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Celebrity Partnerships Raise Hotel Awareness, Revenue

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What do musician Gavin DeGraw, comedian Rob Riggle, and Game of Thrones actor Kristofer Hivju all have in common? They all have partnerships within the hospitality industry. Hivju is the much-lauded Wyndham Rewards Wyzard, Riggle is IHG's creative director (and "Breakfast Head Honcho"), and DeGraw recently partnered with Curio – A Collection by Hilton for the #CitiesbyCurio campaign.

Drawing attention to a superstar has proven to be a successful marketing tool and more and more hotel brands are using celebrity publicity to increase online traffic and grow revenue. But while these partnerships may seem like no-brainers, matching the perfect personality to a brand can be challenging. This is why Stuart Foster, vice president of global brand marketing for Hilton Hotels & Resorts, is so pleased with the new partnership between Curio and DeGraw. "Gavin has a one-of-a-kind personality, which—combined with his passion for discovering when traveling—made him a natural fit for Curio," Foster says.

And DeGraw and Curio have been busy. He's been filming localized travel guides for cities with Curio hotels, which has in turn increased the brand's web traffic. In less than a month, two of DeGraw's videos were viewed almost 100,000 times, and Curio made more than 430,000 online impressions. "The partnership also allows us to give fans unique experiences—whether it is a chance to win tickets to a show, meet Gavin for a sound check, or to engage with him directly via a Twitter chat," Foster explains. Social media usage also skyrockets with celebrity partnerships. When DeGraw partnered with Curio, the brand's Facebook engagements jumped by 13,000 and "Likes" were boosted by 85 percent.

With DeGraw's influence, the #CitiesbyCurio campaign continues to grow. "By working with an influential figure whose personality aligns with the Curio brand, we are able to raise awareness by engaging Gavin's fan base," Foster says. "And in doing so, we are introducing the Curio collection to a whole new audience."

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"Get feedback, and work hard to get that feedback. It is not an easy thing to have people give you feedback, and it's not easy for people to give feedback, particularly when it's constructive. It is so critical as you find your career path that you know where your strengths and weaknesses are."

-Leeny Oberg, EVP & CFO, Marriott International

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