# Car tech craze misses mark with practical drivers, warns automotive reviewer



Car manufacturers are investing heavily in the development of new technologies, packing vehicles with an array of screens, sensors, and semi-intelligent assistants. While many advancements, such as adaptive cruise control and automatic child locks, have demonstrably enhanced safety and convenience, others appear to miss the mark entirely. According to automotive reviewer Kristen Brown, who has a unique perspective due to her experiences as a mother of two toddlers, numerous high-tech features are unnecessary and merely inflate vehicle prices.

Brown's insights, derived from her extensive test-driving experiences from rugged SUVs to spacious minivans, highlight a growing concern among consumers about the practicality of such innovations. She asserts that many features are poorly designed for real-world use, particularly for families: "I see cars from a different perspective than other reviewers," she explained. "My goal is to speak to an underrepresented, underserved, and unappreciated audience."

Among the features Brown criticises are in-cabin refrigerators, which are increasingly marketed as luxury items. She found the fridge in a $59,869 Toyota Sienna, priced at an additional $735, to be mostly ineffective. "You can't take the fridge out of the car, like you can with a $35 cooler from REI," she noted, adding that it barely kept drinks cool and, worse still, became a tripping hazard while she was maneuvering car seats.

Similarly, Brown argues that built-in navigation systems often prove redundant when simpler, more efficient alternatives like Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are available. While she acknowledges the usefulness of manufacturer-specific navigation in electric vehicles, for traditional gas-powered cars, third-party apps generally offer a more reliable and user-friendly experience.

Voice recognition technology has been hailed as a potential solution to the distractions of touchscreen interfaces, but Brown asserts that in practice, they often fall short. "Every time I tried to make it do basic stuff, it misunderstood me or didn't work," she said, illustrating the frustration many drivers feel as they grapple with overly complicated systems that hinder rather than enhance the driving experience.

Reports from consumer studies corroborate Brown's sentiments, revealing a significant disconnect between the features offered and consumer preferences. A survey conducted by Consumer Reports found that at least 20% of new vehicle owners had never used many of the high-tech features available, including in-vehicle concierge services and automatic parking systems. This suggests that while manufacturers may be eager to showcase innovative technology, they often overlook the practical needs and habits of everyday drivers.

The frustration is echoed in a J.D. Power study, which highlighted that many car buyers find new technologies either pointless or overly complex. Features like hands-free driver assistance systems and passenger screens received particularly low usefulness scores, reinforcing the necessity for automakers to ensure that their technological advancements provide tangible benefits rather than mere distractions.

Brown also critiques other high-tech features such as ventilated seats and wireless phone charging systems. She points out that cooled seats, which are marketed as a luxury item, often fail to deliver substantial relief compared to traditional seat heating, while wireless chargers can heat devices to damaging temperatures, affecting battery health.

On a more positive note, she appreciates some new innovations designed to assist with driving, such as leading car warnings that alert drivers when the vehicle ahead begins to move. This feature can be useful, particularly for parents distracted by children in the back seat, although opinions vary generationally, with some older drivers finding the constant monitoring intrusive.

Amid the chatter of technical jargon and flashy features, Brown’s perspective urges manufacturers to remember the practical applications of their innovations. As technology continues to define the modern driving experience, it is essential that car companies focus on creating functionalities that genuinely enhance the lives of their users, rather than adding layers of complexity that complicate basic driving tasks.

### Reference Map

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/yourmoney/article-14684777/auto-reviewer-unnecessary-features-bother-car-shoppers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/cars/survey-shows-many-high-tech-car-features-go-unused.html> - A Consumer Reports survey reveals that many high-tech car features are underutilized by owners. The study found that at least 20% of new vehicle owners have never used 16 of the 33 technology features measured. Features such as in-vehicle concierge services, mobile connectivity, and automatic parking systems are among those least used. The report suggests that while automakers are investing heavily in technology, many consumers prefer to use their smartphones for these functions, leading to a disconnect between the features offered and consumer preferences.
* <https://www.slashgear.com/1431376/high-tech-car-features-unnecessary/> - An article from SlashGear discusses six high-tech car features deemed unnecessary by some experts. These include rain-sensing wipers, electronic parking brakes, gesture control, shift indicator lights, and others. The piece argues that these features often fail to meet their intended purposes effectively and can introduce unnecessary complexity and potential points of failure in vehicles. The author suggests that such features may not provide significant benefits to drivers and could be considered superfluous additions to modern cars.
* <https://www.kbb.com/car-news/study-car-buyers-frustrated-with-new-tech/> - A study by J.D. Power highlights that many car buyers are frustrated with new technological features in vehicles. The survey found that owners often find certain technologies of little use or continually annoying. Features such as hands-free driver assistance systems and passenger screens received low perceived usefulness scores. The study emphasizes the need for automakers to ensure that new technologies address real problems and enhance the driving experience, rather than adding complexity without clear benefits.
* <https://cars.usnews.com/cars-trucks/advice/car-features-you-dont-need> - U.S. News & World Report lists eight new-car features that buyers might consider unnecessary. These include automatic stick shifts, all-wheel drive, CD changers, power folding seats, keyless ignition, xenon headlamps, factory-installed navigation systems, and others. The article argues that these features often add cost without providing significant value to most consumers. It suggests that buyers should focus on features that offer genuine benefits and consider skipping those that are less essential or redundant.
* <https://jalopnik.com/the-ten-car-features-that-get-the-most-undeserved-hate-1745444121> - Jalopnik presents a list of ten car features that receive undeserved criticism. Among these are infotainment screens, keys, and steel wheels. The article argues that these features often provide value and functionality that outweigh the negative perceptions. It suggests that while some features may have drawbacks, they are generally beneficial and should not be dismissed outright.
* <https://jalopnik.com/this-is-the-useless-car-tech-could-you-happily-live-with-1851625603> - Jalopnik readers share their opinions on automotive features they consider unnecessary. Responses include features like air conditioning, electric windows, keyless ignition, heated rear windows, CD players, and automatic headlights and wipers. The article highlights that many drivers feel these features are superfluous and prefer to have only essential functionalities in their vehicles.