THE POWER AND GROWING INFLUENCE OF MILLENNIAL FAMILY TRAVELERS

*We loved attending TMS Family for many reasons-- the size, conversations and learning that family travel influencers is a growing trend. This was also the first conference that allowed our son Jack, 13 months, up on stage while we presented!*

*Johnny Jet, creator of JohnnyJet.com*

*Great networking and invaluable education with travel writers/bloggers! Destination Niagara USA has participated for several years and we always walk away with trends and contacts that help shape our future direction*.

John Percy, President and CEO Destination Niagara USA

*TMS Family gives Allianz an opportunity to meet and learn from a wide range of travel influencers in an intimate setting.  We better understand not only travel trends, but also any pain points for families traveling. This allows us to see how we can grow and evolve our products and services to better suit their needs and, in turn, many other customers.*

*Sarah Fouts, Social Media and Content Strategy Manager, USA*

*A Report on Research from the 2017 TMS Family Travel Conference, Clearwater, Florida*

The face of family travel is changing rapidly, especially as Millennial families assert their travel styles and preferences. They travel farther afield and more often than their peers without kids, valuing new experiences they can share on social media, which they also rely on to plan vacations. Kids have an increasingly influential role in where families go and what they do. At the recent #TMSClearwater Family Travel Conference’s Summit Program, the aspirations, achievements and attitudes of millennials traveling with children were explored during three intense days as was the new way to reach this market—working with social media influencers.

Why We Studied the Millennial Family Traveler

There are 80 million millennials in the United States – now the largest demographic segment (more than 30 percent) in the U.S. workforce. Millennial families are taking multiple trips each year, spending more than their peers without kids and other generations. Marketers have long known that millennials are a significant force. However, the custom research presented at the TMS Conference in Clearwater, Florida – curated to highlight new data -- surprised many, as did the ways millennial parents are now making their travel decisions.

In attendance to hear, digest and discuss the cutting-edge research were 40 nationally known writers, editors, social media influencers, broadcasters and executives from various segments of the travel industry including cruise lines (Carnival Corp), travel services (Allianz USA), and DMOs (Visit New Mexico and Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation), among others.

What We Learned about the Millennial Family Traveler

Among millennials, families travel much more than couples or singles and are spending more than their peers. During the next year, they plan to spend more than GenXers or Baby Boomers—and nearly 20 percent more than in the past year. They are also traveling more internationally than other demographic group—more than half took an international trip in the last year and nearly 2/3 plan to take more vacations abroad in the next 12 months.

Despite the overall slowdown in travel, with fewer travelers spending about 5 percent less than in 2017, millennial parents remain optimistic and don’t cite safety as a reason to stay closer to home. They are taking more than one vacation – often an adventure trip. Increasingly, tour operators are adding adventure activities for families with younger children.

Due to budget, families are also taking more weekend getaways, especially by car, which are planned just a week or two in advance. Such road trips are especially popular with families living in Texas, California and Florida.

How Millennial Families Plan & Research Travel

Millennial parents rely more on online reviews and research than their peers to select travel services, and are more apt to use social media to research destinations, and to engage with brands directly in pursuit of deals.

They, like their older siblings, increasingly rely on their children to research where families might go and what they will do when they get there. Children and teens get their vacation information and motivation from what they see on social media and TV.

Key Takeaways from the 2017 TMS Family Travel Conference

* Millennial families represent the largest growth segment and opportunity in the travel market.
* Marketing a destination or experience to appeal to children is key to a successful family travel campaign.
* Millennials want to be “the first on their block” to experience a place or activity.
* Shopping, the beach and dining experiences are what family travelers want on a weekend getaway.
* More than half of domestic family vacations include a visit to an attraction but museums, aquariums and science museums rank higher than theme parks
* Far more Millennial families than their peers have cruised and plan to take a cruise in the next two years.
* Two thirds of Millennial families surveyed have used shared accommodations like Air BnB or HomeAway because they like the feeling of “a home away from home” and meeting locals
* Millennial family travelers rely on social media when planning vacations; looking for inspiration from influencers they trust and interaction with a destination.
* Consumer reviews online are very important when selecting accommodations.

TMS Family Travel Summit 2017 Research

In between tours to the Clearwater Aquarium to meet Winter, the most famous dolphin in the world with a nearly two million following on social media, and visiting the famous 3-mile long Clearwater Beach for a sand sculpting competition, TMS Conference attendees were privy to presentations from national experts, conversations on the changing role of influencers in marketing family travel, the growing power of LGBTQ families and the chance to create a campaign targeting Millennial Families.

Where Millennial Families Differ from their Peers

*Steve Cohen, VP, Research & Insights for MMGY Global, oversees the “Portrait of American Travelers” (now in its 28th year), source of the research he presented for this conference. “Those not marketing to children are missing the boat,” Cohen said.*

* 81 percent of millennial parents report that children help plan daily vacation activities; 75 percent said kids influence the destination and 64 percent said kids influence the choice of hotel or resort.
* Millennial families spent $5,295 on leisure travel in the last year and plan to spend $6,282 in the next year—a 19 percent increase, in contrast to the decline in spending intent among all leisure travelers.
* 64 percent of millennial families intend to travel internationally in the next 12 months; 51 percent have taken an international trip in the last year with Europe leading their region of interest.
* Millennial families opt for cruises because they can see multiple destinations and are family friendly. 71 percent of those polled said having taken a cruise as a child makes cruising more appealing to them; 75 percent reported cruises afford the security to travel to foreign places they might be wary of visiting independently and 76 percent said a cruise line’s eco-responsibility record matters in what cruise they choose.
* The Majority of millennial families—79 percent—report interest in all suite accommodations and 65 percent in shared accommodations. What matters besides value: previous experience with the brand, free breakfast, consumer reviews on online review sites, information/photos/videos on the hotel’s website. And free internet access from public areas.
* More than half of millennial families—52 percent—have used sharing economy lodging—34 percent Airbnb, 30 percent HomeAway and 14 percent VRBO. Just as important, 46 percent report they are likely to use such accommodations in the future. Top reasons: to stay in an unusual place, to stay in the neighborhood as the people they are visiting, and a dislike for staying in hotels for a long period.
* 52 percent of millennial families have selected a destination at least in part because of social media; 40 percent primarily based on information viewed on social media.
* When engaging with a brand on social media, millennial families not only want offers but are looking to be able to give feedback.
* 54 percent of millennial families report they post about their vacation experiences to make their friends and family jealous.
* 65 percent of millennial families report art/history museums are a top attraction of interest, followed by aquariums (59 percent), science museums (56 percent), zoos (55 percent) –ahead of theme parks, amusement parks and waterparks.

Insights from the Weekend Family Traveler

*One out of five overnight leisure family trips is for a getaway weekend during which they spend over $800, says Jeffrey Eslinger,* *Senior Director - Research Account Services, D.K. Shifflet & Associates, who specializes in travel and tourism market research at all economic levels.*

* Getaway weekends are taken more by travelers between the ages of 35-54, with 31 percent taken by millennial families.
* The largest share of Getaway Weekends are taken by those with incomes of less than $50,000 per year. Those taking longer vacations tend to be more affluent
* Getaway weekends are more popular than general vacations with African American and Hispanic families.
* Nearly a third of those planning a Getaway Weekend plan just a week or less in advance; 42 percent plan within a month.
* Those most apt to take Getaway Weekends come from Texas, California and Florida.
* The most popular destinations for Getaway Weekends are Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, FL; Los Angeles and San Antonio, TX
* The majority (59 percent) of families going on a Getaway Weekend stay in hotels; 35 percent stay in other paid lodging, while 24 percent stay with friends or family.
* 28 percent of families heading on a Getaway Weekend want to go shopping; 25 percent to the beach and 24 percent to enjoy a dining experience — more than want to go to a theme park, visit friends or relatives, sightsee or visit a national park or historic site.
* Boomers are more likely to fly and Millennials more likely to drive on an overnight leisure family trip.
* Asian travelers are more likely to fly while Hispanics are more likely to drive.

**Hosts of #TMSCLEARWATER:**

Joanne Vero, J. Vero & Associates – TMS/HUB

Kyle McCarthy, Family Travel Forum

Eileen Ogintz, Taking the Kids

**Speakers:**

Cory Cart, Hub

Steve Cohen, MMGY GLOBAL

Ryan Cochran, co-founder of the New Orleans LGBT Hospitality Alliance

Natalie DiScala, creator of ohtravelissima.com

Jeffrey Eslinger, D.K. Shifflet & Associates

Dr. John Forde, professor and head of the department of communications, Mississippi State University

Johnny Jet, founder JohnnyJet.com

Rebecca Latham, Cabinet Secretary, the New Mexico Tourism Department

John Percy, President and CEO, Destination Niagara USA

Victor Ricci, CEO TrendPie

**Participants:**

Lois Alter Mark, USA Today 10Best.com

Becky Beall, The Travel Voice by Becky

Janice Brady, An Open Suitcase

Krystal Butherus, Sunny Sweet Days

Tara Cannon, Pint Size Pilot

Lisa Carey, Money Saving Parent

Ed Caum, Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB

Lisa Chandler, Sugar Sand Festival Clearwater, FLA

Trina De-Oliveira, The Mommyhood Life

Sara Fouts, Allianz Global Assistance USA

Hilarye Fuller, Dotting the Map

Jennifer Greene, Journeys with Jenn

Tamara Gruber, We3Travel/Vacation Mavens

Vance Gulliksen, Carnival Cruise Line

Eileen Gunn, Families Go

Esther Irish, Laugh with Us

Hannah Khan, Development Counsellors International

Jennifer Lazarz, City of Gallup

Tim Leffel, PerceptiveTravel.com

Caroline and Craig Makepeace, Y Travel Blog

Charles McCool, McCool Travel

Nedra McDaniel, Adventure Mom

Lisa O’Driscoll, Fun Money Mom

Joyce Oliva, Carnival Cruise Line

Elena Ollick and Joe Psyk, Daily Mom

Nicky Omohundro, LittleFamilyAdventure.com

Karilyn Owen, No Back Home

Melody Pittman, Wherever I May Roam

Hannah Rinaldi, Eat, Drink and Save Money

Bryanna and Craig Royal, Crazy Family Adventure

Kimberly Tate, Stuffed Suitcase and Vacation Mavens

Allison Taylor, Family Vacations U.S.

Aleis Tusa, City of Clearwater

Dana Vento, DanaVento.com

Karen Warren, ThisGirlTravels.com

Barb Webb, Rural Mom

Captain Charles Wright, Everglades Area Tours

Marla Zickefoose, JustMarla.com