# Auto reviewer exposes costly car tech most drivers rarely use



Car manufacturers continue to pour billions into enhancing vehicles with the latest technology—think expansive screens, advanced sensors, and semi-autonomous systems. While innovations like adaptive cruise control and automatic child locks have undeniably contributed to safer driving experiences, many industry observers argue that a significant portion of this tech is excessive and, in some cases, entirely superfluous.

Kristen Brown, a prominent automotive reviewer and mother of two toddlers, presents a particularly candid critique of the modern vehicle's technological offerings. Having tested an extensive range of models from rugged off-roaders to sprawling minivans, she emphasises that many newly minted features fail to meet the everyday needs of families. Her evaluations are informed not just by industry standards but by the practicalities of parenting, as she maneuvers with toddlers in the backseat, often battling with stray toys and car seats.

One feature that has come under fire in her analyses is the in-cabin fridge, marketed as a luxury add-on in many SUVs and minivans. While Brown tested one in a Toyota Sienna—with an accompanying price tag of $735—she found it lacking, describing it as cumbersome and ineffective for keeping drinks cold. “You can’t take the fridge out of the car like you can with a $35 cooler from REI,” she remarked, highlighting its impracticality.

Similarly, built-in navigation systems have become a contentious topic. Many new vehicles come with these systems permanently installed, yet Brown argues they are unnecessary given the widespread availability and superiority of services like Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. While she acknowledges that electric vehicles might benefit from bespoke navigation setups for battery management, she contends that for petrol cars, third-party apps are far more intuitive and reliable.

Voice recognition technology promised to ease the burden of interacting with the vehicle controls. However, Brown's personal experience reveals significant shortcomings, particularly during her test drive of the Kia Carnival MPV. “Every time I tried to make it do basic stuff it misunderstood me,” she stated, underscoring the limits of voice command functionality and the potential for misunderstandings during crucial moments, like when trying to react to a child’s needs.

Another debated feature is ventilated seats. While some drivers appreciate the cool comfort these seats provide, Brown believes their effectiveness is overstated. As she articulated, cooled seats circulate only a small amount of air and fail to generate substantial changes in body temperature. Moreover, she warns that the fans responsible for this cooling are often prone to malfunction, leading to potentially costly repairs.

While some technologies receive widespread criticism, a few standouts garner praise. Brown appreciates features like Toyota's thoughtful integration of phone storage systems that include an option to power off wireless charging pads. This feature helps prevent overheating, addressing a common complaint among users regarding the detrimental effects of prolonged wireless charging on battery health—in stark contrast to overbearing wireless chargers found in many vehicles.

Interestingly, the feature known as “leading car warnings”—which alerts drivers when a vehicle ahead starts to move—has elicited mixed reactions. Brown appreciates its practicality, particularly as a parent who occasionally diverts attention to retrieve items fallen in the backseat. However, she acknowledges that her in-laws find such reminders intrusive, echoing a broader generational divide regarding the acceptance of advanced vehicle technology.

Consumer sentiment overall reflects this dichotomy. A survey conducted by Consumer Reports highlighted that 20% of new vehicle owners had never utilised up to 16 of the 33 technology features assessed, indicating a significant disconnect between what automakers provide and what consumers actually find useful. This sentiment aligns with findings from Kelley Blue Book, revealing that many drivers express frustration with the advanced technologies in their vehicles due to unmet expectations.

Overall, as vehicle technology continues to evolve, the challenge remains for manufacturers to align their innovations with the genuine needs and practical realities of everyday consumers. Amidst the plethora of features likely to bemuse and frustrate drivers, industry stakeholders might do well to rein in some over-the-top offerings in favour of solutions that simplify life rather than complicate it further.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/yourmoney/article-14684777/auto-reviewer-unnecessary-features-bother-car-shoppers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/yourmoney/article-14684777/auto-reviewer-unnecessary-features-bother-car-shoppers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/yourmoney/article-14684777/auto-reviewer-unnecessary-features-bother-car-shoppers.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
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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.slashgear.com/1431376/high-tech-car-features-unnecessary/> - This article discusses six high-tech car features that are considered unnecessary, including rain-sensing wipers, electronic parking brakes, gesture control, shift indicator lights, and more. It highlights how these features may not effectively solve existing problems and can be more of a nuisance than a benefit to drivers.
* <https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/cars/survey-shows-many-high-tech-car-features-go-unused.html> - A survey by Consumer Reports reveals that many high-tech car features go unused by owners. The study found that at least 20% of new vehicle owners have never used 16 of the 33 technology features measured, indicating a disconnect between the features automakers offer and the actual needs or desires of consumers.
* <https://www.jalopnik.com/this-is-the-useless-car-tech-could-you-happily-live-wit-1851625603> - Jalopnik readers share their opinions on car features they find unnecessary, such as voice control systems that struggle with accents, automatic parking assist, and audible speed alerts. The article highlights a general sentiment that many modern car technologies are more of a distraction than a convenience.
* <https://cars.usnews.com/cars-trucks/advice/car-features-you-dont-need> - This article lists several car features that may not be essential, including automatic stick shifts, all-wheel drive, CD changers, and keyless ignition. It suggests that these features often add cost and complexity without providing significant benefits to most drivers.
* <https://www.carexpert.com.au/opinion/the-most-overrated-features-in-new-cars> - CarExpert discusses various car features that are considered overrated, such as remote parking, automated parking assist, audible speed alerts, and useless drive modes. The article emphasizes that these features often fail to meet expectations and can be more of a hindrance than a help.
* <https://www.kbb.com/car-news/study-car-buyers-frustrated-with-new-tech/> - A study by Kelley Blue Book reveals that many new car owners are frustrated with advanced technologies in their vehicles. The survey indicates that features like smart climate control and driver assistance systems often fail to meet user expectations, leading to dissatisfaction among consumers.