

AI Search Cites 0.8% of Dealership Inventory Pages

The A3 Brands Dealership AI Search Study · 661 US franchise dealerships (the best-reviewed dealer per brand per state) · 113,094 AI prompts · Google AI Overview, Google AI Mode, ChatGPT, Gemini

27x

an editorial page (buying guide, comparison, explainer) is more likely to be cited by an AI engine than a vehicle listing: 21.1% of 21,352 editorial pages cited vs 0.8% of 391,527 vehicle detail pages

89%

of dealerships publishing ≥ 10 pages of each type show the pattern on their own site (291 of 328; sign test $p = 5e-50$)

0 of 4

assumed signals predicted citation: technical AI-readiness (+0.068), Google star rating (-0.064), review volume (+0.001), website platform ($p = 0.0226$, not significant after Bonferroni)

+0.362

correlation between editorial pages published and AI citation, 95% CI [+0.284, +0.436], the only signal whose interval excludes zero

None

measurable difference between cited and uncited editorial pages on the same site across ten properties: median 905 vs 845 words, 14 vs 13 headings

98% · 6%

Google AI Overview cites a source in 98% of answers where a dealership appears and names the dealership in 6%; Gemini 61% · 51%

WHAT IT MEANS FOR A DEALERSHIP

Buyers research for hours before they shop (Cox Automotive, 2025 Car Buyer Journey Study: ~7 hours online vs under 3 with the selling dealer) and one in five already used an AI site or AI Overview. AI answers those early questions from research pages, not listings. The dealerships that get cited are the ones that published the answers.

Technical readiness is table stakes: 97.9% of audited dealerships are eligible for Google's AI features. Reviews did not predict citation but still decide which named store gets the call. A single blended "AI visibility score" hides the cite-vs-name split between engines.

METHOD, IN BRIEF

Sample chosen from Google review data before measurement, credibility-weighted. Headless-browser audit with fallback fetcher. SEMrush AI Visibility exports per prompt and engine, reported as rates. Bootstrap 95% CIs (10,000 resamples); permutation tests (20,000 shuffles), Bonferroni across 15 comparisons. Seeded and reproducible. Three earlier findings withdrawn as sampling artifacts. Association, not causation.

Disclosure. A3 Brands sells content and search work to dealerships; the method is public and the null results are published for that reason.

CITATION

A3 Brands. The Dealership AI Search Study. A3 Brands Research, August 2026. a3brands.com/ai-search-study