

Do today's car dealerships have a bumpy road ahead?

A staggering 85% of people feel that the traditional car dealership model needs to adapt quickly to survive.

In a world driven by customer-centric brands such as Amazon and Apple whose sophisticated algorithms seem able to predict our next purchase before we're even aware we want it, antiquated and impersonal car showrooms need to step up their game.

The modern customer expects brands to talk to them, rather than at them - and the dealers that can perfect this approach today will be reaping the rewards tomorrow.



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To my mind, a car purchase in the future should go something like this:

It's time. I've decided that I'm going to take the plunge and buy a new car. So, I take out my tablet and consult my virtual assistant. Rather than simply asking me, "Do you want brand A or brand B", the selection process is based entirely on my specific needs. My VA considers my personality type, my style, what I want to use the car for, and what I want my car to express. It then recommends a bespoke set of vehicles and corresponding feature sets.

I make my choice and start configuring the car - Racing Green paintwork, leather seats, concave alloys, cream dash - and as I do so, a pop up appears. It's a local dealership asking whether I would like a virtual tour of the car. Absolutely I would. I log onto their app, and enter my contact preference, and book a slot.

Later that day, I get a video call from the dealership. A sales assistant, wearing VR glasses, walks me around my chosen model and then overlays my selected configurations onto the vehicle. Impressive!

However, when the dealer sits in the driver's seat, I decide that perhaps the cream dash isn't quite right. He suggests walnut, and with the click of a button, the walnut dash appears. Much better.

The car looks perfect, and I decide to take a test drive. So, book in a time through the app and choose my start and endpoint. The following day, the sales assistant brings the car to my house. And, after a quick drive around the block, my mind is made up. This is the car for me.

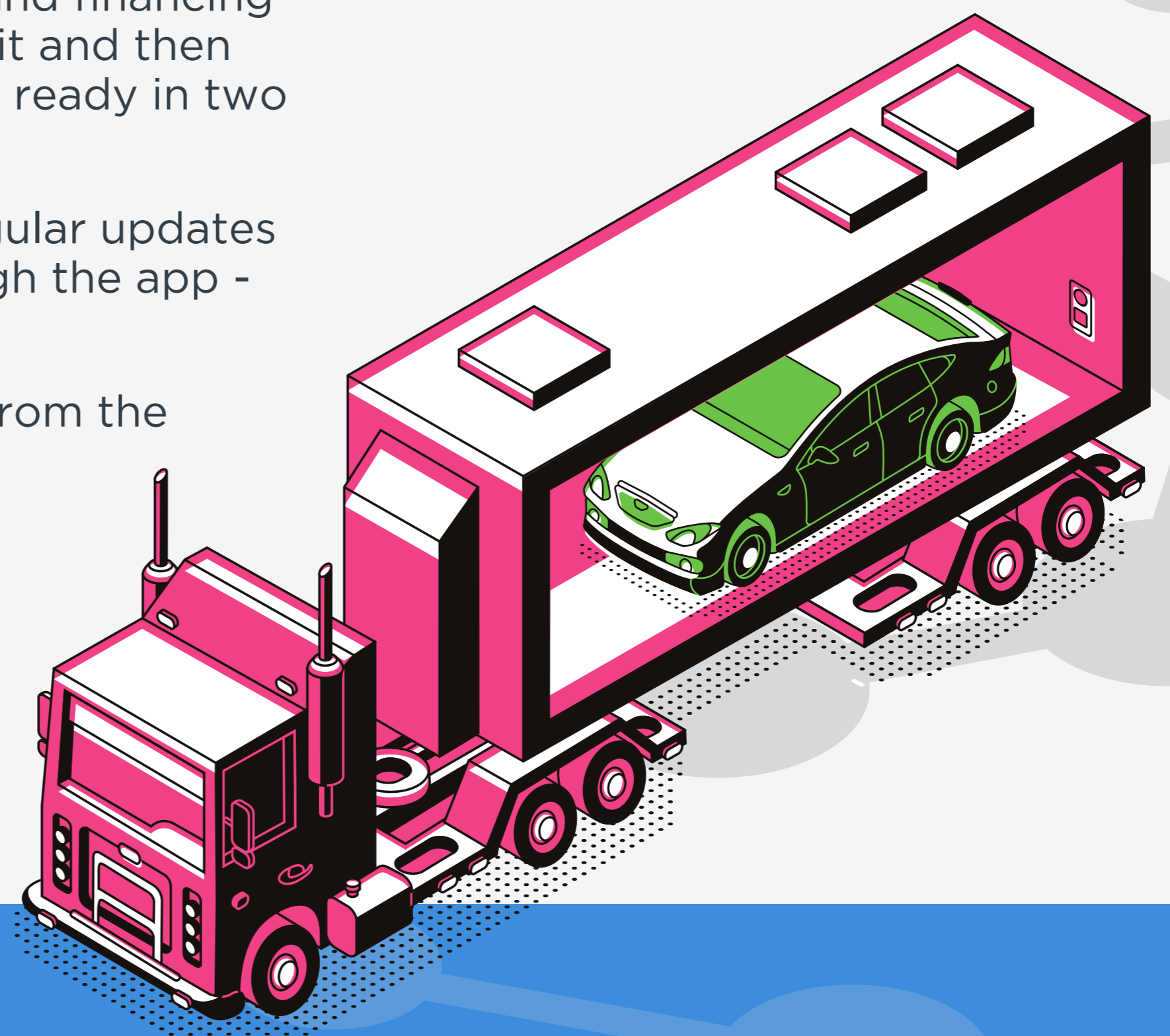
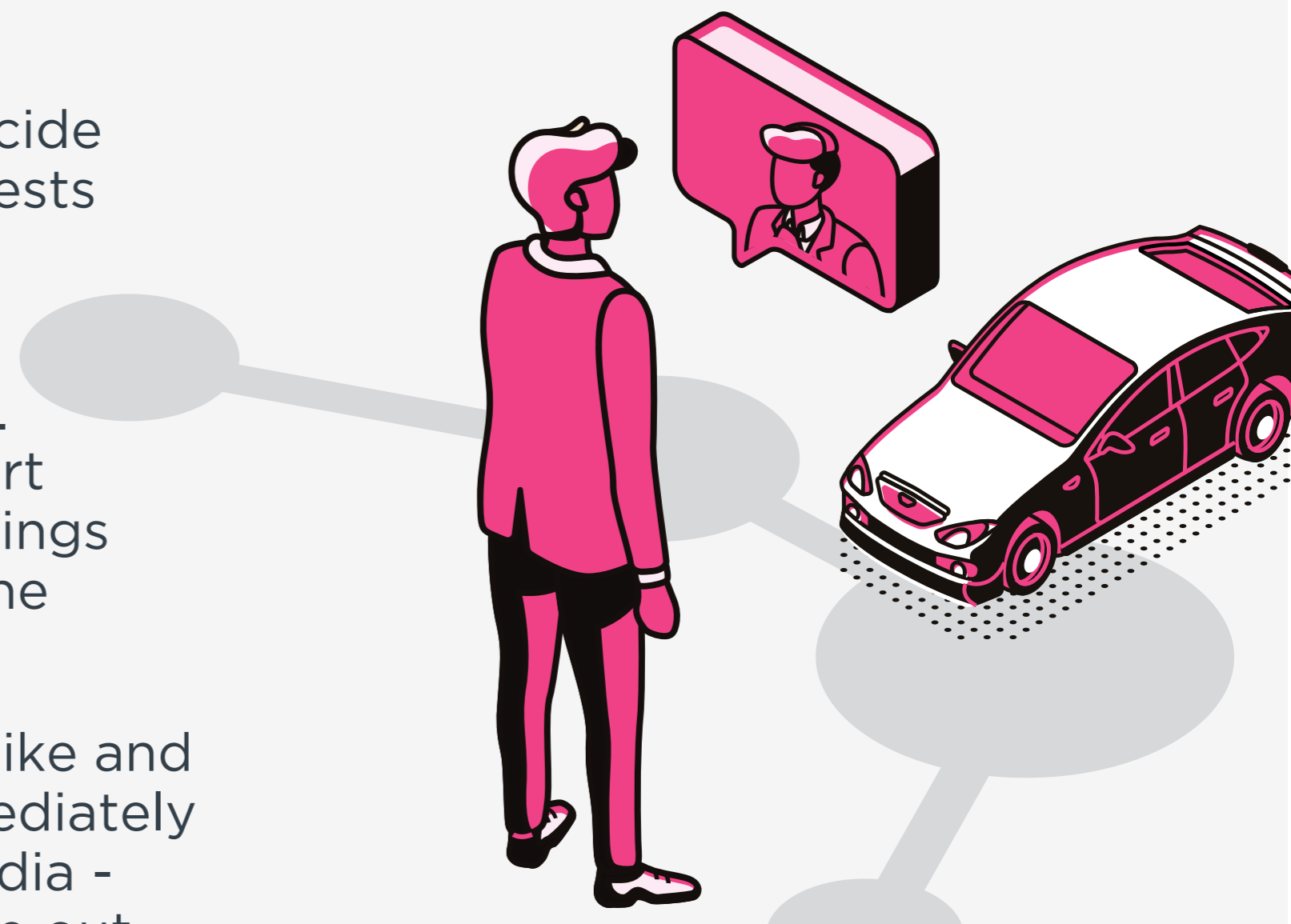
I ask the salesman to send me a quotation, and then I like and share the details of my new car through the app. Immediately friends and colleagues start commenting on social media - "Nice ride!", "Looking good!", "When are you taking me out for a drive?"

Later that day, my phone pings. The price and financing packages have arrived. I transfer the deposit and then receive a message telling me my car will be ready in two weeks.

Throughout the next fortnight, I receive regular updates about how the build is coming along through the app - "Assembly started", "Shipping", "En route".

Finally, the day dawns, and I receive a call from the dealership telling me my car has arrived.

A seamless process.



With a little imagination, a little innovation, and some hard work, experiences like this can become the norm for tomorrow's car buyers.

There are thousands of digital solutions that can help companies provide personalization throughout the customer journey across a range of touchpoints and channels. And I, for one, can't wait to see how they will put them to use.

What innovations would you like to see at a dealership near you in the future?

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