skiing and riding at both resorts and is priced at \$389 for adults, \$319 for teens and \$219 for children. All season passes are on sale only through Nov. 7, 2010.

This article was prepared by Marketing Weekly News editors from staff and other reports. Copyright 2010, Marketing Weekly News via VerticalNews.com.

Skiing? There's an app for that

15 November 2010

The Boston Globe

Highlights from Scott Kirsner's Innovation Economy blog.

It's November, the trees are bare, the air is chilly, and the thoughts of diehard skiers and snowboarders are naturally turning to . . . using Facebook on their mobile phones.

OK, maybe not naturally. But there's a nifty new Facebook application from the Boston social media agency Brand Networks, in partnership with the Sunday River Ski Resort in Maine. They hope you will use your mobile phone on the mountain as frequently as you pull out a tube of lip balm.

Here's how it works: Add the new Sunday River app to your Facebook page. Then, when you visit the resort, use the Facebook app on your mobile phone to "check in" at various spots on the mountain.

As a result, you earn virtual "patches" that show up on your Facebook page, or actual rewards that can be redeemed, such as for half-off appetizers at one of the resort's restaurants. (For you youngsters: In the olden days, before Facebook, the way we wasted our free time was by sewing actual patches on our ski parkas.)

"If you check in at all eight of Sunday River's peaks, you get the Explorer patch," explains Brand Networks founder Jamie Tedford. "Or if you check in on any day that it's snowing and write 'Powder Day' in your comment, you unlock the 'Powder Day' patch." Tedford says there will be signs around the resort encouraging visitors to use the Facebook app.

The app serves two purposes.

First, it encourages Sunday River visitors to spread the word to their Facebook friends about where they are and how much fun they're having. That's cheap marketing for the resort.

But second, Tedford says, the app could evolve into a new kind of loyalty program for Sunday River, rewarding visitors who come often.

Though this reward doesn't yet exist, Tedford says it would be easy to offer a free lift ticket or a Sunday River fleece vest at the end of the season to someone who checked in on 20 different days, for instance.

Tedford says that for marketers, it makes more sense to integrate with Facebook's "Places" check-in capability, rather than to create a separate mobile app or rely on Foursquare, which helped popularize the concept of checking in with a phone when you arrive somewhere.

"The number one app on any of these mobile platforms is, or is going to be, Facebook. You either get with it, or you're up against it," he says. "You just don't want to be another app that someone needs to click."

Design firm creates a new division. Here is a lesson in why consultants should not be allowed to give themselves advice.

Continuum, headquartered in Newton, is one of the world's biggest "design and innovation" consultancies, with more than 180 full-time employees. It helped Procter & Gamble create the Swiffer, has collaborated with Samsung on flat-screen TVs, and worked with Bedford-based Insolet Corp. to launch a wearable insulin pump for diabetics.

They pride themselves on their ability to think through tough design challenges - whether building a lunchbox-size, battery-powered testing lab that doctors can use with AIDS patients in developing countries or figuring out how General Dynamics can better integrate communications systems into a Humvee.

Continuum, once known as Design Continuum, was founded in 1983.

Last month, I started getting e-mails from Continuum about "important news" that was on the way. A meeting was scheduled, then rescheduled.

I finally got a chance last week to hear the news directly from chief executive Harry West.

Continuum is creating a new division called Continuum Advanced Systems. It will be run by its own head, Tom Merle, a Continuum employee for a dozen years. It may even have its own office space someday, next door to the rest of Continuum.

What is different about Continuum Advanced Services?



It will concentrate on "developing complex systems and technologies that are based on a fundamental understanding of people," according to a news release. In my one-hour meeting, though, it was not really clear how CAS will differ from plain old Continuum, aside from taking charge of most of the medical and technology projects. There's no change in the firm's ownership.

I was handed some press information in two identical gray folders: one for Continuum, and one for Continuum Advanced Services. Also, I was told that Continuum had considered changing its name but decided against it.

I had to wonder how many meetings and how much strategizing were required to arrive at these momentous decisions.

The only actual news at our meeting?

Last year, Continuum opened an office in Shanghai that has since grown to about 16 people, and the firm may soon set up a branch in South America, most likely in Brazil. (Continuum already had a presence in cities such as Milan and Seoul.)

"About 25 percent of our business these days touches on China and South America," West said.

For the full blog, which is

updated daily, visit www.boston.com/innovation [<http://www.boston.com/innovation>].

15innovation.ART

NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL NETWORK SLOPES

14 November 2010

San Jose Mercury News

This season, there's more to technology on the ski slopes than the new shapes in skis.

As skiers and snowboarders head online to book vacations and then brag about it, Colorado resorts are amping up their social media and smart phone applications to reach them, offering everything from geotagging to automatic Twitter updates.

Vail Resorts Inc. and Aspen Skiing Co. are launching new apps, and resort employees industrywide are also plastering Facebookwalls and tweeting about recent snowfall and special deals that might not be available anywhere else but online.

"It's definitely part of this trend of 'marketing made personal,'" said Melanie Mills, president and chief executive officer of the trade group Colorado Ski Country USA.

"Everyone is using technology to talk more directly with their guests and more individually to their guests."

Past seasons have had ski and snowboard manufacturers touting new equipment shapes. This season, techies are buzzing about Vail Resorts Inc.'s free new EpicMix mobile and online application, which uses radio frequency identification tags on lift tickets and season passes.

The RFID tags and new scanners on lift towers let EpicMix track customers' ski days and vertical feet logged at Breckenridge, Keystone, Vail and Beaver Creek in Colorado and Heavenly in Tahoe, without a rider doing anything extra.

Customers who opt in can have that information automatically posted on their Twitter and Facebook updates, and their visits can earn them digital "pins," similar to what Gowalla and Foursquare offer. (For now, EpicMix pins don't translate into real-life rewards.)

If friends also have Facebook accounts linked to EpicMix, users with smart phones can get alerts about when those friends are on the mountain too and send them messages.

Vail Resorts CEO Rob Katz says it's taking the apres ski tradition of swapping tales about an epic day on the mountain into the digital age, as visitors' stats are touted online to avid and casual skier friends alike.

"One of our social media goals is to create customers who create other customers for us," said Mike Slone, interactive director at Vail Resorts.

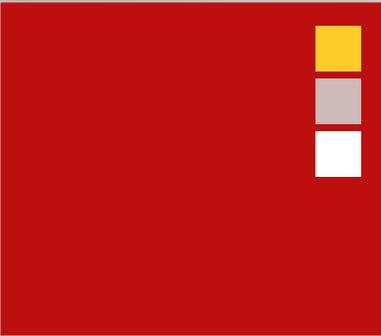
"It's a sign of a huge shift in how resorts are interacting with their guests. It's a very different approach to driving loyalty," said Mark Roebke, chief innovation officer for the ski software company RTP.

At RTP, Roebke is beefing up the Realski iPhone application that acts as an interactive trail map for dozens of North American resorts. Users hold up a newer iPhone to see a video image of whatever a skier is viewing on the mountain, and tags of nearby trails, restaurants and restrooms digitally pop up on the screen.

Realski 2.0, available this season, packs in more information. It also lets users take screen shots and geotag them.

Need to find that powder stash again? Take a picture and geotag it, so that Realski can point the way back. Afraid of forgetting where the car is parked or how to get to the bar to meet up with buddies later? Take a picture and geotag it. Same with that glove that fell off during a ride on the lift.

Realski is free, but resort maps cost 99 cents apiece.



Screen shots from Realski can be shared on Facebook or Twitter, but there's no way to share functioning geotags yet.

Document SJMN000020101118e6be0000b

Applying themselves on your iPhone ; Conditions, location, equipment all visible at your fingertips

7 November 2010

The Boston Globe

From condition reports to bargains on ski and snowboard equipment, here are some of the top iPhone applications to check out this season.

The North Face Snow Report

Since its launch last year, North Face's free Snow Report has widely become the go-to app for conditions, with a mix of social media so users can see what others are saying about snowfall totals and other resort-related news with the built-in Twitter feature. The link to a resort's webcam provides an instant look at the mountain, and mapping technology allows the user a hassle-free location feature. For backcountry enthusiasts, North Face this year released the free Trailhead, an app that finds trails and hikes based on your location and tracks your speed, distance, and elevation with GPS (Global Positioning System).

Ski and Snow Report

While not quite as dynamic as North Face's version, the free Ski and Snow Report from Skireport.com tends to load a lot quicker. The app allows you to search and save your favorite resorts for easy access. Each resort report contains first-hand accounts and photos from others, both of which are nice resources, especially if you don't always buy the resort's ballooned snow report.

OnTheSnow Gear Guide

Thanks to OnTheSnow's comprehensive app, prospective equipment buyers can head to their retail shop with all the information they need. The Gear Guide features detailed information on more than 230 pieces of ski and snowboard gear. Get reviews, pricing, and technical specifications, all of which you can compare against other products.

RealSki

Like a technological window, RealSki utilizes augmented reality technology to provide enhanced details about one's surroundings. The free application, which requires a minimum of 3GS on the iPhone, will label trails, chairlifts, and other resort amenities simply by holding your phone as if you were going to snap a photo. Data pertaining to your immediate location will pop up on the screen, providing a precise way to determine locale. The technology can't be

used everywhere, but a handful of New England resorts are RealSki- ready, including Sunday River, Stowe, Jay Peak, and Loon.

Theodolite

Diving a little deeper into augmented reality technology is Theodolite, which displays real-time information about altitude, position, and inclination. If lost in the backcountry, it could provide a valuable tool for navigating back to civilization, provided you have a signal, of course. Three versions are available: Free, Basic (\$1.99), and Pro (\$3.99).

iTrailMap

The days of fumbling with a map on a windy lift ride are over. iTrailMap compiles the official maps for more than 650 resorts worldwide into one convenient app. While the free version allows the ability to download and store maps, iTrailMap 3D (\$4.99) goes a step further, combining the traditional maps with GPS and 3-D technology, allowing you to track your vertical and distance skied, and upload those stats to Google Earth.

The Weather Channel

No weather app delivers so much simplicity with so many options. The Weather Channel remains the gold standard for pinpointing outdoor plans with its ease of use and the ability to transition between stored locations instantly, a tool that allows skiers and riders to try to discover which area is forecast to get more snow on any given day. The free version also includes animated radar and regionalized video forecasts. Upgrade to The Weather Channel Max (\$3.99), and you'll also receive traffic cameras and customizable maps.

Adaptunes

Whether you should be cruising down the mountain with your earbuds in is probably arguable. But in any case, the 99-cent Adaptunes will make sure you hear the music over the wind with an app that automatically adjusts your volume based on speed. Simply select the sort of activity you're performing and volume control will be based on your movements.

Backcountry

For those thinking about getting into the backcountry experience, Backcountry provides invaluable tools for the novice. Find hikes in your area, including a GPS-led guide leading you to your start point, as well as tips and a checklist for venturing out into the mountains. Free.

Tapped



A handful of New England resorts - Sunday River, Okemo, Smuggler's Notch, and Stratton - host Tapped, a free app that allows you to locate yourself with GPS on each resort's specific trail map. You will also have the ability to locate family members and friends with a sharing function, locate key resources at the mountain, get up-to-the-minute resort information including snowfall and lift status, and record your tracks and log your vertical for the day.

Steep and Cheap

A longtime favorite online retailer for outdoor enthusiasts, Steep and Cheap released its first app this year, providing some of the best deals available. If you have used Steep and Cheap, it's the same deal with the free app, one item at a time for sale for a limited amount of time, or until supply runs out.

Skullcandy

Outdoor action sports retailer Skullcandy gets into the mobile business with its free 3-in-1 app, providing the latest weather and conditions related to surfing, skating, and skiing and riding. Additionally, you will be able to stream music from over 50 artists, and watch action sports videos created by the Skullcandy team. Due to some mature material, this app is recommended for those over age 12.

Ski resorts rev up digital marketing

Associated Press

31 October 2010

The Commercial Appeal

Colorado resorts are amping up their social media and smart phone applications, offering everything from geotagging to automatic Twitter updates.

Vail Resorts Inc. and Aspen Skiing Co. are launching new apps, and resort employees industrywide are plastering Facebook walls and tweeting about recent snowfall and special online deals.

The Realski iPhone application, which is being beefed up, acts as an interactive trail map for dozens of North American resorts. Users hold up a newer iPhone to see a video image of whatever a skier is viewing on the mountain, and tags of nearby trails, restaurants and restrooms digitally pop up on the screen.

Realski 2.0, available this season, packs in more information. It also lets users take screen shots and geotag them.

NEWS AND FEATURES - DIGITAL

Mobile Ski Apps Enjoy Snowball Effect

28 October 2010

Imagine you're skiing down a mountain. After hitting a terrain park and doing a few jumps and half-pipes, you launch a mobile app on your smartphone to see how many vertical feet you've skied and how many digital pins you've collected that day.

That's just one of many capabilities to be offered by Colorado's Vail Resorts, which next month will launch an online and mobile application for the 2010-11 ski and snowboard season. Dubbed EpicMix, the app allows guests at any of Vail's five resorts to capture their performance and share it with others via social networks.

Mobile apps are becoming as ubiquitous on the slopes as skis and poles, enhancing the experience for skiing enthusiasts—and providing brand- and loyalty-building opportunities for the marketers themselves.

Mobile apps are not new to skiers. Many other resorts and ski/snowboard brands have implemented such applications. Gear maker REI's Snow and Ski Report, for example, was voted by Mashable.com as one of the best-branded mobile apps. Snow and Ski Report lets skiers learn about snow conditions at various resorts. The latest version for the iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad is available for free on iTunes.

What makes EpicMix different is the fact that it will use the infrastructure already in place to capture the data. Radio frequency scanners are being installed at each of the 89 lifts across the Vail properties. Each season pass and lift ticket has an RF-enabled chip to track lift rides, calculate vertical feet skied and days on the mountain. The chip can be disabled if guests choose to do so.

Then there's the social media component, which, according to Mike Slone, director of interactive and online marketing for Vail Resorts, is what's really going to attract the younger generation of skiers and snowboarders. For an enhanced experience, the EpicMix mobile app can be downloaded for the iPhone, Android or another smartphone to unlock the social media capabilities. For instance, the app can alert skiers when their Facebook friends are also on the mountain.

"One big trend is that people expect better experiences from ski mountains, especially millennials and Gen Y-ers. They all grew up with technology and we built EpicMix to connect with those consumers," said Slone, adding that in many ways, Vail Resorts' app follows the example of innovative concepts like Nike+ (the ability to capture your ski or snowboard experience) and Gowalla (collecting digital pins).



Vail Resorts' IT team created the app; Crispin Porter + Bogusky is executing related marketing efforts.

RESORTS HONE DIGITAL STRATEGIES

Digital and mobile marketing is a smart strategy for any resort trying to reach today's consumer, said Noah Elkin, principal mobile analyst at eMarketer. According to eMarketer's March Hospitality eBusiness Strategies survey, 26 percent of hoteliers are planning a mobile-ready Web site this year, 24 percent are planning an iPhone app, and 28 percent are planning SMS text marketing.

"The increase in digital and mobile efforts makes sense from a strategic perspective," Elkin said. "Mobile content—whether sites or apps—makes a lot of sense for ski resorts, especially those on the scale of Vail, Aspen and Killington . . . Using this and other nontraditional channels to deliver incentives can help drive adhesion."

Nontraditional channels seem to be the preferred choice for resort marketers. (Meanwhile, traditional advertising for ski products and resorts has been declining over the years. According to the Nielsen Co., ski ad expenditures were \$13.4 million in 2008, \$11.5 million in 2009 and \$6 million though July 2010.) Here's a look at how the other major resorts are using digital, social media and mobile this season:

- Aspen Skiing Company, which operates four mountains in Aspen/Snowmass, Colo., is touting Friday giveaways—including gear and lift tickets—via Twitter and trip giveaways on its Facebook page. And like Vail Resorts, Aspen has a mobile app, which launched last spring. The app is a guide to trail maps, snow reports, on-mountain Webcams and more. iPad and Android versions will also launch soon, per a rep for Aspen Skiing Company. Foursquare integration is also in the works, allowing guests to check in at Aspen/Snowmass and nearby locations.

- Killington Resort in Vermont has rolled out two QR code campaigns this fall. The first one is a 2-for-1 lift ticket deal that appears in magazine ads. Readers can scan the QR code with their smartphone, enter their information on a site and receive an e-mail coupon for the resort. The second promo offers a VIP package to the Winter Dew Tour at Killington, Jan. 20-23. Moviegoers can scan a QR code from Killington's lobby display and enter to win. The resort will launch another QR code campaign next month at the New York City Snow Film Festival, Nov. 19-21. "The cool thing about the QR codes is that it allows us to take our interaction with the guest from a static print format such as a magazine ad, billboard or display advertisement directly to a dynamic platform," said company rep Tom Horrocks.

- Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort, Utah, feels it's best to reach consumers where they're already engaged

online: Facebook, Twitter and other sites that they visit frequently. The resort's iPhone app has garnered 34,000 downloads so far. Version 2.0 (due out next month) will be compatible with Android phones and will include features with social functionality, allowing users to share photos and updates via Facebook Connect and Twitter. Should be ready in November.

- Stowe Mountain Resort, Vermont, has been immersed in social media and mobile marketing for the past year, according to a rep. The resort has been offering exclusive lodging specials to followers on Facebook and Twitter. Then there's the mobile marketing platform, a call-to-action campaign: "Text STOWE to 89800 to be entered to win a \$300 gift card and receive timely updates on specials, conditions and more from Stowe." Dating back to last winter, opt-ins with this program have been growing, the rep said. Additionally, Stowe uses GPS tracking technology to text visitors near the mountain. This is particularly relevant during a snowstorm when current conditions are at their best.

Ski resorts storm the slopes with new apps

28 October 2010

Asheville Citizen-Times

This season, there's more to technology on the ski slopes than the new shapes in skis.

As skiers and snowboarders head online to book vacations and then brag about it, Colorado resorts are amping up their social media and smart phone applications to reach them, offering everything from geotagging to automatic Twitter updates.

Vail Resorts Inc. and Aspen Skiing Co. are launching new apps, and resort employees industrywide are also plastering Facebookwalls and tweeting about recent snowfall and special deals that might not be available anywhere else but online.

"It's definitely part of this trend of 'marketing made personal,'" said Melanie Mills, president and chief executive officer of the trade group Colorado Ski Country USA. "Everyone is using technology to talk more directly with their guests and more individually to their guests."

Past seasons have had ski and snowboard manufacturers touting new equipment shapes. This season, techies are buzzing about Vail Resorts Inc.'s free new EpicMix mobile and online application, which uses radio frequency identification tags on lift tickets and season passes.

The RFID tags and new scanners on lift towers let EpicMix track customers' ski days and vertical feet logged at Breckenridge, Keystone, Vail and Beaver Creek in Colorado



and Heavenly in California, without a rider doing anything extra.

Customers who opt in can have that information automatically posted on their Twitter and Facebook updates, and their visits can earn them digital "pins," similar to what Gowalla and Foursquare offer. (For now, EpicMix pins don't translate into real-life rewards.)

If friends also have Facebook accounts linked to EpicMix, users with smart phones can get alerts about when those friends are on the mountain too and send them messages.

Vail Resorts CEO Rob Katz says it's taking the apres ski tradition of swapping tales about an epic day on the mountain into the digital age, as visitors' stats are touted online to avid and casual skier friends alike.

"One of our social media goals is to create customers who create other customers for us," said Mike Stone, interactive director at Vail Resorts.

"It's a sign of a huge shift in how resorts are interacting with their guests. It's a very different approach to driving loyalty," said Mark Roebke, chief innovation officer for the ski software company RTP.

At RTP, Roebke is beefing up the Realski iPhone application that acts as an interactive trail map for dozens of North American resorts. Users hold up a newer iPhone to see a video image of whatever a skier is viewing on the mountain, and tags of nearby trails, restaurants and restrooms digitally pop up on the screen.

Realski 2.0, available this season, packs in more information. It also lets users take screen shots and geotag them.

Need to find that powder stash again? Take a picture and geotag it, so that Realski can point the way back. Afraid of forgetting where the car is parked or how to get to the bar to meet up with buddies later? Take a picture and geotag it. Same with that glove that fell off during a ride on the lift.

Realski is free, but resort maps cost 99 cents apiece.

Screen shots from Realski can be shared on Facebook or Twitter, but there's no way to share functioning geotags yet.

RTP also is working with resorts on an application to let people get scanned at lift lines by using their phones, similar to using a boarding pass on a smart phone at the airport. A virtual lift ticket appears on the phone, but tapping on a space at the bottom might bring up weather reports or the ability to add more days on a lift ticket.

Skiers would have to take their phones out of their pockets to get a virtual lift ticket scanned.

That could change though. Some resorts have RFID tags on their real-world tickets so customers can be scanned through a person's coat, and in Europe, Swatch watches with RFID tags let wearers ride the lifts at participating resorts. Roebke predicts it's a matter of time before smart phones add RFID too.

Some new technology at the resorts works behind the scenes, like what Loveland Ski Area added to make reservations more seamless. Some is aimed at making it easier to spend.

Aspen Skiing Co. hopes its upcoming mobile application, which would work on most smart phones, can provide updates on snowfall and trail grooming but also allow guests to make dinner reservations or buy lessons, Mills said.

"There's a change in buying behavior. There's a convenience expectation. 'Why do I have to stand in line,'" Roebke said. "This is geared toward, how do we give people the most trouble-free experience possible."

Meanwhile OnTheSnow.com, run by a Vail Resorts subsidiary, has launched its free iPhone Gear Guide application that lets users compare mountain gear. Its app for snow reports is free this year, and a similar one for the iPad is due in December.

One note of caution for all this technology on the slopes: The rules for stopping to geotag or do anything else with your phone are the same as they would be for stopping to take a breather. The National Ski Areas Association Responsibility Code says, "Stop in a safe place for you and others." So whether you are taking a photo, making a call, geotagging, tweeting or just waiting for a friend, find a safe area where you can see what's going on and where others can easily see you.

Ski resorts bump up attractions Bigger, faster lifts, more halfpipes, a social-chatter app and expanded terrain all aim to lure customers **24 October 2010**

Denver Post

The story of improvements in ski country this season is one of quality rather than quantity.

Unlike years past, when fall meant the unveiling of expansive new acreage, the hallmark of recent seasons has been upgrading the skier and rider experience.

"We're completely focused on investing in our resorts to make our guests' experiences better and better," said Liz Biebl, Vail spokeswoman. "We've been successful doing



this and differentiating our resorts over time, and we expect to continue every year.'

A new lift and a revolutionary new app top the list of this year's improvements at Vail.

The High Noon Express Lift will replace a lift installed in 1979. With service to the popular Sun Down Bowl, the original lift in this location was installed when Vail opened in 1962. The new lift will bring an additional 1,000 skiers per hour (2,400 versus 1,400) to the Bowl and halve the ride time from 12 minutes to six.

In the technology realm, Vail will set itself apart this year with its introduction of the first-of-its-kind EpicMix App. EpicMix runs on radio-frequency identification scanners at each of the 89 lifts on the five Vail Resorts mountains - Vail, Beaver Creek, Keystone, Breckenridge and Heavenly (in Tahoe) - that will feature the app.

Chips embedded in Vail's Peaks lift tickets or various season passes allow you to track vertical feet skied and connect the mobile app to your accounts on Facebook and Twitter. In addition to letting you instantly rub in the fact that you got first tracks to your friends stuck at home, you also can find friends and family on the mountain in real time and instant message them. If you don't want someone to know you're up on the hill - say, your boss for example - you can disable the locator function.

'Skiing has always been a social activity, sharing your adventures and accomplishments at the end of the day with family and friends, and EpicMix enables guests to choose to do that seamlessly,' said Kathleen Lessman of Vail Resorts.

Of course Vail isn't the only Colorado resort trying to anticipate its guests' needs.

Arapahoe Basin, which had the last major terrain expansion in the state when it opened the Montezuma Bowl in 2008, is also getting a new lift.

The \$4 million Black Mountain Express, a detachable quad chairlift, will replace the Exhibition fixed-grip triple chair located in the base area, which was installed in 1978. The new lift will have a capacity of 2,000 people per hour, a length of 2,877 feet, a vertical rise of 719 feet and a ride time of just under three minutes. The top terminal of the new lift will be slightly realigned uphill and to the west away from Black Mountain Lodge. The lower terminal will remain in the same location.

Sure, new lifts are nice, but what do you do when you get there?

In response to skier and rider requests, several Colorado resorts will be serving up new terrain 'on the side.'

'We have a couple of resorts expanding terrain in response to customers wanting more side country,' said Jennifer Rudolph, a spokeswoman for Colorado Ski Country USA, the trade association that represents the 22 Colorado resorts that are not owned by Vail Resorts. 'People have been asking for terrain that's right on the boundary but still avalanche-controlled. People still have to earn it; this terrain is not going to be served up on a heated gondola.'

Telluride is leading the way in this area with the installation of a new bridge and staircase to the left shoulder of the resort's Palmyra Peak. Over the summer a helicopter airlifted two steel staircases and a bridge over the ski resort to its final resting place - the span between Gold Hill Chutes 8 and 9. All three components measure 30 inches wide, feature hand railings on both sides and a serrated, grated-steel walking surface. Together, the stairway and bridge combined make up 126 linear feet ascending Telluride's Gold Hill.

Following up on last season's terrain expansion, which added 30 percent more expert terrain, Durango Mountain Resort is adding even more terrain for 2010-11, this time on the front side of the mountain. The new, gladed section of the mountain will be known as 'The Ambassadors Glade,' named after resort owners Chuck and Sue Cobb, who served as U.S. ambassadors to Iceland and Jamaica, respectively.

Also to cater to more experienced skiers and riders, Eldora is making a substantial effort to improve glade skiing and snowboarding through tree thinning on the advanced and expert terrain of Jolly Jug Glades, Powderhorn Glades, Placer Glades and Brian's Glades.

Meanwhile, in Aspen, those who have always wanted to check out the Highland Bowl will have a chance through a free guided tour this season. The legendary bowl boasts 2,000 vertical feet of backcountry-style skiing accessed by a 30- to 45-minute hike and optional Sno-Cat ride. The tours run at 11 a.m. on Wednesdays for confident double-black skiers only.

New lifts and terrain access aside, the bulk of the improvements in ski country this season are down-to-earth basics.

'Snowmaking isn't sexy to talk about but we sure appreciate it in the early season,' Rudolph said. 'It's like that with a lot of the improvements this year. Skiers won't notice right away, but they'll be up at their favorite resort and come to realize something has changed for the better.'

What's new and where



With the addition of a new 12-foot halfpipe, Aspen and Snowmass will become the only resorts in the world to have three half-pipes. The newest pipe, which is in addition to the Olympic-size superpipe at Buttermilk and the existing 18-foot halfpipe in Snowmass, is for those newest to the sport. The new pipe will be located in Snowmass' Lowdown Park.

Breckenridge has a new 22-foot superpipe in which to host training sessions with leaders in the sport. In addition, a new alpine coaster will open at the Peak 8 Fun Park. The Gold Runner will wind guests through loops and curves within the canopy of Peak 8 summer and winter.

For the \$6 million Copper Mountain spent over the summer, the resort has increased its snowmaking capacity by 25 percent, added 40 percent more free parking in the Corn Lot and bought a 22-foot- pipe- grooming Zaugg, which means the resort will be able to have an Olympic-

size superpipe the entire season.

There's new terrain opening at Echo Mountain Ski and Snowboard Area for the resort's fifth season. The top-to-bottom Easiest Way Down brings the resort's named trails to 16. In addition to the new beginner trail, the expansion will also increase access to gladed terrain in Lower Westside Glades.

For the 2010-11 season, Eldora is installing a magic carpet to help get first-time skiers up the mountain before they're ready to try a traditional chairlift. The new conveyor lift Tenderfoot replaces the old Tenderfoot handle tow. The new lift extends slightly higher on Ho-Hum Trail and allows for direct access to EZ lift.

Loveland is replacing its ticketing and point-of-sale system throughout the ski area with a fully integrated system that will smooth guest transition throughout departments.

At Monarch Mountain, the resort spent \$1.2 million building a new base terminal that will allow the Garfield lift to run more efficiently, with fewer stops for skiers and riders getting on and off the lift. The Pioneer quad chair lift has a new offloading ramp at the top. A new yurt for the junior mountain program will be used for registration and as a warming hut for older children, and the The Children's Center is being remodeled to better serve the littlest skiers and riders.

At Powderhorn this winter, guests will find new beginner-to-advanced natural features located in three terrain parks on the mountain. The features are being built from Aspen deadfall and other wood.

Purgatory is also ramping up its terrain park this season. In an innovative approach, the resort constructed the park

features out of dirt. By building hits and carving pipes from earth instead of snow, less snow will be needed to open and maintain the parks.

Silverton Mountain is adding 30 chairs to the line on its one lift, bringing the number of chairs on the line from 59 to 89.

The beach is coming to Steamboat this season. Visitors can catch some rays at the new Burgess Creek Terrace and Umbrella Bar on the Bear River Bar & Grill Deck, located slopeside in the base area adjacent to the Gondola entrance. In addition, snowmaking increased 27 percent and 30 new and refurbished rails and other features were added to the resort's four terrain parks.

While still putting the finishing touches on the Village at Winter Park, the resort is investing in raising the level of guest service. Enhancements include the purchase of two new Sno-Cats, additions to the ski and snowboard rental fleet, new mountain Web cameras and an additional 822 marked parking spaces at The Vintage Hotel. Snowriders can park for free at the hotel and then access the resort via the Village Cabriolet. And The Lodge at Sunspot atop Winter Park Mountain, celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2012, has a new look inside and out, with more work to come to ready for the celebration.

The main day lodge at Wolf Creek has a new kitchen and carpeting. Additionally, the water-free, composting restrooms on the top of the mountain are scheduled for completion this season.

It doesn't get anymore down- to-earth than composting restrooms, so we'll stop our list here and wish you a happy, snowy season. ---- ---

Following your tracks Some resorts are putting radio tags in lift tickets to allow tracking of skiers. Does that throw privacy off the mountain?

21 October 2010

Denver Post

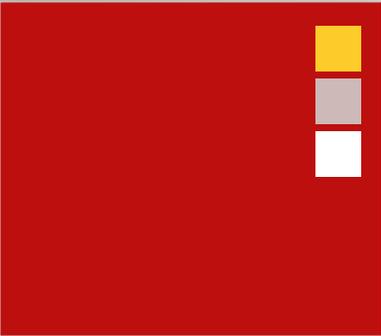
Going skiing?

You may be tracked.

Resort operators have implanted tiny radio-frequency computer chips with antennas in lift tickets and season passes. They're installing more scanners on mountain slopes.

The scanners automatically track skiers and snowboarders, recording their whereabouts in company databases.

Some skiers and privacy advocates object.



'Any kind of technology that creates an automatic tracking system by default violates people's general expectation - not just of privacy but of the world,' said Lee Tien, senior staff attorney for the pro-privacy Electronic Frontier Foundation. 'You are not expecting to be tracked.'

A Colorado ski instructor started producing aluminum 'ski-pass defender' sheaths that block radio signals and is selling them at the rate of eight sheaths a day.

Federal trade regulators for years have been tracking the spread of radio-frequency technology, which increasingly is embedded in credit cards, passports, items for sale in malls and experimental driver's licenses. But the government has not set limits.

Now Vail Resorts Inc. is poised to deploy EpicMix, the most extensive on-mountain tracking system in Colorado.

All 89 lifts at Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone and Vail, and at Heavenly in California, will be outfitted with scanner portals able to read the chips as skiers and snowboarders pass through, Vail Resorts spokeswoman Kelly Ladyga said.

Vail passes carry 900-megahertz tracking devices, which industry publications indicate can enable longer-distance reading, rather than the 13.56-MHz tags considered standard for ski passes.

Vail officials tout EpicMix as 'the key to unlocking a new mountain experience,' a capturing-and-sharing grid to revolutionize the way customers 'interface' with the mountain.

Vail invested an undisclosed portion of its \$75 million capital-improvement budget to develop the system.

Features include the ability to set up accounts that use the chip data to track how many vertical feet and days have been skied.

The EpicMix program also allows users to download software applications for mobile devices, such as the iPhone, that enable the automatic display of their whereabouts on the mountain at social-networking websites such as Facebook.

'It's a competitive differentiation which we hope translates into more people skiing at our resorts - and skiing more often,' Ladyga said.

Privacy?

'There is no privacy issue,' she said, noting that competitive runners are tracked in some races using similar methods.

Skiers and snowboarders who don't want to be tracked can remove RFID chips from their tickets or passes using a hole-puncher, she said. If a day skier asks for a paper ticket with no tracking device, those can be issued, she said.

Any information