

Millennials redefining travel marketing

By Kathryn Reed

Millennials are not something to be feared, laughed at or ignored. They are merely the next generation.

These 18- to 34-year-olds are here and they aren't going anywhere. What they are doing, though, is changing how those in the tourism industry think. And if people aren't changing their thinking, they are bound to lose out on this burgeoning segment of the population that is hitting the road.

That was part of the message delivered to a packed room at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel on April 26. Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce put on the annual three-hour tourism confab.

Millennials are all about the experience and then sharing it – usually via a mobile device on social media. They want authenticity.

“A connected village is the heart of the new economy,” Jason Broadwater said. “The defining characteristic of millennials is digital and social connectivity. Millennials are digital natives. They don't know a world without it.”

Broadwater is founder and president of the Internet marketing company RevenFlo, which is based in Rock Hill, S.C. He spoke Tuesday about millennials and the new economy.

He said this generation's priorities when traveling are:

- Experiencing new culture – 86 percent
- Local food – 69 percent

- Partying – 44 percent
- Shopping – 28 percent.

About 72.2 million millennials live in the United States. California is home to 6 million of them, while baby boomers account for 4 million. California is the No. 1 state for millennials to visit.

Their adolescence has also been extended, with 36 percent of them still living at home. What is different compared to prior generations, according to Broadwater, is that this is not seen as a social failure.

Often their parents are baby boomers. This extension of the familial circle means that generation is redefining what it means to be older.

Millennials also see themselves as being part of a local culture and a global citizen at the same time. They are collaborators who share information and resources. They don't buy into institutionalized hierarchy.

This also ties into their work lives where many are entrepreneurs and not part of the traditional 9 to 5, Monday-Friday world.

Connectivity is their motto – in terms of work, play and travel.

“They are less territorial. They share everything,” Broadwater said.

To attract them to the South Shore, Broadwater said, “Let the locals tell their stories in an authentic conversational platform.”