



# UX Playbook

Homepage

COX AUTOMOTIVE

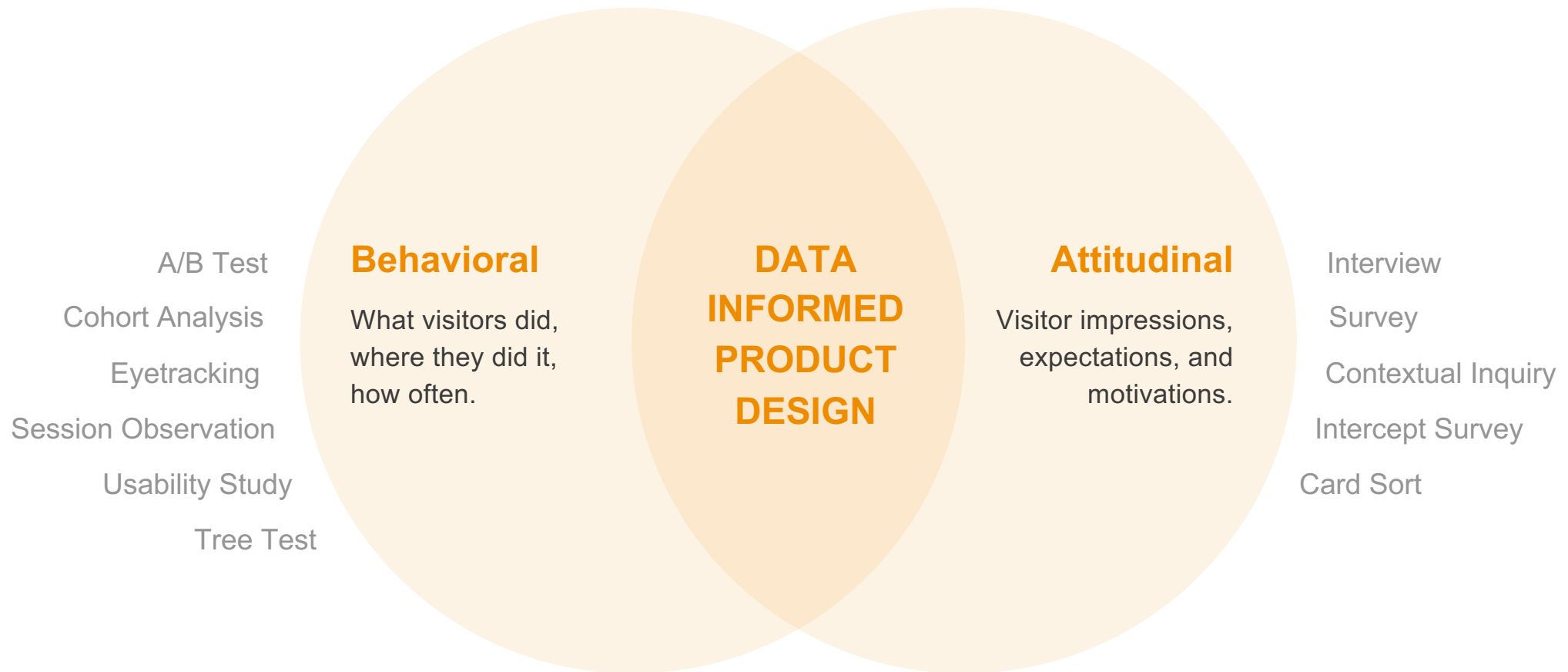
DEALER.COM

# About the UX Playbook

# What is the UX Playbook?

The UX Playbook is a set of **data-informed recommendations** aimed at providing a **positive experience** for the dealership website visitor.

# What is “data” in UX?



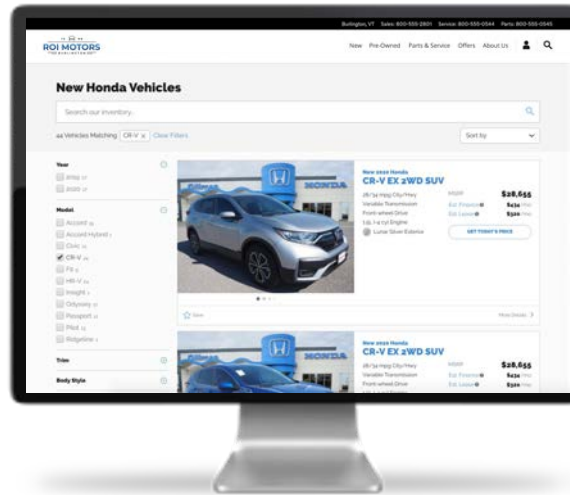
# Areas of Focus: Shopper Workflow

The UX Playbook focuses on three critical paths of the dealership website: the homepage, search results page, and details page.



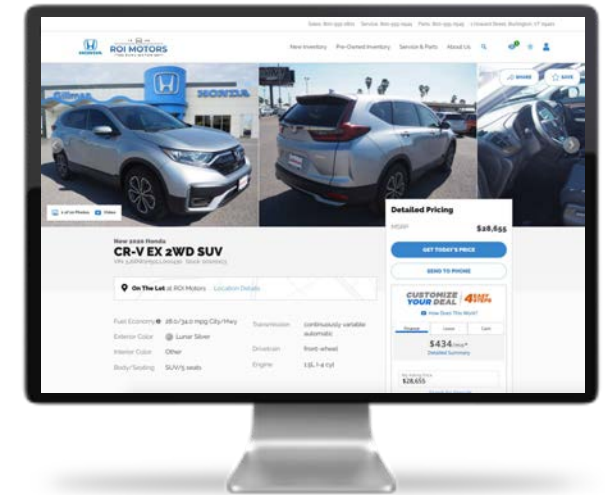
## Homepage

Brand impressions and starting point for discovery.



## Search Results Page

High level vehicle comparisons.



## Details Page

Specific considerations and next steps.

# Areas of Focus: Devices

UX Playbook recommendations apply across devices unless otherwise noted.



**62%**  
Mobile

**3%**  
Tablet

**35%**  
Desktop & Laptop

# Homepage

# Homepage by the numbers...

**38M**

homepage visits  
per month

**50M**

total (including bounces)  
homepage visits per month

**66%**

of visitors see the  
homepage

**75%**

see a SRP

**45%**

see a VDP

**64%**

of visitors enter on  
the homepage at  
least once

**23%**

enter on SRP

**16s**

median time  
spent on  
homepage over  
website visit

**1.4**

views per visit



## Common Question

# What homepage performs the best?

We have yet to observe a strong correlation between homepage design and common performance metrics such as leads or VDP views.

We have, however, observed a correlation between homepage design and brand perception.

**That is, the homepage makes the first impression. It is the most valuable place to establish the dealership brand.**

The following recommendations focus on optimizing for brand perception and creating clear paths to desired content for the visitor.

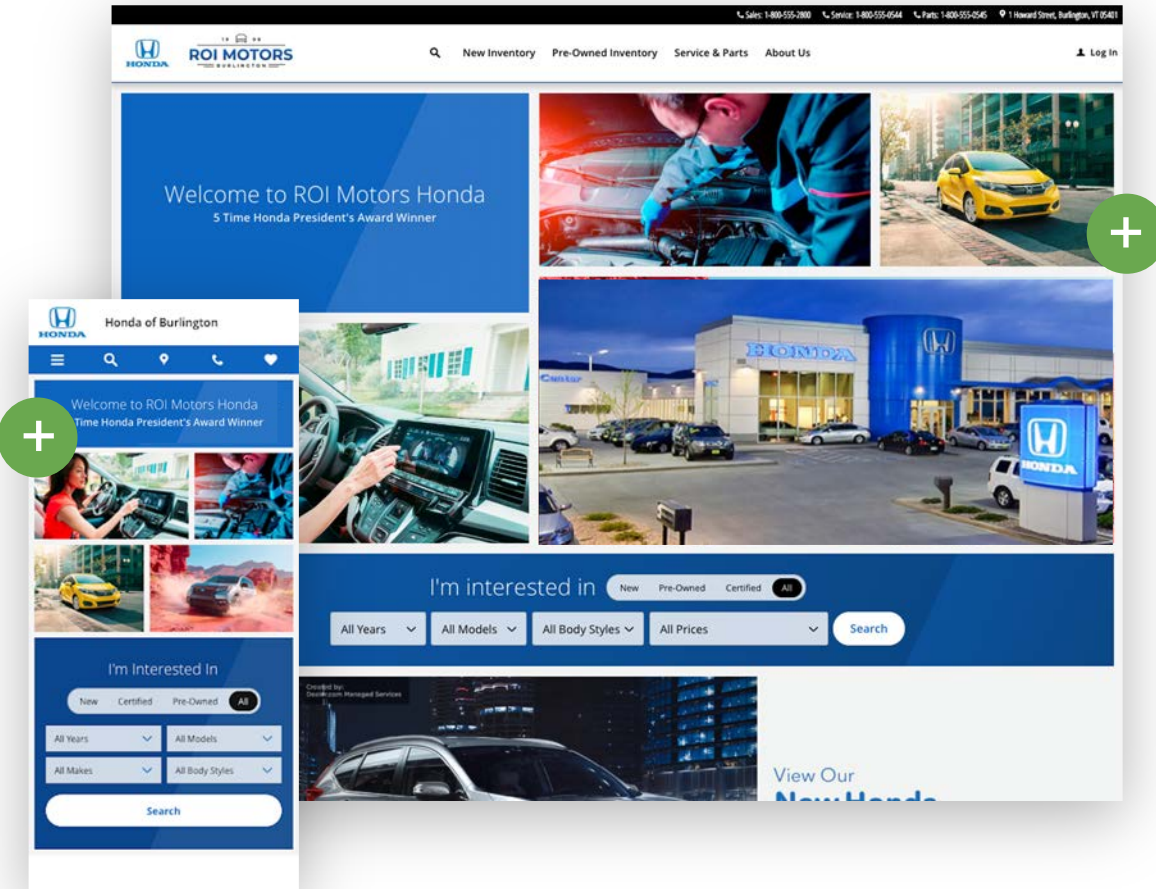
### Voice of Customer

*“When I’m looking at a website... it really is associated with the legitimacy of what I think the actual organization has to offer. So if your website is bad, what it portrays to me is that you don’t put effort into all sections of your business and therefore don’t care about it fully. If you have a good website, it adds to the legitimacy and the quality of customer care because you care how the customer feels when using the site.”*

- Homepage Study Participant

## Recommendation

# Prioritize value statement, hero photo, and inventory search.



## Rationale

The time needed to establish your brand is limited.

**Visitors spend <16s on the homepage over their entire website visit.**

**~90% of clicks are on navigation or facet search.**

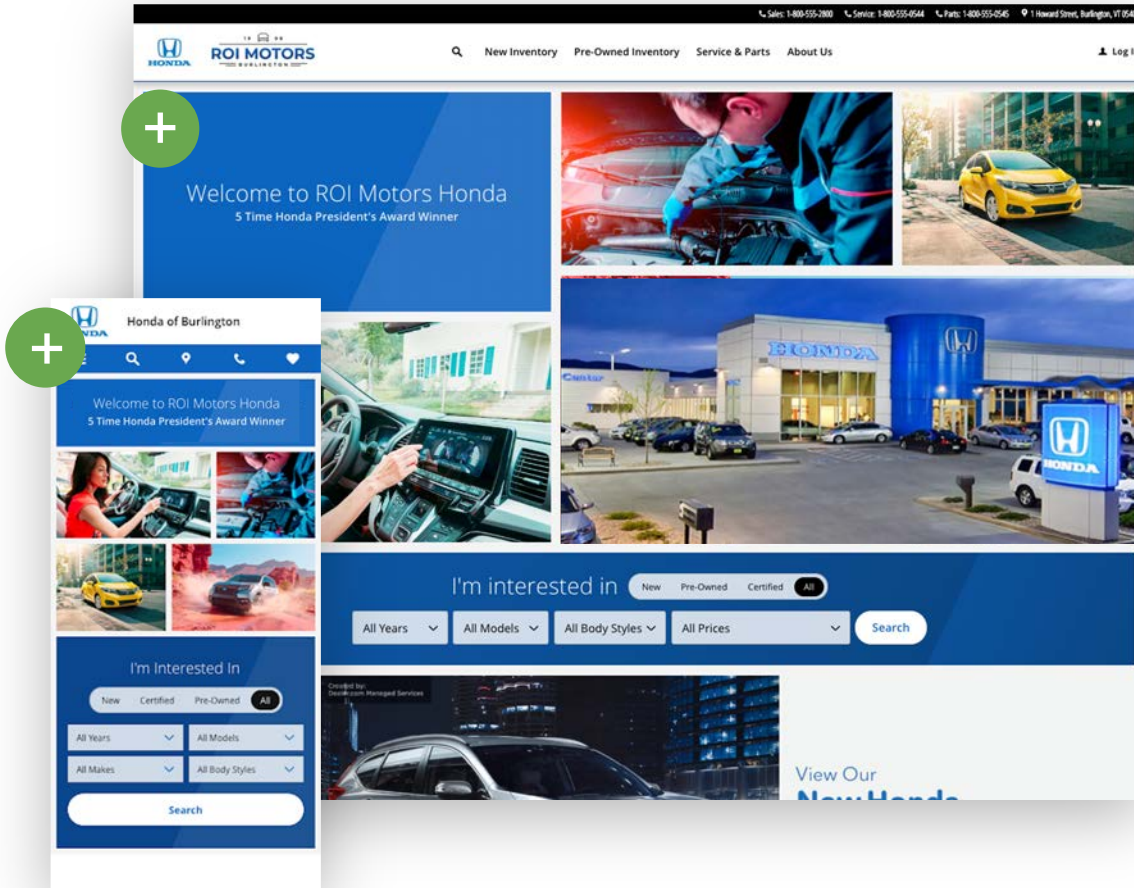
**Only 1 out of every 3 visitors scrolls beyond 1000px.**

Prioritizing a value statement, dealership hero photo, and inventory search creates a positive brand impression and offers visitors a clear path to their next step.

Source: Homepage Behavioral Analysis. Q3 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# Write a strong value statement.



## Rationale

Overwhelmingly, the value statement and photography were mentioned as the key differentiators when shoppers were asked their perception of several dealership websites.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

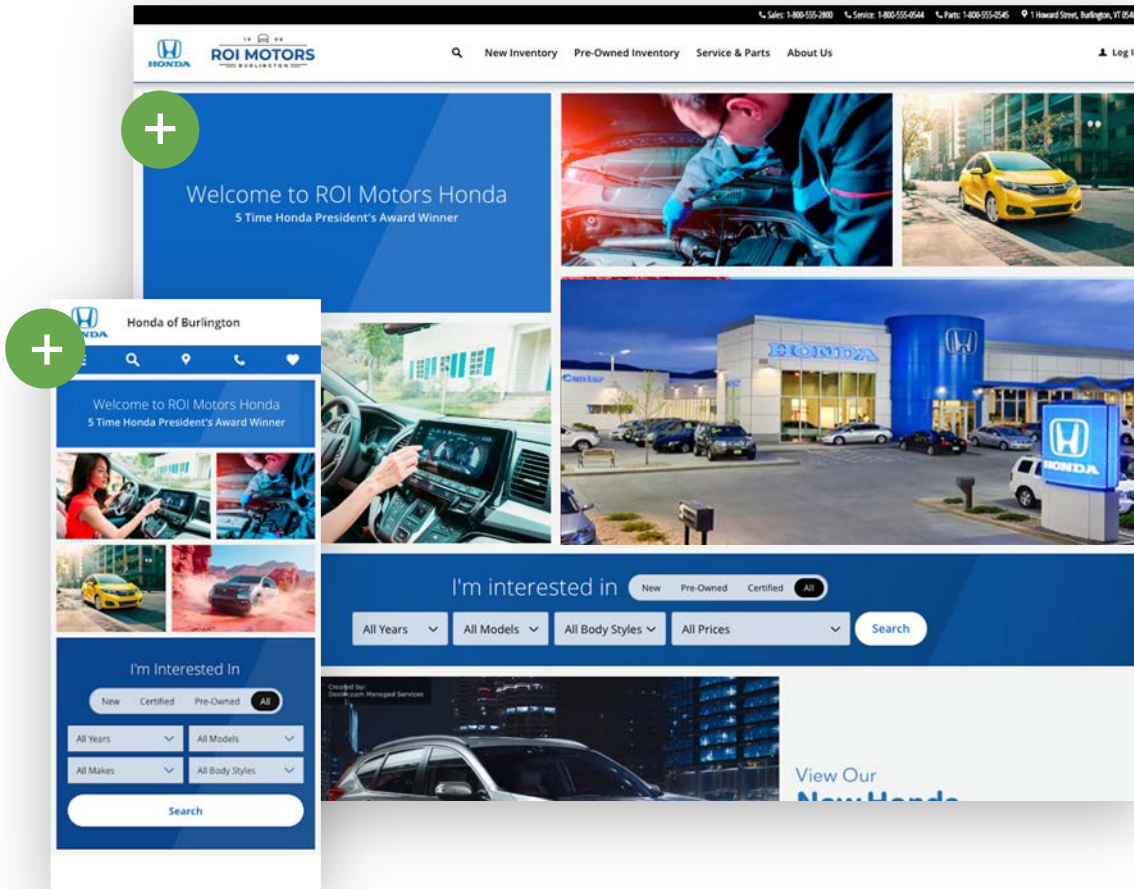
## Voice of Customer

*"The award makes me feel good about the dealership. It gives me some trustworthy feeling about them."*

- Homepage Study Participant

## Recommendation

# Write a strong value statement.



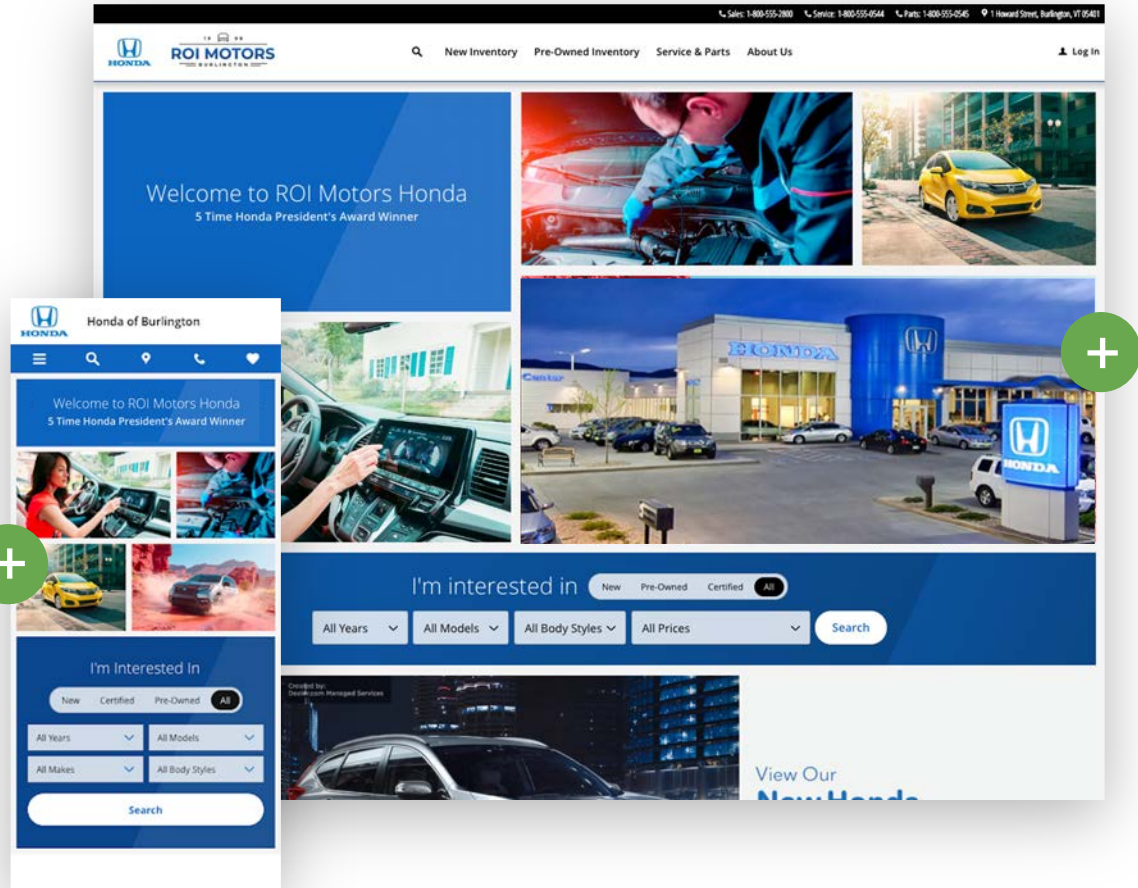
## Positive Performers

1. Manufacturer or customer service awards received.  
“Honda President’s Award Winner”
2. Ratings/rankings based on a third party source.  
“Your 5-Star Honda Dealer” / “Highest rated in [geographic area]” (be sure to cite the source of the ratings)
3. Community involvement or charity work.  
“A Community Partner Since 1976”
4. Greet the visitor or combine a greeting with one of the topics above.  
“Welcome to Honda of Burlington”

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# Feature high quality hero photography.



## Rationale

Overwhelmingly, the value statement and photography were mentioned as the key differentiators when shoppers were asked their perception of several dealership websites.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

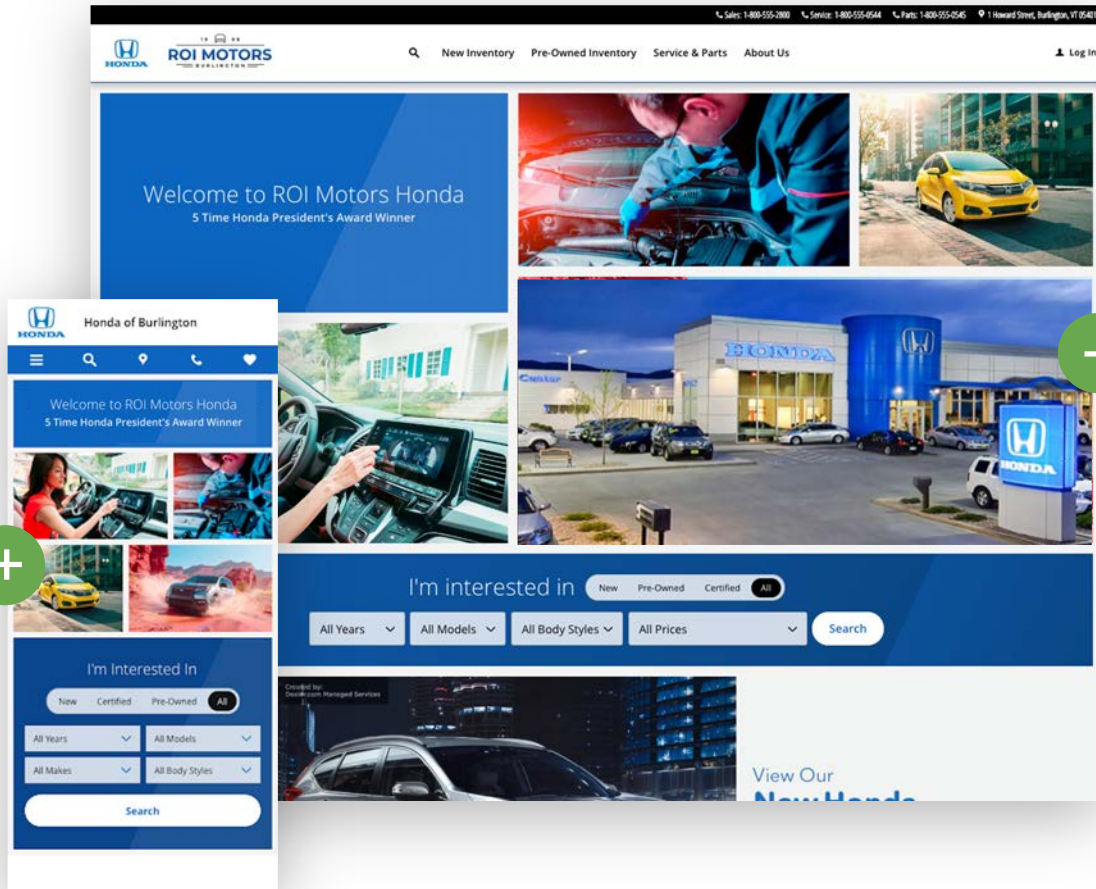
## Voice of Customer

*“Definitely very professional... They’re putting a lot of work into it. I’ve definitely seen some dealership websites that don’t look anything near this professional. That definitely inspires confidence in this dealer.”*

- Homepage Study Participant viewing website featuring high quality hero photography

## Recommendation

# Feature high quality hero photography.



## Positive Performers

1. Exterior showing the building entrance, signage, and/or lot.
2. Indoor showroom or facilities.
3. Staff helping customers.
4. Clean and organized service department/bays.
5. OEM Ad Planner lifestyle shots including popular models.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Voice of the Customer

*"I really like the emphasis on the pictures. It just surrounds you with pictures. It makes this website more memorable."*

- Homepage Study Participant

# What About Video?

Visitors' opinions are polarized.

## Voice of the Customer

*"This is pretty slick here. It's showing me [the dealership]. I find this interesting. I guess it gets redundant if you watch it too long but it does give a span for what the dealership does. Makes the dealer look more up-to-date."*

- Homepage Study Participant

VS

## Voice of the Customer

*"Oh god. Video? I freaking hate video so much. It's really distracting. It's useless."*

- Homepage Study Participant

## Recommendations:

Minimize movement of subjects to prevent distraction.

Keep it under 15 seconds and compress for performance purposes.

Don't loop playback forever.

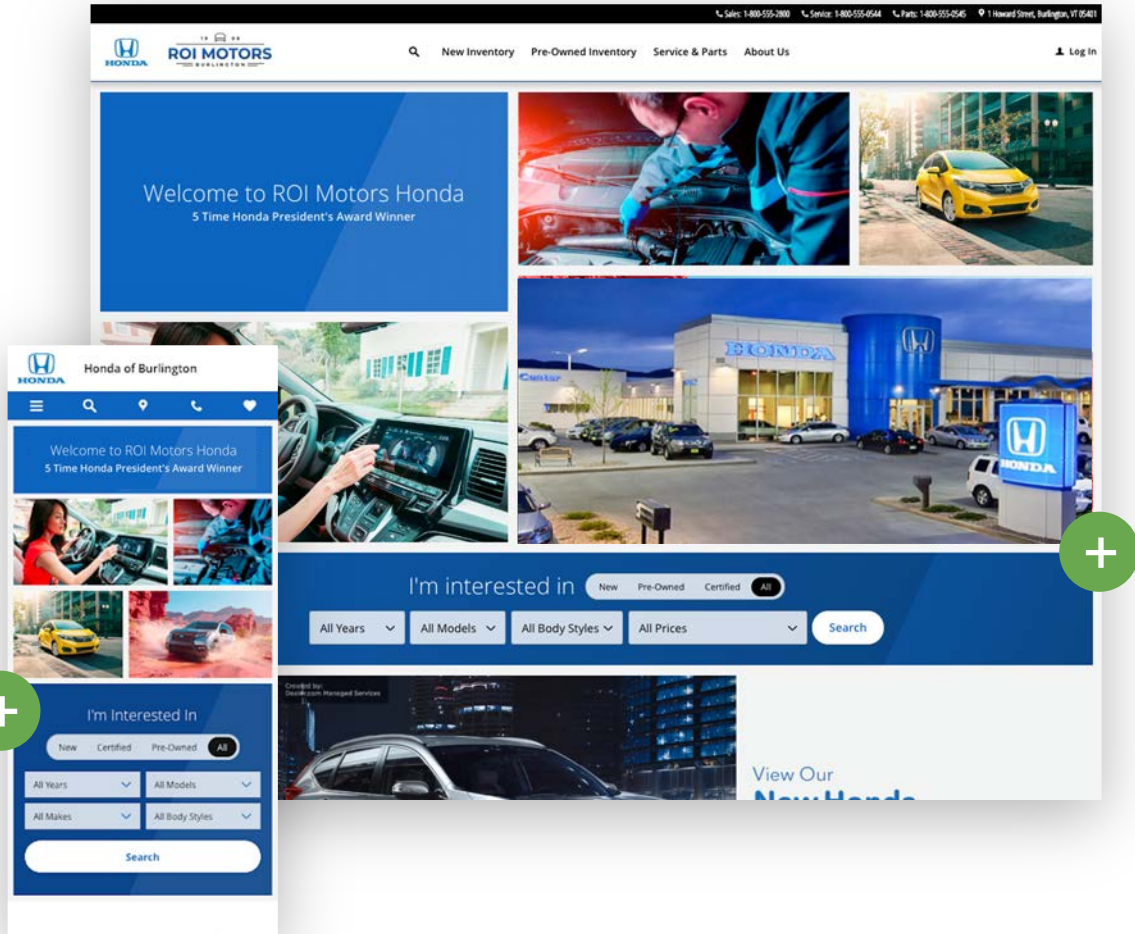
Make sure overlaying text is readable.

Consider alternative for mobile devices.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# Prioritize facet search as primary inventory search.



## Behavior

**40-60% of inventory visits go through facet search** when it is prioritized near top of homepage.

When facet search and free-text search are featured side-by-side, **facet search is preferred 4:1**.

Feature the most used facets:

**75%** Make

**59%** Model

**35%** Year

**18%** Body Style

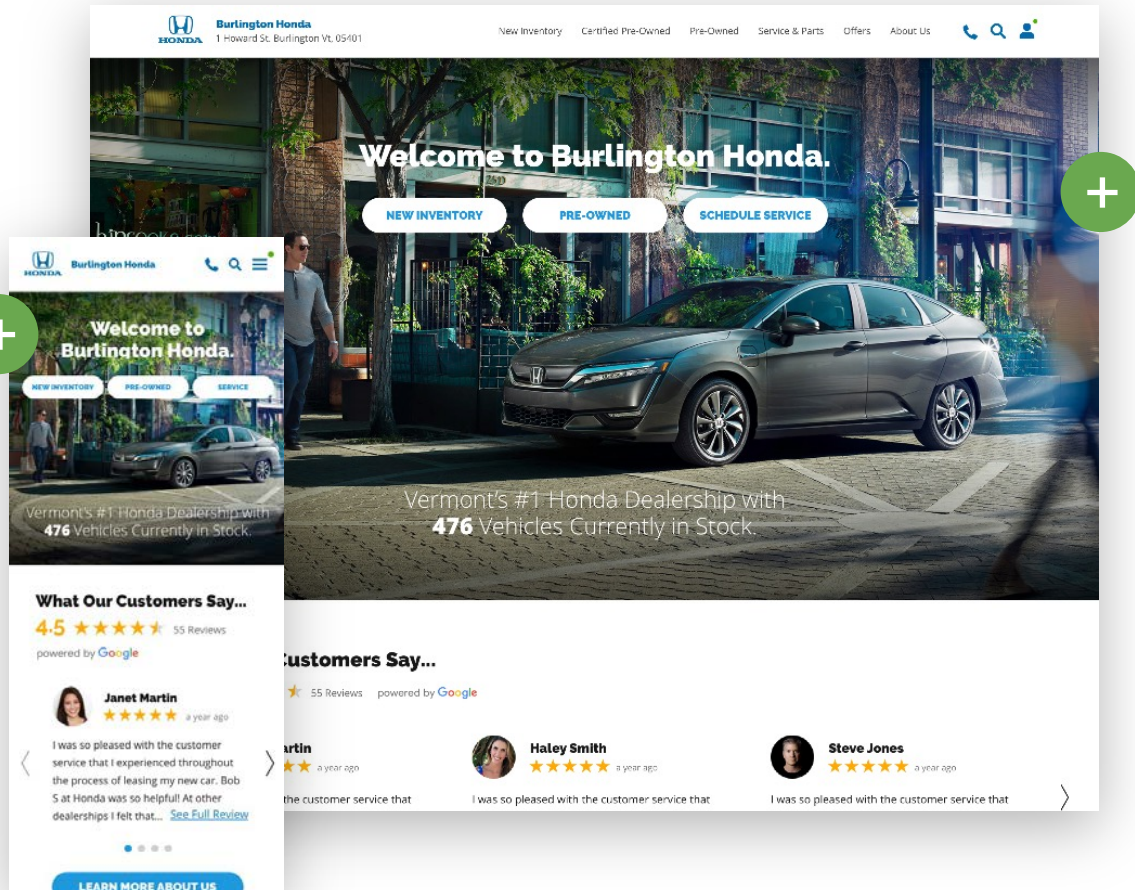
**9%** Price

All other facets accommodate for <3% of visitor engagement on homepage.

Source: Homepage Facet Search Audit. November 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.



# Alternatively, prioritize CTAs to popular content.



## Rationale

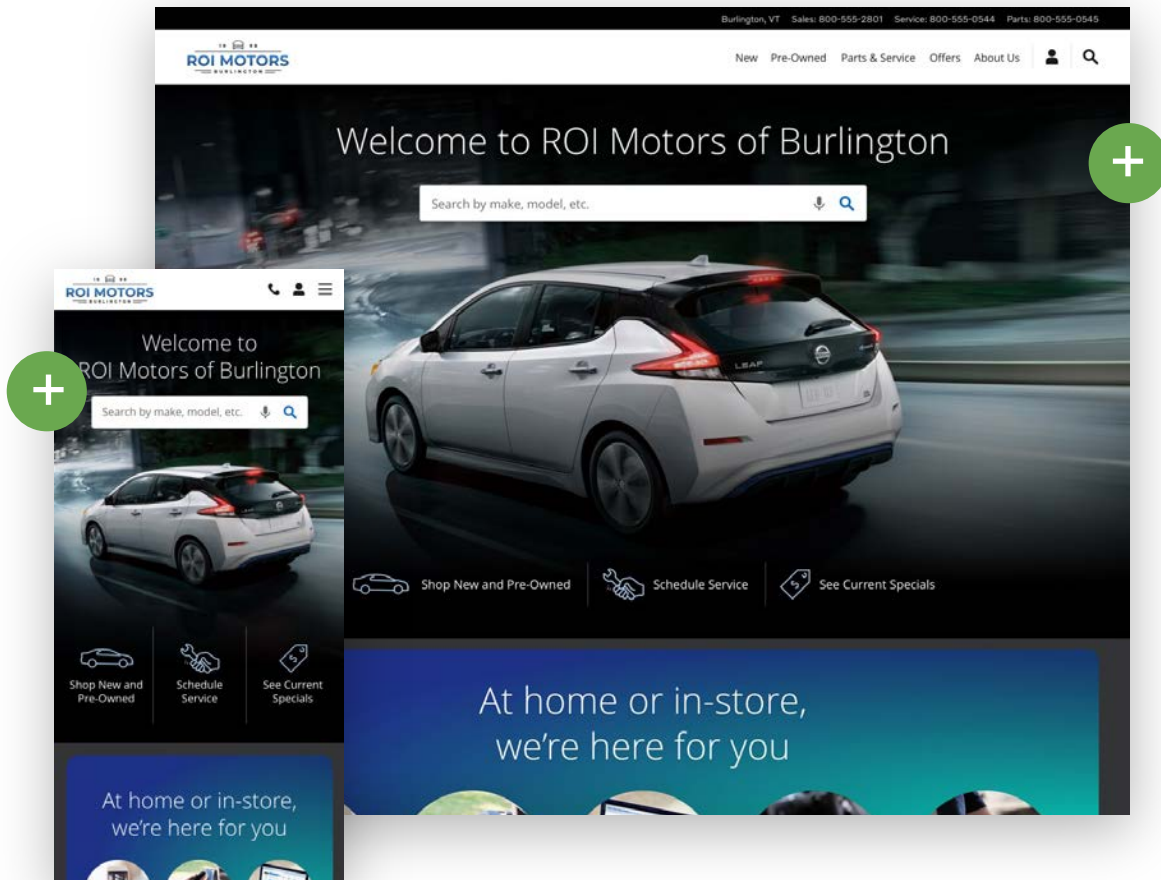
An acceptable alternative to facet search is to feature 2-3 calls to action for popular content such as “New Inventory”, “Used Inventory”, “Schedule Service”, “Specials”, etc.

Replacing facet search with CTAs does not allow the visitor to refine inventory before visiting the SRP, but it does provide a way of prioritizing inventory and non-inventory content equally on the homepage which can be desirable depending on the situation (ex. driving visitors to other profit centers).

**Prioritizing CTAs saw the highest engagement (~50%)** over prioritizing facets. However, visitors remarked they preferred using facets when they had a specific make/model in mind.

## Recommendation

# Alternatively, prioritize free text with CTAs to popular content.



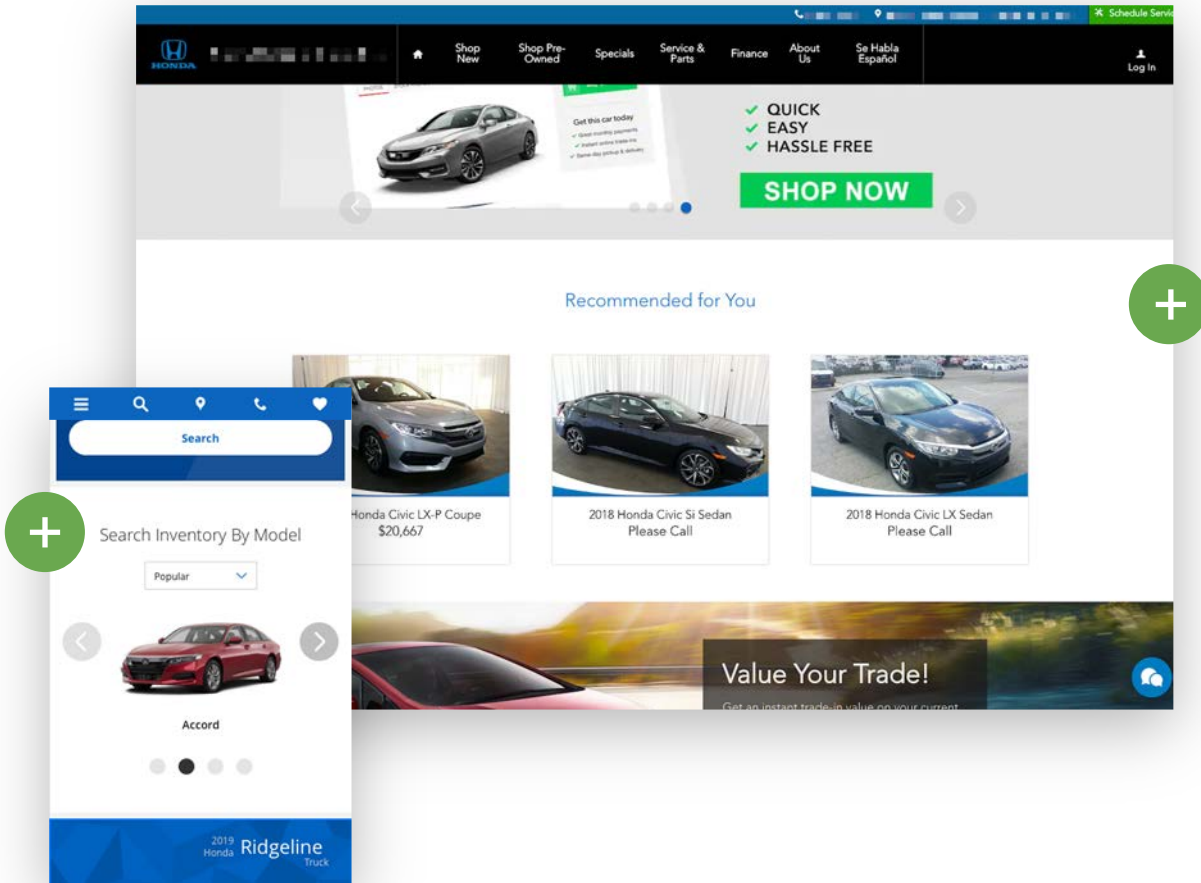
## Rationale

Though facet search and direct CTAs are more frequently engaged paths to inventory, free text search provides a path to inventory in a more compact design element. This helps to create a “cleaner” homepage style and allows the photo and value statement to be more prominent. It also benefits smaller devices where facet search can take up significant vertical space.

When featuring free text search we recommend also including CTAs to popular content. This offers a “best of both worlds” approach: visitors preferring flexibility can use free text search while visitors preferring clear, direct paths can use the CTAs.

## Recommendation

# Let photos “breathe”.



## Rationale

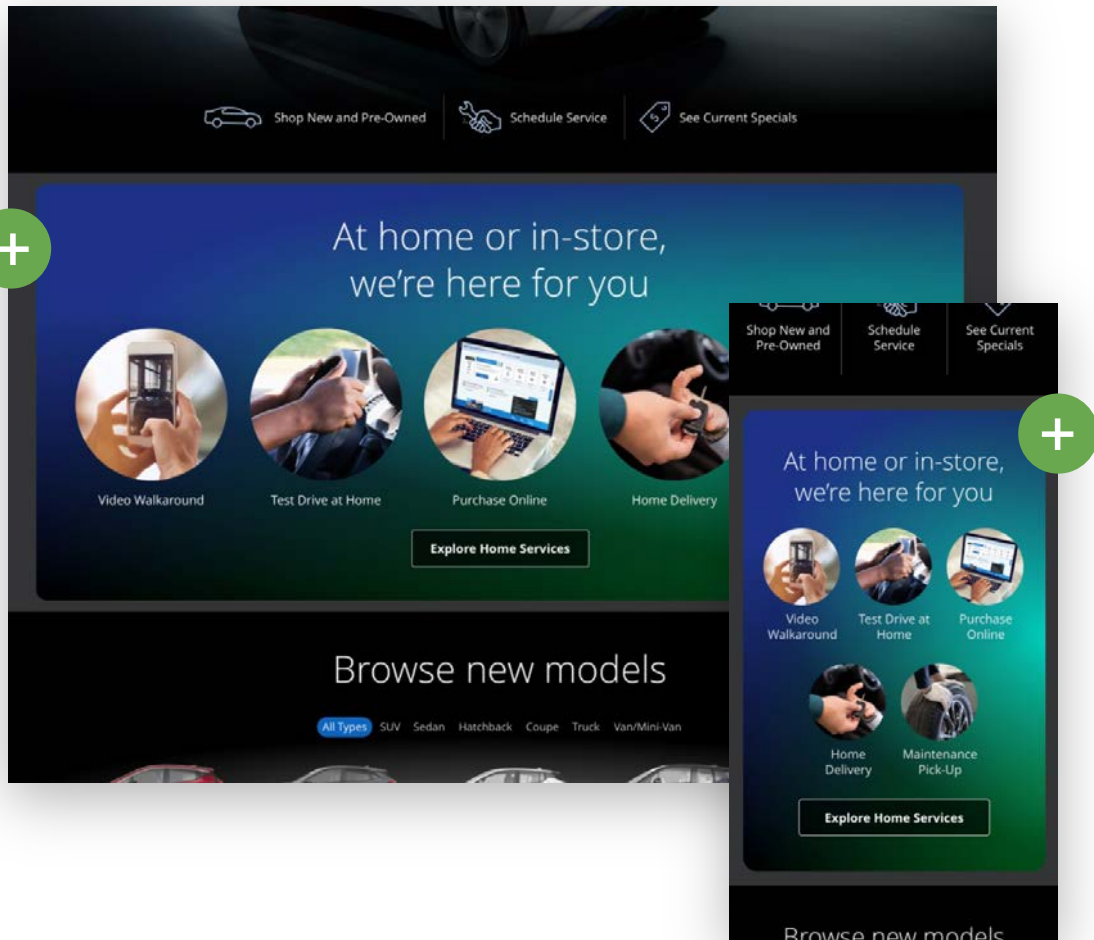
Homepages that featured a solid color background to break up photo heavy sections were not perceived as overwhelming or cluttered.

Using this technique, you get the benefits of high quality photography (visual interest, professionalism) without the negative impact of clutter.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# Highlight home services.



## Rationale

Out of all differentiating content on the homepage, communicating home services (including purchasing online) was viewed the most positively by participants.

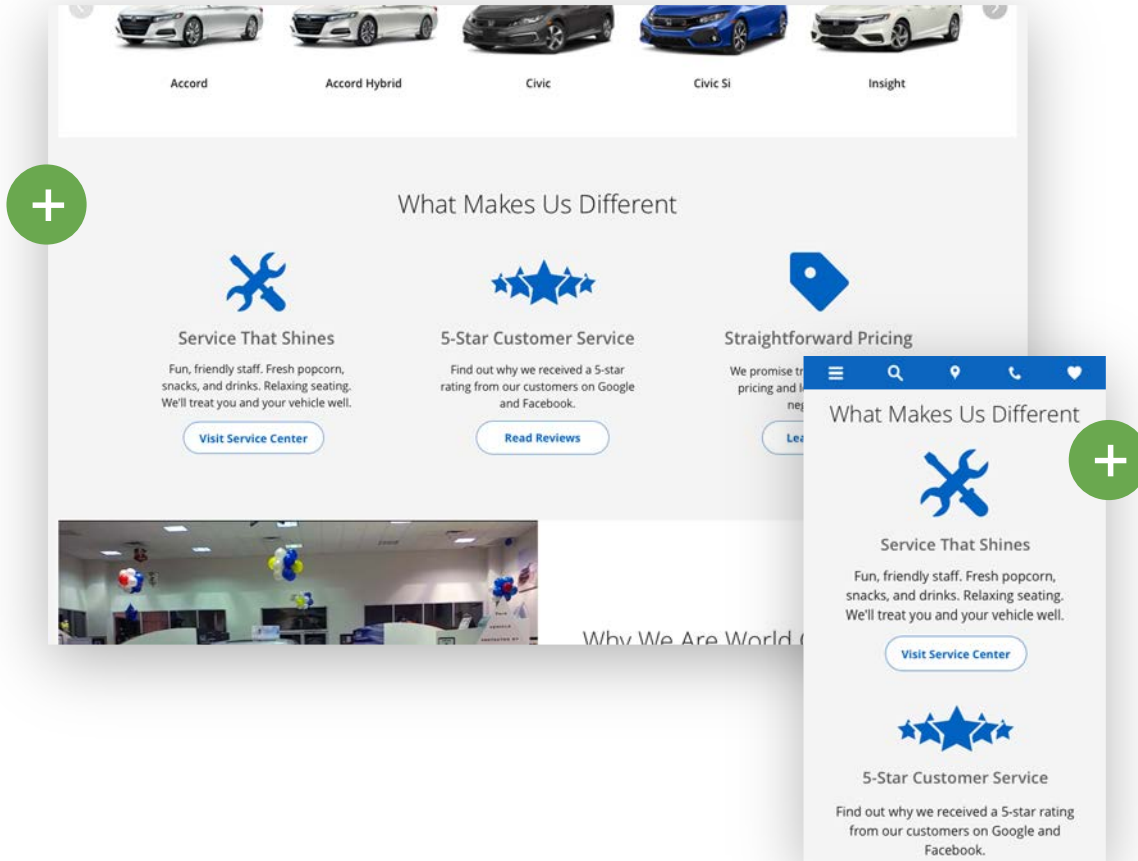
**3 out of 4 dealers conduct business beyond their physical location**, however only **22% of consumers know dealers offer such services**.

**82% of consumers** who have used service pick-up and delivery **are likely to choose one dealership over another based on it being offered**. Furthermore, **51% of those** who have used service pickup and delivery **had more services completed**.

Source: COVID-19 Digital Shopping Study. May 2020. Cox Automotive.

## Recommendation

# Describe other differentiating qualities.



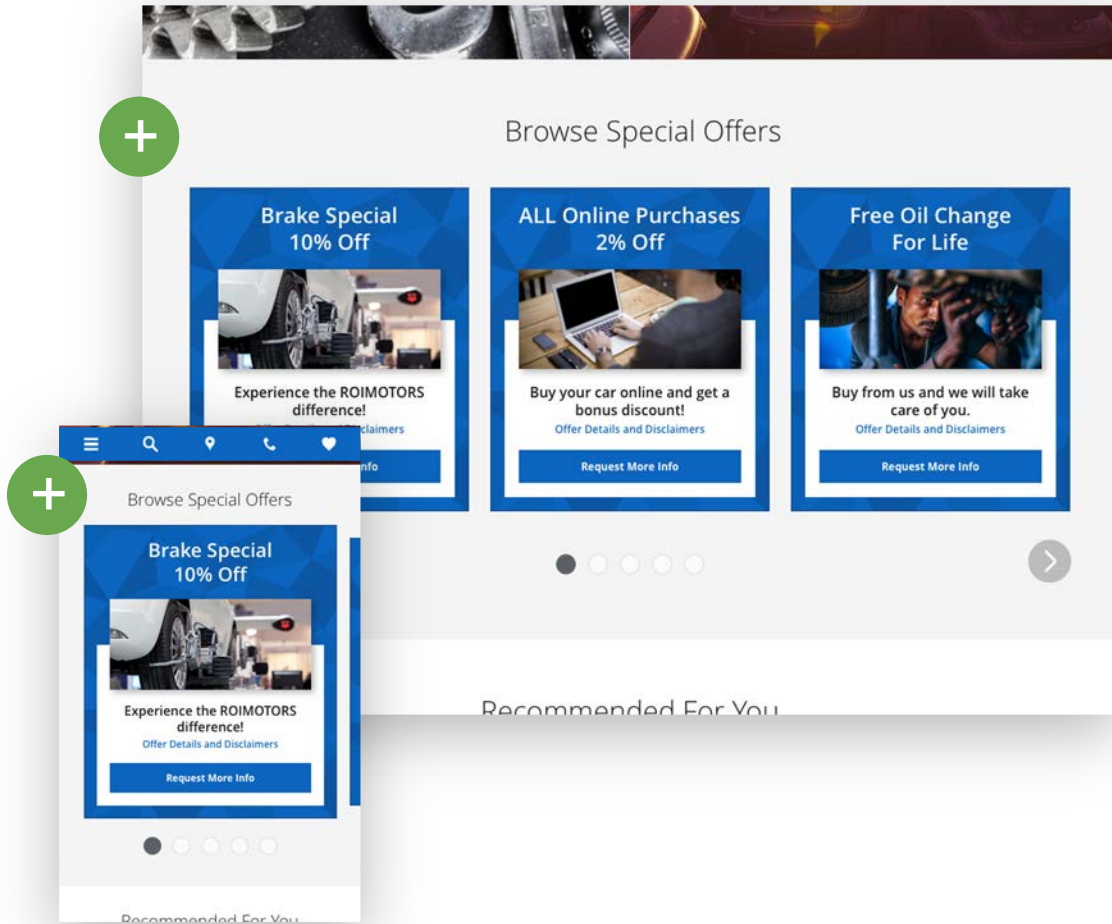
## Rationale

When cross-shopping multiple dealership websites, visitors are looking for differentiating factors. Promoting qualities such as customer service awards, non commission sales staff, service amenities, convenient technology (ex. digital retailing, service notifications), reviews, and community involvement can foster trust and create a positive brand perception.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# Feature specials or link to specials.



## Rationale

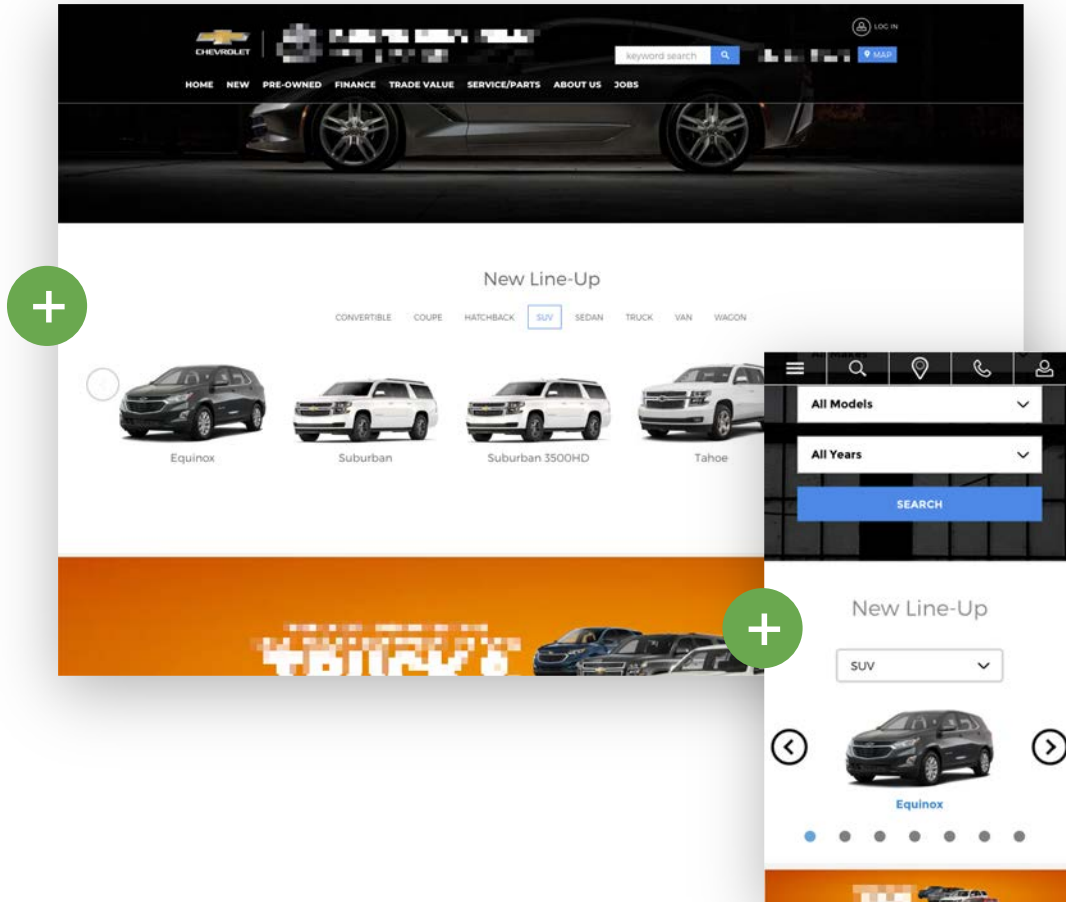
Slideshow carousels are typically used to promote specials. On average we see **<1% click through for slides**. This is most likely due to the slide being irrelevant to the shopper and/or banner blindness.

Despite low engagement with slides. Specials are something that many shoppers are interested in. **7% of navigation clicks are to specials pages.**

To optimize visitor behavior, we recommend placing specials-related CTAs or slides and banners using Experience Optimization on the homepage after primary content (value statement, hero photo, facet search).

## Recommendation

# Feature side-by-side model selector.



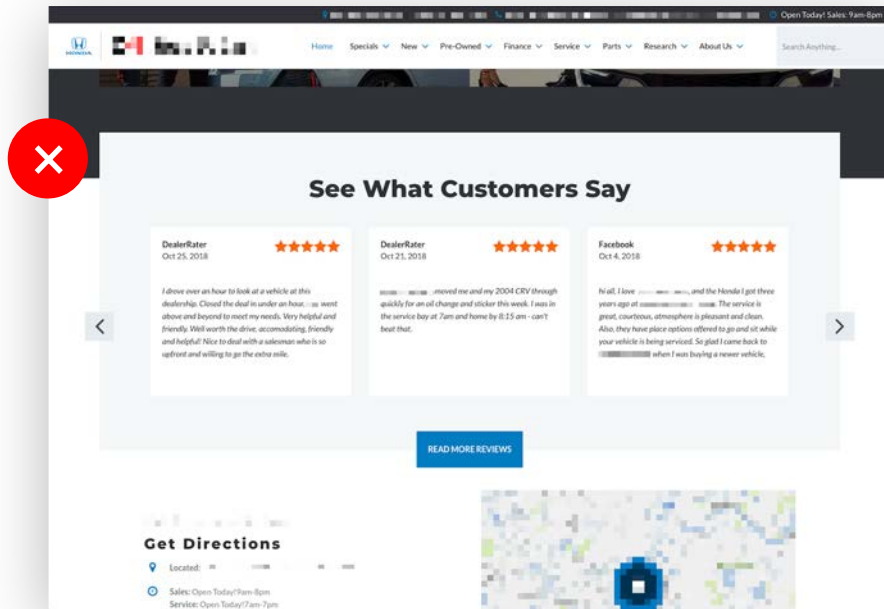
## Rationale

As high as **10% of homepage clicks to inventory** can occur through the side-by-side model selector when featured after primary content (value statement, hero photo, facet search).

Shoppers had a positive reaction to this model selector, stating it was **easier to find a desired model through visual comparison with other models**. This model selector also adds visual interest to the page and can be used to break up photo heavy pages.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

# Feature reviews on interior pages only.



## Rationale

Previous studies showed that visitors expected and reacted positively to seeing reviews from trusted third-party sources (Google, Facebook, etc.) on the homepage. However, more recent studies have shown these reviews are met with extreme skepticism and distrust by visitors because it's easy for businesses to remove negative reviews on their own website. Visitors often remarked that they'd visit the third-party source directly if interested in a dealer's ratings and reviews. We recommend displaying reviews on informational pages like the About Us page where visitors can be more receptive to dealer curated content.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q4 2020. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Voice of the Customer

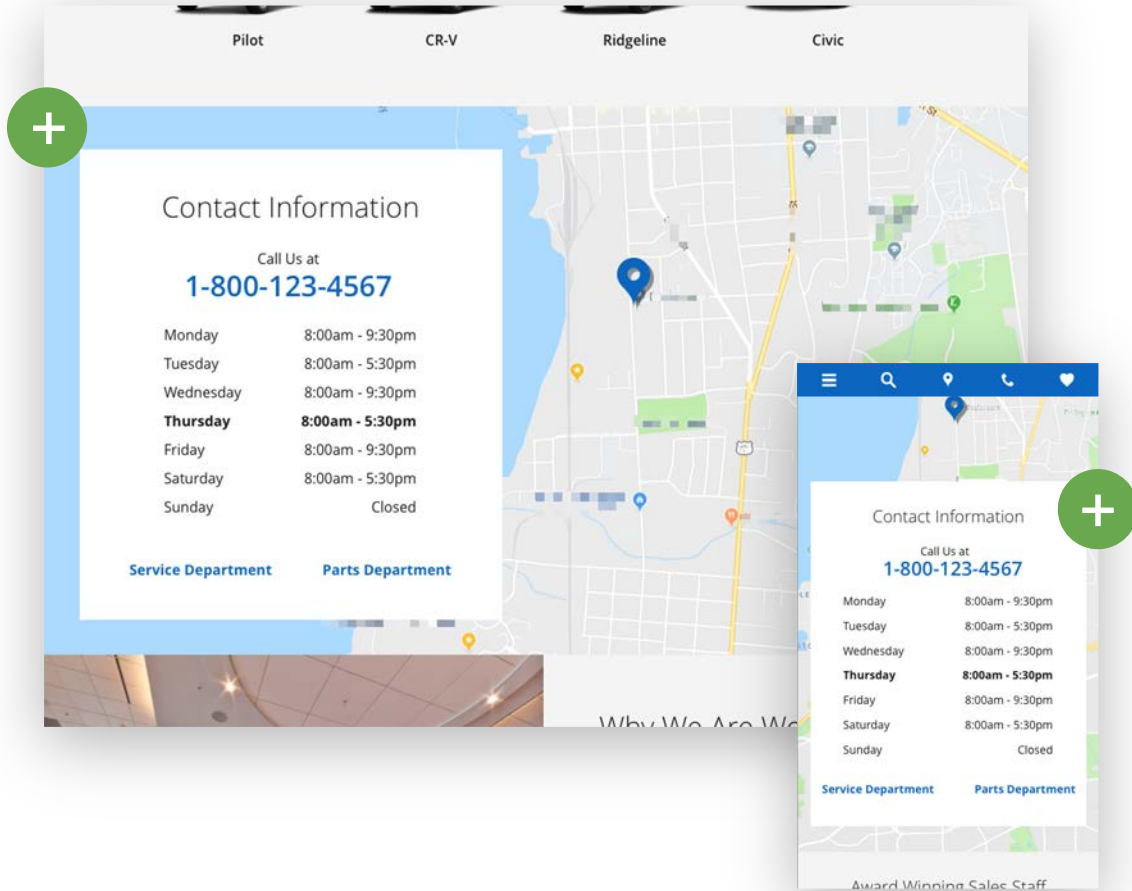
*"I don't know if I trust the reviews anymore just because it seems a little bit biased nowadays.. I just assume the dealerships are kind of cherry-picking or they're fake.. I just wouldn't assume they're true."*

- Homepage Study Participant



## Recommendation

# Feature contact and/or directions.



## Rationale

It's common for consumers to visit a business website to simply look up the phone number or address. Dealership websites are no different...

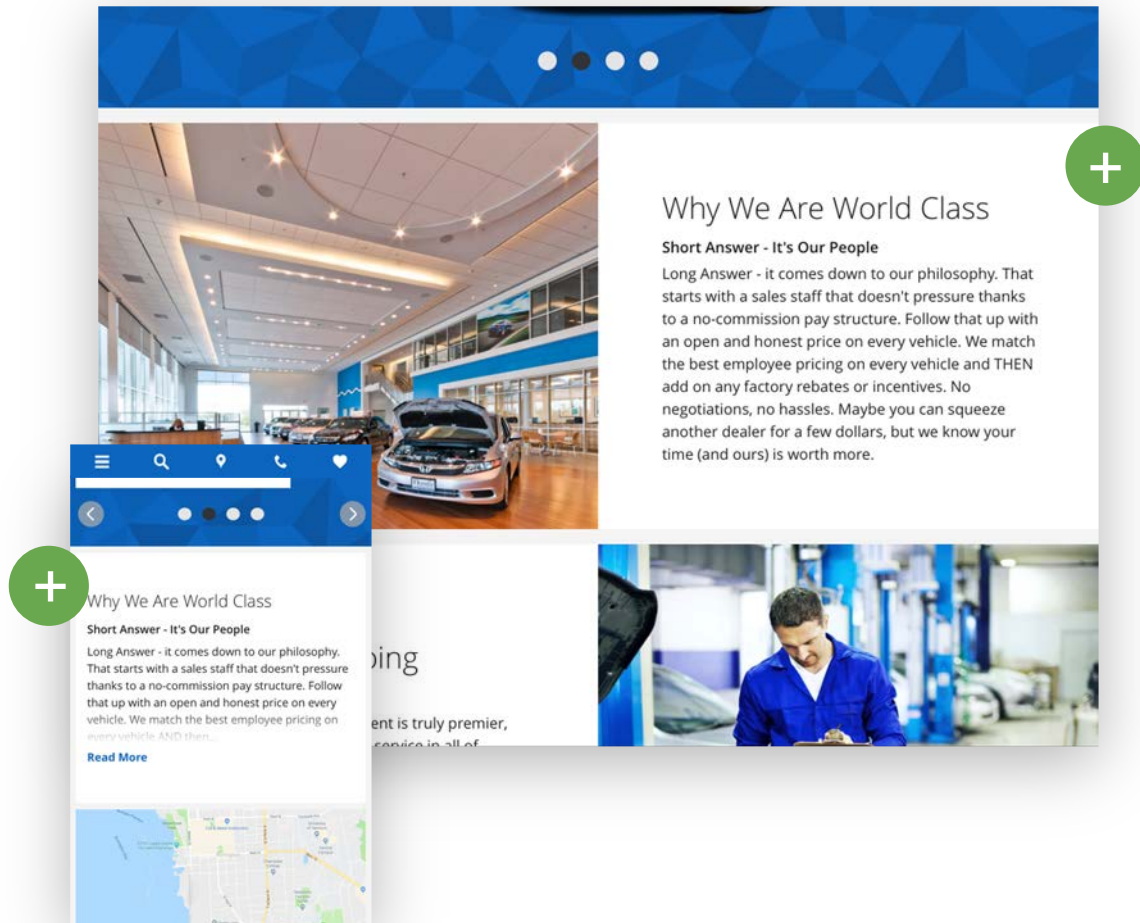
On average, **website phone leads outnumber form leads by 3.5:1**.

In addition, **9% of navigation clicks are to “Contact and Directions” and “About Us” pages**.

Source: Ongoing Website Engagement Analysis. November 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

## Recommendation

# “Chunk” SEO content and supplement with photos.



## Rationale

Typically used for SEO value, when text heavy content was separated into thematic chunks and paired with a photo for each chunk, visitors reacted positively, even stopping to read sections that interested them.

On mobile, consider hiding SEO content behind a “Read More” accordion. This retains SEO value while reducing the length of the page, saving visitors from scrolling through lengthy content on their device.

Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

# Homepage Recommendations

| Recommendation  | Impact | Metric of Interest            |
|---|--------|-------------------------------|
| Prioritize value statement, dealership photo, and inventory search                        | High   | Brand perception, visit time  |
| Write a strong value statement (awards, reviews, customer service, etc)                   | High   | Brand perception              |
| Feature a high quality hero photo (exterior, signage, showroom, etc)                      | High   | Brand perception              |
| Prioritize facet search as primary inventory search                                       | High   | Visit time, SRP view rate     |
| Alternatively, prioritize CTAs to popular content   | Low    | Visit time, content view rate |
| Alternatively, prioritize free text search with CTAs to popular content                   | Low    | Visit time, content view rate |
| Let photos breathe  | Medium | Brand perception              |
| Highlight home services   | Medium | Brand perception              |
| Describe differentiating qualities (awards, non commission staff, service amenities, etc) | High   | Brand perception              |
| Feature specials or link to specials  | Low    | Brand perception              |
| Feature side-by-side model selector   | Low    | Visit time                    |
| Feature reviews on interior pages only  | Medium | Brand perception              |

# Homepage Recommendations

| Recommendation                                     | Impact | Metric of Interest |
|--|--------|--------------------|
| Feature contact and/or directions                  | Low    | Lead rate          |
| “Chunk” long (SEO) text and supplement with photos | Low    | Brand perception   |

**Thank You**

COX AUTOMOTIVE

DEALER.COM