

# HOW TO ATTRACT THE LUXURY TRAVELER

*(EVEN WHEN YOU'RE NOT A LUXURY DESTINATION).*

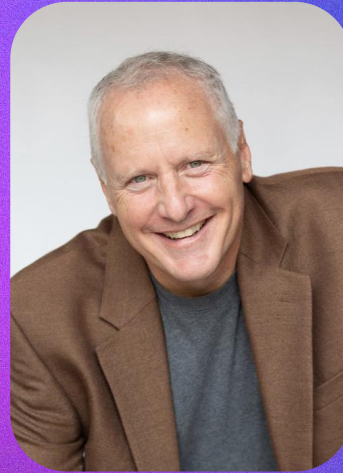
FLORIDA DESTINATION MARKETING SUMMIT - MAY 2026



# WHO'S WHO



**MELISSA PERT**  
**SVP**  
**Integrated Media**



**MATT STIKER**  
**SVP**  
**Brand Strategy**

# WHAT'S WHAT

## KHM at a Glance

- **Founded:** \*about 40+ years ago
- **Locations:** Denver, CO headquarters with fully-remote workforce
- **Company Size:** 300+ team members
- **Annual DMO Clients:** 200+ unique partnerships
- **Team Experience:** Over 25% of staff have worked for tourism, attraction, and hospitality brands

# THE RUNDOWN

- **How Luxury is Being Redefined**

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- **Implications Culturally (not just Travel)**

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- **The Principles & The Playbook**

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- **Six “Rules”**

# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LUXURY ?

[Hint: Not this.]



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LUXURY ?

[Hint: Not this,  
either.]



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY **LUXURY** ?

[Hint: Nope.]



# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LUXURY ?

[Hint: Uh-uh.]

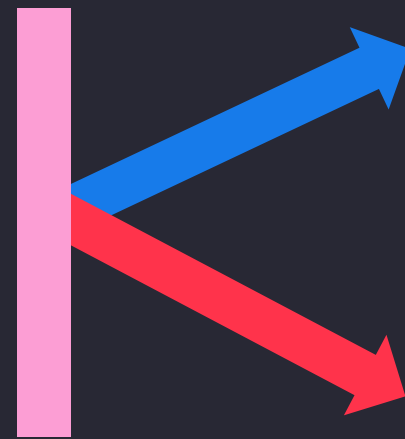


# LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED. DAILY.

## The K-Shaped Recovery:

Inequality accelerating due to the pandemic

- Jobs
- Wealth
- Income
- Health
- Education



- Stockholders
- Homeowners
- Tech, Finance
- Men
- College Grads
- South/West
- Goods

- Renters
- Hospitality
- Retail
- Women
- Non-college grads
- Northeast
- Services

# LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED. DAILY.

Affluent consumers have remained resilient despite inflation

- Discretionary spending - **especially on travel** - outpacing pre-2020 levels
- Middle-market travelers show more price sensitivity and trade-offs

# LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED. DAILY.

High-net-worth and mass-affluent travelers are increasingly allocating a larger share of their spending to **experiences rather than physical goods**

→ Trend toward “memories over materialism”

# LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED. DAILY.

Data from luxury travel and hospitality sectors shows premium travelers are trading up:

- **fewer trips, but longer stays**
- higher-end accommodations
- **more immersive, customized experiences** (private guides, exclusive access, wellness, and cultural depth)

# LUXURY IS BEING REDEFINED. DAILY.

Experiential luxury is also becoming more identity-driven

- **Affluent travelers seek travel that signals personal values** (authenticity, sustainability, uniqueness), rather than traditional status markers like brand-name hotels or first-class flights alone

**THESE SHIFTS  
ARE NOT JUST  
TAKING PLACE  
IN TRAVEL...**



# FROM OWNERSHIP TO EXPERIENCE ECOSYSTEMS

Luxury brands (across autos, fashion, and retail) are **shifting from product-centric models toward experiential ecosystems** - events, services, and brand “worlds” that extend beyond the purchase

# BESPOKE AND HYPER- PERSONALIZATION AS THE NEW BASELINE

Personalization is now central to luxury marketing, with affluent consumers expecting tailored products, services, and communications that **reflect individual identity**

# QUIET LUXURY OVER CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Affluent consumers are increasingly favoring **understated, logo-light goods** that signal taste and insider status rather than overt wealth

# NARRATIVES OF CRAFTSMANSHIP, HERITAGE, AND TIME

Luxury marketing increasingly foregrounds craftsmanship, heritage, and scarcity as core value drivers, rather than product features alone

# ALIGNMENT WITH VALUES: SUSTAINABILITY, LONGEVITY, AND REPAIRABILITY

Affluent consumers are prioritizing brands that align with personal values—especially sustainability, durability, and ethical production

# TRAVEL AS A CROSS-CATEGORY EXPRESSION OF LUXURY IDENTITY

Luxury categories increasingly market products through the experiences they enable - mobility, discovery, and lifestyle - rather than the object itself

**LUXURY IS  
STILL WHAT  
PEOPLE THINK.**

***AND IT'S ALSO  
INCREASINGLY  
NOT WHAT  
PEOPLE THINK.***

**WHAT'S TRUE  
FOR LUXURY  
PRODUCTS...**

***IS ALSO TRUE  
FOR LUXURY  
MARKETING***

# SHARED TRAITS

- They de-center the product
- They elevate experience, culture, and identity
- They often require participation, not just consumption
- They create scarcity - of access, content, or meaning
- They crave storytelling

**HANG ON.**

Aren't you getting a  
little off track?

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**BRANDS NOT  
CONSIDERED  
"LUXURY"  
ARE  
LEVERAGING  
THESE  
PRINCIPLES.**



**APPLE**

Ownership → membership  
in a curated world.



**AIRBNB**

Selling meaning and memory, not  
inventory.



**PELOTON**

Emotional connection and  
participation over function.



**STARBUCKS**

Elevating the ordinary through  
environment and narrative.



**IKEA**

Narrative + values shaping  
perceived value.



**EVEN OUTSIDE  
TRADITIONAL  
LUXURY,  
THE SAME  
PLAYBOOK IS  
EMERGING...**

- Experience > product
- Access > ownership
- Identity > status
- Community > transaction
- Scarcity (real or engineered) > scale

# WHAT USED TO DEFINE LUXURY IS NOW BECOMING MAINSTREAM EXPECTATION.

- Luxury is still what people think (price, exclusivity)
- But it's also what they *don't think* - because **brands have made "luxury-like" experiences common**
- The *mindset* of luxury has become more important than the *price point*.



**"YOU'RE luxury, YOU'RE luxury, "YOU'RE luxury!"**

# SOME “RULES”

1.

# SELL ACCESS, NOT JUST PLACE

Luxury travelers are less motivated by *where* they go and more by *what they can access*. Exclusive tours, behind-the-scenes moments, early entry, and insider connections can elevate any destination.

2.

# CURATE EXPERIENCES, DON'T JUST LIST ATTRACTIONS

The shift from products to experiences means destinations need to package and present **intentional, story-driven itineraries** - not just things to do, but *how they come together*.

3.

# DESIGN FOR IDENTITY, NOT DEMOGRAPHIC S

Target mindsets (explorers, wellness seekers, culture insiders) rather than income brackets. Luxury travelers are choosing experiences that reflect **who they are - or want to become.**

## 4.

# CREATE MOMENTS OF SCARCITY AND URGENCY

Limited-time events, seasonal offerings, and one-of-a-kind experiences drive desirability.

Even non-luxury destinations can feel premium when access is **rare or time-bound**.

5.



# ELEVATE THE EXPERIENCE LAYER— EVEN IF THE INFRASTRUCTURE ISN'T LUXURY

You don't need five-star hotels everywhere. Thoughtful touches - guides, storytelling, service, seamlessness - can create a **premium feeling around otherwise everyday assets.**

6.

# BUILD AROUND COMMUNITY AND SHARED EXPERIENCE

Increasingly, value comes from *who you experience something with.*

Group travel, hosted experiences, and event-based itineraries create **emotional richness that rivals traditional luxury.**

TO SUM UP.  
**BEFORE YOU  
DO ANYTHING,  
REMEMBER TO**

**A.I.M.**

Luxury today isn't defined by price point alone...

it's defined by **access, intention, and meaning.**

# THANKS.



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**QUESTIONS?**