



## DoubleTree by Hilton's Little Things Project Brightens Travel Experiences Nationwide

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Ketchum and Gensler and Digital Royalty and OMD and Decibel Management and Laird and DoubleTree by Hilton, Jan 1,2013

**Summary:** 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Marketing Consumer Services — Travel and Tourism / Hospitality

At DoubleTree by Hilton, little things mean everything when it comes to travel. With travel growing increasingly difficult, DoubleTree by Hilton was determined to leverage its CARE culture to make travelers feel human again.

The solution? Ask the travelers. Listen to their answers. Then surprise and delight them with what they said they wanted. The Little Things Project was born, and DoubleTree by Hilton set off on nationwide tour to deliver “little things” to brighten travel. The team surpassed its goals – delivering 3.6 billion media impressions, along with thousands of new social media followers and Hilton HHonors members.

Marketing consumer services includes programs designed to introduce new services or promote existing services to a consumer audience.

### Full Text: **SUMMARY**

Travel today comes with challenges and annoyances – rising airfares, fewer amenities, canceled flights, security delays, cramped seating and cheap onboard snacks. DoubleTree by Hilton wanted to make travelers feel human again by elevating the “little things” that mean everything to guests and that have come to define its culture of comfort. But how?

Ketchum’s solution: Ask the travelers. Listen to their answers. Then delight them with what they said they wanted. We launched the Little Things Project, a listening tour asking travelers what “little things” would brighten their travel. Based on 5,000+ responses through DoubleTree by Hilton’s social media platforms, we created a year-round, 50-city tour to surprise travelers with the “little things” they said they wanted – ranging from exclusive deals for local attractions to free Wi-Fi and chocolate chip cookies. “Swarm Cars” in select cities blended the virtual and physical worlds by delivering real-time “little things” requests received on Twitter.

The project surpassed all goals – delivering 3.6B media impressions; 24,753 new Facebook fans; 8,923 Hilton Honors sign-ups and 658,056 sweepstakes entries. The brand also experienced revenue increases during the campaign.

### **RESEARCH**

#### ***Insights:***

#### **The Brand’s Story**

Ketchum reviewed DoubleTree by Hilton surveys that found consumers were aware of the DoubleTree by Hilton cookie but were less familiar with the unique CARE culture.

***Insight:*** The cookie should be a part of the campaign, but highlight DoubleTree by Hilton’s slogan “*Where the little things mean everything.*”

## **Trends**

**Consumer Trend:** Third-party marketing research revealed two trends that impact customer loyalty: 1) customized experiences based on individual needs; 2) “surprising and delighting” consumers with unexpected services.

**Insight:** DoubleTree by Hilton had opportunity to stand apart by surprising and delighting consumers with customized requests.

**Industry Trend:** News articles revealed consumers are frustrated by air travel today.

**Insight:** Consumers are more stressed than ever at hotel arrival. DoubleTree by Hilton should anticipate their needs.

## **Logistics**

**Information:** The team reviewed third-party research to identify markets based on geographic and demographic factors, in-market properties, DMA and social media rankings and proximity to other markets to determine a route to optimize media opportunities, visitors and budget.

**Insight:** Result was tour’s 50-city route for May to November.

## **Primary Research – What Travelers Want**

DoubleTree by Hilton polled 5,000 consumers on social media by geo-targeting 50 US cities on Facebook and Twitter platforms to find out what would brighten their travel experiences.

**Insight:** Most popular answers were “local deals and offers”, “free Wi-Fi,” “free cookies,” and “charging stations.”

### ***Target Audience:***

Potential U.S. hotel guests that we call the ‘Juggler 2.0’—people who juggle various tasks; 48% male/52% female; median age of 41; median household income of \$89K; median # of hotel nights per year = 5; median nights stayed for business = 6; median nights stayed for leisure = 5

## **PLANNING**

### ***Objectives:***

Generate positive brand visibility to increase brand name recognition to drive hotel volume and revenues:

*Goal 1: Business Metrics* - Increase overall revenue

*Goal 2: Traditional Media* - 100M impressions; 1 national print, 1 national morning show, local market coverage

*Goal 3: Social Media* - 5K new Facebook fans; 2K new Twitter followers; 10K sweepstakes entries; 3K HHonors sign-ups

*Goal 4: Consumer Traffic and Engagement* - 2.5K average visitors to event in top 20 markets; 250 consumer responses per market explaining what would make travel brighter

### ***Strategy:***

### **Little Things Project!**

Create sharable moment that illustrates how DoubleTree by Hilton anticipates and delivers upon consumers’ travel needs, lightens the mood and ultimately brings the brand’s personality to life particularly during important travel times—spring, summer and the holidays.

## **EXECUTION**

From May to November, the team developed, implemented and manned the Little Things Project, a traveling, pop-up event experience that delivered consumers with the “little things” that people told us they wanted, including local deals and offers, free Wi-Fi, device charging stations and free chocolate chip cookies.

The event was marked by the landmark “Tell Me Tree,” an inviting respite designed to give consumers a quick break from the weary world of travel and another opportunity to provide us with feedback on what “little things” would make their travel brighter.

Ketchum introduced the campaign in New York with a media tour and a successful ambush on Rockefeller Plaza for appearances on NBC’s TODAY.

“Swarm Cars” flocked select cities, fulfilling real-time requests to lucky Tweeters using #LittleThings. Deliveries included a lobster dinner, pizza party, and ice cream to Twitter’s headquarters.

People followed the journey, submitted “little things,” joined HHonors and entered a sweepstakes on Facebook.

### **Promotions**

- **Partnership with ESPN:** Optimized media buy with ESPN to surprise people on Twitter with tickets to MLB games.
- **Little Things Project Sweepstakes:** Facebook contest with instant prizes such as HHonors points and a \$25,000 vacation. Consumers received scratch-off tickets with entry code at events.

## **EVALUATION**

The program exceeded all goals and objectives. Later this year, DoubleTree by Hilton plans to deliver upon the most frequently requested “little things” that people said they wanted.

*GOAL 1: Business Metrics* - Increase overall revenue.

**RESULTS:** Increased revenue from April (before the tour) to July (the end of legs 1 and 2).

*GOAL 2: Traditional Media* - 100M impressions; 1 national print; 1 national morning show.

**RESULTS:** 3.6B media impressions via 2,511 placements. DoubleTree by Hilton executives conducted media tour with AP, *New York Post*, *Travel + Leisure*, *TheStreet.com*, *The Wall Street Journal* and two additional interviews on FOX News. Additional coverage: Good Morning America Photo of the Day, *Fortune*, *PRWeek*, and local outlets including *The Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Denver Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Miami Herald*, FOX News Detroit and St. Louis, CBS Atlanta, ABC Cleveland and Sacramento, CW Denver, WPIX, and NBC Pittsburgh and New York.

*GOAL 3: Social Media* - 5K new Facebook fans, 2K new Twitter followers; 10K sweepstakes entries; 3K HHonors sign-ups (Hilton WorldWide’s loyalty program).

**RESULTS:** 24,753 new Facebook fans (16% increase) 7,465 new Twitter followers (20% increase) 658,056 sweepstakes entries; 8,923 HHonors sign-ups.

*GOAL 4: Consumer Traffic and Engagement* - 2.5K average visitors in top 20 markets; 250 consumer responses per market explaining what would make travel brighter.

**RESULTS:** Average of 3K “little things” distributed per market; more than 20K total responses; 500 average responses per event.