



The Ultimate Driving Machine, The Ultimate Mansplain

Description

There's something uniquely maddening about being talked down to by a machine—or worse, the people who design its voice. When I took my M440i convertible in to replace a flat tire, I wasn't expecting poetry, but I also wasn't prepared for a message that made me feel like I'd wandered into a remedial automotive workshop. The dealership informed me, with great urgency, that my right rear tire was blown and the others were dangerously worn. Fair enough. But the service message didn't stop there. It launched into an unsolicited explanation of what a tire is—a round component made of rubber and reinforced with chords or belts—as if I might otherwise mistake it for a frisbee.

I couldn't help but laugh. Do BMW mechanics genuinely believe their customer base—people shelling out upwards of £60,000 for a car—don't know what tires are? Or was this a bespoke experience tailored for me, a blonde woman from the UK, driving a convertible? Either way, it wasn't just unnecessary—it was insulting. I mean, I learned to parallel park in the cramped, chaotic streets of London, dodging black cabs and double-decker buses. I know what a tire is.

But this wasn't just about one patronizing message. It's emblematic of a larger trend: the infantilization of consumers under the guise of "helpful" communication. Shampoo bottles still remind us to "lather, rinse, repeat," bank apps pepper us with emojis like we're six-year-olds saving pocket money, and tech companies roll out updates with painfully detailed guides as if we've never seen a phone before. Somewhere along the way, businesses decided that the safest way to interact with customers was to assume we're all clueless—and to explain everything, loudly and repeatedly, until compliance is achieved.

At its core, this behavior isn't about education—it's about power. Corporations don't see us as equals in the transaction; they see us as liabilities. If they explain what a tire is, maybe no one can claim they weren't warned. If they slap "Contents Hot" on every coffee cup, maybe they can fend off lawsuits. This obsession with covering their backs has led to a style of communication that makes us feel less like valued customers and more like fragile toddlers in need of constant supervision.

And yet, it's not just about avoiding lawsuits. There's something deeper at play. The rise of personalized communication companies tailoring their messages based on data was supposed to make us feel understood. Instead, it's flattened humanity into algorithms and stereotypes. To BMW, I'm not a person; I'm a demographic. A young woman, likely clueless about cars, in need of extra hand-holding. The result? A service message so reductive it's laughable.

The real tragedy is how normalized this has become. We've grown so accustomed to being patronized by corporations that we barely notice it anymore. The shampoo bottles, the emoji-filled bank apps, the tiresplaining dealership alerts—they've become the background noise of modern life. We don't push back because, frankly, we're too tired. And maybe that's the point. Maybe corporations have learned that if they talk to us like children long enough, we'll start to believe it. We'll stop questioning their assumptions, their authority, their power.

But here's the thing: we don't have to accept it. The next time a company talks down to you, remember this: their condescension says more about them than it does about you. It's a reflection of their insecurities, their need to control the narrative, their fear of letting us think for ourselves. And while we might not be able to change their behavior overnight, we can at least refuse to internalize it.

So when BMW decided to explain tires to me, I laughed. Not because it was funny, but because it was absurd. And maybe that's the best response we have: to laugh, to push back, and to call it out when we see it. After all, the only thing more ridiculous than being patronized by a corporation is staying silent about it.

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