

MOBILE

Starwood uses foursquare to incentivize summer programming

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By TRICIA CARR

Starwood Hotels & Resorts is offering incentives for checking in on foursquare at its nine hotel brands including St. Regis and The Luxury Collection as part of a contest and promotion that aims to share the company's summer programming with Live Nation.



Starwood Preferred Guest rewards program created a contest to market its Live Nation 2012 summer programming during which members can enter to win tickets to one of nine exclusive performances. By checking in at a hotel location on foursquare, members can earn extra entries in the contest and unlock a \$15 Live Nation discount code.

"This is good because it shows that [Starwood] is trying to broaden their scope, especially with the younger demographic," said Josh Marcus, director of business development and digital strategist at [SayItSocial](#), Wilmington, NC. "If a brand uses an application that is already out there, it can move forward with the wisdom of the existing technologies."

"I like the use of location-based and word-of-mouth marketing aspects," he said. "It is good to see a large hotel brand adopting mobile technologies and moving forward with a big initiative with them."

"The fact that Starwood is offering rewards for sharing on foursquare will greatly benefits

those branded hotels.”

Mr. Harcus is not affiliated with Starwood, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Starwood could not comment before press deadline.

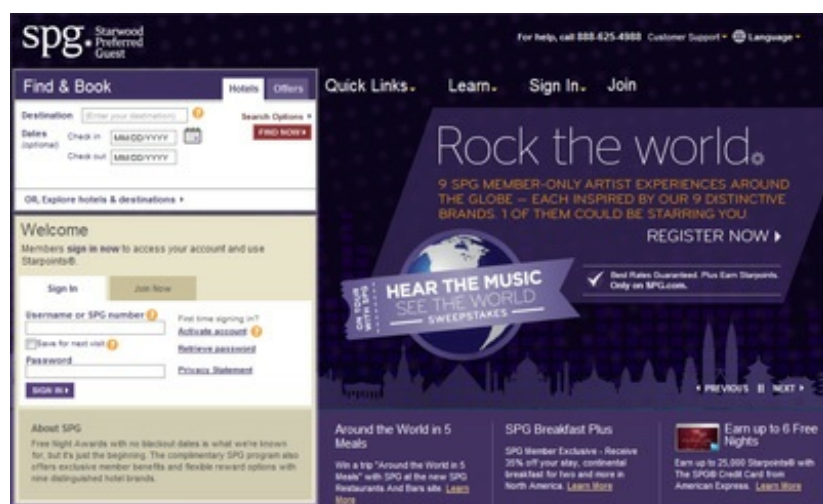
Concert check-in

The Hear the Music, See the World's SPG summer schedule consists of nine trips to Starwood properties in destinations such as New York, Miami, Dallas, Houston, Paris and Dubai. Each trip will include a musical performance.

During each trip, a chosen artist will perform who best represents each hotel property.

For example, singer/songwriter Jamie Cullum will perform poolside at the St. Regis Bal Harbour Resort in Miami next month.

Members can register to win one of the nine trips on <http://spg.com>, during a hotel stay and on foursquare.



SPG Web site

The contest page seems to be a good venue for SPG to showcase its Live Nation programming. The contest acts as an incentive to visit the site and view the offerings.



Contest entry page

Starwood is encouraging foursquare check-ins at its properties from SPG members by offering extra contest entries per check-in at any property through April 30.

Members in the United States who check-in on foursquare will unlock a single-use \$15

Live Nation concert cash code that can be applied to the purchase of tickets or artist merchandise.

To get the credit, a SPG account must be linked to the foursquare account. Instructions to do so can be found on <http://spg.com/hearthemusic>.

SPG members can also book a trip to one of the concerts using their starpoints, even if they do not check-in to a property.

These programs are an extension of the long-running On Tour with SPG program and the brand's three-year partnership with Live Nation, claims the brand.

"The decision to leverage foursquare in the campaign in my estimation was based simply on app familiarity and reach," said Scott Forshay, mobile and emerging technologies strategist for Acquity Group, Austin, TX. "The significant install base for foursquare ensures greater participation as opposed to a white-labeled, brand developed check-in.

"The primary concern with foursquare serving as the check-in engine is the concern of foursquare users attempting to game the system through proximity based check-ins and not actual on-premise check-ins and the inability of Starwood systems to reconcile, but the relative ubiquity of the app still makes it the ideal mechanism."

Foursquare focus

Other luxury hotel brands are using foursquare for mobile campaigns.

For example, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts used foursquare to market the launch of a global spa initiative. Guests who checked in to Four Seasons spas received spa tips from those properties and the Curators of Calm ([see story](#)).

In addition, Ritz-Carlton, Toronto used the Toronto Independent Film Festival to build up its social media followers. At each of the film festival locations, consumers who checked-in via foursquare would receive tips about the location from the Ritz-Carlton concierge staff ([see story](#)).

"The luxury traveler seeks greater degrees of intimacy with, and priority access to, the brands they most covet," Mr. Forshay said.

"Luxury hotel rewards programs have always been experts in the art of sophisticated game mechanics providing subtle incentives to further brand loyalty with VIP traveler treatment," he said. "In return for loyalty, however, there must always be an unspoken mutual exchange of equal or greater value between traveler and brand."

Final Take

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