

MOBILE

## American Express, Starwood offer exclusive deals to affluent connoisseurs

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By RACHEL LAMB

American Express is teaming with Starwood Hotels & Resorts' Hawaiian locations to introduce a bar code in print publications that leads consumers to an optimized site with travel deals at the properties.

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**Luxury Daily**

The upscale Luxury Collection and St. Regis Starwood properties are featured on the mobile site along with the less-luxurious Westin and Marriott brands. The one-page ad with the Microsoft Tag code is found in the August issue of Food & Wine magazine.

“Tag helps publishers connect with customers in new and unconventional ways and gives them access to analytics that can inform their marketing strategies, thus helping them make effective and efficient decisions about their marketing spend,” said Bill McQuain, director of business development in the startup business group for **Microsoft**, Seattle.

“Brands can offer unique incentives, exclusive content and certain privileges to their customers by using mobile tags – something that an affluent audience is looking for,” he said.

Members only

The ad in Food & Wine features a group of tourists paddling in clear, blue water off the

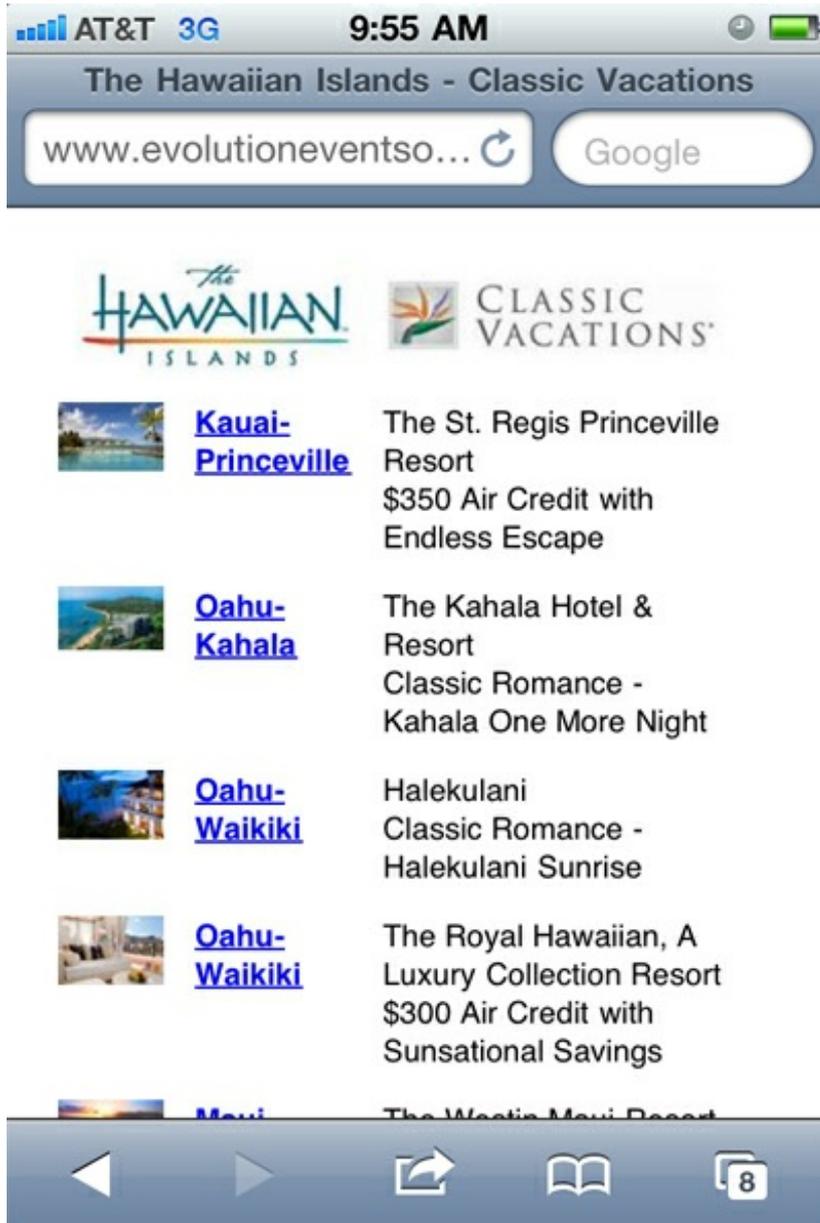
coast of Hawaii's main island, O'ahu.

The top of the ad reads, "Island: O'ahu. Location: Off Waikiki Beach. Time: Who cares?"

At the bottom is the logo of the Hawaii Islands. There is a mobile call-to-action that encourages consumers to download the Microsoft Tag app and scan the code.

The offer is exclusive to American Express cardmembers.

When users scan the code, they are led to a mobile site that lists Starwood's hotels including the St. Regis Princeville Resort and The Royal Hawaiian, a Luxury Collection Resort.



### *List of Hawaii destinations*

Other luxury brands such as the Ritz-Carlton Kapulua are mentioned.

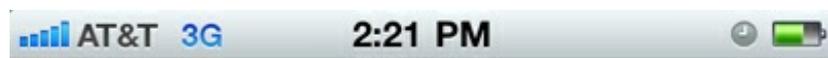
When consumers tap or click on a link, the exclusive deal is detailed.

For example, the St. Regis Princeville Resort's offer is "\$350 air credit with endless escape."

The offer includes \$350 air credit with a five-night stay from \$1,569 per person in a Mountain Garden room at the property.

The minimum stay is five nights and each traveler must purchase a travel-smart plan or travel waiver. The offer must be booked and paid for with an American Express card.

The site also shows pictures of the hotel, some additional information and contact information to make the purchase.



### **The St. Regis Princeville Resort**

#### **Offer**

\$350 Air Credit with Endless Escape

#### **Offer Includes**

\$350 Air Credit

#### **Package Price**

5 Nights from \$1569 per person in a Mountain Garden room

#### **Requirements**

Minimum Stay - 5 Nights  
Each traveler must purchase a Travel Smart Plan or travel waiver  
Must book and pay with any American Express® Card to receive offer

#### **Offer is Available for the Following Room**

##### **Categories**

Valid in all rooms except specialty suites:  
Royal Suite, Bali Hai Suite, Presidential Suite,



### *St. Regis Princeville*

“The luxury experience starts from the time a potential customer is considering a purchase, so [bar codes] make those benefits come to life in a really exciting and engaging way,” said David Javitch, vice president of marketing at Scanbuy, New York.

“A customer interested in these ads is very likely to own a smartphone and comfortable with using that device to get more information,” he said.

Scan and buy

Many consumers who read Food & Wine are affluent. The average age is 48 with a

household income of \$151,871.

“Luxury is all about experience,” Mr. Javitch said. “All consumers are looking for easy access to information when they are on the go, even the wealthy.

“[Bar codes] deliver that experience, and millions of people are scanning codes every week now,” he said. “Consumers are extremely interested in using this technology if the content is compelling, valuable, and easily viewable on a mobile device.”

Indeed, since bar codes are a new and exciting tactic for most brands, other luxury brands are starting to use them.

For instance, German automaker Porsche is driving dealership traffic as the first luxury automaker to use Microsoft Tag bar codes that reveal details specific to certain models ([see story](#)).

Furthermore, since smartphones are expensive to buy and come with pricey data plans, affluent consumers are the most likely to buy them.

American Express most likely shares many clients with upscale hotel chains.

As summer is a time where many people go on vacation, this is a smart time for Starwood and American Express to plant this code.

“Tags add value to a brand because they complement whatever experience the brand wants to provide potential customers,” Microsoft’s Mr. McQuain said.

“It also allows brands to mix up their approach and presence on a page by linking to a broad range of experiences that when scanned, can link to video, a mobile site that requires an unique pass code, product images, rewards or even enter the customer into a contest,” he said.

“Tags are well suited to provide experiences associated with exclusive, luxury brands.”

Final Take

*Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily*

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