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205 101-101 3 56

Potomac, MD
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National Customer Relations
Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.
19001 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501

Gentlemen:

In April 2004, I purchased a 2004 Toyota Avalon XLS from Jim Coleman Toyota, Bethesda, MD. Since then, I have had time to evaluate this vehicle and I wanted to let you know how I feel about it.

One of the most important items on my "need to have" list when looking for a new vehicle is the comfort of the seat. I knew when I sat in the Avalon's seat that it supported my long legs and I felt the most comfortable in it compared with other car brands. The heated seat is a plus. The back seat has ample leg room and my guests are comfortable. The trunk also has ample room. I do like the 6-disk CD player very much.

Other than a couple of episodes, the first time only six days after purchase, when the key wouldn't turn in the ignition and all the dash lights stay lit, the car has been running smoothly. Coleman Toyota did check out all the computer chips and found them to be functioning as of the end of April and they did not have an explanation as to why the system locked up. It happened one other time since then. All I can do is take the key out of the ignition and wait a few minutes and then try to restart, which so far, has worked. However, I am hoping to never again experience this system lock-out. Can you explain why this lock-out should be happening?

I do have the following list of shortcomings, some of which I consider safety hazards:

1. When backing up, I cannot see the trunk of the car to give me a visual idea of how close I am to whatever may be behind me. There are no warning signals that I can hear to alert me that I am close to an object or a person, God forbid. The blind areas between the side and rear windows are so wide, they also block my view. Recently, this right blind area was so bad, I narrowly avoided an accident because I couldn't see the driver either in my side-view mirror or by looking over my shoulder. I had to come to a complete stop because I was

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in a lot of traffic and of course, this is a danger in itself because of the chance of the vehicles behind me not coming to a stop as well. Luckily, the driver in the right lane saw my signal light and had stopped in his lane for me, so that time it worked out with no mishaps, but I still shiver considering what could have happened. All in all, they add up to a great SAFETY HAZARD to me.

2. I don't know why the rear window is so slanted, probably because of aerodynamics. I do believe that this also contributes to the vision problem mentioned in Item 1. And in all my years, I have never had to wipe the dew off a rear window in the Summer mornings until this past year.
3. Why do I have to push four buttons for defogging/defrosting the windshield when only one was necessary in my 1995 vehicle? To defog the windshield in the Summer is something I have never done before. Your manual (please see my Manual comments below) cites what you should not do but it doesn't tell you what you should do. Because the dealership never reviewed the buttons (more on that later too) with me at the time of purchase, I was having one hell of a time trying to clear the windshield so I could see (the passenger side never seemed to clear up) in the early morning. Finally, I was told on the phone that I have to turn off the A/C, push the internal recirculating air button (which automatically changed to the outside air so this instruction doesn't make sense) turn up the temperature button to High, and push the defroster button. Can you believe this? The temperature got so hot I thought I was having a hot flash! Not only that, try all of this while you are driving and then you want to lower or turn off the heat and push the A/C, etc., etc. Oh yes, have you ever sat in a hot seat in the Summer? Not a pretty picture for a 2004 automobile with the expensive price tag. Too much manual labor while driving and not enough automatic technology for a 2004 vehicle. You need to streamline this system to come up to the standards of the 1990's at the very least but if I were you, I would strive for the 21st Century. I am extremely unhappy with this item.
4. The visors are not deep enough. I am 5'6" tall but I have to stretch upward in my seat when I am driving toward the sun so my eyes avoid the sun's brightness. The visors should be another 1" deeper.
5. Why isn't the odometer in full view at all times in front of me adjacent to the MPH gauge? I have no need for the Mach gauge and don't know why it should be a part of any vehicle unless you think the car will be a race car in its second life. At this time, I have no idea how many miles I have already driven. The present location of the odometer is off to the side next to the navigational system, combined with Trip A and Trip B mileage counters. I do use one of the trip counters so I can determine my gas mileage from fill up to fill up. But to get to the odometer or the other trip counter, you have to push one of the tiniest buttons made in your industry that is so hard, it actually hurts my fingers. I have arthritis in my fingers and psoriasis on some fingertips

which is very painful, especially when the skin is broken, and it just plain hurts to push this tiny, hard button. Furthermore, if someone gives me directions to go a mile or a half mile up the road, I want to be able to see the odometer directly in front of me. I should not have to look sideways, taking my eyes off the road in front of me, trying to find the small numbers in a small space. Another SAFETY HAZARD in my opinion. Please send me a large soft rubber covering for the odometer button to ease the pain. And in the future, make the numbers LARGE so one can see and read them in both darkness and light (see my comments below on this).

6. The dash lights directly in front of the steering wheel and for the odometer, clock, and outside temperature area, where the numbers are extremely small, do not come on in day light making them hard to read. On dark, cloudy days, I can't see the speedometer. My lights control is always set on automatic and the dealer has tested the light sensor and found nothing wrong. The dash lights should be on at all times if you are doing to make the dash so dark in color and the numbers so small. I recommend a desperate redesign for a separate odometer, dash lights on at all times, and large numbers for easy reading.
7. When the steering wheel is turned to the left, there is a groaning and grinding noise in the front of the car on the driver's side. Why?
8. You have the "Automatic" and "Off" buttons set backward on the rearview mirror, which also controls the outside sideview mirrors. The mirrors should automatically and ALWAYS be at the same light as that outside and if the driver feels the need to darken the mirrors, then the driver would have the option to press the "Dark" or "Off" button. Because it isn't, every time I start my car, I have to turn off the "automatic" button. Again, something I never had to do before and just another thing to remember.
9. Where's the space for the Kleenex or tissue box? This needs to be at my fingertips. Sneezes come on fastttttttt.
10. Where's the space for the trash? I don't need the cigarette tray—make this space for trash, albeit it's rather small but at least it can be closed until the next rest stop.
11. What a time finding the "Open Hood" button! It is not visible so you have to stand on your head to locate it. Why isn't it in open view and marked "Open Hood" in a color combination that is easy to read?
12. The navigational system is so sensitive (still can't figure out how you put a space between a two-word city name), I find it is easier to locate my destination on a map and write down my directions to have in front of me as I travel. When my children tried it out, one found it too sensitive and time

consuming to use and the other discovered the system's directions take you the longggggg, longggggg way to and from your destination. This system was supposed to be an option but all of the Avalons I saw already had the system and so, in reality, there was no option. I never intended to purchase this option but I had no choice. In the future, this won't happen. If I have no option, the car will not be purchased. Yes, I know, this is how the dealership orders them but if there is an option, the customer should be the one to make this decision, not the dealer.

13. Your Avalon Manual stinks!!! Your index has no references to Heating. I had to go through each page and mark those pages in the index myself. I'm going to wear out the temperature button very soon because I have to constantly move it either higher or lower depending on how hot or cold it is inside the car. There should be a sliding temperature gauge. There is no reference to Windshield Defogger/Defroster, only for the Rear Window. Again, I had to thumb through each page, etc. It must be a manual for several different Toyota cars. It is very, very difficult to figure out what applies to my car and what does not. Every conceivable subject should be addressed in the index, not just a select few. This manual needs to be rewritten from scratch.
14. Dealership: Our salesman was new on the job and we were his first customer. He was very personable but inexperienced in dealing with a "tough" customer. What a lesson he learned that day! No assistance from anyone in the dealership in explaining and going over all the controls, buttons, where to find buttons for certain applications and how to operate them. The gas tank was empty and I had to ask for a fill-up to get home. Dealers need to remember that the customer needs to feel that they care. I didn't get that feeling.

All in all, I am counting on reliability "under the hood", the brake system, and with the HVAC system in future years, not to forget the radio/tape/CD system. From what I have read and heard about from others, my Toyota should offer me these things. If, over the years, this becomes a reality, I will then be somewhat satisfied with my purchase. BUT, PLEASE, do something about making your car safer and more user-friendly with regard to the items referenced above because right now, I am not a happy customer.

Yours truly,



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