Vehicle Purchase Path
Cross-Shopping Analysis

Google/Compete/ Polk

U.S., July 2012

Overview and Methodology

Overview

This study quantifies new vehicle purchasers' use of different types of queries within the 6 months prior to purchase to better understand how vehicle shoppers approach the research process.

Methodology

Compete matched clickstream behavior from its panel of 2 million online consumers to Polk new vehicle registration data from January 2010 through December 2010. Compete used this dataset to quantify the following:

- Share of vehicle purchasers' searches by keyword type (e.g. brand purchased, competitor brands, 3rd party site, segment terms, etc.)

- Most common search query patterns prior to purchase by vehicle brand, focusing on first query, last query, and overall query volume distribution across keyword types

Search activity was measured during the 6-months prior to purchase (date of Polk registration)

Executive Summary

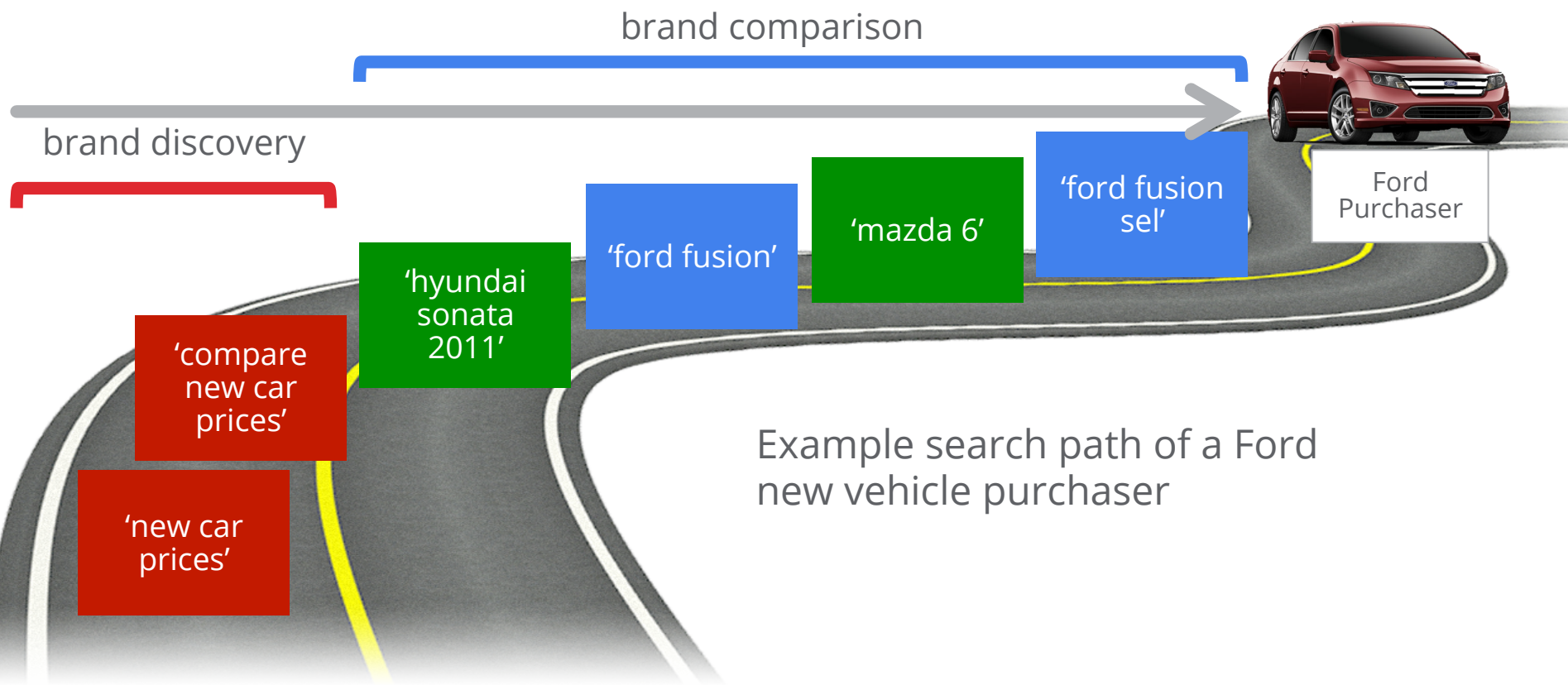Shopper path insights, from in-market entry to purchase

1 **Shoppers enter the market with an initial consideration set, and an open mind:** 37% start with a non-branded term and 43% of shoppers switch from their first brand searched to the brand they ultimately purchase.

2 **Vehicle research involves heavy cross shopping:** A third of vehicle research involves competitors to the brand ultimately purchased.

3 **Shoppers compare to the very end:** While most (35%) of purchasers' final searches involve the brand they buy, 33% last search for a competitive brand and 32% last search for a non-branded term.

Uncovering shopper behavior through search

Search path 6 months prior to purchase

brand comparison

brand discovery

'new car prices'

'compare new car prices'

'hyundai sonata 2011'

'ford fusion'

'mazda 6'

'ford fusion sel'

Ford Purchaser

Example search path of a Ford new vehicle purchaser

Note: Sample path is for illustration purposes only.

Just 20% of vehicle purchasers start with the brand they ultimately buy

73% of in-market search volume deals with cross-shopping

Legend:
- First Query (blue)
- Share of Queries (green)

Category	First Query	Share of Queries
Competitor Brand	43%	35%
Non-branded	37%	39%
Brand Purchased	20%	27%
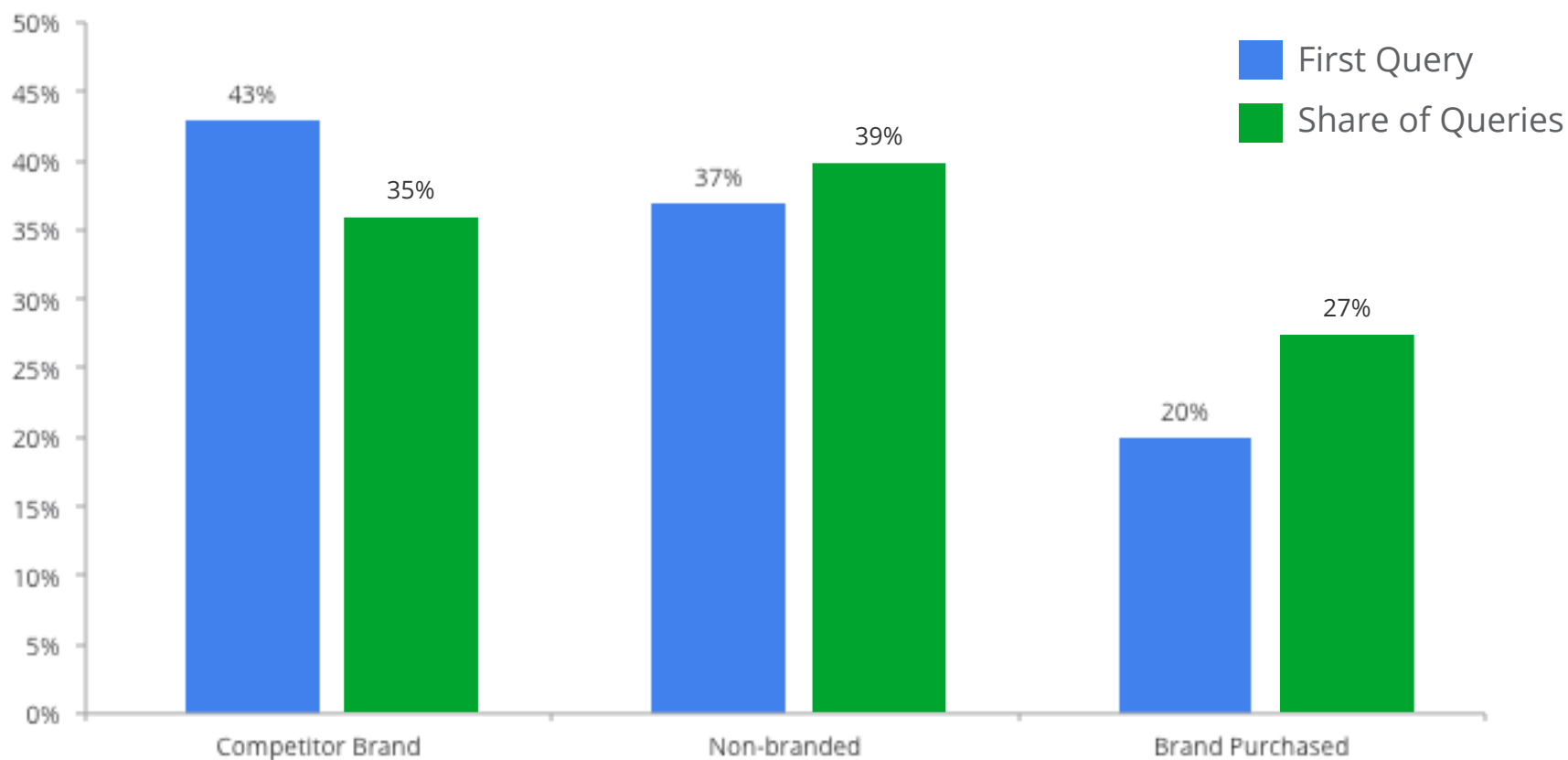
Early research involves competitor brands

The brand ultimately purchased is more likely to emerge at the end

Distribution of Vehicle Purchasers' Search Queries by Term Type

First Query
- 12%
- 25%
- 43%
- 20%

Last Query
- 7%
- 25%
- 33%
- 35%

Legend:
- ■ Vehicle Segment
- ■ Auto Site
- ■ Competitor
- ■ Brand Purchased
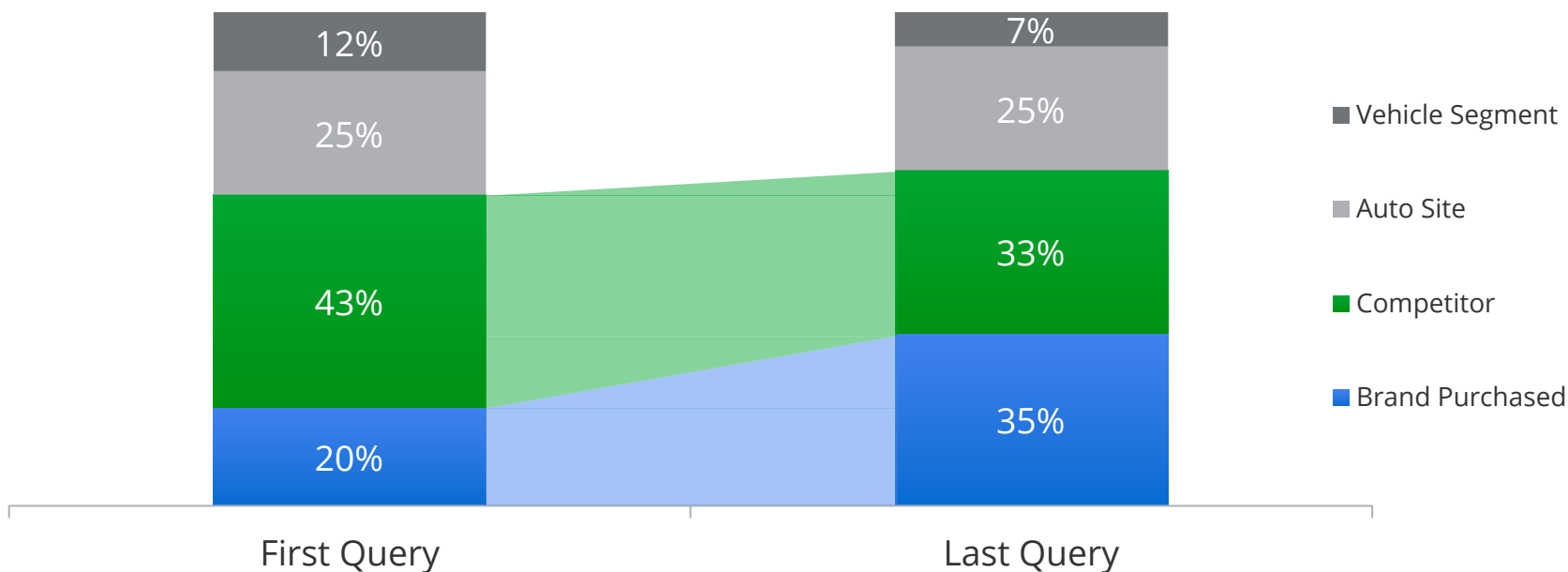
Luxury vehicle buyers are even heavier cross-shoppers

69% of luxury search volume involves comparing competitors to the brand ultimately purchased

Distribution of Vehicle Purchasers' Search Queries by Term Type

Legend:
- ■ Vehicle Segment
- ■ Auto Site
- ■ Competitor
- ■ Brand Purchased

Volume Purchasers: 9%, 30%, 35%, 27%

Luxury Purchasers: 5%, 26%, 48%, 21%
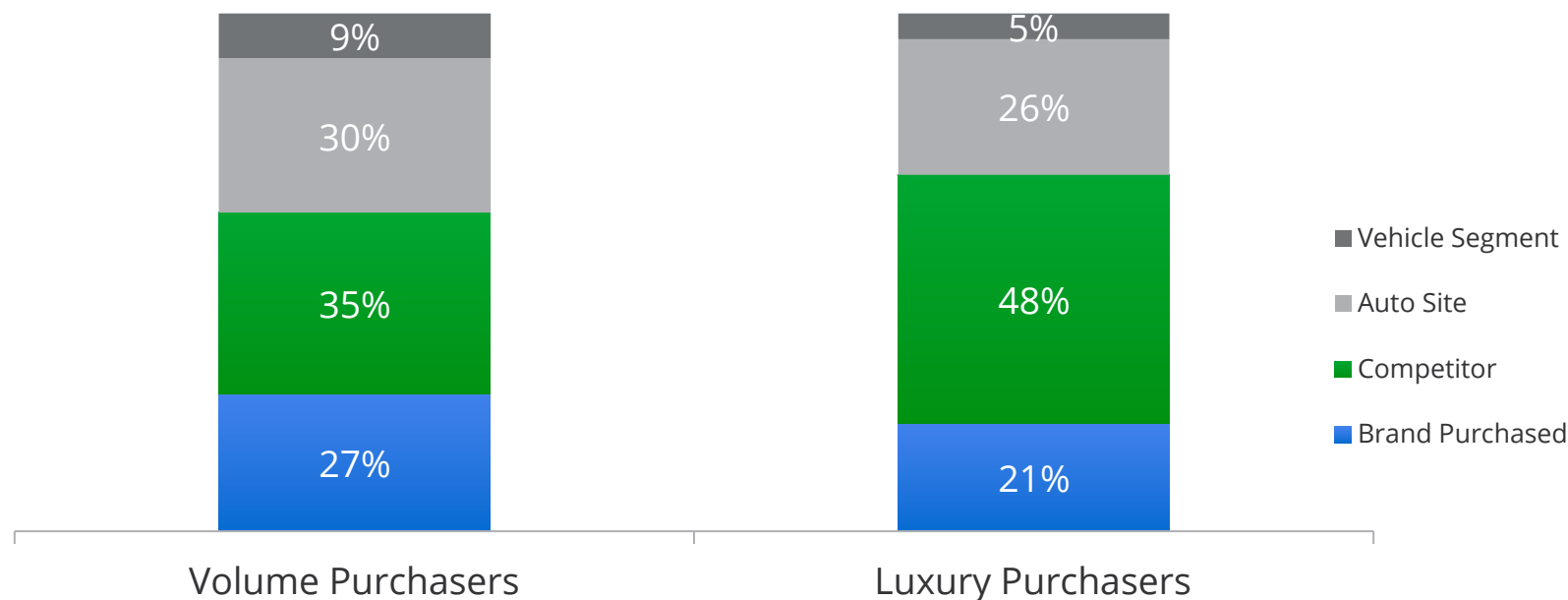
Discussion Points

From insight to action

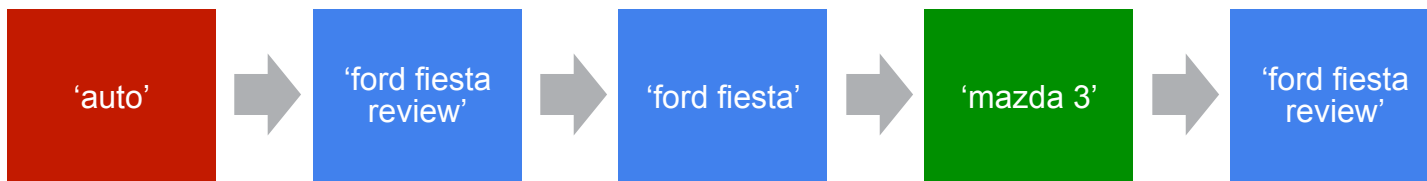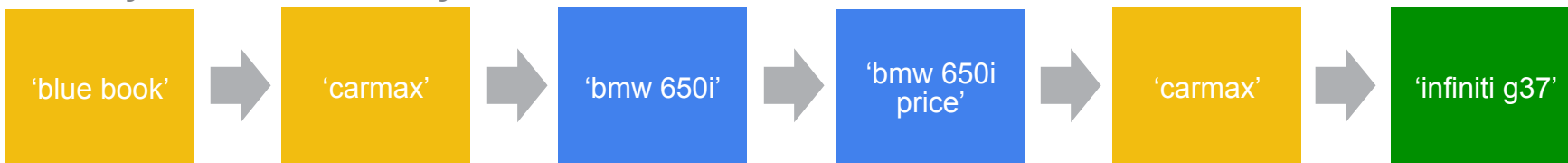|	Insight	Discussion
1	Shoppers enter the market with an initial consideration set, but an open mind	• What is your *in-market* branding strategy? • Is your brand discoverable as shoppers research?
2	Vehicle research involves heavy cross shopping	• Across the web, do you introduce shoppers to your brand as they explore a vehicle segment? • Do both your mobile and desktop experiences promote your competitive advantages?
3	Shoppers compare to the very end	• Do your dealers reinforce favorable brand comparison to help win the end game?

Query Path Detail

Example Query Paths

Volume Purchaser Query Path:

'auto' → 'ford fiesta review' → 'ford fiesta' → 'mazda 3' → 'ford fiesta review'

Luxury Purchaser Query Path:

'blue book' → 'carmax' → 'bmw 650i' → 'bmw 650i price' → 'carmax' → 'infiniti g37'

Ford Purchaser Query Path:

'new car prices' → 'compare new car prices' → 'hyundai sonata 2011' → 'ford fusion' → 'mazda 6' → 'ford fusion sel'
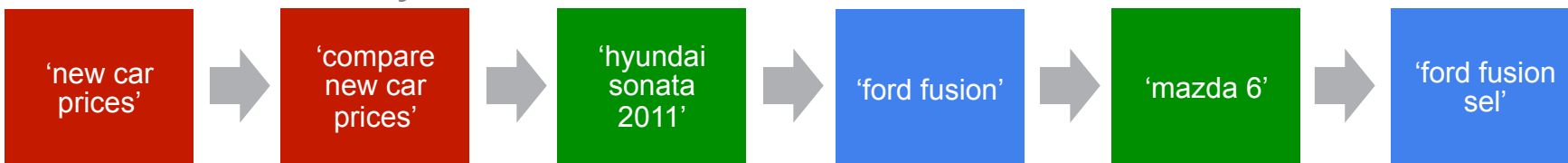
Query Path Breakout: Volume Purchasers

Start	Branded 20%	Competitor 43%	3rd Party 25%	Segment 12%
	Branded 45%	Branded 33%	Branded 34%	Branded 27%
	Competitor 27%	Competitor 40%	Competitor 24%	Competitor 34%	End
	3rd Party 25%	3rd Party 19%	3rd Party 37%	3rd Party 20%
	Segment 3%	Segment 8%	Segment 5%	Segment 19%
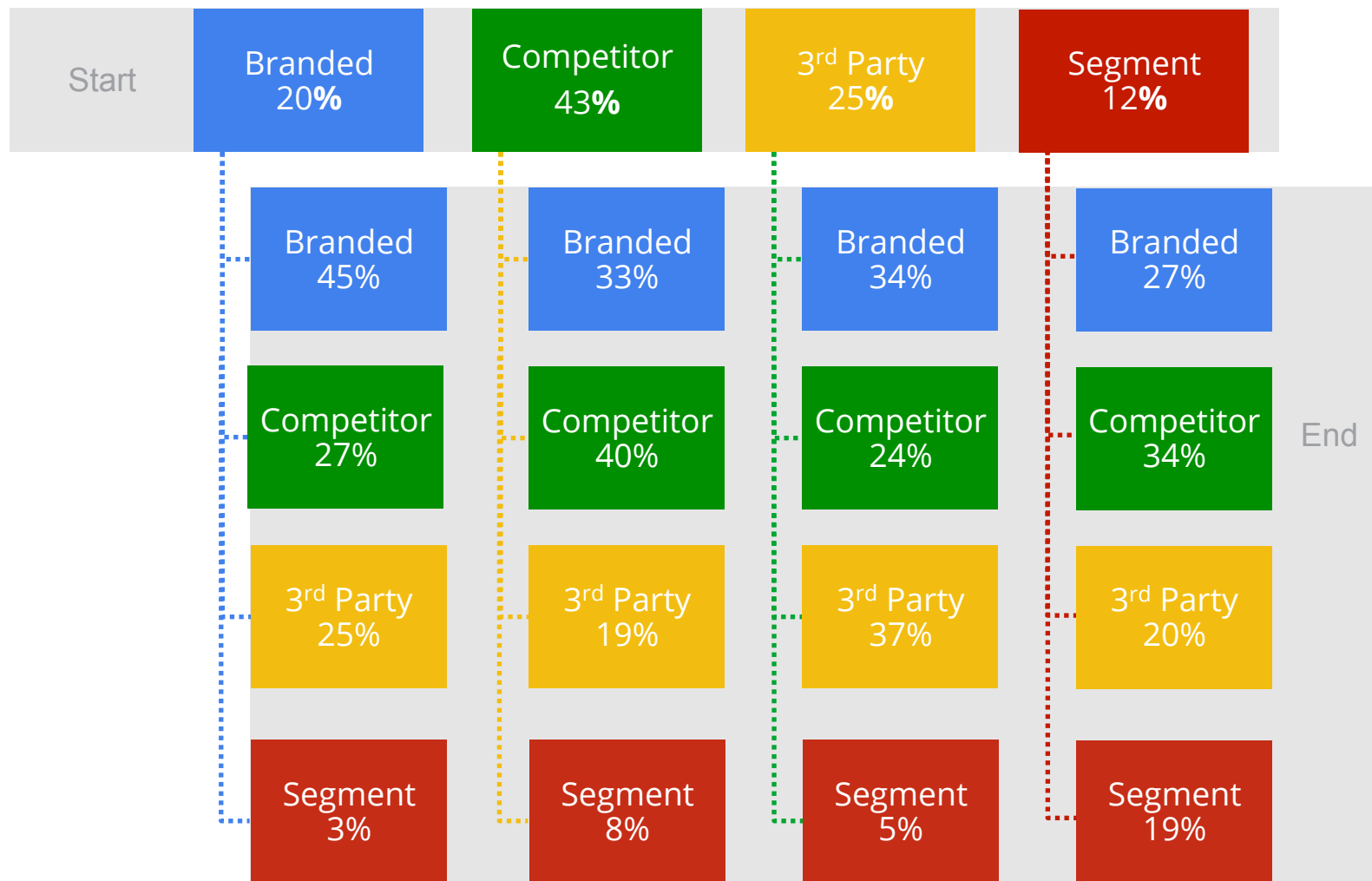
Query Share by Term Type: Volume Purchasers

Share of Volume Purchaser Search Queries by Term Type

8%

30%

35%

27%

Volume Purchasers

Legend:
- Vehicle Segment
- Auto Site
- Competitor
- Brand Purchased
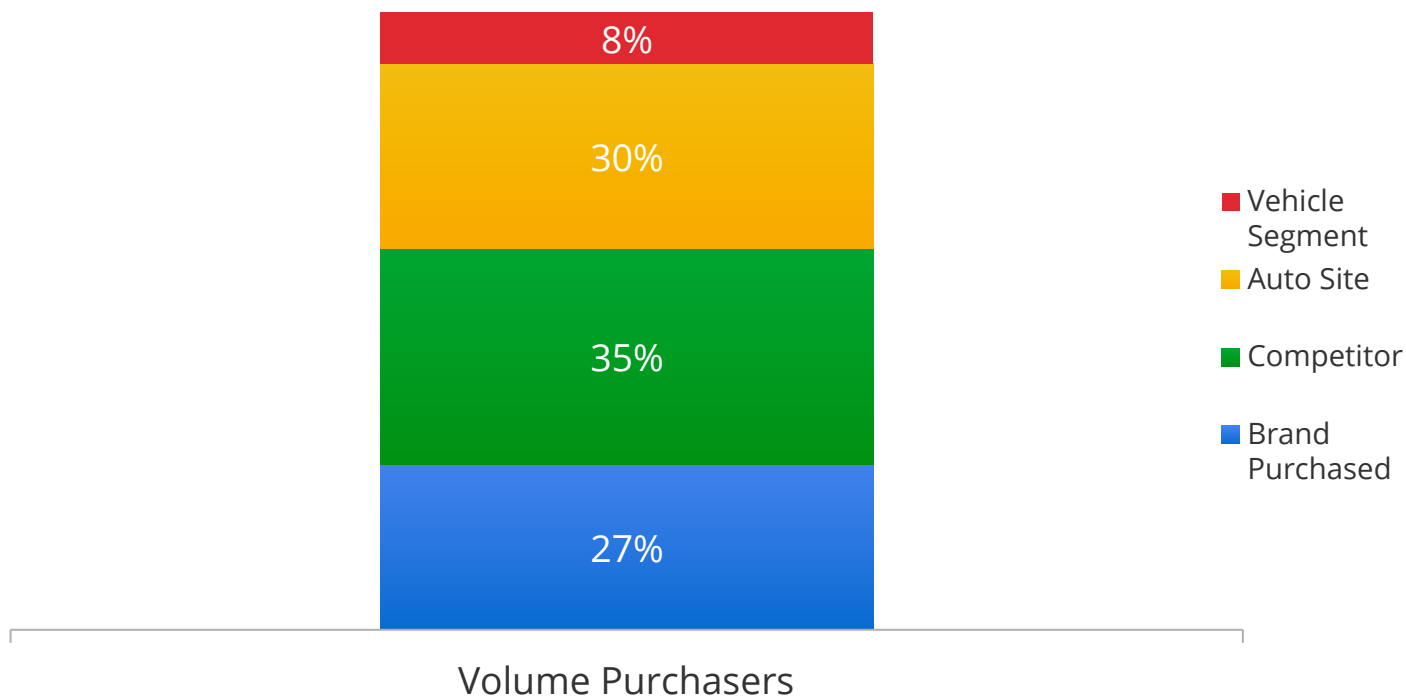
First and Last Search: Luxury Purchasers

Share of purchasers that finished on:

Branded	Competitor	3rd Party	Segment
39%	33%	22%	6%

Share of purchasers that started on:

Branded	Competitor	3rd Party	Segment
25%	50%	17%	8%

Query Path Breakout: Luxury Purchasers

Start	Branded 25%	Competitor 50%	3rd Party 17%	Segment 8%
	Branded 56%	Branded 39%	Branded 33%	Branded 0%
	Competitor 11%	Competitor 50%	Competitor 0%	Competitor 67%
	3rd Party 22%	3rd Party 11%	3rd Party 67%	3rd Party 0%
	Segment 11%	Segment 0%	Segment 0%	Segment 33%

End
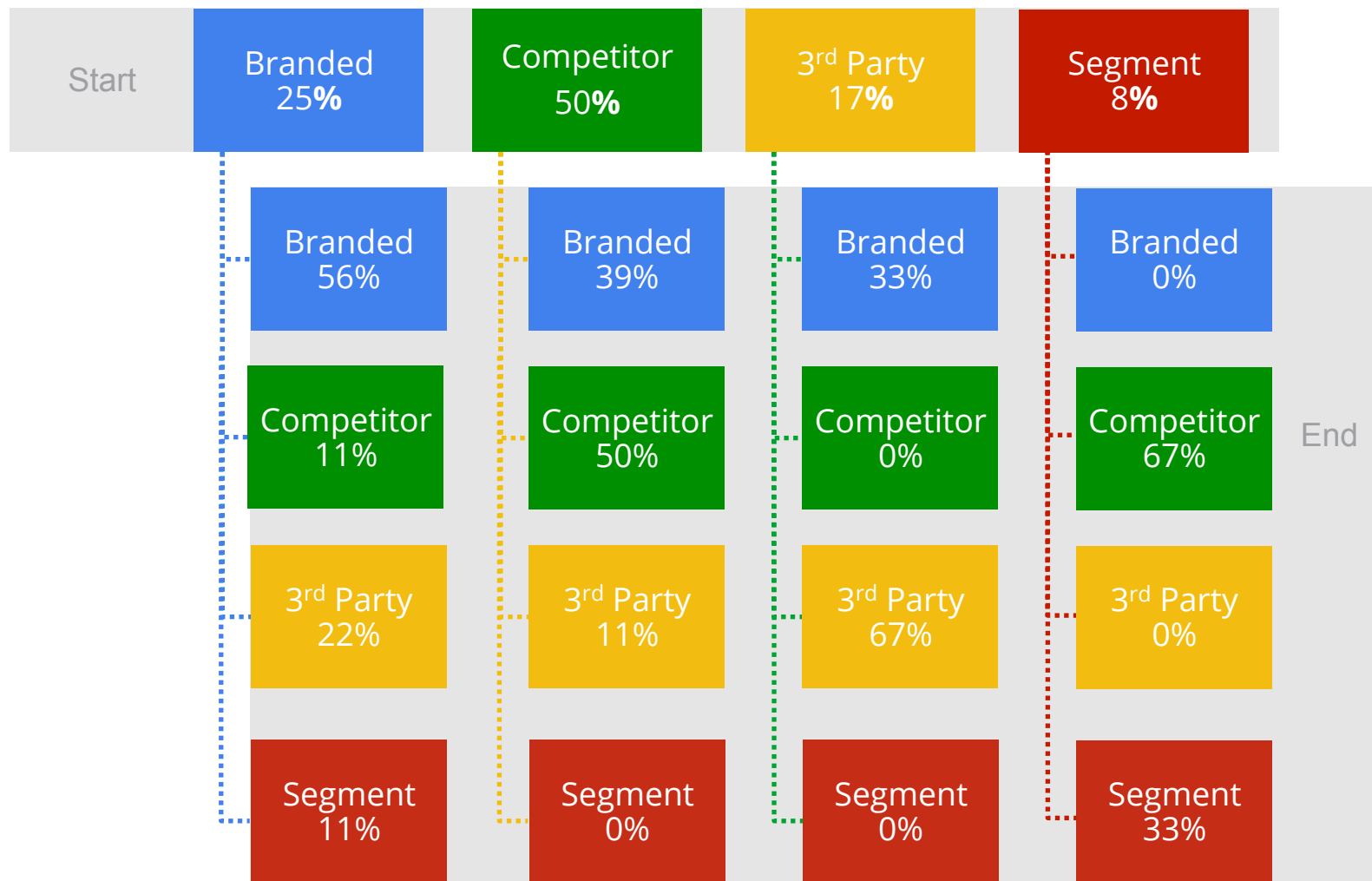
Query Share by Term Type: Luxury Purchasers

Share of Luxury Purchaser Search Queries by Term Type

Luxury Purchasers

Legend:
- Vehicle Segment
- Auto Site
- Competitor
- Brand Purchased

Values: 5%, 26%, 48%, 21%