BEYOND THE REVEAL

RESEARCH SYNTHESIS \\ VOLUME 02

RETHINKING PRODUCT LAUNCHES FOR FASTER SALES MOMENTUM

ELEMENT THREE
TRADER INTERACTIVE
RV Trader
STATISTICAL SURVEYS

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ELEMENT THREE
TRADER INTERACTIVE

LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS

In dealer-distributed industries, a product launch is one of the most important bets an OEM can make. It represents years of development, millions of dollars in investment, and countless hours of planning. Yet, too often, the excitement of a launch doesn't translate quickly into sales momentum.

That's what led us to take on this research. Together, Element Three and Trader Interactive set out to explore why new products and model years so often peak long after they're announced—and what could be done differently.

We approached the question from multiple angles: consumer surveys, OEM interviews, marketplace activity, and retail sales data. What we found confirmed some long-held beliefs, but it also uncovered friction points that are less obvious. This report isn't meant to be the final word. Instead, it's a synthesis of what we observed and an invitation to continue the conversation. We hope it helps OEMs, dealers, and their partners think differently about launches—not as isolated events, but as the beginning of a longer journey to build adoption, brand equity, and stronger dealer relationships.

Thank you for reading. We look forward to what comes next.

Kyler Mason
President
Element Three

Jim Ranson
Chief Growth Officer
Trader Interactive

Two partners with industry expertise and a drive to better understand the market.

Element Three partners with OEMs and dealers to design and execute product launches across B2B2X industries.

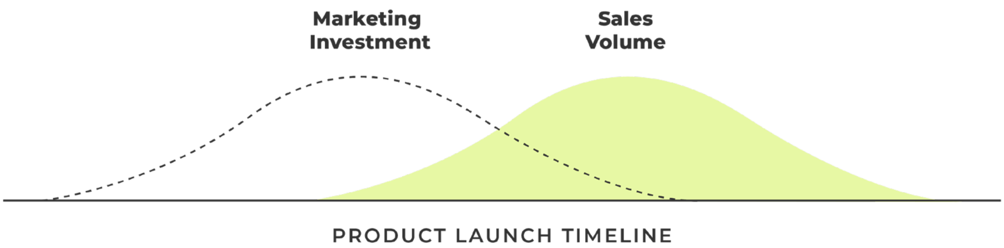
Trader Interactive operates the leading consumer marketplaces in RV, marine, and powersports and provides sales intelligence through Statistical Surveys, Inc. (SSI).

By combining these vantage points, we could see the issue from both ends of the value chain: how OEMs plan launches, how consumers actually shop, what dealers list, and what sells.
Our primary focus was consumer-facing categories where lifestyle purchases dominate, with commercial vehicles referenced as comparison points.

This isn't a final answer. But it's a clearer picture of why launch campaigns don't create more velocity—and what might be done to accelerate results.

THE CORE QUESTION

If launches demand so much investment, why don’t they deliver faster sales results?



In B2B2X industries—where OEMs rely on dealers to bring products to market—launches represent one of the largest investments a brand makes. Years of development and millions of dollars go into creating and unveiling new products. The expectation: generate demand quickly and see sales momentum build right away.

The reality is slower. In the consumer-facing categories we studied most closely—RVs, boats, motorcycles, and powersports—data from Statistical Surveys Inc. (SSI) show that new products and model years rarely peak in their first quarters. Instead, momentum builds gradually, often reaching its high point only once the next model year is already being sold. Dealers are left balancing older inventory against new arrivals, while OEMs move on to planning the next cycle.

The Business Impact

Part of the lag is structural: development runs up to reveal dates, and production and delivery take time. But even after inventory is widely available, peaks often come later than expected. That signals other friction points are at play—ones that awareness alone cannot overcome.

The result is strain across the value chain:

- OEMs wait longer to see returns on their launch investments
- Dealers juggle conflicting sales priorities
- Consumers encounter a buying experience that feels out of sync with how they actually research and shop

Our Research Focus

To explore it, we focused on the consumer-facing side of B2B2X—industries where lifestyle and discretionary purchases dominate—while using commercial vehicles as comparison points. What emerged was a clearer view of why launches so often fail to accelerate adoption, and where OEMs and dealers might unlock faster returns.

Our research approach:

To understand why launches don't always deliver faster sales results, we brought together multiple perspectives. Our goal wasn't to prove a single theory but to see what emerged when consumer behavior, OEM perspectives, marketplace activity, and sales data were analyzed side by side.

Our Research Drew From:

- 518-person consumer survey on purchase experience
- OEM interviews across five industries
- Marketplace activity from RV Trader, Boatmart, Cycle Trader, and others
- Statistical Surveys Inc. (SSI) RV retail sales data by product and model year
- Past Trader Interactive research on consumer demographics and shopping behavior
- Decades of experience supporting B2B2X OEMs in RV, marine, motorcycles, and powersports

This mix gave us a directional but rich picture of where launch investments connect and where friction slows adoption.

Channel partners are brought into product launches too late by OEMs.

Training and marketing materials do not reach dealers far enough in advance of new product unveiling to the market.

Dealers Need Product Details Sooner

OEM interviews revealed that final product details are often not final until weeks—or even days—before a reveal. According to one participant:

"We're still finishing brochures after the press release goes live."

In RV especially, leaders admitted that features and configurations sometimes continue to shift even after announcement, meaning the unit promoted isn't always the one that arrives at dealers.

This creates a breakdown at the very handoff point where creating launch attention should flow directly into sales and marketing. Dealers don't have the clarity or materials they need to sell confidently, and marketing teams hesitate to push aggressively when specs may still change.

Training also lags: one OEM acknowledged that "we roll it out, but not everyone at the dealer level has seen it or been trained before the first customers walk in." That delay means the staff most responsible for converting awareness into sales often aren't equipped to do so in the critical weeks after launch.

Inconsistency Creates Confusion

The cost of this gap could be high, because our consumer survey showed that features and technology are the number one factor that persuades buyers to purchase new instead of used. When those features are unclear, in flux, or communicated inconsistently, OEMs blunt the most powerful reason for a buyer to act on a launch. Instead of building momentum, the launch may create hesitation.

"People get overly cautious of sharing information so it doesn't get shared until it's too late, and the recipients don't have time to plan accordingly."

- OEM INTERVIEWEE

Create attention, THEN promote the product.

An alternate approach looks like a reveal moment that creates attention and transitions smoothly into promoting the product, with dealers already enabled to close a sale. This looks like:

1. Living marketing materials that can be updated quickly when product details shift, keeping dealers and buyers aligned
2. Phased dealer enablement that equips dealers with training, imagery, and positioning in advance—even if some details will be refined later
3. Promise-first storytelling that emphasizes the product's value or innovation themes, while leaving flexibility on features still in motion
4. Multi-phase launch campaigns that build on the promise-first story by building to features/tech promotion after details are finalized

Learn from Commercial Vehicles: Training Comes First

While consumer-facing categories like RV, marine, and powersports often struggle with dealer readiness, commercial OEMs described more structured launch practices.

Interviews highlighted:

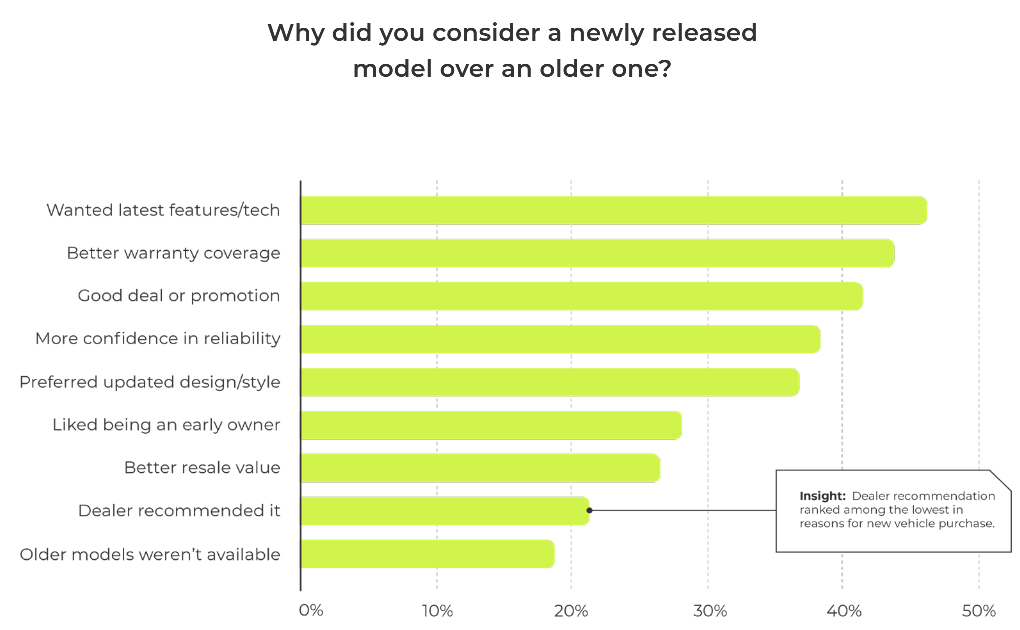
- Regionalized training summits before launch, where dealer reps are hands-on with the product before it's announced publicly
- Advance collateral and tools delivered to the channel so marketing and sales are aligned from day one
- A firm rule that training comes first, announcement second. One executive explained: "We don't announce until our dealer reps are trained, period. We take them through it first, then we go to market."

CONSUMER SURVEY INSIGHTS

Consumers care most about products and features.

Our consumer survey revealed that new technology and features is the primary reason they select a new vehicle as opposed to used—put up against alternative reasons such as warranty, price, and dealer recommendation. This fact further reinforces that manufacturers need to sequence their training and marketing materials well so that buyers aren't left with a disjointed dealer experience where features are misrepresented or not represented at all.

Perhaps surprisingly, the dealer's product recommendation was near the bottom of the list for what influenced buyers' purchase decisions.



New product marketing initiatives aren't aligned with the buyer's extended journey to purchase.

OEMs often build launch campaigns around a three-month timeline—or less—while the research period for buyers commonly extends a year or more.

Don't Expect Buyers to Leap at a New Product Immediately

Most buyers spend six months to a year moving through stages of learning, comparing, and validating—often revisiting OEM sites, dealer sites, marketplaces, and shows multiple times. One respondent summed it up:

"I knew I wanted a fifth wheel, but I looked at listings and reviews for almost a year before deciding."

New Products Don't Get the Reinforcement They Need

OEM interviews painted the opposite picture of launch practice. Marketing activity tends to concentrate around a reveal moment—a dealer meeting, industry show, or PR push—followed by a few weeks of ads. After that, attention shifts back to promoting the brand and thinking about the next model year. As one executive put it:

"We're great at the reveal, but we don't stay in-market with the product."

SSI sales data confirmed the impact of this misalignment: new model year releases of existing products rarely hit their peak sales until the following year, meaning the initial launch window closes long before most buyers are ready to act.

Longer, Multiphase Campaigns Align Better with Shopping Practices

A better way to approach this means launch campaigns that don't just create a spike at reveal but remain visible much longer. Manufacturers wouldn't risk spending less time during development ensuring a product will meet consumer demand—and they shouldn't spend so little time telling those people the product is out there waiting for them to buy.

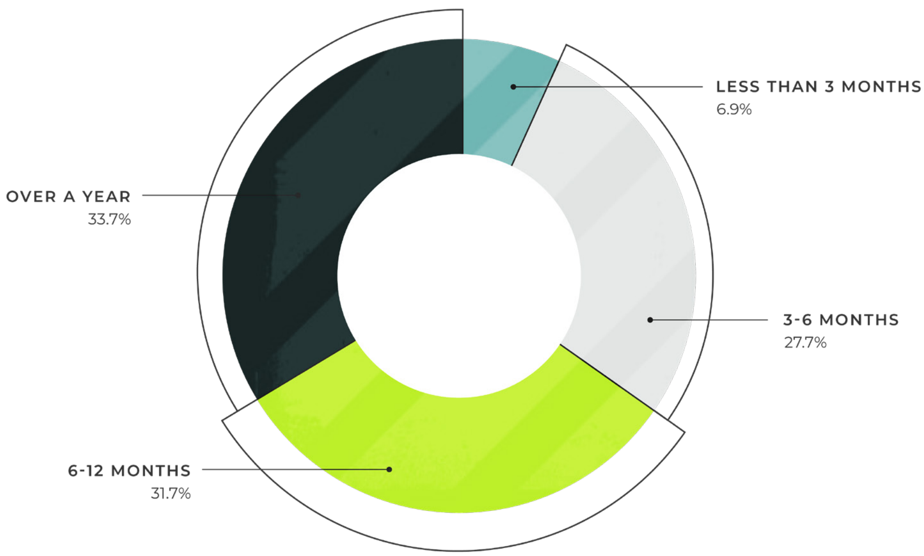
This can come to life through:

1. Multiphase launch campaigns that extend across the research timeline, with teaser, reveal, and sustain activity
2. Creating additional “spikes” in promotion over the course of the new product’s launch years—around important industry events, cultural moments, and more
3. Better shopping tools like comparison content, explainer videos, and dealer-ready materials that remain useful months after reveal
4. Product advertising in marketplaces like RV Trader and Boatmart, alongside vehicle listings, to maximize visibility in the places where we know consumers are already doing their research

The consideration phase can last six months—or more.

The data reveals an extended consideration period that defines the buying journey—where two thirds of consumers spend over six months researching and one third of them over a year. If product-specific messages don't extend into this research period for buyers and integrate into evergreen campaigns, a huge opportunity to accelerate purchases is being left on the table.

How long did you research before making your vehicle purchase?



FRICTION POINT 3

New products land in a crowded ecosystem of both competitors and used inventory from the same OEM.

The majority of consumers start their research with used inventory—as many as 60%—and they aren't receiving the right messages and dealer resources to move them toward a new unit.

Buyers Think Used Units Are the Right Way In

More than 60% of RV and powersports shoppers begin their search with used inventory.

This isn't a fallback after they evaluate new products—it's a default position that buying used is a better entry point. One respondent summed it up:

"You get more for your money and avoid the mystery of first-year problems."

On Trader Interactive's marketplaces, the pattern was similar: new units represent nearly two-thirds of listings, but used models generate more than 70% of user impressions.

SSI sales data confirmed another headwind: prior model years often outsell the new release for several quarters. OEM interviews highlighted the dealer-side complexity this creates. Mixed-lot dealers must decide how to prioritize between the newest launch, older model years still on lots, and competitive products. Without strong incentives or clear product stories, many simply focus on what they know they can move fastest. As one OEM executive said:

"Every time we add a product line, it just steals from another."

> "Managing that inventory transition is always a challenge—never easy—and it's typically handled by price. The new product is always more expensive than the older product."
>
> - OEM INTERVIEWEE

Every product launch should strengthen—not cannibalize—your entire portfolio.

What does "better" look like? Launch marketing that anticipates the crowded ecosystem. New products need to be positioned not just against rival brands, but alongside their own lineup, prior model years, and used alternatives. Unless the product represents meaningful innovation for a broad segment of buyers, a launch alone won't expand market share—it will mostly reshuffle demand within it.

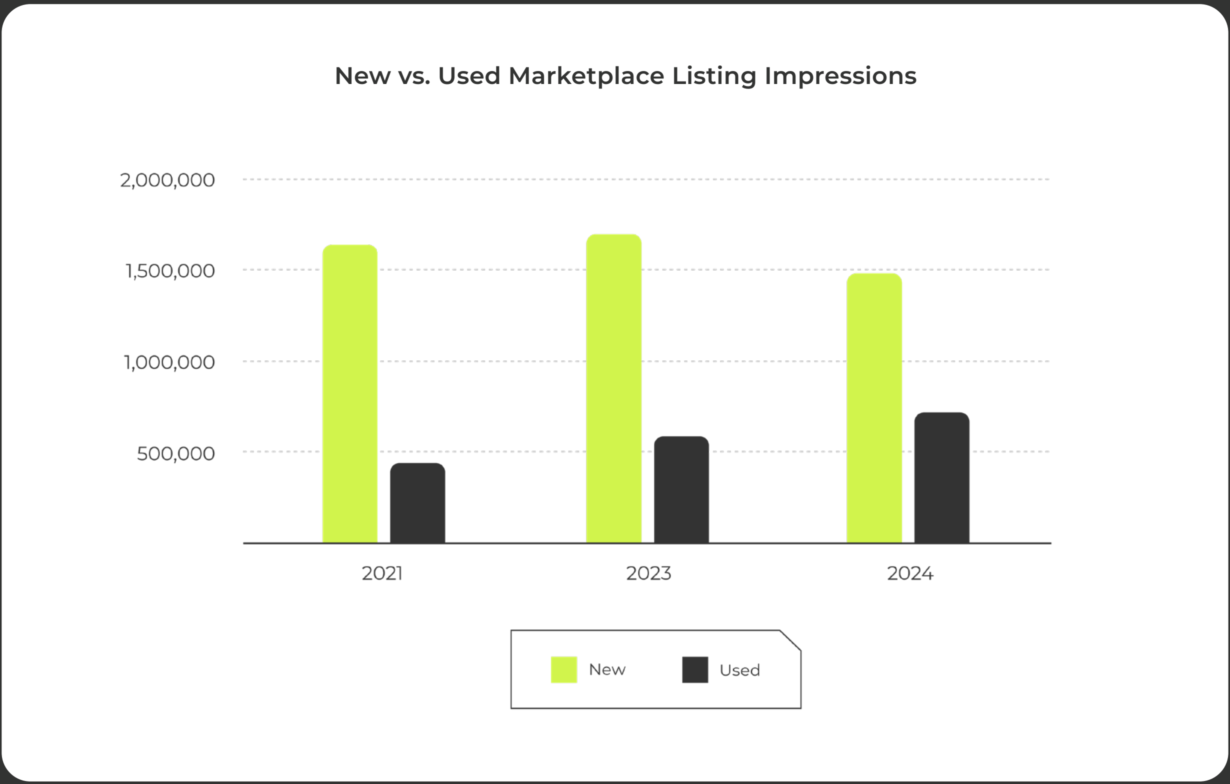
This can be combated by:

1. New vs. used messaging that highlights warranty, financing, and resale value as clear reasons to buy new now instead of defaulting to used
2. Enablement resources for dealers to position new vs. prior model years confidently, ensuring older inventory isn't sidelined or discounted unnecessarily
3. Portfolio-level positioning that ensures each new product is marketed in a way that reinforces the OEM's product family, rather than simply cannibalizing attention from sibling products
4. Inventory-focused co-marketing between OEMs and dealers that ensures the lot is always ready for the new units when they arrive—which can include regional promotion of inventory in online marketplaces such as RV Trader and Boatmart

The competition isn't just rival brands—it's used inventory too.

Data from Trader Interactive's marketplaces show how this dynamic plays out in real-world shopper behavior. While new units make up the majority of listings, used models consistently attract a disproportionate share of attention. From 2021 to 2024, impressions on used inventory have climbed steadily—closing the gap with new units even as OEMs increase their new product listings.

This imbalance underscores the challenge for manufacturers: even when new models are available and visible, consumer attention is still drawn toward used options. Launch marketing must therefore compete not only with rival brands, but with the gravitational pull of used inventory across the marketplace.



New product launches start slow and sometimes never get up to speed.

This research confirms what many in the industry already feel: new products often take too long to build momentum. Launches happen before the channel is ready, campaigns fade before buyers finish researching, and new units must fight for attention against used inventory and prior model years.

Product Launches Are Part of Year-round Product Marketing

Treat product launches as the beginning of product marketing, not a one-time event. The OEMs who will see faster returns on their launch investments will:

- Close the gap between announcement and enablement
- Sustain campaigns through the full buying cycle
- Better equip dealers to win in crowded ecosystems

But launches don't happen in isolation—they depend on dealers to carry them through. And dealers themselves are evolving. With unit sales margins tightening, many rely more heavily on service, financing, and accessories to sustain profitability. OEMs who understand and align with those economics in their launch and co-marketing plans will not only gain dealer support, but also ensure new products get prioritized on the lot.

Future Research Questions:

- How have dealers experienced product launches changing over time?
- How does moving into new product categories impact sales for legacy products?
- What other lessons from commercial vehicle launches might lifestyle B2B2X OEMs be able to apply to their own product marketing?

Adapt Your Launches to Your Environment

Product launches don't fail for lack of creativity or investment. They stall because they're not built for the real conditions of B2B2X industries. Adjust for those realities, and launches can work harder, faster, and longer.

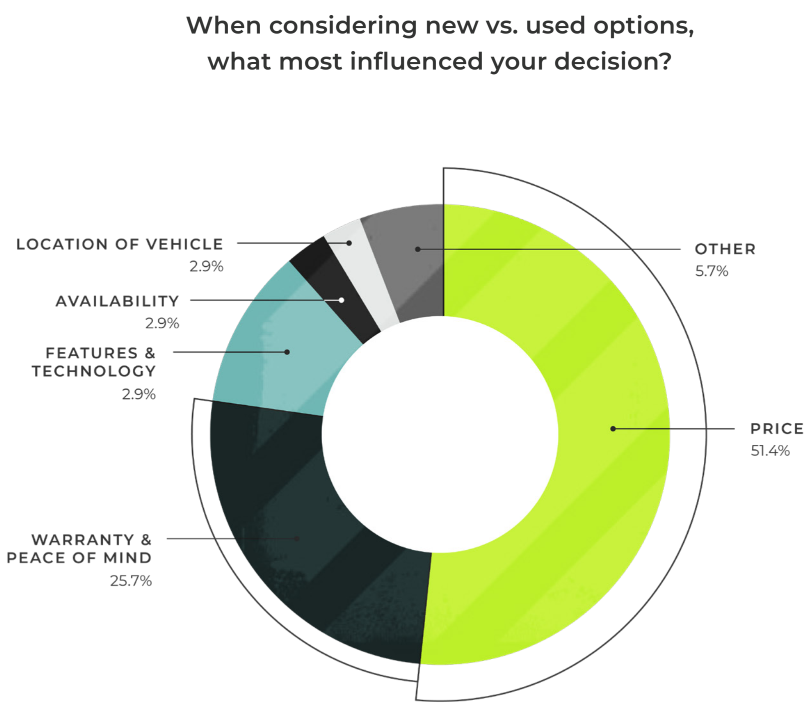
About the research partners:

Element Three is a full-service marketing agency that specializes in serving businesses that go to market through a dealer distribution network. With two decades working with manufacturers like Airstream, Boston Whaler, Newmar, Steelcase, and more, Element Three helps build brand power and move more inventory through services like product launches, dealer programs, technology implementation, and advertising campaigns.

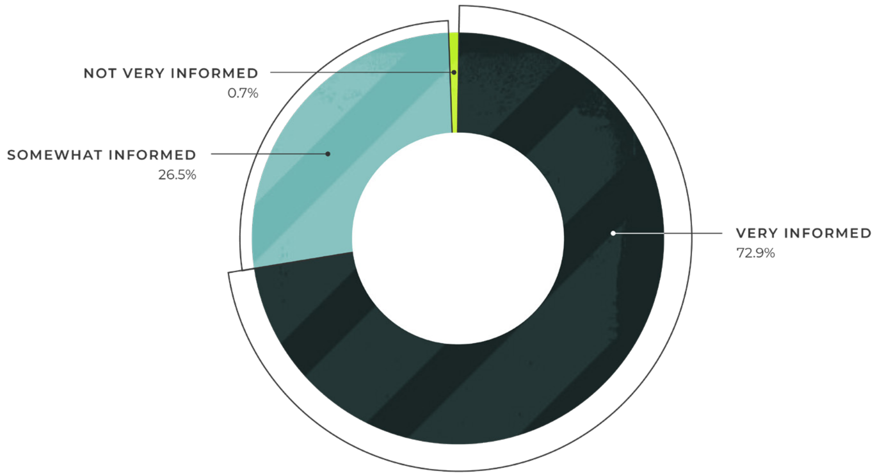
Trader Interactive is a leading provider of digital offerings including online advertising products serving the powersports, recreational vehicle, commercial truck, and equipment segments. They operate marketplaces including RV Trader, Cycle Trader, and Boatmart, as well Statistical Surveys, Inc. (SSI), who provides the most complete retail market share data available nationwide to OEMs, suppliers, finance companies, and dealers.

Additional consumer survey data:

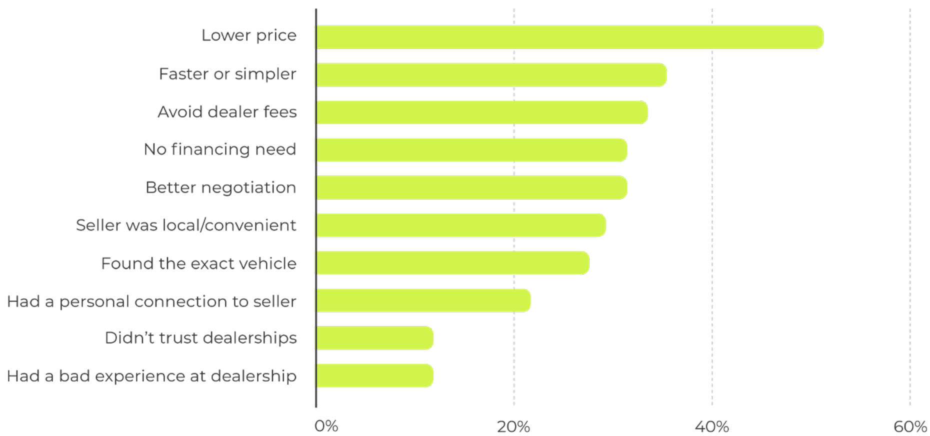
The following consumer insights reveal critical decision points that directly impact launch success and dealer relationships. This data exposes what drives new versus used decisions, buyer confidence gaps before dealership visits, and motivations for choosing private sellers over authorized dealers.



How informed did you feel before visiting a dealership for the product you wanted?



For consumers who purchased private versus a dealer: what motivated your decision to purchase from a private seller?



READY TO LAUNCH DIFFERENTLY?

Get in touch with our teams.

This research highlighted where product launches in B2B2X industries often stall—and where opportunities exist to accelerate results. If you'd like to explore how these findings apply to your business, we'd love to continue the conversation.

Start the conversation:

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