

UX Playbook

Site-wide Recommendations

COX AUTOMOTIVE

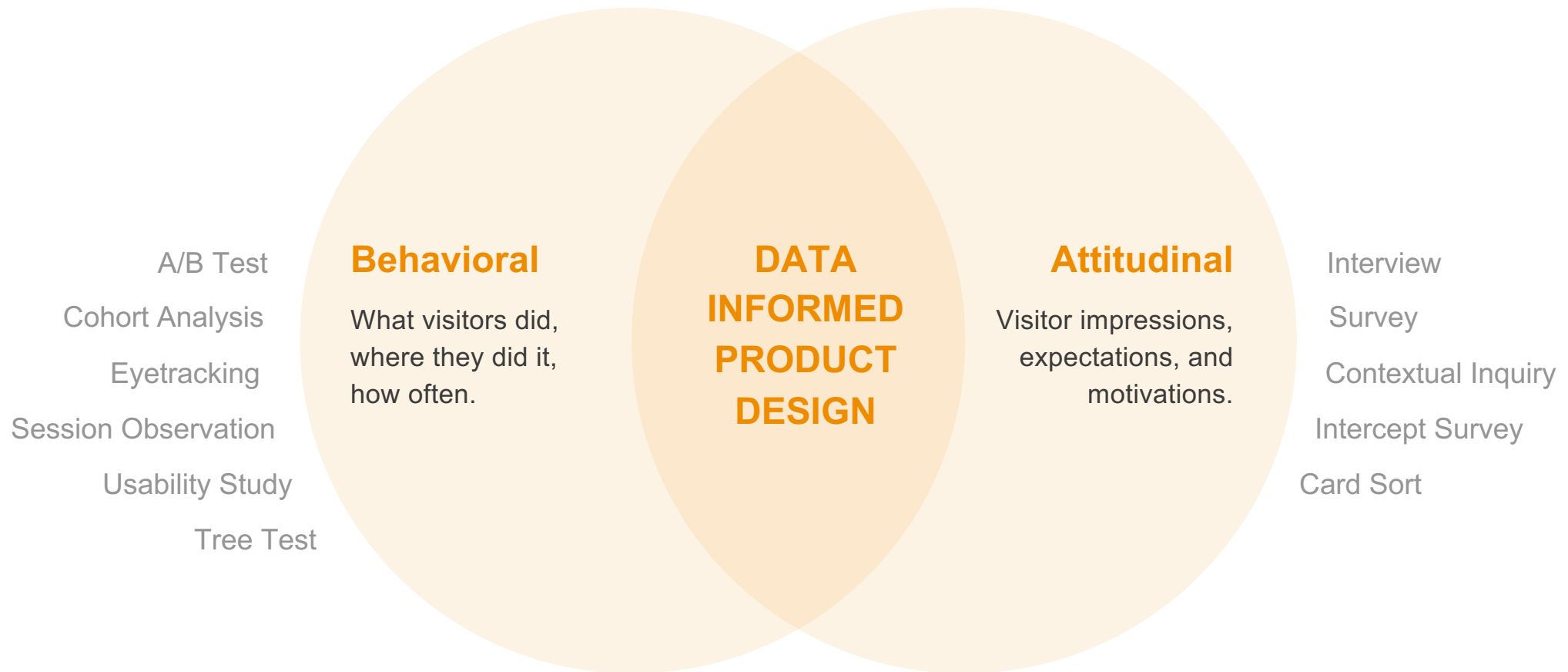
DEALER.COM 

About the UX Playbook

What is the UX Playbook?

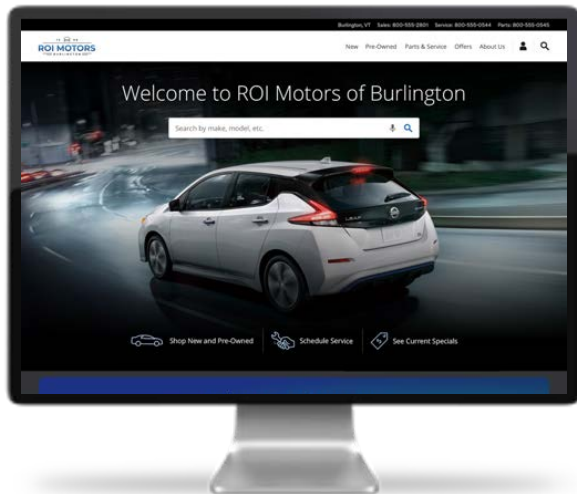
The UX Playbook is a set of **data-informed recommendations** aimed at providing a **positive experience** for the dealership website visitor.

What is “data” in UX?



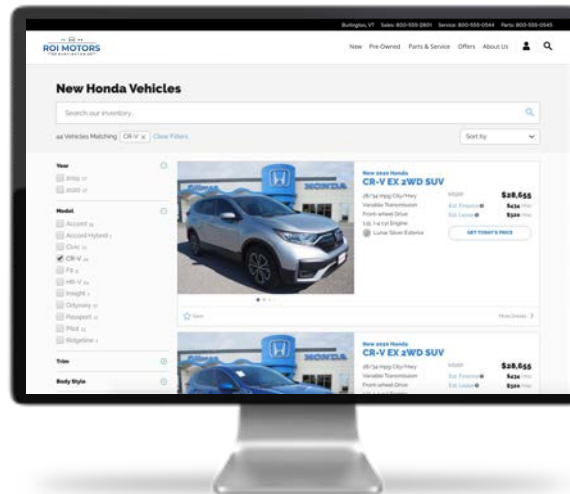
Areas of Focus: Shopper Workflow

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



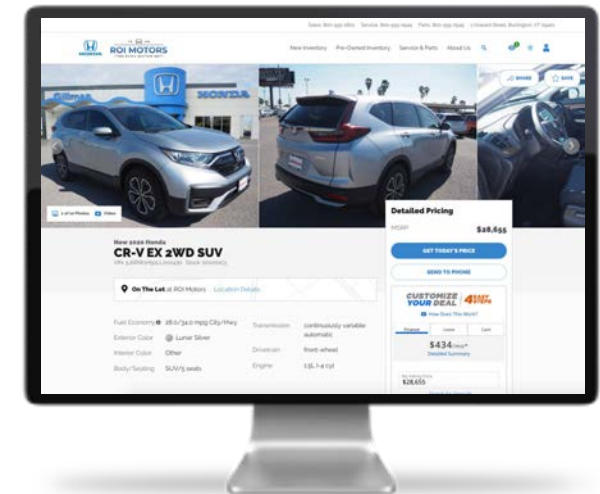
Homepage

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

Site-wide Recommendations

Common Question

What navigation performs the best?

A top performing navigation helps visitors find the specific information they need as quickly and directly as possible. After testing a variety of navigation structures, we found the following structure to perform the best for speed and directness. We recommend using it as a starting point for creating your site's navigation.

New	Pre-owned	Finance	Service & Parts	About Us
New Vehicle Inventory	Pre-owned Inventory	Value Your Trade-in	Service	About Us
Specials	Certified Pre-owned Inventory	Finance and Lease Center	Schedule Service Appointment	Contact and Directions
Manufacturer Offers	Specials	Finance Application	Service Center	Meet Our Team
Model Lineup			Specials	Careers
			Parts	
			Parts Center	
			Specials	

Recommendation

Be descriptive, specific, and concise when naming navigation categories and links.



New

- New Inventory
- Featured Vehicles
- New Vehicles
- Specials
- Incentives
- Showroom
- Find Your Car
- Model Research
- Model Comparisons



New

- New Vehicle Inventory
- Specials
- Manufacturer Offers
- Model Lineup

*Won't I see "New Vehicles" under "New Inventory" too?
What's the difference between "Specials" and "Incentives"?
What's "Showroom"? The store lobby? Amenities?
Is "Model Comparisons" the same as "Model Research"?
Doesn't "New Inventory" help me "Find Your Car"?*

Rationale

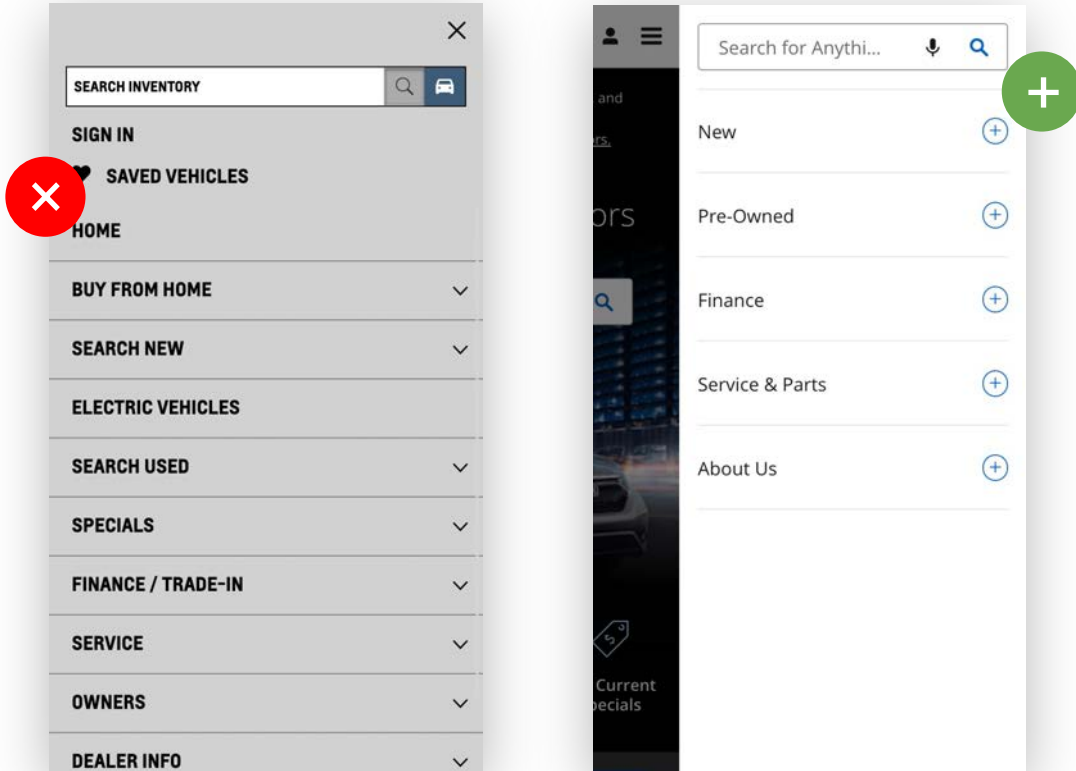
Header navigation offers important wayfinding paths for visitors. Of non-bouncing visitors, **51% of desktop visitors and 25% of mobile visitors engage the header.**

A navigation item's name should clarify, in the most efficient way possible, a visitor's expectations about what they will see when visiting the item. Furthermore, it is important to review *all* navigation items when naming. Similarly named items can create confusion and indecision in the visitor's mind.

Source: Dealership Navigation Study. October 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Reduce the number of top level navigation items.



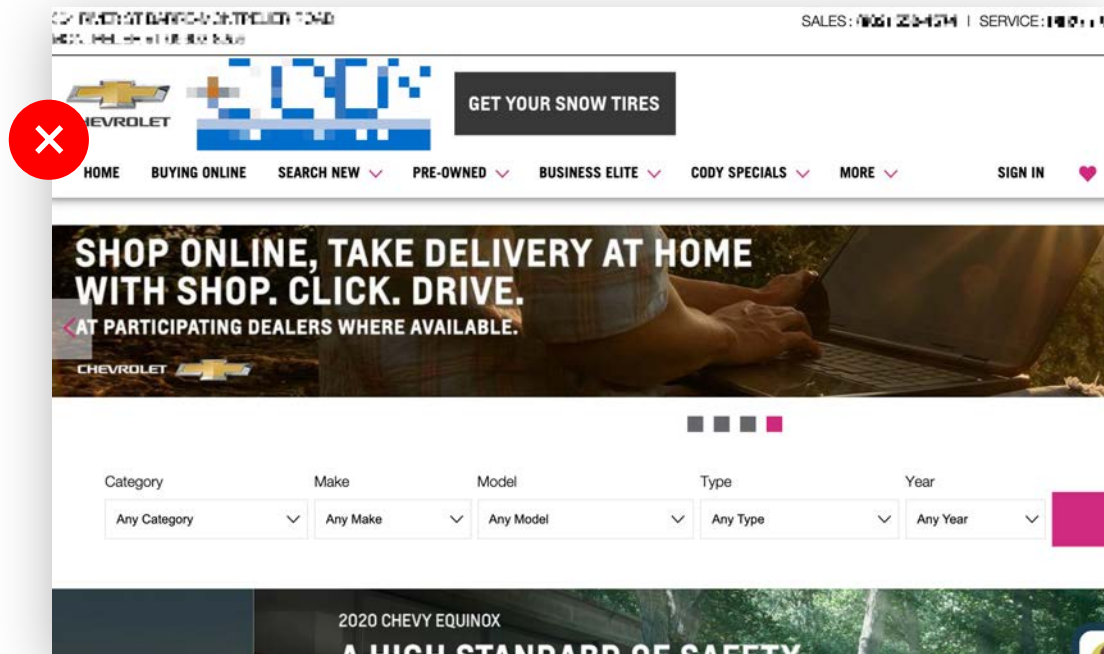
Rationale

It is important to group related content into categories, any categories that cannot be grouped together are good candidates for top level navigation. For example, links for service and links for parts are related enough to include in one “Service & Parts” top level navigation item, whereas finance links could apply to both new inventory and pre-owned inventory and should be included in a separate top level navigation item for “Finance”.

Creating less top-level categories allows visitors to quickly scan and locate the category containing content relevant to their task.

Recommendation

Do not include a home link in navigation.



Rationale

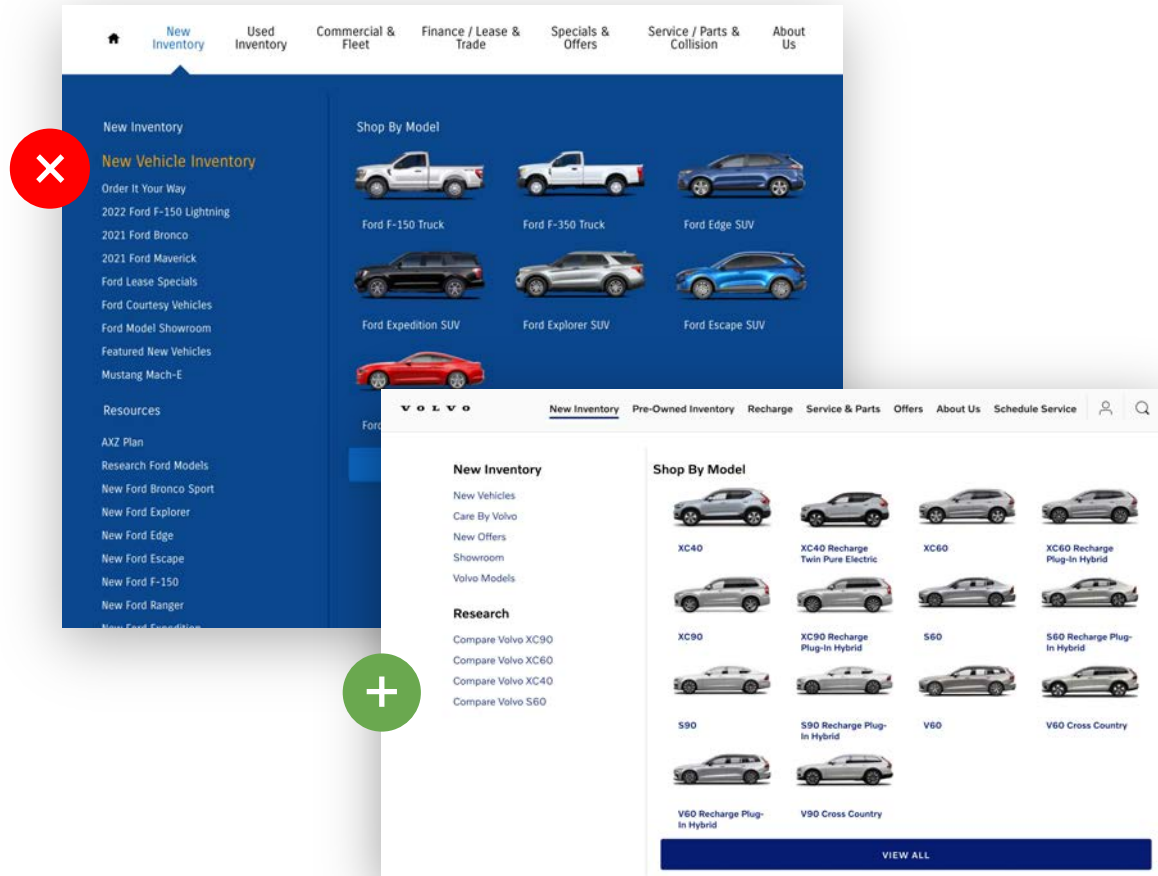
Previous research indicated that a “Home” link or icon in the navigation offered visitors a clear way back to the homepage of the website.

Recently completed research shows that this is no longer the case. **A/B testing of navigation both with and without a home link showed no significant change in visitor behavior.** Instead of using the home link in the navigation, visitors used the brand logo to navigate to the homepage, a common pattern on many other websites today.

Source: Home Icon Suppression Test. August 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Avoid long lists of links, instead separate links into categories.



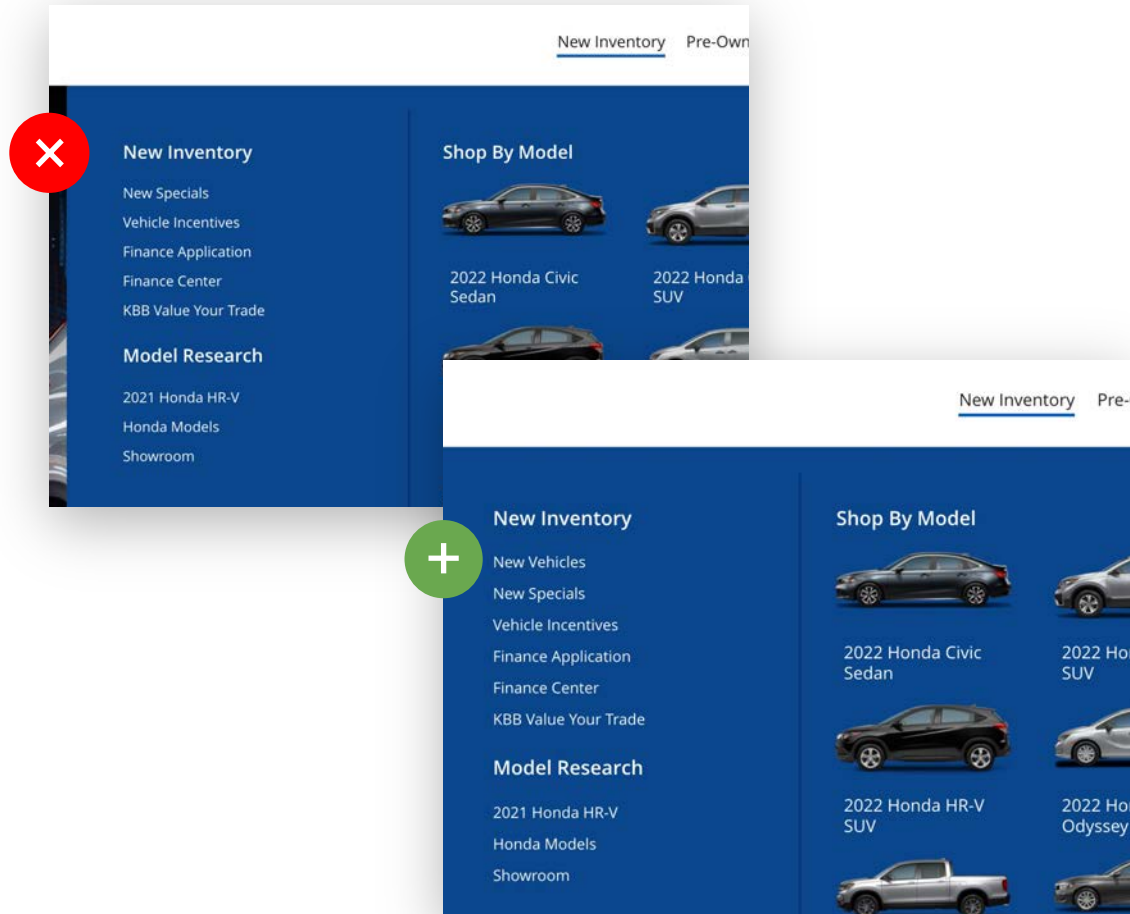
Rationale

Long lists of links take visitors time to read and process. Often long lists can be grouped into sub-categories. Categorizing links improves visitor processing time by enabling them to scan the category headings before scanning the links themselves. Once a heading related to the content they're looking for is found, they can read through the links within the category.

Source: [How Chunking Helps Content Processing](#) by Kate Moran. March 2016. Nielsen Norman Group.
Source: [Dealership Navigation Study](#). October 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Do not link category names.



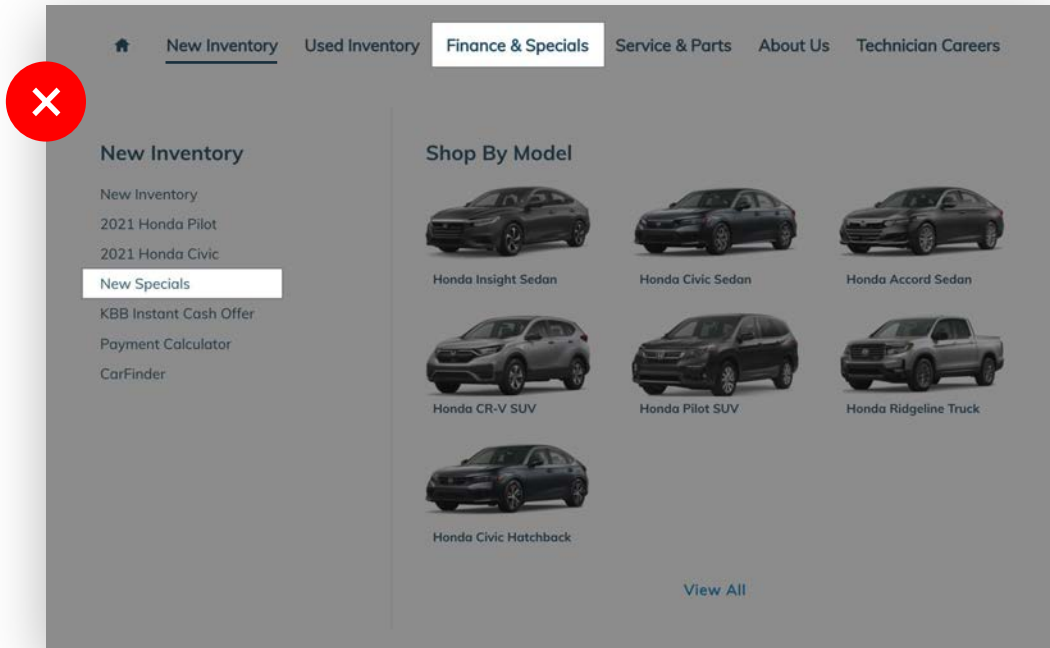
Rationale

Though it is technically possible for categories to link directly to content, visitors often perceive categories as non-interactive and can be confused when they cannot find a specific link for the content *within* the category. For example, a “New Inventory” category should not link directly to inventory, instead the category should contain a separate “New Vehicles” or “New Vehicle Inventory” link within it.

Source: Dealership Navigation Study. October 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Remove duplicate links in the navigation.



Rationale

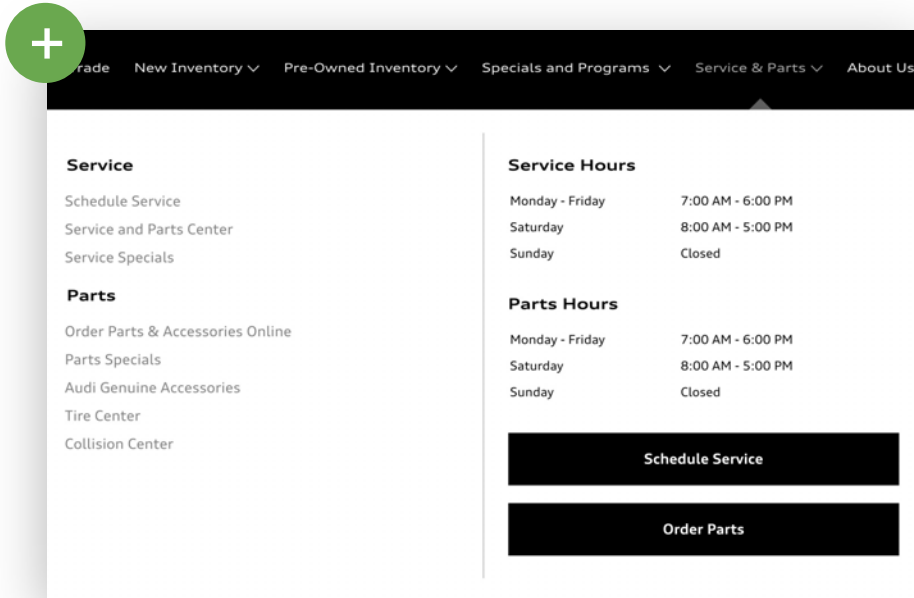
When the navigation contains duplicate links in different categories visitors expressed some confusion about if the links went to the same content or if each link was different in some way. For example, when “New Vehicle Specials” was under the “New Inventory” and “Specials” categories in the navigation, many shoppers said they’d click both “New Vehicle Specials” links to ensure they weren’t missing out on a deal.

We see better performance in visitors finding content when links are only in one category. For example, remove the “Specials” category and just including “New Vehicle Specials” under the “New Inventory” category.

Source: Dealership Navigation Study. October 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Use a “mega dropdown” or “mega menu” on desktop.



Rationale

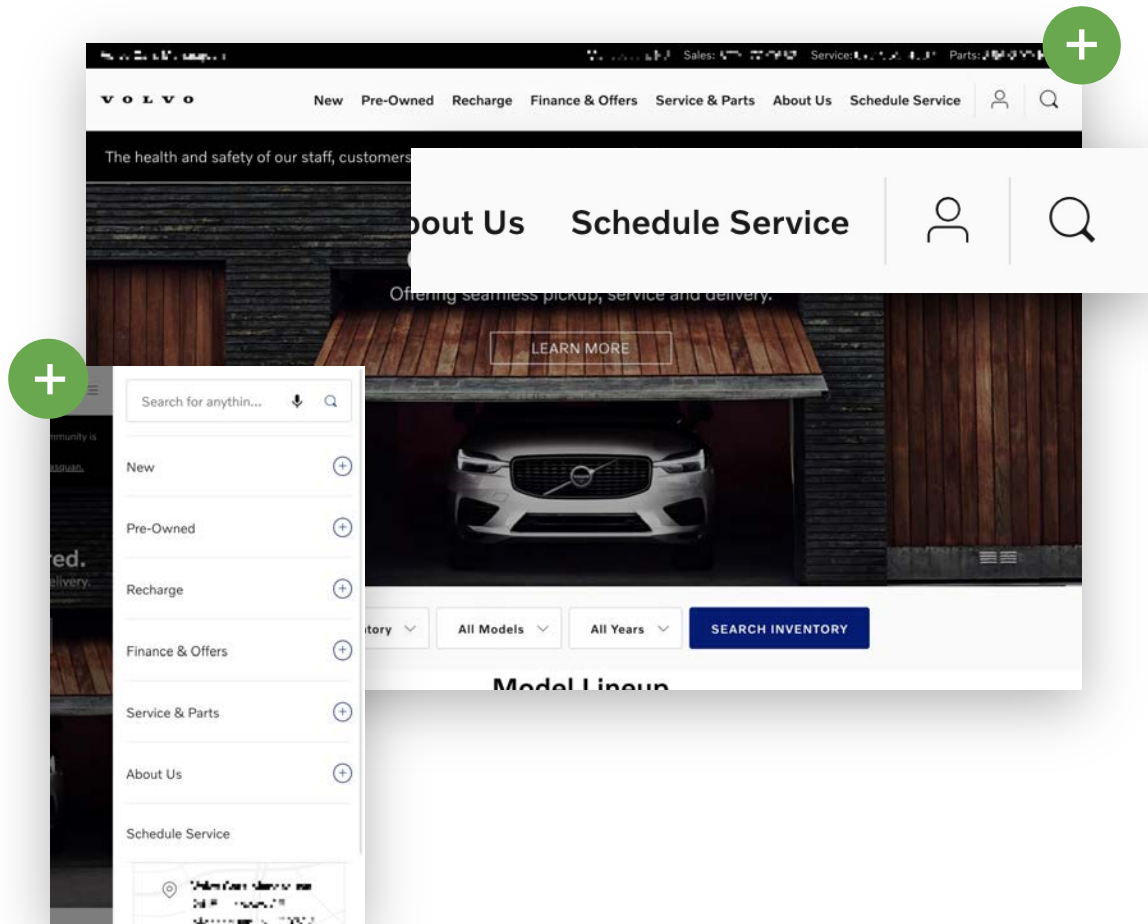
Navigation dropdowns that present a large, multi-column container on desktop are often referred to as “mega menus”. These dropdowns offer several advantages over traditional one-column dropdown menus:

- Allow for use of helpful visuals. For example, featuring model imagery under “New Inventory” to link to inventory for popular models.
- Can include supplemental content to answer quick questions. For example, showing service department hours under “Service & Parts”.
- Allow for categorization of types of navigation links to create a more scannable hierarchy. For example, a category for “Service” containing links to all service pages and a separate category for “Parts” containing links to all parts pages both within the same “Service & Parts” dropdown.

Source: [Mega Menus Work Well](#) by Jakob Nielsen and Angie Li. March 2017. Nielsen Norman Group.

Recommendation

Include free-text search in the site header.



Rationale

Visitors appreciate having search in the header as a fallback when they can't find content from the navigation or as a quick way to bypass navigation completely.

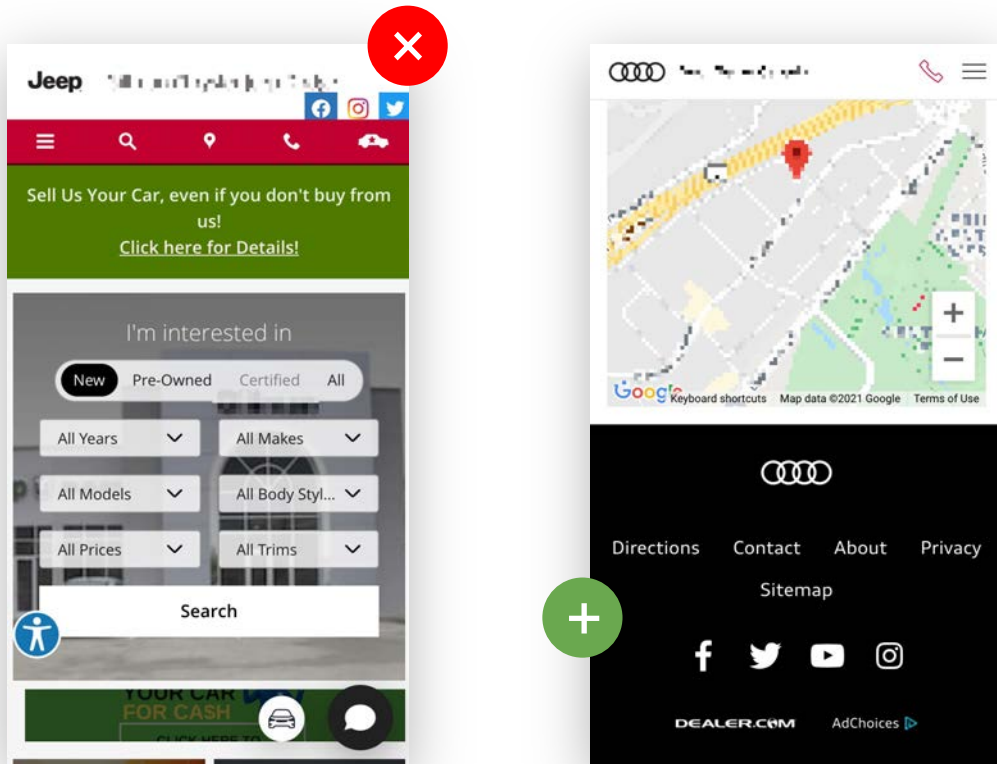
2.9% of non-bouncing visits engage with free-text search in the header.

Though most searches are for inventory (make/model) it is important for the search to return results for all content on the site as some visitors seek information not related to inventory, such as contact information, directions, scheduling service, jobs, etc.

Source: Free-text Search Engagement Ad-hoc Analysis. October 2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Include social media links in the site footer.



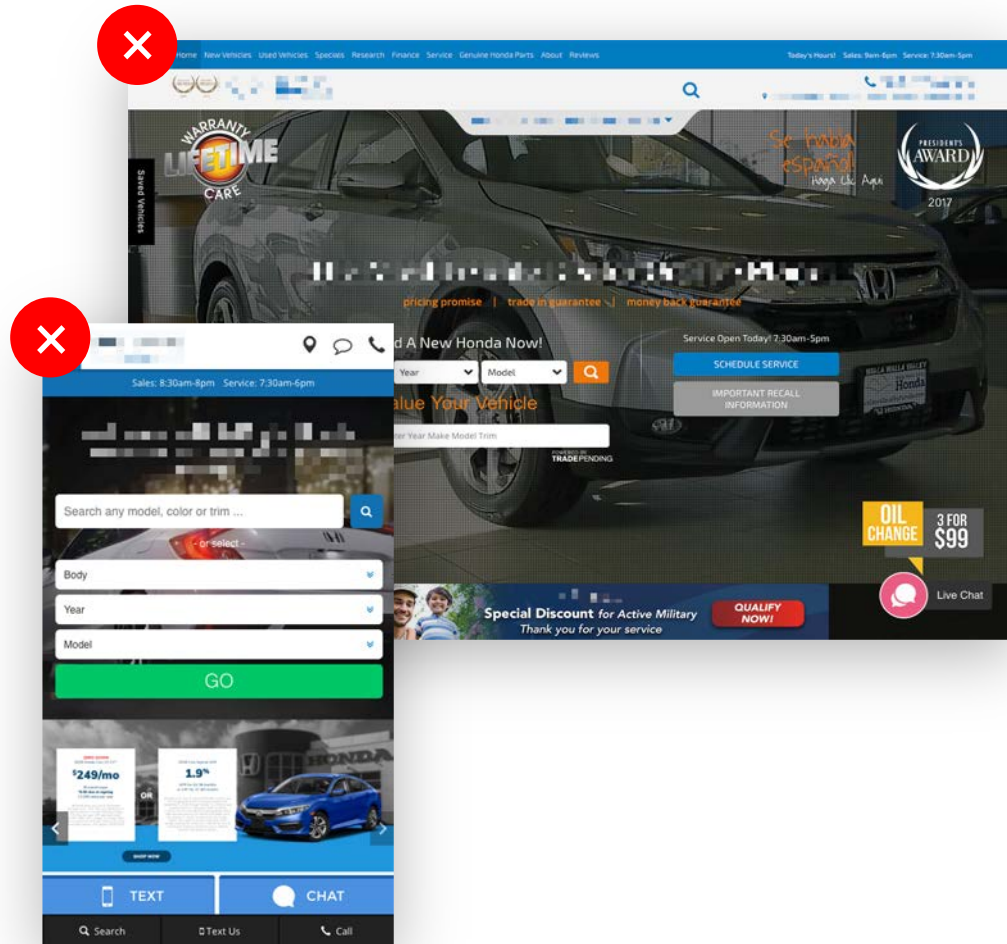
Rationale

Though many visitors do not scroll far enough to see the footer, **visitors will often intentionally scroll to the footer to find content such as contact information and links to social media sites.**

Adding social media links to the header is not recommended as visitors do not expect to find that information in the header and doing so often increases clutter, overwhelming the visitor.

Source: [Footers 101: Design Patterns and When to Use Each](#) by Therese Fressenden. February 2019. Nielsen Norman Group.

Negative Impact of Clutter



Brand Impact

Pages that feature a handful of calls to action, multiple sections of photos or video (including backgrounds), and many blocks of text within the screen at one time were regarded as overwhelming and cluttered. **Dealerships featuring cluttered pages were perceived as unprofessional and ranked lower in comparison to dealers with more organized, clean pages.**

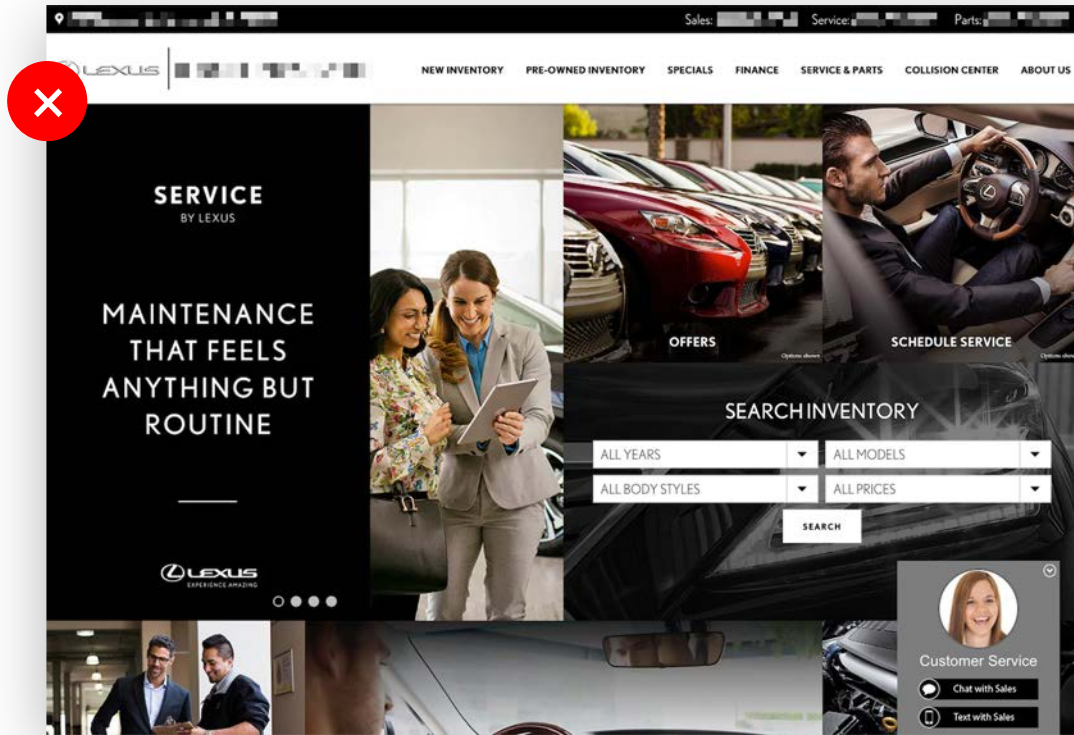
Source: Homepage Usability Studies. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Voice of the Customer

"[The site] seems like it's old school and cluttered. Not a clean look at all. That would tell me the dealer is not really in touch with what the customer is looking for as far giving a message that this dealer has their act together."

- Homepage Study Participant

Negative Impact of Clutter



Behavior

On cluttered pages, visitors will often retreat to familiar places, such as the header navigation, to find content rather than attempt to traverse the clutter.

In a case study comparing homepage designs, cluttered homepages that featured a handful of calls to action, multiple sections of photos or video, and many blocks of text within the browser at one time saw *low* engagement with page content, roughly 10% click through, and *high* engagement with header navigation, ~90% click through. For comparison, **less cluttered homepages saw engagement with page content as high as 70% click through.**

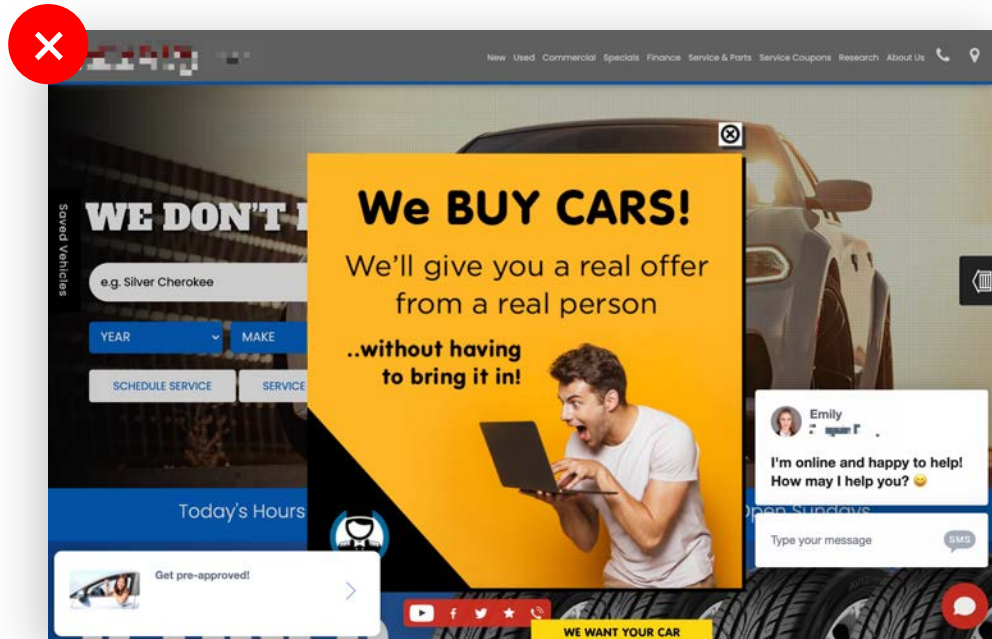
Source: Homepage Clickpath Analysis. Q3-Q4 2018. Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Remove unsolicited popups.

Rationale

In a survey of over 880 dealership website visitors, **16% of negative feedback received regarded unsolicited popups, by far the #1 negative feedback item.** Unsolicited popups are any element of the page that appears without the visitor first interacting with the element. This distracts visitors from what they are currently looking at on the page. Examples include windows that appear over the website, chat messages (“How can I help today?”), and coupons that slide out from the edge of the browser window. It is important to note that visitors appreciate having a way to chat with the dealer, but they want to choose to interact with the chat on their own terms when the time is right. The reaction can be so negative that some visitors surveyed said they would leave the site because of the popups.

Source: Ongoing Website User Experience Survey, 2020-2021. Dealer.com User Experience Team.



Remove unsolicited popups.



Voice of the Customer

“My complaint is that damn chat crap. I cannot look at what I am interested in because the chat crap keeps popping up in the middle of the truck I am looking at. If I close it once that should tell you I don't want to chat . It is infuriating. So if I can't look at trucks uninterrupted on your site why would I go to your lot? Here is a clue - I WON'T”

- 2021 Dealer.com Website User Experience Survey Response



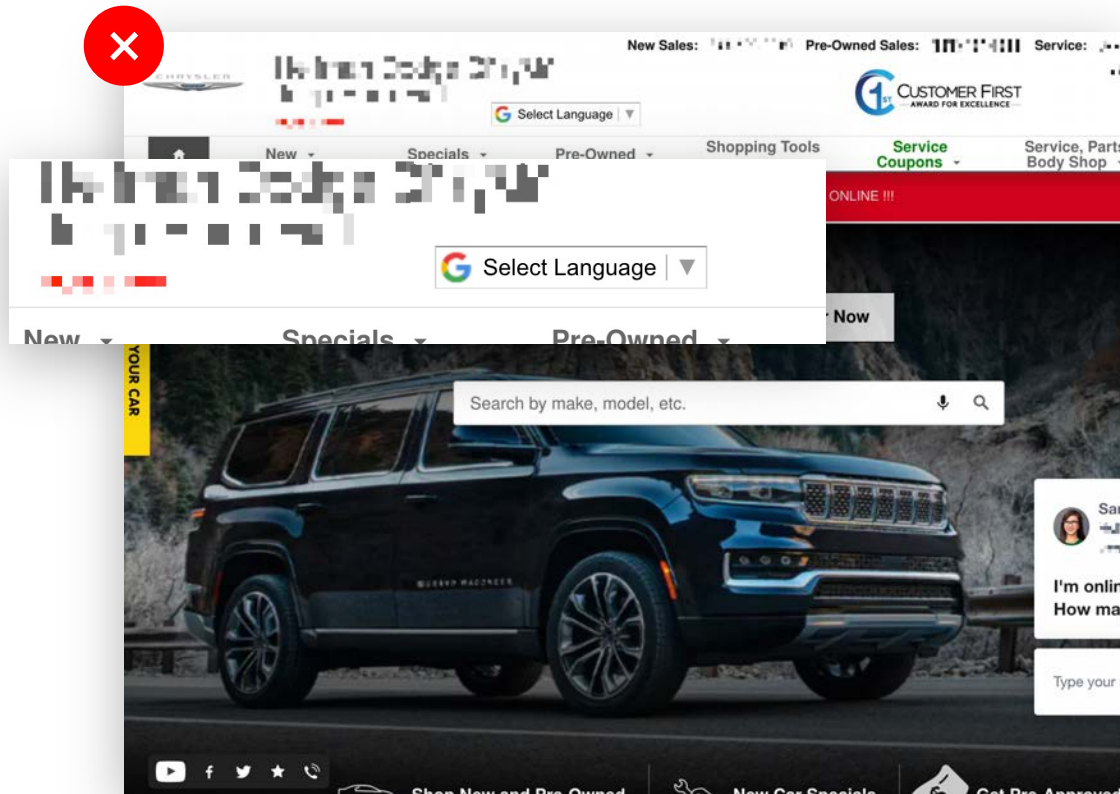
Voice of the Customer

“Every other dealer has constant annoying pop-ups every time a page is loaded of an online sales assistant. It's incredibly frustrating to the point where I often leave the dealer's site. I haven't experienced that with your site which is why I've been able to shop your site and now plan a visit”

- 2021 Dealer.com Website User Experience Survey Response

Recommendation

Remove Google Translate.

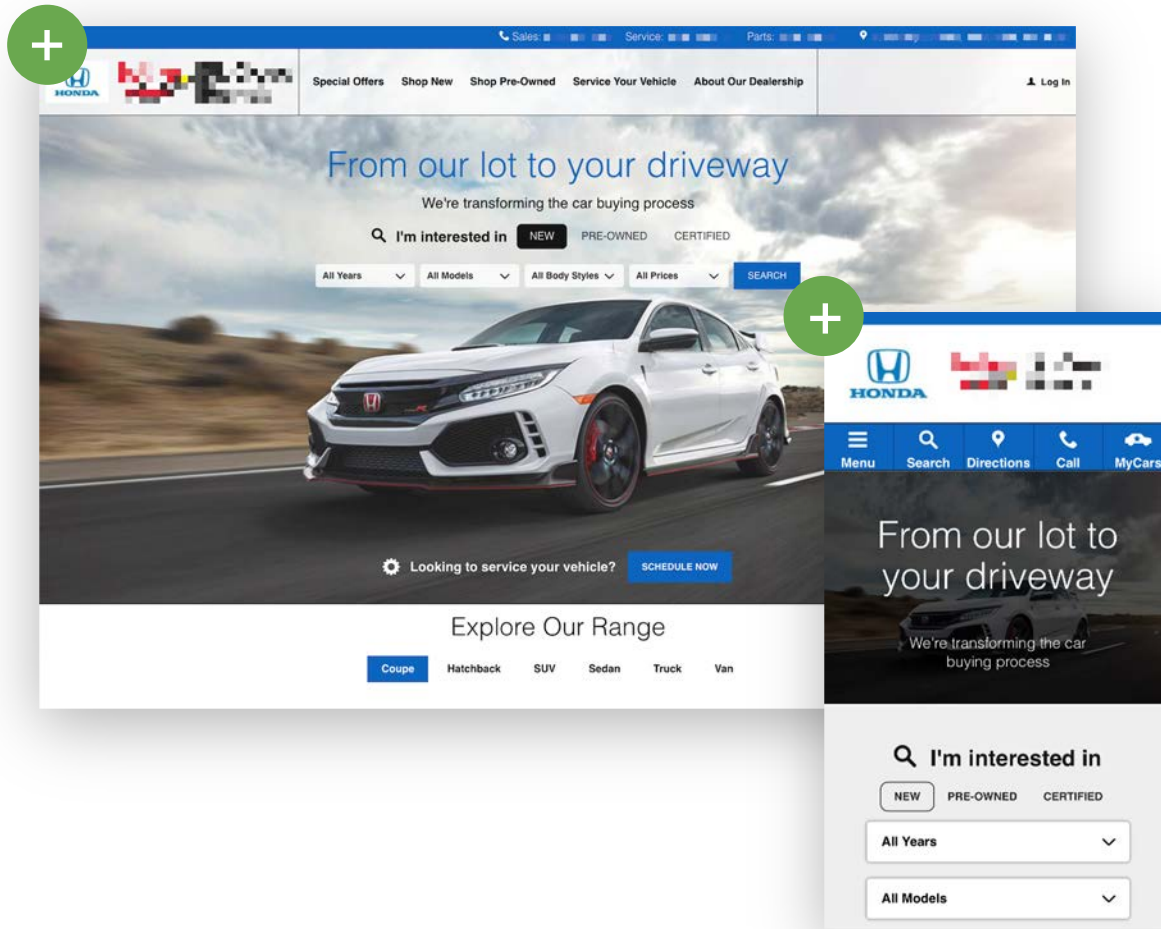


Rationale

Google Translate's Website Translator tool provided visitors with the option to translate the webpage to any language they prefer. This tool is often added to the header of websites, creating clutter and brand inconsistency. Fortunately, many modern web browsers include native support for page translation, creating a better experience without adding clutter. Due to native browser support, Google has decided to discontinue support for the Google Translate Website Translator tool.

Recommendation

Don't crowd the screen.



Rationale

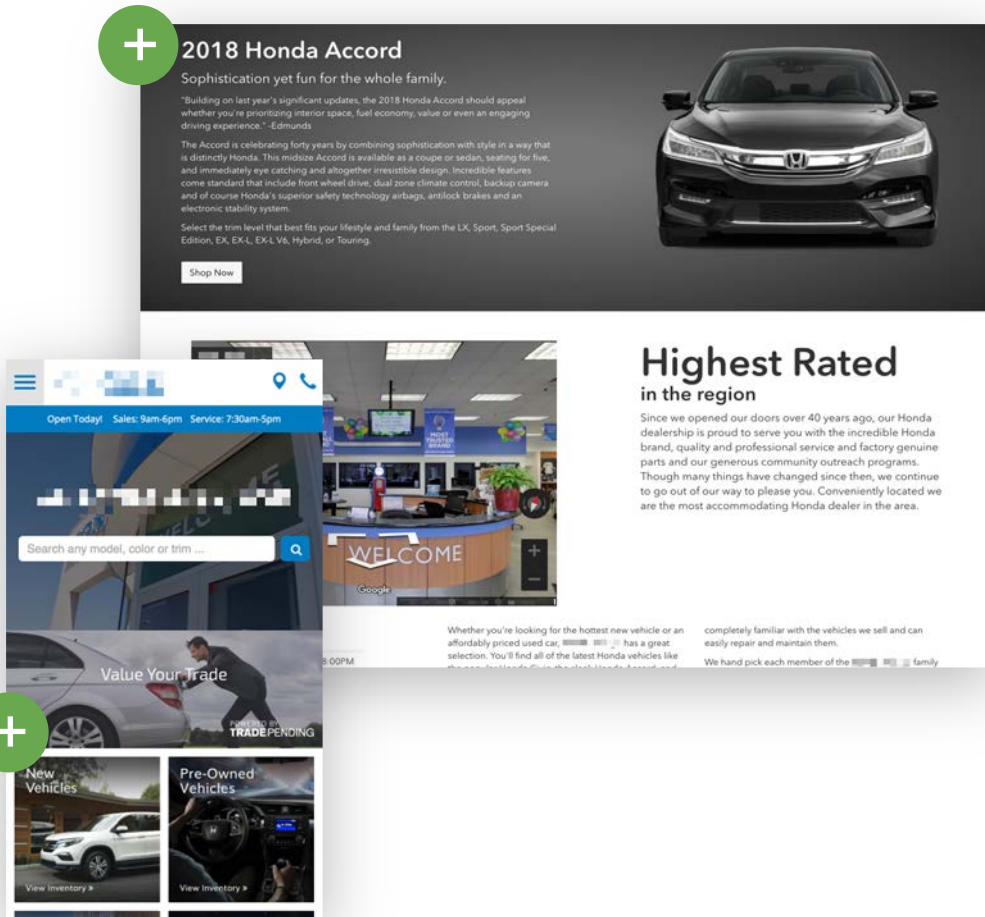
Reducing the number of calls to action, background photos, and blocks of text on screen at one time improves comprehension. **Dealerships with more organized, cleaner homepages were perceived as modern and professional.**

Be sure to curate third party integrations, many of which add buttons, pop ups, toolbars, and/or tabs to the page, increasing the likelihood of clutter.

Source: Homepage Case Study, October 2018, Dealer.com User Experience Team.

Recommendation

Use consistent, on-brand styles.



Rationale

Inconsistent styling can also lead to clutter. We recommend limiting font selection to no more than 2-3 fonts (this also helps with performance), use no more than 10 different font sizes, use similar sizes for similar content, and choose a small palette of colors appropriate for your brand.

Dealerships with consistent font, color, and spacing choices were perceived as modern and professional.

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

Voice of the Customer

“It was a clean site. It was easy to read everything. Everything was organized and laid out and nicely spaced. It was easy to concentrate and take in the information on the page.”

- Homepage Study Participant

Site-wide Recommendations

Recommendation	Impact	Metric of Interest
Be descriptive, specific, and concise when naming navigation categories and links.	High	Visit time
Reduce the number of top level navigation items.	High	Visit time
Do not include a home link in navigation.	Medium	Visit time
Avoid long lists of links, instead separate links into categories.	High	Visit time
Do not link category names.	Low	Visit time
Remove duplicate links in the navigation.	Medium	Visit time
Use a “mega dropdown” or “mega menu” on desktop.	Medium	Visit time
Include free-text search in the site header.	Medium	Visit time
Include social media links in the site footer.	Medium	Visit time, brand perception
Remove unsolicited popups.	High	Brand perception, visit time, bounce rate
Remove Google Translate.	Low	Brand perception, visit time, bounce rate
Don't crowd the screen.	High	Brand perception, visit time, bounce rate
Use consistent, on-brand styles.	High	Brand perception

Thank You

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