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ABSTRACT

The Cvent Supplier Network (CSN) is a widely used business-to-business venue sourcing platform that connects event planners with hotels and venues across hundreds of countries. Within this marketplace, luxury venues form a high-value segment and consistently generate a disproportionate share of request-for-proposal (RFP) activity relative to their share of total listings. Despite this, CSN offers no systematic method for identifying, classifying or surfacing these venues in a way that reflects how planners evaluate luxury or how luxury hotels seek to position themselves.

This thesis documents a six-month industry research project conducted within the Product Design team at Cvent, focused on understanding the gap between how planners experience luxury venue discovery on CSN and what the experience could offer them. The research was carried out in two phases. The first phase, Discovery, combined a platform audit of CSN's existing flows, qualitative interviews with six event planners and ten hoteliers, a competitive analysis of five alternative venue sourcing platforms and a quantitative analysis of platform data drawn from CSN's internal Client Loyalty Survey (CLS) records and RFP transaction logs. The second phase, Solution Exploration, synthesised research findings into a refined problem statement, a user persona and a customer journey map, and then proposed a set of design solutions that were subsequently presented to and validated by the product management and design leadership team at Cvent.

The key finding of the research is that a significant number of venues that genuinely qualify as luxury by objective criteria are not tagged as luxury on the platform, yet these venues receive approximately six times more RFPs than venues that are tagged as luxury but do not meet the same criteria. This mismatch between the platform's classification system and actual planner behaviour points to a structural problem in how luxury is defined and surfaced on CSN.

The proposed solution introduces a luxury classification framework based on a tiered scoring model that draws on external industry accreditations, platform behavioural data and venue profile attributes. Building on this framework, the solution centres on a luxury toggle within the search experience, allowing planners to shift directly into a pre-filtered view of verified luxury and ultra-luxury venues. Supporting changes to the venue profile page and the hotelier listing template are also proposed.

Evaluative research in the form of usability testing on the prototyped solution is planned as the next phase of this project. Findings from that research will be incorporated into this document once complete. A dedicated section has been reserved for this purpose in Chapter 5.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9 I would also like to express my appreciation to all survey participants, who took the time to share their thoughts and preferences. Their responses formed the foundation of this research and provided essential insights into user expectations for Luxury Venue Classification and Discovery for Event Planners. Special thanks to my peers and colleagues, who offered feedback and suggestions that greatly enhanced the quality and scope of this project.

5 Finally, I am grateful to my family and friends for their constant encouragement and understanding during the research process. Their support was a tremendous source of motivation and helped me overcome the challenges along the way. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this research in any capacity. This accomplishment would not have been possible without your support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Form
CSN	Cvent Supplier Network
RFP	Request for Proposal
VPP	Venue Profile Page
SRP	Search Results Page
SHP	Search Home Page
UX	User Experience
F&B	Food and Beverage
AV	Audiovisual
CLS	Client Loyalty Survey
AAA	American Automobile Association
UHNW	Ultra-High Net Worth
B2B	Business to Business
AI	Artificial Intelligence
PM	Product Manager
CTA	Call to Action
CRS	Central Reservation System

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Background

Event planning is a multi-billion-dollar global industry, and the sourcing of appropriate venues is among the most time-intensive tasks a planner undertakes. For high-profile events such as CXO retreats, destination weddings, incentive travel programmes and luxury brand activations, venue selection goes beyond logistics. The venue itself communicates the calibre of the event and the professional standing of the planner.

Within this context, luxury venues occupy a specific and well-defined category in the hospitality industry. They are characterised not only by physical attributes such as the size and quality of rooms but by service philosophy, culinary standards, experiential design and a consistent record of delivering events at a particular standard. Industry bodies such as the Forbes Travel Guide, the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Michelin Guide have for decades provided external accreditation systems that help both consumers and professionals identify properties meeting these standards (see Appendix VI for descriptions of these rating systems).

Despite this, the digital tools that event planners use to source venues have not always kept pace with how luxury is understood and communicated in the hospitality industry. Planners who use venue sourcing platforms routinely describe having to combine multiple imprecise filters, rely on personal familiarity with specific brand names and turn to external sites for validation before feeling confident that a shortlisted property genuinely represents a luxury experience.

This thesis documents a research and design project undertaken during a six-month internship within the Product Design team at Cvent, one of the world's leading event technology companies. The project focused specifically on the Cvent Supplier Network (CSN), Cvent's venue sourcing marketplace, and asked how CSN can better support planners who are sourcing luxury venues and how luxury venue operators can better communicate what makes their property exceptional.

1.2 Organisation Overview

1.2.1 Cvent

Cvent, Inc. is a global event technology company headquartered in Tysons, Virginia, United States. It provides cloud-based software for event management, venue sourcing, webinars and attendee engagement across both virtual and in-person formats. The company serves a broad client base that includes corporations, associations, government agencies and third-party event

planning firms across more than 175 countries. Its product portfolio covers the full event lifecycle, from initial planning and budgeting to attendee registration, event marketing and post-event analytics.

The company has grown through organic development as well as strategic acquisitions. In 2025, Cvent acquired Goldcast, an AI-powered event marketing platform, which has expanded the company's artificial intelligence capabilities across its product suite.

The table below lists the Cvent products most directly relevant to this project.

Table 1-Cvent Products Relevant to This Research

Product	Function
Cvent Supplier Network (CSN)	B2B venue sourcing marketplace for event planners and hotels
CventIQ	AI-powered RFP response automation for hotel teams
CSN Business Intelligence	RFP metrics, group insights and sourcing analytics for hotels
Cvent Top Awards	Algorithm that ranks venues based on planner engagement and responsiveness
Goldcast	AI-powered event marketing platform (acquired 2025)
TOP RESPONDER System	Algorithmically identifies hotels with fast RFP response records

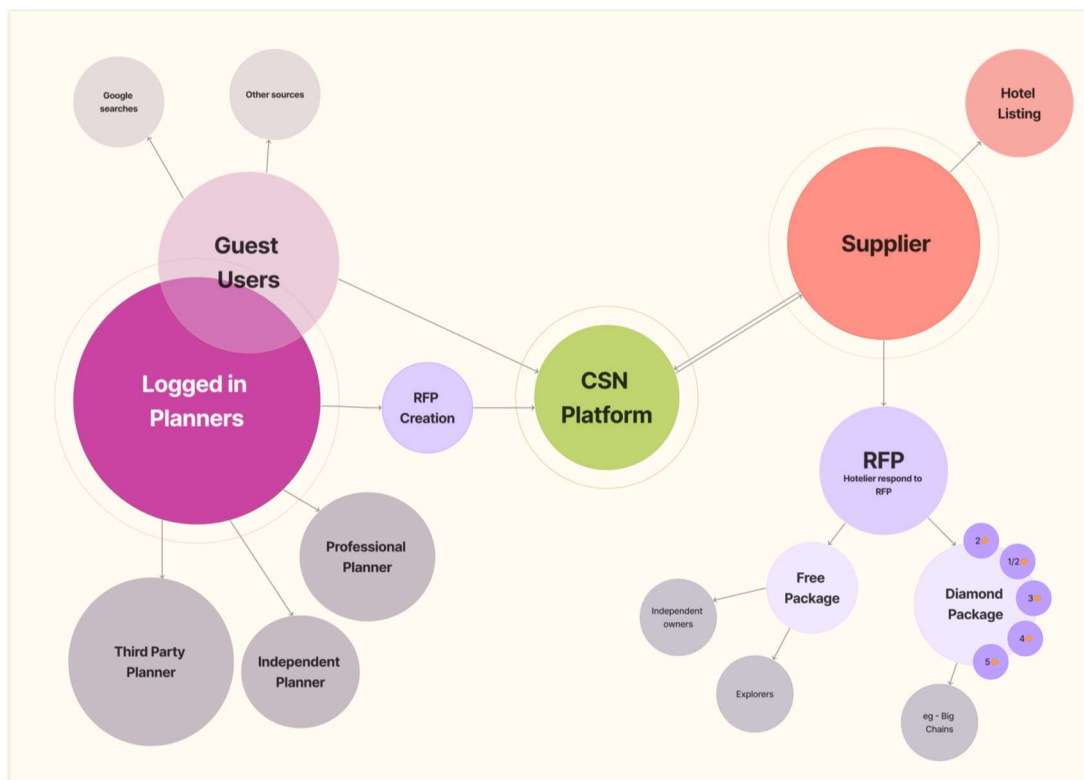


Figure 1.1 - Cvent Product Ecosystem

1.2.2 The Cvent Supplier Network (CSN)

The Cvent Supplier Network is the core venue marketplace within Cvent's platform. It functions as a B2B directory and transaction layer where event planners search for venues, evaluate them through profile pages, shortlist candidates and then initiate procurement through a standardised Request for Proposal process.

CSN hosts listings from approximately 180,000 venues globally, ranging from hotel conference rooms to convention centres, dedicated event spaces, resorts and boutique properties. Each venue creates and maintains a profile through the supplier-facing onboarding and management tool.

From the planner's perspective, the central interactions on CSN are as follows. The planner begins by entering a destination, dates and attendee count on the Search Home Page. They then browse and filter venue cards on the Search Results Page before clicking into individual Venue Profile Pages to evaluate fit. Once satisfied, they shortlist venues and add them to a cart. They then send RFPs to shortlisted venues, evaluate the proposals received and award the business.

CSN operates on a supplier subscription model. Venues can list at a base tier (General supplier) or upgrade to a Diamond supplier package, which unlocks additional profile features such as multimedia widgets, detailed documentation fields and an awards and ratings display section.

From the supplier's perspective, the process involves completing the onboarding flow and filling in core property information, choosing a General or Diamond listing tier, completing the profile with photos and meeting space details, monitoring a profile completeness score and publishing the profile to appear in planner searches.

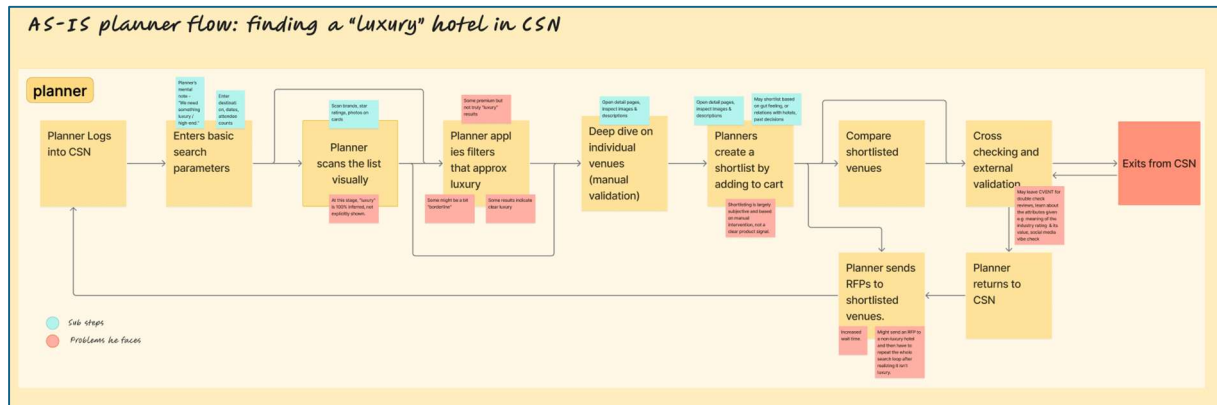


Figure 2 - CSN Venue Search Flow Overview

1.2.3 The Project Team

This project was conducted within the Product Design team at Cvent under the following mentorship structure.

Role	Name
Principal Designer	Mohit Sharma
Design Manager	Smita Mittal Salem
Design Mentor	Shaurya Verma

The research and design work documented in this thesis was carried out independently by the author as part of a six-month internship engagement.

1.3 Motivation for the Project

The motivation for this project originated from an observed gap in CSN's existing capability. While CSN hosts a large number of luxury hotel properties and while event planners regularly use the platform to source venues for high-end events, the platform does not differentiate luxury venues from non-luxury venues in any structured way.

The current system allows any venue to tag itself as 'luxury' without a defined qualifying standard. This means the luxury tag on CSN does not carry predictable meaning for planners,

and planners have learned to treat it with limited trust. At the same time, properties that genuinely meet widely accepted luxury criteria are not consistently surfaced or identified as such, which means they can be overlooked by planners who would otherwise want to consider them.

Data available within the platform suggested that this misalignment between classification and actual planner behaviour was significant, and that there was a meaningful opportunity to improve both the planner experience and the visibility of high-quality venues by introducing a more principled and transparent classification model. This is what the project set out to explore.

1.4 Problem Statement

The problem statement below was provided as part of the initial project brief issued to the researcher:

"There is currently no clear or standardised method on Cvent to classify and surface luxury venues in a way that aligns with how planners evaluate them and how venues seek to position themselves. While planners may intuitively understand luxury, the platform does not provide: a shared definition of what qualifies as a 'luxury' venue; clear signals to distinguish luxury versus premium versus standard venues; dedicated discovery or filtering mechanisms for luxury event needs; or ways for hoteliers to intentionally showcase luxury elements. As a result: venue validation becomes manual and inefficient; luxury venues may be overlooked or misrepresented; high-end sourcing feels less confident and less curated; and venues lack tools to communicate their differentiating luxury attributes."

Following research, this initial statement was refined based on evidence gathered from planners, hoteliers and platform data. The refined version is presented in Section 4.8.

1.5 Research Objectives

The project brief outlined nine research questions. These were used to guide the research design and are listed below.

1. How do planners currently identify and evaluate luxury venues?
2. Which venue attributes- including design, service, amenities, food and beverage, meeting spaces and pricing most influence luxury perception?
3. How do luxury venues want to position and differentiate themselves on Cvent?
4. Which aspects of luxury vary significantly across properties and therefore require different visualisation or representation?
5. How can Cvent surface luxury venues without disrupting current filtering and search behaviour?

6. Which one or two luxury aspects should be prioritised for detailed solutioning given scope constraints?
7. Does the idea of luxury change from region to region or across cultures in ways that might complicate applying a single evaluation model?
8. Are there quantified or metadata-based determinants that could be used to programmatically identify potential luxury properties?
9. Is a self-identification model possible, where the venue submits why they believe their property could be considered luxury?

1.6 Project Scope

This project is scoped to hotel-type properties listed on CSN. Other venue types such as convention centres, outdoor spaces and private estates are not the primary focus of this research, though findings may have some relevance to them. The project addressed both sides of the marketplace: the planner-facing discovery and search experience, and the hotelier-facing listing template and profile experience.

The project was carried out across two phases. The first phase, Discovery, covered research and synthesis. The second phase, Solution Exploration, covered ideation, design and validation. A third phase, evaluative research, was planned as a follow-on and is described in Section 5.6.

Table 2 - Project Deliverables

Deliverable	Status
Luxury Venue Use Case Analysis	Completed
Luxury Classification Framework	Completed (scoring criteria in progress)
Proposed Design Solutions	Completed and validated
Opportunity Map	Completed
Final Presentation	Completed
Evaluative Research	Planned

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1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised across six chapters.

Chapter 2 reviews existing literature and industry context relevant to the project, specifically how luxury is defined in the hospitality industry, how digital venue sourcing platforms operate and how classification systems function in product design.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, including the methods used and the rationale for choosing them.

Chapter 4 presents findings from all research activities: the platform audit, stakeholder interviews, competitive analysis and quantitative data analysis. It also presents the persona, customer journey map and synthesised pain points developed from this research.

Chapter 5 describes the design solutions proposed in response to the findings, their validation by the Cvent product team and the plan for evaluative research.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis with a summary of the work, future scope and social impact.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining Luxury in the Hospitality Industry

The concept of luxury is difficult to define precisely. It is simultaneously an emotional response, a product category and a service standard. In everyday usage, the word is applied broadly: 'luxury apartments,' 'luxury cars' and 'luxury hotels' can describe anything from genuinely premium products to marketing-inflated claims about otherwise ordinary ones.

Within the hospitality industry, structured attempts to define and rate luxury have existed for over a century. Three systems are particularly relevant to how planners and hoteliers on CSN think about quality and recognition.

2.1.1 The Forbes Travel Guide Star System

The Forbes Travel Guide, formerly known as the Mobil Travel Guide, has rated hotels since 1958. It operates on a five-star scale and employs trained anonymous inspectors who evaluate properties against several hundred criteria covering service quality, facility condition, food and beverage standards and the overall guest experience. A Forbes Five-Star designation is considered among the most rigorous designations in the global hospitality industry. As of 2024, fewer than 100 hotels worldwide hold a Forbes Five-Star rating (Forbes Travel Guide, 2000).

The Forbes system is relevant to this project because it represents an objective, externally verified signal of luxury that planners respect and that hotels invest significantly in maintaining. It is among the strongest available signals that a property is operating at a genuine luxury standard.

2.1.2 The AAA Diamond Rating System

The American Automobile Association (AAA) rates hotels in the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean on a one to five Diamond scale. The Five Diamond rating indicates properties that offer an extraordinary level of service, physical appointments and amenities. Like Forbes, AAA uses trained inspectors and applies a consistent evaluation framework (Association, 2026).

The AAA system operates geographically and is not applicable outside its coverage region. This is relevant to CSN's global context: a planner searching for a Five Diamond property in Paris will find no results because the AAA system does not operate there, yet the intention behind the search- finding a property at the highest service tier is entirely valid.

2.1.3 The Michelin Guide

The Michelin Guide, originally published in France in 1900, is best known for its restaurant star ratings of one to three stars. For hospitality, the presence of a Michelin-rated restaurant within or affiliated with a hotel is frequently treated as a significant signal of culinary luxury. Some planners and hoteliers cite Michelin-rated food and beverage provision as a key differentiator for high-end events, particularly for incentive travel and executive-level gatherings where food quality is a central component of the experience (Group, 2026).

2.1.4 The Challenge of a Single Definition

Beyond these formal rating systems, research on luxury consumer behaviour has noted that luxury perception varies meaningfully across cultural contexts, price points and event types (CVENT, 2022). A planner organising a national sales conference for a mid-sized company and a planner organising an executive leadership retreat for a board of directors will each use the word 'luxury' but with different thresholds in mind.

This variability is not merely semantic. It has real consequences for platform design. A classification system that applies one definition of luxury to all planners risks either overwhelming planners with properties that feel extravagant for their client's budget or failing more discerning planners who need ultra-premium options. The research conducted for this project found evidence of this tension directly in interview data, which is discussed in Section 4.2.

2.2 Venue Sourcing in the Digital Age

Digital venue sourcing platforms have fundamentally changed how event planners find and work with hotels and event spaces. Before these platforms existed, planners had to rely on personal networks, hotel sales representatives, printed directories, and physical site visits a slow and often incomplete process. The arrival of centralised marketplace tools made it possible to search thousands of properties at once, compare them on the same set of attributes, and kick off the procurement process through a single, standardised workflow.

This shift has created new efficiencies but also introduced new challenges. When all venues are presented on a uniform card-based interface, visual and informational differentiation becomes difficult. Properties that are genuinely exceptional may look no different from properties that are merely adequate if both profiles present the same categories of information in the same way.

The challenge of communicating subtle but meaningful distinctions in quality through a digital interface is not unique to venue sourcing. It is a documented problem in digital retail, product recommendation and service marketplaces more broadly (CATT, Digital Market place, CVENT, 2021) . However, the B2B nature of venue sourcing adds a layer of complexity: the planner is not the final consumer of the venue experience. They are making a recommendation

on behalf of a client, and the professional stakes of an incorrect recommendation are higher than in a typical consumer purchase.

This creates a 'trust gap' in B2B marketplace design - the intermediary needs enough quality signal from the platform to confidently represent a product to a third party without first experiencing it directly. The research conducted for this project consistently identified this dynamic in planner interview responses.

2.3 Classification Systems in Digital Platforms

Classification systems are the frameworks that platforms use to sort and label things into meaningful groups. They are a basic but essential part of how digital products are organised and understood. When done well, they reduce the cognitive load on users by surfacing the most relevant items for a specific need without requiring the user to construct the classification logic themselves.

In e-commerce and marketplace design, tiered classification is common. Platforms such as Airbnb have introduced labels such as 'Superhost' and 'Plus' to signal quality above a baseline. Hotel booking platforms use star ratings and guest review scores to provide layered quality signals. Professional networks use endorsement counts and certified credentials to classify professional standing.

What these systems have in common is that classification is made explicit: the user knows what a label means, or at least has access to a clear explanation. The system's rules, even if algorithmically complex in their computation, produce a legible and trustworthy signal for the user.

On CSN at the time of this research, the luxury tag exists but is not backed by an explicit classification rule. Any venue can apply it. The absence of a defined standard means planners cannot rely on it as a meaningful filter, which is a core problem this project seeks to address.

2.4 UX Design in B2B Marketplaces

Designing for B2B users is quite different from designing for everyday consumers. The people using a B2B product are not casual users, they know their domain well, the decisions they make carry real consequences, and they do not have the patience for unclear or confusing experiences at the moments that matter most. For event planners on CSN, the decision to shortlist and send an RFP to a venue represents a professional commitment: if the venue turns out to be a poor fit, the planner must restart the process, time on both sides is wasted and the client relationship may be affected.

In this context, the UX principle of reducing decisional uncertainty is particularly important. Design features that help users confidently narrow their choices, understand what distinguishes

one option from another and trust that the platform's categorisation is accurate can have a significant effect on decision quality and efficiency.

Journey mapping and persona development are well-established tools in UX research. They help researchers understand the full sequence of steps a user goes through when interacting with a system and more importantly, pinpoint the moments where things feel confusing, uncertain, or harder than they should be. Both methods were used in this project and are described in the methodology and findings chapters.

2.5 Summary

The luxury hospitality sector has well-established external rating frameworks - Forbes, AAA and Michelin- that are widely recognised by both planners and hotel operators. These frameworks provide objective, third-party verified signals of quality. Digital venue sourcing platforms have not yet systematically incorporated these signals into their classification and discovery experiences. The CSN platform is a specific example where the gap between the sophistication of the hospitality industry's quality signals and the sophistication of the platform's classification model has created practical problems for planners and commercial disadvantages for genuinely luxury properties. The research chapters that follow document this gap in detail.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The research for this project was designed to be exploratory in its first stage and analytical in its second. The goal of the exploratory stage was to understand, without preconception, how planners and hoteliers currently experience luxury venue search and discovery on CSN and what frustrations or limitations they encounter. The goal of the analytical stage was to interrogate platform data to determine whether the subjective experiences described by participants were reflected in observable planner behaviour at scale.

This combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was chosen because neither alone would have been sufficient. Qualitative research yields rich, contextually grounded insight into how people think and what they struggle with, but it cannot confirm whether those experiences are representative of the broader user population. Quantitative data can show patterns across large user populations, but without qualitative context it is difficult to interpret why those patterns exist or what they mean for design.

The research was carried out in two named phases: Discovery (research and synthesis) and Solution Exploration (design and validation).

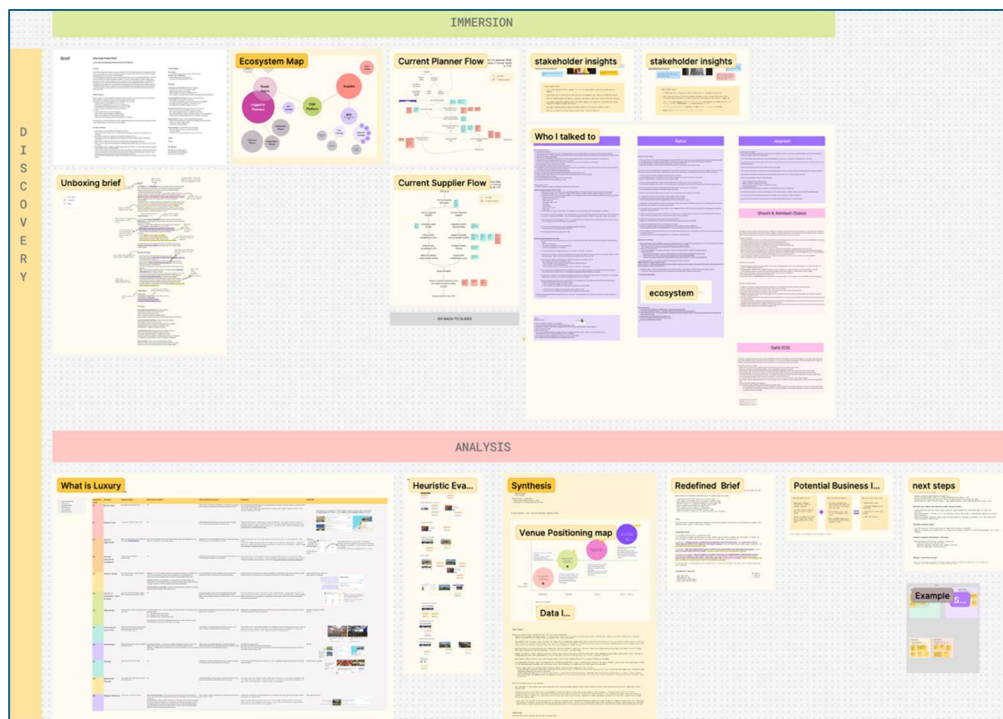


Figure 3 - Research Phase Overview

3.2 Platform Audit

Before speaking with any external participants, a thorough audit of CSN was conducted. The audit examined both the planner-facing and the supplier-facing experiences on the platform.

On the planner side, the audit mapped the full flow from the Search Home Page through the search results experience, the luxury tab, individual venue profile pages, the shortlisting cart and the RFP creation process. Each stage was evaluated for how luxury information is presented, whether luxury signals are explicit or implicit and where the experience breaks down or forces the user to seek validation outside the platform.

On the supplier side, the audit followed the onboarding and profile management experience for both General and Diamond tier suppliers. It examined what fields are available for a venue to describe itself, what luxury-relevant information can be entered, how profile completeness is calculated and where the experience limits a hotel's ability to communicate its distinctive qualities.

The audit was conducted iteratively in parallel with desk research and informed the design of the interview guides used in the primary research stage.

3.3 Stakeholder Interviews

Primary qualitative data was gathered through sixteen semi-structured interviews with two distinct participant groups.

3.3.1 Event Planner Interviews

Six event planners participated in interviews exploring how they currently approach luxury venue sourcing.

Method of recruitment – Focus group: Planners who generated maximum revenue in Cvent in year 2025

Interview format – Remote

Approximate duration for each interview – 45 mins - 1 hr each interview

The interview guide (see Appendix II) covered the following areas: how the planner defines 'luxury' in the context of their work; which signals they rely on to identify luxury venues both within and outside the platform; where they experience friction or uncertainty in the current CSN experience; how they validate a venue before committing to shortlisting it; and what distinguishes a confident sourcing experience from an uncertain one.

Questions were open-ended and conversational, allowing participants to introduce topics and examples not anticipated in the guide. Key quotes were captured verbatim and attributed where participants consented to named attribution.

3.3.2 Hotelier Interviews

Ten hoteliers participated in interviews exploring how they currently represent their properties on CSN and what limitations they experience in communicating luxury positioning. Participants represented a mix of branded chain hotels and independent properties.

Interview format – Remote

Interviews covered the following areas: how the hotelier defines their property's tier and market positioning; which aspects of their property they consider most important for luxury communication; what the current CSN profile template enables and constrains in terms of luxury storytelling; what external recognition (Forbes, AAA, Michelin or other) they hold and how they currently use it on the platform; and what they would most want planners to know that the platform currently does not help them communicate.

The interview guide used for this group is included in Appendix III.

3.4 Competitive Analysis

A structured competitive analysis was conducted across five venue sourcing platforms identified as relevant to the project scope. The platforms analysed were BoomPop, Unique Venues, Groups360 (GroupSync), Hubli and MeetingSelect.

Each platform was evaluated against a consistent framework covering primary audience and business model, how luxury is defined and surfaced (if at all), key features relevant to the luxury sourcing experience, venue profile content quality and hotelier input flexibility, budget-related features, AI or recommendation capabilities and gaps and limitations relative to CSN's scope.

The competitive analysis framework is documented in Appendix IV. A summary of findings is presented in Section 4.5.

3.5 Quantitative Data Analysis

Internal platform data was analysed to understand the relationship between how venues are classified on CSN and how planners actually behave towards them. The data, drawn from CSN's Client Loyalty Survey records and RFP transaction logs, allowed for comparison across venue segments defined by their satisfaction of, or failure to satisfy, objective luxury criteria.

The luxury criteria used to define segments in this analysis were a Northstar rating of 4 or 5 stars, a CSN listing type of 3 or 4 Diamond package and concierge availability. Venues were then cross-referenced against the luxury tag that exists on the platform. This produced four

quadrant segments. The first consists of venues that meet objective luxury criteria but are not tagged as luxury on CSN, referred to in this document as 'True Luxury' properties. The second consists of venues that are tagged as luxury but do not meet the objective luxury criteria, referred to as 'Tagged Luxury' or 'Premium' properties. The third consists of venues that meet the criteria and are also tagged as luxury. The fourth consists of venues in neither category.

For each segment, RFP volume per venue, average yearly RFP value and total economic activity were calculated. The results are presented in Section 4.4.

3.6 Synthesis Methods

Research findings from the four methods above were synthesised using standard UX research tools.

3.6.1 Affinity Mapping

Interview data was coded thematically to identify recurring patterns across participant responses. Themes were grouped by stage of the planner journey and by stakeholder type (planner versus hotelier).

3.6.2 Persona Development

A primary user persona was developed, representing the planner archetype most relevant to luxury sourcing: an experienced third-party planner working on high-stakes event briefs. The persona is described in Section 4.6.

3.6.3 Customer Journey Mapping

A current-state customer journey map was constructed to trace the planner's experience from entry on the Search Home Page through to the RFP stage. The map captures actions, decision points, mental state and pain points at each stage. The journey map is presented in Section 4.7.

3.6.4 Pain Point Synthesis

The final synthesis step was the distillation of all research findings into a set of six problem statements, each grounded in multiple evidence sources. These pain points drove the solution design phase and are described in Section 4.8.

Table 3- Research Methods Summary

Method	Participants / Data Source	Purpose
Platform Audit	CSN (planner and hotelier flows)	Understand current state; identify implicit luxury signals
Planner Interviews	6 event planners	Understand current behaviour, frustrations and definitions of luxury
Hotelier Interviews	10 hotel operators	Understand current capability and positioning challenges
Competitive Analysis	5 platforms	Identify market benchmarks and design opportunities
Quantitative Data Analysis	CSN CLS and RFP data	Validate qualitative findings at scale; identify behavioural patterns

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Current State Analysis

Before research with participants could surface what was missing from CSN, it was necessary to establish a clear picture of what the platform currently offers at each stage of the luxury sourcing journey. This section describes the as-is flows for both planners and hoteliers, based on the platform audit conducted at the start of the project.

4.1.1 AS-IS Planner Flow on CSN

The current planner journey on CSN begins at either the Search Home Page for a returning or first-time guest user or with the creation of an RFP followed by a venue search, for logged-in planners. Both paths converge at the venue search experience.

Stage 1: Search Entry

A planner arriving at CSN's venue search is presented with a standard search bar. The inputs supported are destination, dates and attendee count. There is no option at this stage to specify event type, luxury preference or any other contextual signal. Both guest and logged-in planners begin with an identical search interface.

Stage 2: Filters and Search Results Page

On the Search Results Page, the planner applies filters to narrow results. The available filters include venue type (hotel, resort, boutique), brand, star rating and amenity selections. A 'luxury' tag exists as one filter option, but there is no explanation of what criteria qualify a venue for this tag. The filter, when applied, returns a mix of properties that planners described in interviews as inconsistent in their actual luxury level.

Alongside the standard search results, a dedicated Luxury tab exists on the platform. This tab shows a curated set of properties, but with no visible criteria for what qualifies a property for inclusion. Planners who used this tab during the audit described it as feeling more like a promotional space than a classification system.

Stage 3: Venue Profile Page

When a planner clicks into a venue, the profile page presents a set of tabs covering the property overview, meeting spaces, rooms, sustainability and any available awards. The information is structured consistently across all venue tiers: a genuine five-star resort and a solid four-star business hotel are presented in near-identical formats with the same categories of information.

Stage 4: External Validation

Multiple interviewees described leaving CSN at this point to validate the venue through external sources: the hotel's own website, Google reviews and social media. This behaviour was consistent across planner profiles and was described as a standard part of the workflow rather than an exceptional step.

Stage 5: Shortlisting and RFP

Once validated externally, the planner adds the venue to a shortlist cart and proceeds to create an RFP. The comparison tool available in the cart compares venues on meeting space capacity, pricing tier and basic amenities, but not on luxury level, accreditations or experiential quality.

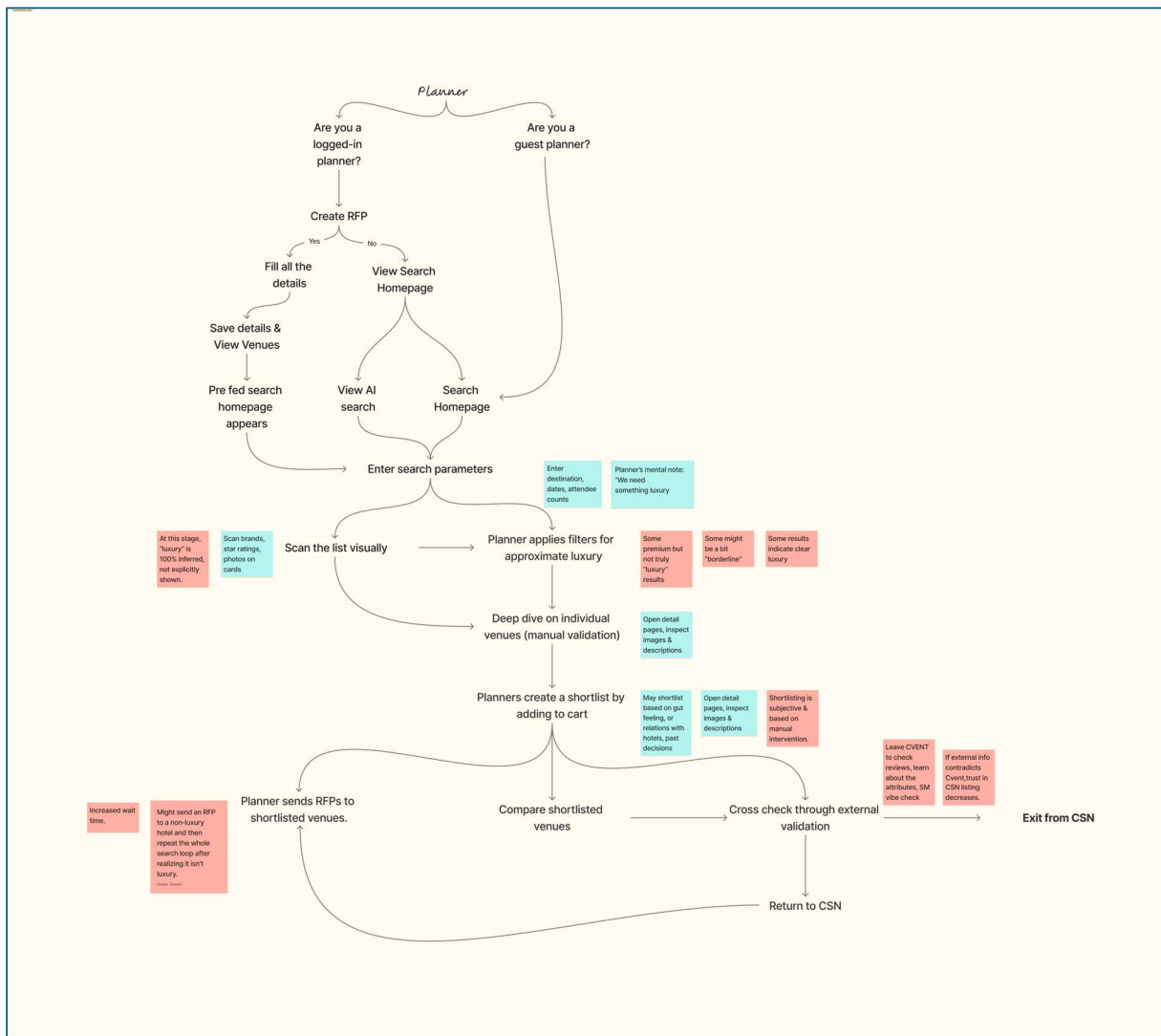


Figure 4- AS-IS Planner Flow on CSN

Table 4- Planner Pain Points by Journey Stage

Journey Stage	Observed Behaviour	Pain Point
Search Entry	Planner searches by location, not by luxury intent	No luxury-specific entry path; luxury logic is implicit
Filter / SRP	Stacks multiple filters (star + brand + amenities) to approximate luxury	Luxury filter is unreliable; no visible definition of luxury on the platform
Luxury Tab	Browses the tab but does not trust it as definitive	No qualifying criteria shown; feels like marketing rather than classification
VPP	Leaves CSN to check external sites	Platform does not consolidate luxury signals; planner must triangulate
Cart / Compare	Compares venues on capacity and price, not luxury level	No luxury indicator in comparison; risk of sending RFPs to off-tier venues
Post-RFP	Receives proposals that do not match expected luxury standard	Mismatch discovered too late; planner must restart the sourcing loop

4.1.2 AS-IS Supplier Flow on CSN

The supplier onboarding flow begins with a hotel creating an account and completing core property information: brand, star rating, property type and a basic set of amenities.

The flow then branches. General (non-Diamond) suppliers complete a basic profile with a short description and a small selection of photos. Diamond suppliers unlock additional features: a multimedia widget, detailed document uploads, awards and ratings fields and access to AI-generated property summary text.

At the final step, the profile is reviewed and published. Suppliers can track a profile completeness score, which reflects whether all available fields have been filled.

The critical observation from the supplier audit is that the profile completeness score rewards volume of data entry rather than the quality of the narrative. A property that fills in forty standard amenity checkboxes will score higher than one that writes a considered description of its culinary philosophy, because the latter does not map to a structured field in the current template. The result is that all profiles, regardless of quality tier, are constructed and evaluated on the same terms. As one interviewee from a luxury hotel brand put it: 'The website right now is not luxury, nothing stands out as having more information than going to the hotel's site.'

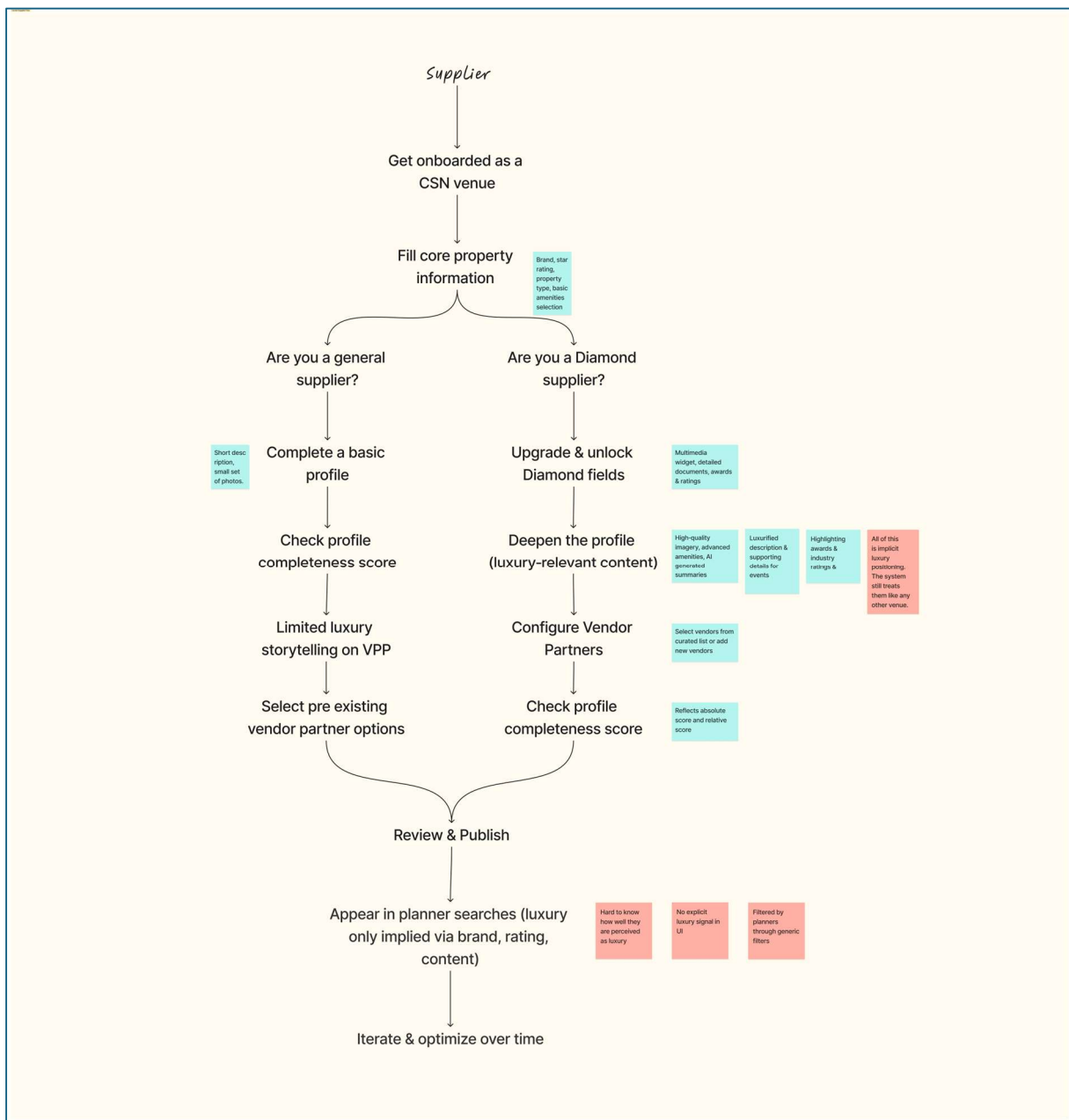


Figure 5- AS-IS Supplier Flow on CSN

4.2 Primary Research Findings - Planner Perspective

Interviews with six event planners revealed a consistent set of challenges in sourcing luxury venues through CSN. These are described below, supported by representative quotations from participants.

4.2.1 Luxury Must Be Manually Inferred

The most consistent finding across all six planner interviews was that luxury is not a legible category on CSN. Planners described having to construct a proxy definition from multiple imprecise signals: star rating, brand name and photography style.

One planner described her approach as follows: 'I wanted to get a wide net and be like, this is what the luxury hotels are offering, this is what the mid-levels are offering, this is what the boutiques are offering. And just see what's that rate range look like.' This approach requires significant prior knowledge. A planner who is familiar with which hotel brands typically signal luxury has a workable shortcut. A planner who is new to a destination or who is working with a less well-known property category has fewer reliable signals to rely on.

4.2.2 Star Ratings Are Unreliable Proxies

Several planners described frustration with star ratings as a filtering mechanism for luxury. The five-star ceiling creates a problem in destinations where very few or no properties hold that rating, even if multiple strong four-star properties exist at a luxury standard.

One planner described this directly: *"Maybe I pushed the star all the way over to 5-Star and then nothing came up... it turns out there's like one 5-Star property in Palm Springs... when I put it to 4-Star, then I get everything... and that's not giving me that luxury experience."*

A related observation from the platform audit corroborated this: some CSN listings carry a 5.5-star Northstar rating, indicating a tier above the standard five-star designation. This rating exists in the data but is not surfaced clearly to planners in the filter interface, meaning a relevant category of premium property is largely invisible in the current experience.

4.2.3 No In-Platform Validation Mechanism

When a planner identifies a property they believe might be luxury but that they have not worked with before, they currently have no way to confirm its standard within CSN. External validation through review sites, the hotel's own website and social media browsing is described uniformly as a standard step in the workflow.

This was corroborated by Client Loyalty Survey data used in the quantitative analysis phase, which recorded the complaint *"Unable to find user reviews"* as a noted limitation of the platform from organisational event planners.

4.2.4 The Luxury Category Means Different Things to Different Planners

A frequently discussed theme in interviews was that 'luxury' as a concept varies significantly based on client type, event type and price point. Research identified three broad tiers in how planners described the upper end of the quality spectrum.

The lower end of this spectrum represents what this project terms the premium tier: properties that are well-appointed and full-service but where a client's budget constrains more extravagant options. The mid-range represents the luxury tier: full five-star resort experiences with end-to-

Figure 6 - Planner Spectrum of Luxury Definitions

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names communicate quality to a third-party client with no additional context required. An independent luxury property, however exceptional, lacks this communicative shorthand and is therefore disadvantaged in the discovery phase.

4.2.6 Luxury-Defining Features Are Not Filterable

Planners described specific amenities and service features that signal genuine luxury to them: dedicated event concierge service, private villa availability, on-site Michelin-rated dining and spa facilities of a particular grade. None of these features are available as filters in the current CSN search experience, meaning a planner who wants to find a venue offering a full butler service or a Michelin-starred restaurant specifically for a client brief cannot search for it directly.

4.2.7 Capability Type Affects Luxury Expectations

The type of event a planner is sourcing significantly influences what luxury means to them. A planner organising a meeting focused on room blocks, breakout sessions and rate caps will have different criteria from one organising an incentive travel programme where experiential quality, food and beverage and personalisation are central to the brief. The platform currently does not distinguish luxury on the basis of event type, which means a venue that is outstanding for one type may not be appropriate for another.

4.3 Primary Research Findings -Hotelier Perspective

Interviews with ten hoteliers surfaced a complementary set of challenges from the supply side of the marketplace. Several themes emerged consistently.

4.3.1 Independent Properties Cannot Compete With Chain Brand Recognition

Hotels that are not part of a globally recognised luxury chain brand described a structural difficulty in competing for planner attention on CSN. When planners default to known brands as a quality shortcut, independent properties that may genuinely meet or exceed the luxury standard of those brands are bypassed without consideration.

This is a commercial problem. These properties typically invest in exactly the kinds of differentiated service, design and food and beverage quality that define genuine luxury, but the platform does not provide the vocabulary or structure to communicate this investment to planners who are unfamiliar with their brand.

4.3.2 The Current Template Does Not Support Luxury Storytelling

Multiple hoteliers described the standard CSN profile template as inadequate for communicating what distinguishes their property. The template foregrounds generic information -room counts, meeting space capacity and standard amenity checkboxes- that is similar across all quality tiers.

Qualities that are most distinctive about luxury properties, including service philosophy, culinary programme, spatial design, personalisation capabilities and heritage, have no dedicated fields or structured spaces in the current template.

This was highlighted by two direct quotes from hotel operators. A representative from Equinox Hotels stated: *“The website right now is not luxury, nothing stands out as having more information than going to the hotel's site.”* A representative from Four Seasons Resort Maui stated: *“Highlighting what we are as luxury, 5 stars, 5 diamonds, providing an opportunity to access us is huge.”*

4.3.3 Planners Cannot Identify the Basis for Premium Pricing

Several hoteliers expressed that planners, when they do engage with their property, often struggle to justify or understand why the rate is significantly higher than adjacent lower-tier properties. The platform does not currently help hoteliers communicate the investment behind their rates. Without visibility of service quality, accreditation level and experiential capability, planners find it difficult to build a case for a particular property's pricing to their clients.

4.3.4 The Self-Labelling Problem

Because any property can currently tag itself as 'luxury' on CSN without meeting any specified standard, the tag is devalued. Hoteliers who operate at a genuine luxury level described this as both frustrating and commercially damaging: their properties appear in the same search results category as properties that are considerably lower in quality, and planners have learned not to trust the tag as a differentiator.

4.4 Quantitative Data Analysis

To understand whether the qualitative findings from planner and hotelier interviews were reflected in planner behaviour at the scale of the full platform, an analysis of CSN's internal data was conducted.

4.4.1 Method

Venues in the CSN dataset were segmented using a combination of objective luxury criteria, as set out in the table below.

Table 5- Luxury Criteria Filters Used in Data Analysis

Criterion	Luxury-Meeting Threshold	Non-Luxury Threshold
Northstar Rating	4 or 5 star	1/2/3 star or no rating
CSN Listing Type	3 or 4 Diamond package	Lower packages

Criterion	Luxury-Meeting Threshold	Non-Luxury Threshold
Concierge Availability	Yes	No or not specified
AAA Rating	4 or 5 Diamond	0/1/2/3 Diamond or no rating
Forbes Rating	4 or 5 Star	0/1/2/3 Star or no rating

Venues that met the composite luxury criteria were then cross-referenced against whether they carried a luxury tag on CSN. This produced distinct segments for comparison.

4.4.2 Results

Table 6- Platform Data Analysis Results by Venue Segment

Segment	No. of Venues	RFPs Received	Avg. RFP per Venue	Avg. Yearly RFP Value
True Luxury (criteria met, NOT tagged luxury)	173	94,262	544.8	\$85.2M
Tagged Luxury (tagged luxury, criteria NOT met)	233	9,401	40.3	\$4.1M
Full Luxury Criteria-Met Pool	937	594,492	634.4	\$150M
All CSN Venues	179,357	1,158,152	6.4	—

The most significant finding is the ratio of RFP activity between the two comparable segments. Venues in the True Luxury group - those that meet objective luxury criteria but are not tagged as luxury on CSN receive approximately six times more RFPs per venue than venues in the Tagged Luxury group, which are tagged on the platform but do not meet the same criteria.

This is notable for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that planners are in effect already seeking out genuine luxury properties through their search and shortlisting behaviour, even without a clear platform-level signal guiding them. Second, it demonstrates that the current luxury tag on CSN does not reflect the actual pattern of luxury demand: the most actively sought venues are not the ones carrying the tag.

Within the True Luxury group of 173 venues, a subset of 13 independent properties was identified. Despite being small in number, these 13 independents received 3,954 RFPs with an average RFP value of \$41M per year. This indicates that independent luxury properties, when they can be found by planners, generate substantial business yet they lack the brand recognition that would make them more discoverable in the current experience.

Table 7- Independent Venue Subset Within True Luxury Pool

Metric	Branded True Luxury	Independent True Luxury
No. of Venues	160	13
RFPs Received	90,308	3,954
Avg. RFP Value	\$99M	\$41M

The analysis adds quantitative grounding to the qualitative finding that luxury classification on CSN is currently misaligned with actual planner behaviour. The venues planners are most drawn to are not the ones the platform designates as luxury.

4.5 Competitive Analysis

Five competing or adjacent venue sourcing platforms were analysed to understand how the broader market addresses luxury discovery and what design solutions have been attempted. The analysis covered BoomPop, Unique Venues, Groups360 (GroupSync), Hubli and MeetingSelect. The full competitive analysis framework and detailed findings are in Appendix IV. The summary below highlights the most relevant observations per platform and identifies three opportunity areas that emerged from the collective analysis.

4.5.1 BoomPop

BoomPop is a US-based corporate events platform primarily focused on offsites and retreats. It combines venue discovery with full event management and supplier coordination. Its pricing model layers a 9% platform fee with 7% supplier commissions and up to 5% additional admin fees, making the total cost of using the platform difficult to assess upfront.

Luxury-relevant features include a dedicated ‘LUXE tab’ within the search experience, allowing planners to switch between all venues and a luxury-specific curated set with a single toggle. Individual venue profile pages carry a ‘Luxury’ label and a ‘Trending’ label where applicable. Onsite restaurants and nearby dining options have dedicated display space on both search results cards and venue profile pages. Hoteliers can write custom amenity descriptions rather than selecting from a predefined list. AI-powered search and an AI assistance tool are also available.

Limitations include coverage primarily limited to the United States, limited feature maturity relative to CSN's scale, an opaque pricing model and the absence of luxury signal continuity through the RFP and proposal comparison stages.

The BoomPop LUXE tab is the clearest direct precedent for a luxury-specific search experience in the competitive landscape.

4.5.2 Unique Venues

Unique Venues is a North American directory specialising in non-traditional and distinctive event spaces. It operates on a subscription model for venue listers and provides free venue finding for planners.

Luxury-relevant features include a 'Request a venue recommendation' page where planners submit a brief and receive a curated suggestion from the Unique Venues team, reviewed by a human rather than AI. A budget estimate input is available in the recommendation flow. Profile pages list all event types welcomed at the venue. A profile freshness indicator shows when listings were last updated. Venue amenities in some profiles appear to have been written by hoteliers in free text rather than selected from a predefined list.

Limitations include no explicit luxury category or luxury-specific filtering, coverage limited to North America and a recommendation process that is manual and therefore limited in scalability.

4.5.3 Groups360 (GroupSync)

Groups360 is a corporate group booking platform focused on small-to-medium meetings. It offers real-time availability from hotel central reservation systems and an instant booking feature for small groups.

Luxury-relevant features include a budget estimation feature in filters and on the search results page, and destination-first search with proposal management tools. The platform is free for planners and commission-based for hotels.

Limitations include no luxury-specific features, distinction or classification, a basic search interface with no tag system on results cards and a marketing positioning that is not fully substantiated by RFP volume data relative to CSN.

4.5.4 Hubli

Hubli is a meeting management platform focused on sustainability-certified spaces. It targets mid-to-large companies booking small or internal meetings and provides instant booking for groups of 1 to 20 and an AI-powered search ranking that prioritises fast-responding, sustainable venues.

Luxury-relevant features include transparent sustainability certification with a detailed explanation of why each property qualifies a model directly analogous to what this project proposes for luxury. Budget estimation is also available in filters.

Limitations include a sustainability focus as its central classification model rather than luxury, limited scale and a supplier content upload process reported as difficult by hotel operators.

The Hubli transparency model for sustainability qualification where a property's classification is explained rather than asserted is a relevant design precedent for how luxury classification could be communicated on CSN.

4.5.5 MeetingSelect

MeetingSelect is a Netherlands-based venue sourcing and meeting management platform operating primarily in Europe. It offers instant booking for small meetings and a broader sourcing experience for larger events.

Luxury-relevant features include explicit luxury labelling where venues can be identified as luxury within the platform, budget estimation as part of filter and RFP setup, theme-based venue filtering allowing planners to browse by event type or mood and planner reviews available on venue profile pages.

Limitations include no justification or criteria for luxury classification shown to users, and planner review display on venue profile pages noted to have created negative outcomes for some venue operators.

Table 8- Competitive Analysis Summary

Feature	BoomPop	Unique Venues	Groups360	Hubli	MeetingSelect	CSN (current)
Explicit luxury designation	Yes (LUXE tab + tag)	No	No	No	Yes (label only)	Tag only (unverified)
Luxury criteria shown to user	No	No	No	Yes (sustainability)	No	No
Budget estimation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
AI search / recommendations	Yes	Manual only	No	Partial	Claimed	Yes (CventIQ)
Custom hotelier amenity input	Yes	Partial	No	No	No	No
F&B dedicated section on VPP	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Event types on VPP	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Industry credentials shown	No	No	No	No	No	Partial (Diamond only)

Feature	BoomPop	Unique Venues	Groups360	Hubli	MeetingSelect	CSN (current)
Full sourcing journey coverage	No	No	No	No	No	Yes

4.5.6 Opportunity Areas Identified

The competitive analysis identified three areas where no existing competitor has built a mature solution and where CSN's existing infrastructure creates a potential advantage.

Table 9- Opportunities Identified vs Competitors

Opportunity	Gap in Competitor Landscape	CSN Potential Advantage
AI Concierge for Luxury Sourcing	BoomPop AI search is basic; Unique Venues recommendation is manual and human-reviewed	CSN's deep RFP history could power personalised luxury venue recommendations
Hotelier Self-Expression Layer	All competitors use predefined amenity lists; no one enables hoteliers to write their own story with AI assistance	CSN's supplier template could be expanded to allow free-text input with AI categorisation and icon suggestions
Luxury Throughout the Full Sourcing Journey	All competitors address discovery only; none carry the luxury signal into RFP comparison or awarding	CSN covers the full flow from search to award, creating a natural layer for persistent luxury signals

4.6 Persona Development

A primary persona was developed to provide a consistent human reference point for design decisions throughout the solution phase. The persona represents the planner archetype most likely to be affected by the problems identified in research: an experienced third-party planner sourcing venues for high-stakes events at the luxury tier.

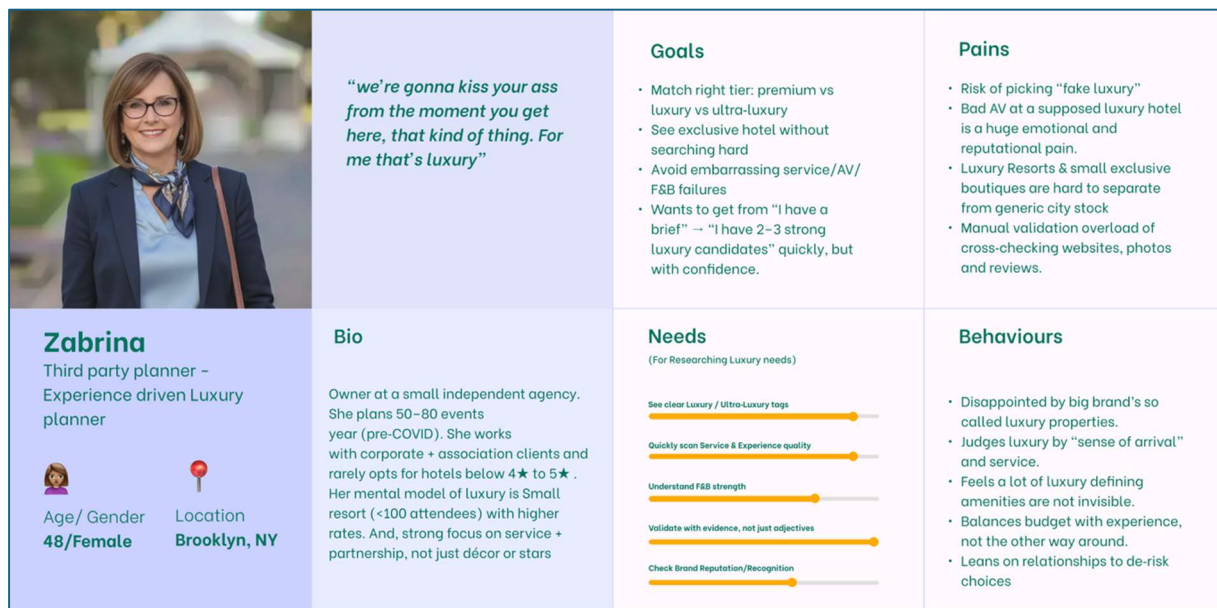


Figure 7 - Persona - Zabrina

The persona, named Zabrina, is a 48-year-old female third-party event planner. Her user story is: *"I want to source a truly luxury venue in Paris for a high-stakes wedding, where the venue's service, spaces and food and beverage match five-star standards, so that I can confidently recommend it to my clients without worrying that it will feel just like any other nice hotel."*

Her goals are to be able to quickly distinguish between true luxury and premium venues, to search, filter and compare strong luxury options efficiently, to have enough profile detail in-platform that she does not need heavy external validation and to ensure that RFPs go only to venues that can actually deliver the luxury experience.

In her scenario, Zabrina is organising a luxury wedding in Paris for a small, high-profile group. She uses CSN to find and shortlist genuinely five-star venues and send RFPs with confidence, without later discovering that the properties she shortlisted are merely 'nice' rather than genuinely luxury.

The choice of a third-party planner as the persona is deliberate. Third-party planners are accountable to a client and therefore have a lower tolerance for uncertainty than in-house planners. Their professional reputation depends on the quality of their recommendations, which makes the trust gap in CSN's luxury experience particularly consequential for them.

4.7 Customer Journey Map (Current State)

The customer journey map documents Zabrina's experience as a planner moving through the current CSN platform when sourcing luxury venues. It includes her actions, decision points, thoughts and pain points at each stage.

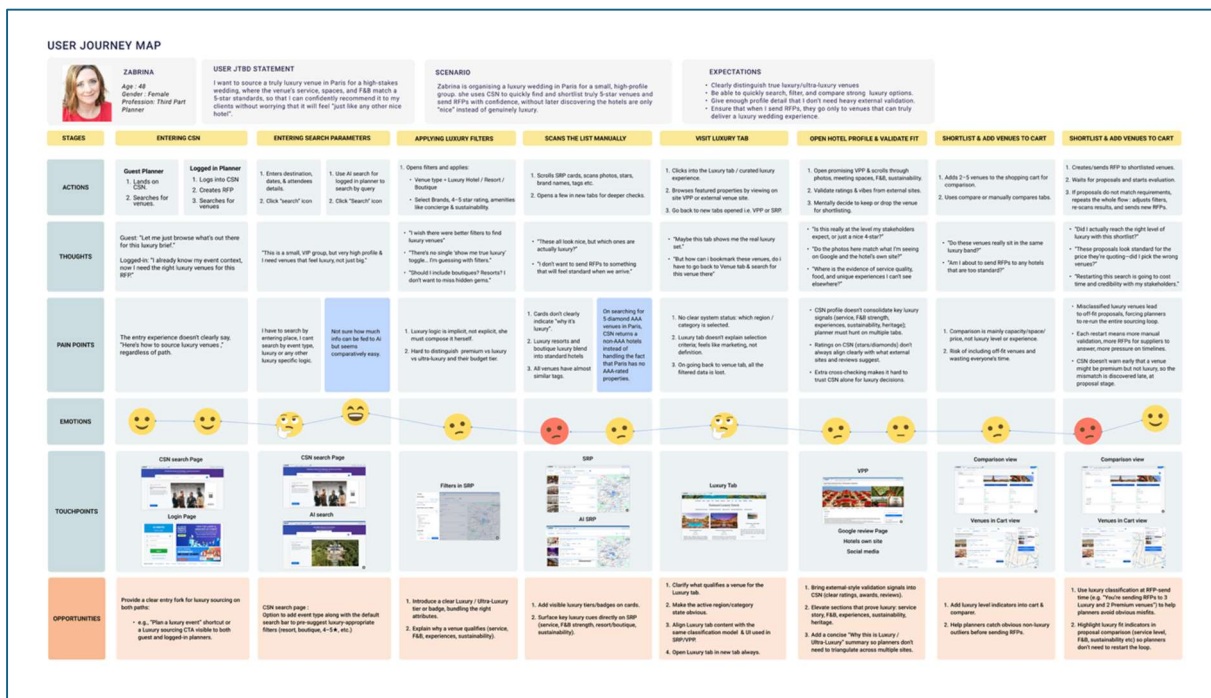


Figure 8 - Customer Journey Map - Current State

Stage 1: Search Entry (Search Home Page)

Zabrina arrives on the CSN venue search. She has a destination (Paris) and a brief (luxury wedding, small high-profile group). The first thing she notices is that there is no luxury-specific entry path. She is presented with a standard search bar expecting a location, dates and attendee count. Her thoughts: *"I wish there were better filters to find luxury venues. There's no single 'show me true luxury' toggle, I'm guessing with filters."* Pain point: no dedicated entry path for luxury sourcing; luxury logic is invisible from the outset.

Stage 2: Filters and Search Results Page

Zabrina searches and lands on the Search Results Page. She applies filters for venue type, star rating, available brands and amenities including concierge. The results come back as a mix. Some are clearly luxury. Some are comfortable but not genuinely luxury. Some are boutique properties she is uncertain about. Her thoughts: *"These all look nice, but which ones are actually luxury? I don't want to send RFPs to something that will feel standard when we arrive."* Pain point: cards do not communicate why a venue is or is not luxury; the luxury filter brings back inconsistent results.

Stage 3: Luxury Tab

Zabrina tries the Luxury tab. It brings back a curated set of properties, but she notices no explanation of what qualified them. She also realises that when she finds a venue she wants to explore and navigates back to the main venue tab, her filters have been reset. Her thoughts: *"Maybe this tab shows me the real luxury set. But how can I bookmark these venues? Do I have to go back to the Venue tab and search for this venue there?"* Pain point: no criteria explanation;

filtered state is lost on navigation; the tab feels like a marketing surface rather than a classification tool.

Stage 4: Venue Profile Page

Zabrina clicks into a property she is considering. The page looks like all other CSN profiles: photos, overview text, meeting spaces tab, rooms tab, sustainability tab. There are no summary statements about why this venue is at a luxury tier. Her thoughts: *“Is this really at the level my stakeholders expect, or just a nice four-star? Where is the evidence of service quality, food and unique experiences I can't see elsewhere?”* She opens Forbes, Google and the hotel's own website before deciding, finding that the hotel's own site communicates its positioning far better than its CSN profile. Pain point: CSN profile does not consolidate luxury signals; planner must triangulate across multiple sites; CSN loses authority as the primary source of truth.

Stage 5: Shortlisting and Comparison

Zabrina adds a few candidates to her shortlist and uses the comparison feature. She can compare capacity, space type and a price range, but not service tier, accreditation or experiential capacity. Her thoughts: *“Do these venues really sit in the same luxury band? Am I about to send RFPs to any hotels that are too standard?”* Pain point: comparison lacks luxury-level differentiation; risk of including off-tier venues.

Stage 6: Post-RFP

After sending RFPs, Zabrina receives proposals back from several venues. Some proposals feel mismatched to her brief, the pricing and positioning are not at the luxury level she expected. Her thoughts: *“These proposals look standard for the price they're quoting... did I pick the wrong venues? Restarting this search is going to cost time and credibility with my stakeholders.”* Pain point: misclassified luxury venues produce off-fit proposals; the sourcing loop must restart; the mismatch is discovered late, at the proposal evaluation stage, rather than being preventable at the search stage.

4.8 Synthesised Problem Statement and Pain Points

Drawing on the full body of evidence, a refined problem statement was developed at the end of the discovery phase:

“On CSN, luxury is invisible, flattened into generic listings, buried behind filters and stripped of the signals planners rely on to distinguish premium, luxury and ultra-luxury. Independent venues go undiscovered. High-value event needs such as AV and food and beverage are never foregrounded, forcing planners to default to brand names, past relationships and external cross-validation to fill the trust gap. This results in wasted effort, missed venues and slower decisions.”

This statement was developed in response to both the qualitative evidence from interviews and the quantitative evidence from platform data, which together showed that the disconnect

between the platform's current luxury classification approach and actual planner behaviour has measurable consequences for planners, hoteliers and the platform itself.

Six specific pain points were identified from this research, each grounded in multiple evidence sources.

Table 10- Six Synthesised Pain Points

ID	Description	Evidence Sources
P1	Luxury is hard to see and trust on CSN. There is no visual or structural distinction between a premium hotel and a true luxury property.	Planner interviews, platform audit, CLS data
P2	Planners default to known brands, familiar destinations and personal relationships as shortcuts. Independent luxury venues are structurally disadvantaged.	Planner interviews, quantitative analysis
P3	Star ratings cap at 5, yet some hotels effectively operate at a higher standard. There is no visible distinction between premium, luxury and ultra-luxury in the interface.	Planner interviews, platform audit
P4	Independent luxury venues have no brand halo and no structured way to signal their quality through the platform.	Hotelier interviews, quantitative analysis
P5	Conferences, conventions and incentive events generate the most luxury RFP value, yet CSN does not foreground these event types or their specific venue requirements.	Platform data, planner interviews
P6	CSN has no validation function. Planners leave the platform to check Forbes, Google and hotel websites before making decisions.	Planner interviews, platform audit

CHAPTER 5

SOLUTION DESIGN AND VALIDATION

5.1 Design Approach

The solution design phase followed from the pain points established in Chapter 4. The design brief was to propose interventions on the Cvent Supplier Network that would give planners a clear and trustworthy way to identify and explore genuine luxury venues, help independent luxury venues communicate their quality alongside branded chain properties, reduce the need for planners to leave the platform to validate their shortlist and introduce explicit luxury tier distinctions rather than a single undifferentiated luxury tag.

The design process involved ideation across all three primary surfaces of the planner experience: the Search Home Page, the Search Results Page and the Venue Profile Page. It also included proposals for changes to the supplier-facing listing template.

Multiple design directions were explored during ideation, covering six prototype scenarios. Following review with the product management and design leadership team at Cvent, the solution was consolidated around a single core mechanic: a luxury toggle that allows planners to shift directly from the standard search experience into a pre-filtered, luxury-verified results view. This toggle and the associated changes to the card design, venue profile page layout and hotelier template form the validated solution.

5.2 Luxury Classification Framework

A core prerequisite for any design solution that surfaces luxury venues is a principled definition of what qualifies as luxury. Without this, a luxury toggle is simply a differently labelled version of the current unreliable luxury tag.

The classification framework developed in this project uses a tiered scoring model to categorise venues into four bands, as set out below.

Table 11- Luxury Classification Tier Thresholds

Tier	Score Range	Label
Ultra Luxury	70 to 100	CSN Ultra Luxury
Luxury	50 to 69	CSN Luxury
Premium	30 to 49	No luxury badge

Tier	Score Range	Label
Standard	Below 30	No luxury badge

5.2.1 Scoring Inputs

The scoring model draws on several categories of venue data. Example weightings documented during the research phase are included below. The full criteria set and final point allocations are still being determined in collaboration with the product team and will be updated once finalised.

Documented example criteria and point values include: Forbes Five-Star designation (30 points), planner review rating of 4.8 or above (22 points) and dedicated event coordinator on site (15 points).

Additional input categories identified for inclusion in the framework include the AAA Diamond designation at 4 or 5 Diamond, Michelin-rated food and beverage provision on site, CSN listing tier at the Diamond package level, service tier indicators from hotelier profile data, concierge availability and historical RFP performance signals.

5.2.2 Certification and Display Rules

The scoring model produces a composite score per venue. Based on this score, a venue earns one of two visible badges ‘*CSN Luxury*’ or ‘*CSN Ultra Luxury*’ or no badge if the score falls below the premium threshold.

The badge is displayed on Search Results Page cards and on Venue Profile Pages. The score behind the badge is not shown on the card face by default; it is visible on hover or within the Venue Profile Page scoring breakdown panel. This design decision was taken to avoid overwhelming the card with numerical data while still making the supporting evidence accessible to planners who want it.

5.2.3 Hard Lock Rules

The framework includes a set of disqualifying criteria that prevent a venue from receiving a luxury badge regardless of its composite score. These are: a CSN listing tier of 1 or 2 Diamond (basic package), a Northstar rating of 1 or 2 star and an active negative flag from the planner review system below a defined threshold.

These hard lock rules are designed to prevent artificially high composite scores that might arise if a venue scores well on one or two criteria while performing poorly on fundamental quality indicators.

5.3 Proposed Solution - The Luxury Toggle Experience

The primary validated solution is a luxury toggle mechanic applied across the three stages of the planner's search journey. The toggle provides planners with a single-action path to a pre-filtered, classification-backed luxury results view and carries through consistent luxury signals from search entry to the venue profile page.

5.3.1 Search Home Page

The Search Home Page introduces a contextual 'Explore CSN Luxury' entry point. For planners who arrive on the page with contextual signals indicating a luxury intent such as prior luxury RFP history or behaviour patterns, this entry point is surfaced as a banner or card. Clicking it opens a pre-filtered Search Results Page with the luxury toggle already applied.

The standard search bar remains available for planners who prefer to begin with a conventional search and apply the toggle themselves on the Search Results Page. This two-path approach respects both experienced planners who know what they want and exploratory planners who prefer to browse before filtering.

5.3.2 Search Results Page

The Search Results Page is the central surface of the solution. When the luxury toggle is active, results are filtered to show only venues that have received a 'CSN Luxury' or 'CSN Ultra Luxury' classification score. The toggle state is visible in the filter bar and can be turned off by the planner to return to the full results set.

Search Results Card Design

Each venue card in the luxury results view is redesigned to carry explicit luxury signals structured in a defined hierarchy. At the top of the card sits the tier badge 'CSN Luxury' or 'CSN Ultra Luxury' with the CSN Verified Luxury icon. Directly below the badge are named credentials such as 'Forbes 5-Star, AAA 5-Diamond, Michelin F&B.' These are followed by the planner rating with review count, the venue name and visual, capability chips indicating key event capabilities such as AV availability and breakout room count and a budget fit signal derived from historical RFP data.

The named credentials on the card replace the need for planners to open each Venue Profile Page just to determine what level of recognition a venue holds. A planner scanning fifteen results can distinguish an AAA Five-Diamond Forbes Five-Star property from a CSN Luxury property with a strong planner rating at a single glance.

The luxury score itself is accessible via a hover state over the verified luxury badge, showing the composite score and its two or three highest-contributing factors. It is not displayed by default on the card face.

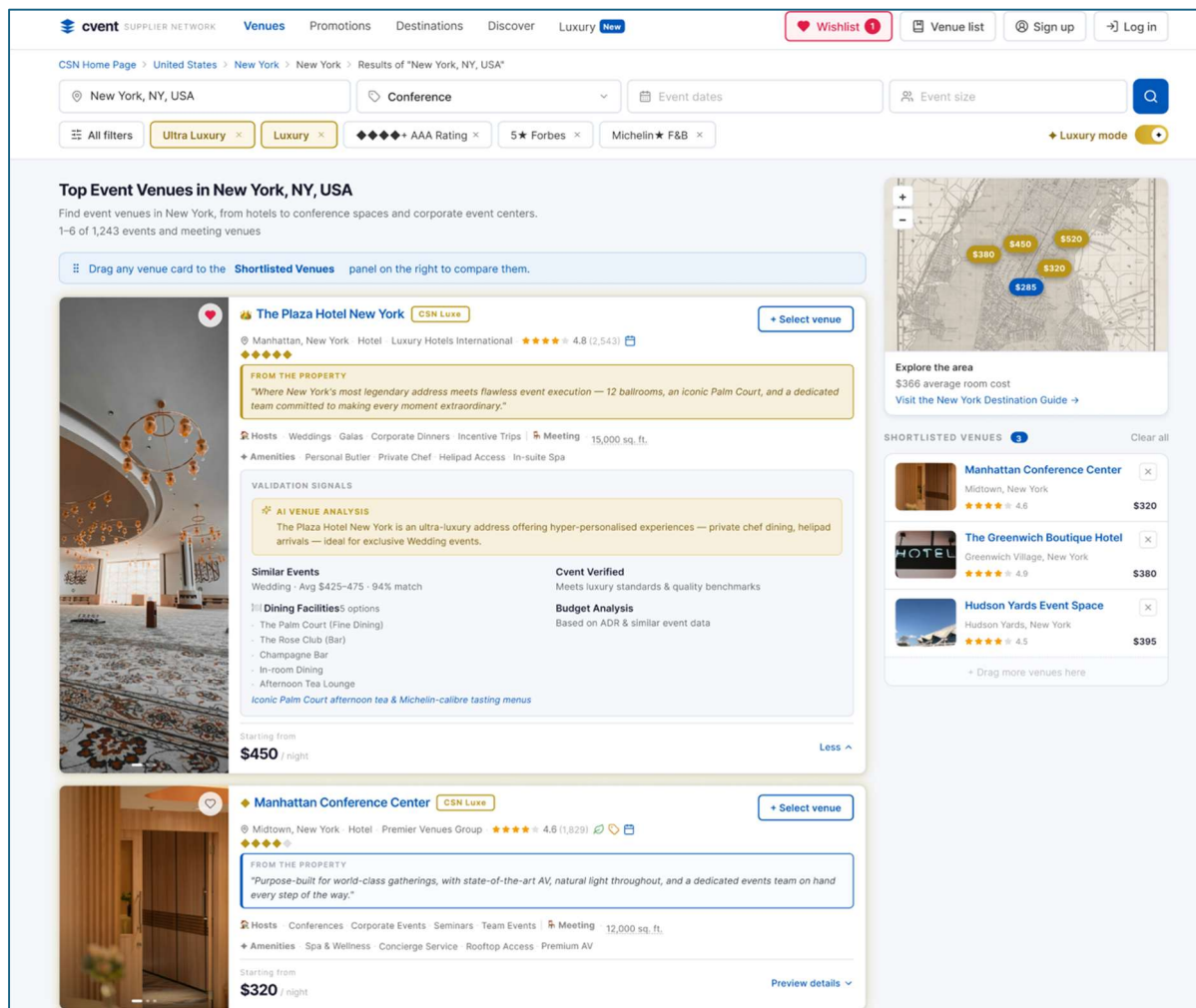


Figure 9 - Luxury Toggle on SRP

Table 12 - SRP Feature Ideas Mapped to Pain Points

SRP Feature	Pain Point(s)	Design Rationale
Luxury toggle (pre-filtered results)	P1, P3	Replaces the unreliable luxury tag with a classification-backed filter
Tier badge on card	P1, P3	Makes the distinction between luxury and ultra-luxury visible at a glance
Named credentials on card	P1, P6	Brings Forbes, AAA and Michelin recognition into the search results layer
Planner rating with review count	P4, P6	Provides social proof for independent venues without brand recognition
Capability chips on card	P5	Communicates event-type fit without requiring a VPP click

SRP Feature	Pain Point(s)	Design Rationale
Budget fit signal	P2, P3	Helps planners understand pricing tier before sending an RFP
Score on hover	P1, P6	Makes the scoring logic visible without cluttering the card default view

5.3.3 Venue Profile Page

The Venue Profile Page receives the deepest set of design changes. The goal of the changes is to give planners enough confidence to send an RFP without leaving CSN to validate the property externally.

AI-Generated “Why This Is Luxury” Summary

At the very top of the Venue Profile Page, above the photo gallery, a short AI-generated paragraph summarises why the venue qualifies at its tier. This is not a marketing description of the venue; it is a classification verdict, synthesising the scoring criteria into two to three readable sentences. An example of what this might look like: 'This venue holds a Forbes Five-Star rating, an AAA Five-Diamond designation and a Michelin two-star restaurant on site. It has been reviewed by 47 planners who have used it for conference events, with an average rating of 4.9. A dedicated event coordinator is available for all bookings.' This summary gives planners immediate justification for the venue's tier and provides the language they need to represent the property to their clients.

Luxury Tier Sticky Header

As the planner scrolls through a long Venue Profile Page, the tier badge and score remain pinned to the top of the page in a slim persistent bar. This prevents the planner from losing their luxury context while reading through specific sections further down the page.

Why Luxury Panel

Immediately below the hero image gallery, a structured 'Why Luxury' panel presents the four key pillars that contribute to the luxury assessment for that specific property: Service Tier, Food and Beverage Quality, Event Spaces and External Recognition. Each pillar is shown as a visual tile with the venue's evidence against that dimension.

Luxury Scoring Breakdown

A collapsible section shows the full scoring breakdown: each criterion the venue satisfied, its point contribution and the composite score. This serves planners who want to interrogate the classification, as well as providing defensible documentation for planners who need to justify their shortlist to a client.

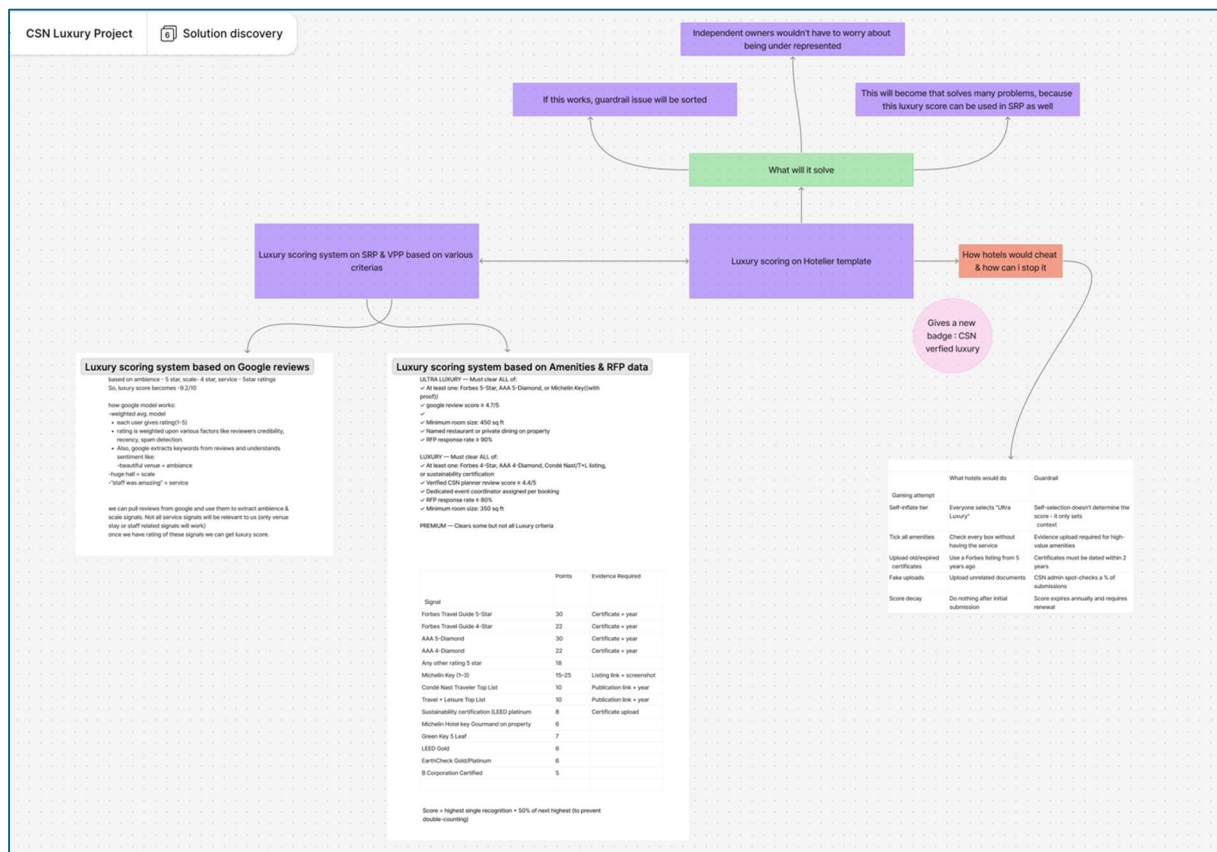


Figure 10- VPP - Luxury Scoring Breakdown Panel

Categorised Photo Gallery

The standard photo gallery is reorganised into named categories: Event Spaces, Dining and Food and Beverage, Rooms and Suites and Outdoor and Distinctive. This allows a planner sourcing for a specific event type to navigate directly to the most relevant photography without scrolling through dozens of images.

External Validation Panel

A dedicated panel consolidates external accreditations: Forbes star designations, AAA Diamond ratings and Michelin recognitions, each shown with their most recent year of award. This replaces the need for the planner to verify these on the hotel's own website or on the relevant accrediting body's site.

Event Capability Cards

A separate section displays the venue's capabilities organised by event type- conference, incentive, wedding and so on. Each event type card shows the relevant metrics: largest room capacity, breakout room count, AV capabilities, hybrid event support and catering arrangements. This directly addresses Pain Point 5 by foregrounding event-type fit.

Budget Confidence Signal

Below the event capability section, a soft budget range signal derived from historical RFP data shows what planners of a similar event type and size have typically spent at this venue. The range is wide enough to protect individual negotiated rate confidentiality and is labelled as based on RFP history. It is suppressed if fewer than ten comparable RFPs exist in the dataset, to avoid displaying misleading ranges for data-thin properties.

Sticky RFP Call to Action

A persistent 'Send RFP' call to action button remains visible throughout the Venue Profile Page scroll. It is pre-populated with the planner's event context from their search session- dates, attendee count and event type, reducing the friction between the validation decision and the action.

Table 13 - VPP Feature Ideas Mapped to Pain Points

VPP Feature	Pain Point(s)	Design Rationale
AI 'Why This Is Luxury' summary	P1, P6	Immediate, readable classification verdict at the top of the page
Luxury tier sticky header	P1	Maintains luxury context throughout a long page
Why Luxury panel	P1, P6	Consolidates all luxury evidence in one visible section
Scoring breakdown	P1, P6	Makes classification logic visible and defensible
Categorised photo gallery	P5	Enables event-type-specific image navigation
External validation panel	P6	Brings Forbes, AAA and Michelin data into the platform
Event capability cards	P5	Communicates specific event-type fit in structured form
Budget confidence signal	P2, P3	Provides soft pricing context without hard rate disclosure
Sticky RFP CTA	P1, P5	Reduces friction from validation to action

5.4 Hotelier-Facing Improvements

Changes to the supplier-facing listing template were proposed to address the research finding that the current template does not allow luxury venue operators to communicate what makes their property exceptional.

5.4.1 Luxury Classification Input

The revised template adds an explicit luxury positioning section. Hotels can select their intended tier -Standard, Premium, Luxury or Ultra Luxury and then submit the supporting evidence: their Forbes, AAA and Michelin designations with the year most recently awarded, any additional industry certifications and a nomination for inclusion in the CSN Luxury classification pool.

This self-reported data is then cross-referenced against the scoring model. The designation of CSN Luxury or CSN Ultra Luxury is not granted simply on the basis of the hotel's claim; it requires the composite score across all criteria to reach the threshold. The self-reporting mechanism is therefore an input into a validation process, not a route to unverified self-labelling.

5.4.2 Custom Amenity Input with AI Assistance

The current template presents amenity selection as a fixed list of checkboxes. The revised template adds a free-text field where hoteliers can describe amenities and distinctive features in their own words. An AI assistance layer then reads the hotelier's input, assigns an appropriate icon from the platform's icon library and categorises the amenity into the relevant section of the Venue Profile Page.

This change addresses the specific frustration expressed by hoteliers who want to communicate unique selling points- a particular type of butler service, a signature experiences programme, a famous chef affiliation that do not map to any checkbox in the current list.

5.4.3 Dedicated Food and Beverage Section

A dedicated Food and Beverage section is added to the template, mirroring the competitive precedent set by BoomPop and Unique Venues. Hoteliers can list on-site restaurants with names, cuisine types and any Michelin or relevant recognition. They can also add nearby dining options for properties where off-site dining is a relevant part of the guest experience. This data populates a dedicated food and beverage section on the Venue Profile Page and contributes to the event capability cards described in Section 5.3.3.

5.4.4 Profile Freshness Indicator

The template updates introduce a visible indicator on both the management view and the public Venue Profile Page showing when the profile was last updated. This addresses a signal of trustworthiness identified in the competitive analysis, where Unique Venue's freshness indicator was noted as a feature that communicated active profile stewardship to planners.

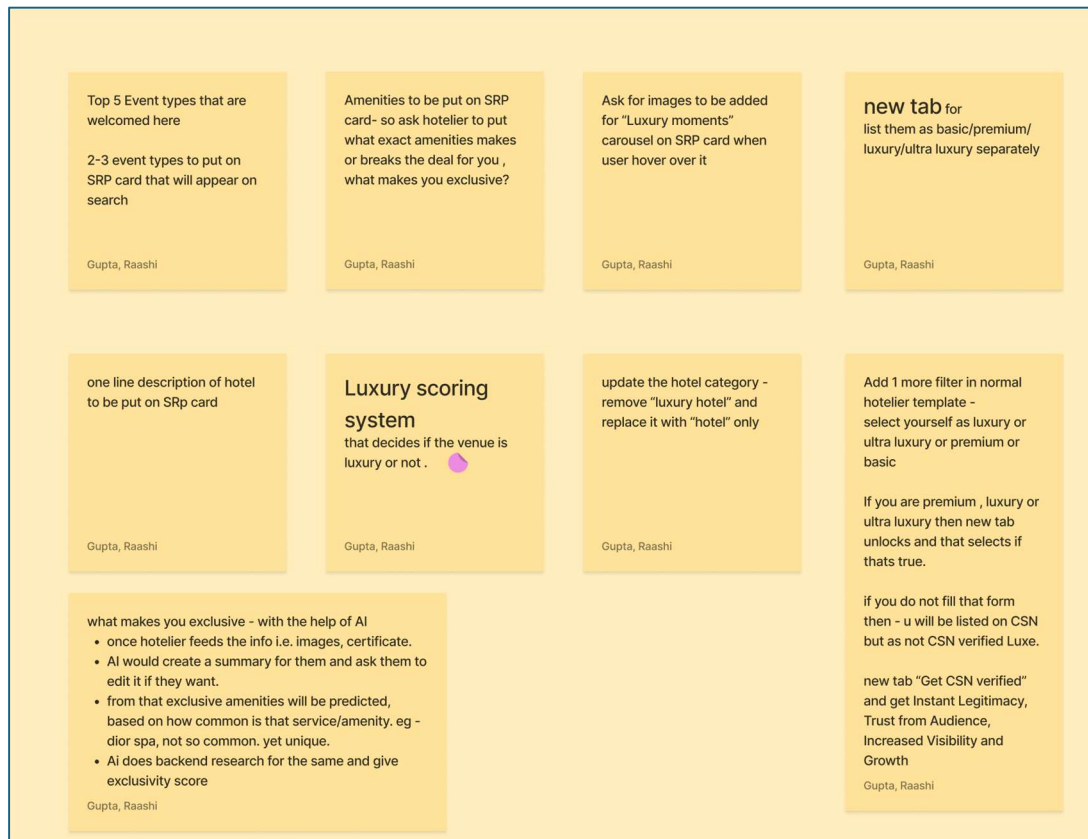


Figure 11 - Hotelier Template - Revised Luxury Fields

5.5 Design Validation

The proposed solutions described in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 were presented to the product management and design leadership team at Cvent. The review covered the full solution concept including the luxury classification framework, the luxury toggle mechanic on the Search Results Page, the Venue Profile Page redesign and the revised hotelier template.

Following this review, the solution direction was confirmed and the luxury toggle experience was identified as the priority direction for further development.

5.6 Evaluative Research (Planned)

This section will be completed following usability testing and findings will be incorporated here.

Evaluative research is planned as the next phase of this project. The research will take the form of moderated usability testing conducted with event planners, evaluating the luxury toggle experience across the Search Home Page, Search Results Page and Venue Profile Page.

The research aims to answer the following questions.

10. Does the luxury toggle present a clear and trustworthy path for planners sourcing luxury venues?
11. Do the tier badges and named credentials on Search Results Page cards meaningfully improve planners' ability to distinguish between venue quality levels?
12. Does the 'Why This Is Luxury' summary on the Venue Profile Page reduce or eliminate the need for planners to validate externally?
13. Is the Budget Confidence Signal on the Venue Profile Page useful and trustworthy for planners, or does it create confusion?
14. Does the overall experience improve planners' confidence in their shortlists?

Participants will be recruited from the same planner profile as those interviewed in the discovery phase: experienced event planners who source luxury venues as part of their regular work.

Findings from this evaluative research will be added to this section upon completion.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, FUTURE SCOPE AND SOCIAL IMPACT

6.1 Conclusion

This project investigated a specific gap in the Cvent Supplier Network's experience: the absence of a structured and trustworthy way for event planners to identify and source luxury venues, and the corresponding absence of a structured way for luxury venue operators to communicate their quality within the platform.

The research confirmed that this gap is not simply a perception issue. Platform data showed that venues meeting objective luxury criteria but lacking a luxury tag receive approximately six times more RFPs per venue than venues tagged as luxury that do not meet the same criteria. This discrepancy reveals a meaningful misalignment between the platform's current classification approach and the way planners actually behave: they are seeking genuine luxury, not the label.

Qualitative research with planners and hoteliers provided the human texture behind this finding. Planners described constructing proxy definitions from star ratings, brand reputation and photography because the platform provides no structured luxury definition. They described leaving the platform routinely to validate properties through external sources. And they described the frustration of discovering a poor venue fit only at the proposal stage, after time and effort on both sides had already been invested.

Hoteliers described a different frustration: genuinely luxury properties, particularly independent ones with no global brand recognition, have no effective way to differentiate themselves from solid but non-luxury properties within the template structure. The profile completeness score rewards data volume rather than quality of narrative, and the absence of structured luxury credential fields means that a Forbes Five-Star property and a three-star business hotel complete the same form.

The solution proposed in response to these findings centres on three mutually reinforcing changes. The first is a luxury classification framework that uses a composite scoring model drawing on external accreditations, platform data and venue profile attributes to assign venues to one of four tiers. The second is a luxury toggle mechanic integrated into the search experience, allowing planners to enter a pre-filtered luxury results view with a single action, supported by explicit tier badges and named credentials on each card. The third is a revised Venue Profile Page that consolidates all luxury signals into a single coherent narrative, anchored by an AI-generated classification verdict and supported by a full scoring breakdown, a categorised gallery, an external validation panel and event-type-specific capability cards.

The solution was presented to and validated by the product management and design leadership team at Cvent. Evaluative research to test the solution with real planners is planned as the next phase.

6.2 Future Scope

Several areas of this project would benefit from further research and development beyond the scope of this study.

6.2.1 Evaluative Research

Moderated usability testing with event planners is the most immediate next step, as described in Section 5.6. The results will determine whether the solution delivers the improvements in confidence and efficiency that the research suggests it should, and will likely surface refinement needs that could not be anticipated through design alone.

6.2.2 Scoring Framework Finalisation

The luxury classification framework's scoring criteria and point values remain in progress. Finalising these will require collaboration between the design, product management and data teams at Cvent, and will likely benefit from an analysis of how different weighting schemes affect which properties receive each tier designation.

6.2.3 International and Cultural Variation

The research questions in the project brief explicitly raised the possibility that luxury means different things in different cultural and regional contexts. This question was observed in the data- the AAA rating system being unavailable in Europe being one example but was not comprehensively investigated in this project. Future research should examine how the classification framework performs across different regional markets and whether any criteria need to be adapted or supplemented.

6.2.4 Hotelier Template Adoption

The proposed changes to the supplier-facing listing template require a separate adoption and change management effort. A follow-on study examining how hoteliers interact with the revised template, whether AI amenity assistance is used as intended and what barriers exist to adoption would be a valuable complement to the planner-facing evaluative research.

6.2.5 Luxury Signal in the Post-Discovery Flow

The opportunity identified in the competitive analysis carrying luxury classification signals through the RFP comparison and awarding stages was not part of the validated solution scope. This remains a meaningful design opportunity for a subsequent project phase.

6.3 Social Impact

Design interventions in commercial platforms do not always have clearly defined social consequences, but this project touches on a few dynamics worth naming.

6.3.1 Visibility for Independent Properties

A meaningful portion of the luxury venue market is made up of independent hotels that are not affiliated with global chains. These properties are often owned and operated by individuals, families or small organisations that have made substantial investments in quality but lack the marketing infrastructure of major brands. The proposed classification framework, if implemented, would create a structured pathway for these properties to be discoverable on the basis of merit rather than brand recognition. This is a direct economic inclusion benefit for a category of business that is currently structurally disadvantaged.

6.3.2 Planning Efficiency

The research established that planners currently spend untracked but significant time leaving the platform to validate properties they are considering. Each of these external validation journeys represents friction that slows the sourcing process and increases the possibility of errors. Reducing this friction through better in-platform trust signals has a direct efficiency benefit for planners and, by extension, for the clients they serve.

6.3.3 Trust in Platform Classification

More broadly, this project addresses a design principle that has consequences beyond luxury: when a platform uses classification labels without a visible and defensible basis for them, it erodes user trust in the platform as a source of truth. The shift from an unverified self-applied luxury tag to a score-backed and transparently communicated luxury designation is an example of a design practice that builds rather than undermines trust in the platform as an informational authority.

