


The next era for the
wealthiest
consumers

A man and a woman are walking together in a desert-like setting with large, arched structures in the background. The man is wearing a light-colored suit and the woman is wearing a light-colored dress with a colorful scarf. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman is carrying a white shopping bag with a colorful scarf inside.

VISA
INFINITE



Very-high-net-worth (VHNW) individuals are among the most valuable audiences in commerce and financial services. Advances in technology, alongside the expectations they enable, are reshaping what it means to deliver premium: one defined by seamless global performance, intelligent personalisation and service that works effortlessly in the background.

Whilst wealth remains concentrated among older cohorts, it is now beginning to shift, setting up the largest intergenerational wealth transfer in history. An estimated \$72.6 trillion will pass to younger generations globally by 2045.¹

They are also more global, and expect seamless, digital-first experiences that reflect their identity and values, not just their wealth. Yet, the financial services industry is struggling to keep pace.

This paper reviews what truly matters to VHNW clients, where the current ecosystem falls short, and what must evolve to meet their changing needs.

VHNW is a segment growing in scale and influence

The VHNW segment is expanding rapidly in both population and wealth, coming from one of the most significant growth periods seen in the past decade.

➤ **510,810** individuals globally considered VHNW as of June 2025 and this is forecast to increase by **33%** to almost **680,000** in 2030²

➤ **\$59.8tn** combined net worth²

➤ Just **1%** of VHNW individuals account for over **32%** of total affluent wealth²

The significance of this segment lies in how their wealth concentrates demand, shaping where and how businesses compete.

Where they are

Europe remains one of the world's most highly concentrated wealth regions with a quarter of the global VHNW population living here.² It also accounts for roughly a quarter of global VHNW wealth.

However, VHNW lifestyles are inherently international: multiple residences, multi-country business interests, frequent international travel, and cross-border purchasing. Therefore, VHNW individuals expect a globally consistent and frictionless service integrated into their lifestyles wherever they are.

“
I'm typically in a hotel for 90 days per year.
Entrepreneur, Germany
”

These global, always-on expectations are already shaping what premium means today, but they are becoming more important as the new generation of wealth takes over.

Who they are

The shifts in scale, global mobility and premium influence are being accelerated by a long-term generational transition. As wealth moves toward Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z, the definition of what qualifies as 'premium' is evolving.

By 2040:

- Millennials and Gen Z will comprise **35%** of the VHNW population (up from **8%** today)²
- **45%** of the VHNW population will be Gen X (up from **25%** today)²

As digital natives with global lifestyles, younger VHNW individuals expect premium experiences to be seamless by default, and personalised in ways that feel genuinely intelligent.

In practice, this raises expectations across the VHNW ecosystem, and the need for providers to evolve.

What they want is largely similar

Together, the growth of the segment, its global mobility, and the generational reset of what 'premium' means explains why VHNW expectations are remarkably consistent across markets. Those expectations centre on four core factors:³

Time is the ultimate currency

Premium experiences mean less effort, flawlessly delivered.

Seamlessness is the baseline

Payments and service should "just work," globally.

Privacy and discretion are non-negotiable

Wealth should not increase exposure.

Curated quality beats breadth

Premium is fewer, better, more relevant experiences.

Increasingly, premium experiences are about relevance rather than visible status. What matters is service that feels personal, access that saves time, and experiences that fit how they actually live.

Yet for many VHNW individuals, today's premium card and payment experiences still fall short of this baseline. Gaps between expectation and delivery are visible in the moments that matter most: when time is scarce, transactions are high-value, and lifestyles cross borders.



Image modified using AI

2. Altrata, World Ultra Wealth Report 2025.

3. Visa Europe, 2025. Study on VHNW individuals in Europe.

VHNW expectations are rising faster than current offerings

Payment friction persists – especially where VHNW feel it most

VHNW individuals run lifestyles that are fast-paced, global and high-stakes. When transactions interrupt travel, delay access, or draw attention at critical moments, they undermine confidence, waste time and detract from the sense of control that defines a true premium experience.

Yet this is often where today's experiences can fall short, with friction emerging during international travel, high-value purchases, and time-sensitive transactions.

In Visa's Europe research:³

High FX rates are the #1 pain point.

For VHNW individuals, this creates ongoing friction by introducing unpredictability into everyday cross-border spending.

25% cite card acceptance as a top frustration.

Acceptance gaps undermine the promise of a globally reliable card, forcing workarounds where VHNW clients expect seamless use.

20% experience transaction declines.

Declines are acute, visible failures that interrupt high-value moments and quickly erode trust in the premium experience.

They don't want to think about conversion risk, FX conversions. They don't want to think about the credit limits.

Family Office Representative
Germany

[A transaction being declined] has happened twice with me. It is very embarrassing.

VHNW Individual
UK



These breakdowns do more than inconvenience. For a segment shaped by reputation, privacy and speed, friction undermines confidence in the premium proposition.

Digital experiences lag behind modern expectations

For VHNW individuals, premium is no longer judged by in-person service or human touchpoints. It is increasingly judged by how well digital tools perform in everyday, high-frequency moments. Yet many premium card ecosystems still force VHNW individuals to navigate fragmented tools, clunky processes and limited real-time control.

As a result, behaviour is already shifting. Visa's Europe research shows VHNW individuals turning to neo-banks to fill these digital gaps:

- 3/4 of family office-managed VHNW individuals use digital banks³
- 1 in 2 VHNW entrepreneurs use digital banks³

Premium personalisation often fails the VHNW test

After experiencing highly tailored service in other areas of their lives, from travel to wealth management, VHNW individuals expect the same level of relevance from premium financial services. Generic messaging and one-size-fits-all benefits therefore can feel inefficient, impersonal and misaligned with the premium baseline they expect.

“ I’m strictly a non-smoker and the card sent me a special offer for a cigar event, which is absolutely ridiculous. They should really pay attention to customise the offers.

Entrepreneur
Germany

As a result, they prioritise relevance, discretion and outcomes, especially from concierge and high-touch service.

Qualitative research Visa carried out in Europe highlights the gap clearly: concierge services are only valued when they feel genuinely personalised and truly exclusive, and many experiences aren’t meeting those expectations.

Security expectations are rising without tolerance for friction

Just as VHNW individuals expect personalisation and service to work quietly in the background, they expect payment security to be ever-present but never visible. Protection is largely assumed, not experienced.

For banks and fintechs, the challenge is straightforward but difficult to execute. Security requirements are expanding, driven by cross-border lifestyles, delegated

spending, and new asset types, while tolerance for friction continues to fall.

This creates a narrow margin for error. Controls that surface too often undermine the premium experience. Controls that are too loose expose risk. Delivering security that adapts to complexity without interrupting the moment is increasingly a baseline expectation.



A reimagined ecosystem that supports VHNW premium lifestyles

The gap between VHNW expectations and today's premium offerings creates a clear market opportunity.

VHNW priorities point to a new “premium baseline”

Across Europe, VHNW individuals consistently signal that premium value starts with global capability and confidence⁴:

Universal acceptance

47%

Multi-currency accounts

42%

Never-decline reliability

31%

But these are no longer differentiators. For VHNW individuals with frequent cross-border, high-value, time-sensitive spend, they are increasingly expected as standard.

To remain relevant, providers will need to go beyond functional reliability and deliver premium value that shows up in experiences, relevance and priority support that saves time and reduces friction.

Premium value is shifting toward experiences, wellbeing and cultural capital

Trend signals across the premium landscape point in a consistent direction: demand is rising for high-touch bespoke service, high-tech personalisation, privacy/peace of mind and experience-led “elevation” (travel, culture, sensory experiences).

The most preferred benefit categories reinforce this direction³:

Health & wellness programmes

78%

Luxury travel packages

77%

Premium sports events

72%

At the same time, the rapid advancement of AI is beginning to reshape how these experiences are delivered. As intelligent, agent-led services become more embedded in daily life, VHNW individuals can increasingly expect value to be proactively surfaced, coordinated and eventually executed securely by an agent on their behalf.

Now, the question is what does it take to deliver against these expectations?



So, what does good look like?

Meet the VHNW



Alex Morgan⁵

Alex is a VHNW entrepreneur and investor based in Europe, with businesses, assets and family interests spread across multiple countries. Travel is constant. Alex spends more time in airports, hotels and boardrooms than at home, and relies on a small, trusted team of assistants, advisors and a family office, to keep life and work moving.

Alex's priorities

Nothing should slow them down

Payments, access and logistics should never interrupt travel, deals, or daily flow.

Everything should work globally

Borders, currencies and transaction size should be irrelevant.

Control without micromanagement

Others act on their behalf, but visibility and confidence are non-negotiable.

Relevance over "luxury"

Generic perks and badly targeted offers feel like noise, not value.

Protection without attention

Security should adapt to complexity quietly, without public friction or disruption.

What "good" looks like in real life

Alex is travelling from London to Milan to Paris over four days, combining board meetings, a property transaction and a family commitment.

Monday morning
London



Board meeting trip

Alex travels from London to Milan for a board meeting. Flights, hotels and ground transport are paid for seamlessly across currencies, without declines or questions.

Monday afternoon
In transit



High-value payment approval

A high-value payment needs approval while they are in transit. From a single app, they review spend in real time and approve the transaction, while concierge handles logistics on their behalf.

Evening
Milan



Curated experience, secured

Alex receives a dynamically generated notification: a private tasting session at a local Michelin-star restaurant has become available. The reservation is secured through concierge, with dietary preferences already on file.

Midweek
Paris



Plans change. It's handled.

A delayed flight and a last minute hotel adjustment are resolved quickly through proactive human support that already understands their preferences, without calls, explanations, or disruption.

Throughout the week



Protection that stays invisible

Payment security works quietly in every transaction. Delegated spending, cross-border transactions, and an occasional unusual payment are handled smoothly by AI-driven risk systems, without alerts, calls or public friction.

5. The persons and scenarios depicted in these use cases are fictional and for illustration only. They do not depict real individuals, events or outcomes and should not be taken as a guarantee of results or as a factual account.



Sam Laurent⁵

Sam is a VHNW investor and philanthropist based between Geneva and New York, with a portfolio spanning private equity, art and sustainable ventures. Travel is frequent, but increasingly intentional. Time is tightly managed, with a focus on family, health and a small number of meaningful experiences each year.

Sam's priorities

Time is the ultimate asset

Interactions should be efficient and reduce effort.

Experiences must be meaningful

Access is expected. Relevance and quality determine value.

Service should feel intuitive

Preferences are recognised without repetition.

Wellbeing is central

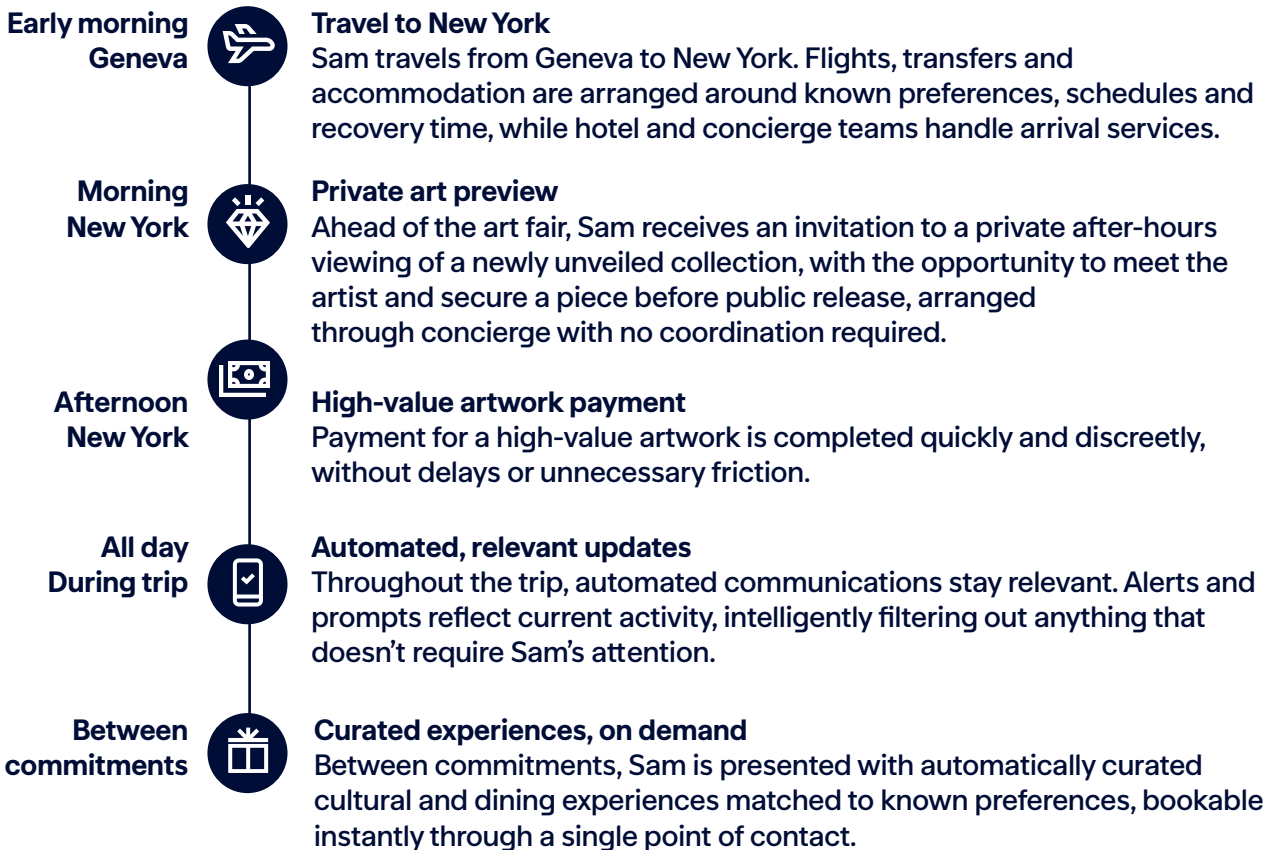
Travel, spend and lifestyle choices support health and longevity

Privacy is essential

Discretion is embedded across all interactions.

What “good” looks like in real life

Sam is travelling between Geneva and New York, combining an investment meeting, an art fair and personal time.



When experiences work this way, payments fade into the background and confidence remains intact. Providers that can support this end-to-end reality are well placed to earn trust, relevance and long-term loyalty.

5. The persons and scenarios depicted in these use cases are fictional and for illustration only. They do not depict real individuals, events or outcomes and should not be taken as a guarantee of results or as a factual account.

What the ecosystem must deliver to meet VHNW expectations

What this research makes clear is that VHNW lifestyles are now increasingly global, fast-moving and complex. Premium expectations have evolved in line with this reality, prioritising relevance, speed and discretion across interactions.

For banks and fintechs, the opportunity lies in designing for this lived reality. Meeting VHNW expectations calls for coordinated evolution across issuers, merchants, acquirers, fintech partners and premium service ecosystems. Four imperatives shape what good looks like:

1

Global reliability

Payments should work everywhere, every time – supporting cross-border lifestyles, high transaction values and multi-currency usage without disruption.

2

Digital excellence

Premium experiences now depend on intelligent, intuitive platforms that consolidate control, delegation, spend visibility, travel logistics, and support into a seamless environment.

3

Hyper-personalised value


Benefits should be culturally attuned and individually relevant – reflecting personal passions and lifestyle priorities, not generic luxury. This is especially critical in the benefit categories VHNW value most, including wellness, travel and premium access experiences.

4

Invisible security

Protection should be proactive and sophisticated, reinforcing trust without adding friction or drawing attention – especially as delegation structures and emerging asset behaviours become more common.

Visa's global scale, acceptance and technological capabilities strongly position it to champion a next-generation premium experience standard, designed around VHNW realities.



By aligning ecosystem partners around these imperatives, Visa can help enable a premium commerce future that reflects the lifestyle, pace and values of the world's most influential consumers.

Reach out to your Visa representative to explore the opportunity.