

Category

NVL

PQ

PQ

New OR Update**?	Current THREAT Severity Level	Date Recorded
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NEW		4/24/2009
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NEW		4/24/2009
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NEW		4/23/2009
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Toyota Corp Comm Threat Tracker Matrix

Topic

Online reaction to 2010 Lexus RX 450h and 2010 Lexus IS Convertibles Pricing Announcements

Online owners, consumers discuss first-generation Toyota Tundra Frame Rust

Online reactions to *Houston Press* Prius unintended acceleration article, Toyota/Lexus Unintended Acceleration

Summary

Beginning on April 24, 2009, there is moderate online discussion regarding pricing announcements of the Lexus RX 450h, Lexus IS 250C, and Lexus IS 350C. Buzz has generally subsided.

Key Online Discussion Themes

- On ClubLexus.com, Lexus owners and enthusiasts are generally favorable towards RX 450h pricing, as some note previous expectations regarding pricing above the RX 400h. These individuals seem pleased that the pricing is actually a bit lower for the improved, redesigned model.
 - Also on ClubLexus.com, this pricing release generates comments in which anticipation of the HS 250h pricing announcement is noted. It appears that, on the heels of the RX 450h pricing announcement, some are hoping for attractive pricing of this new, dedicated hybrid Lexus sedan
 - Some individuals on general auto enthusiast boards comment that the Lexus IS convertible prices are steep, but others soon point out the pricing on competing BMW 3-series models. These vehicles are noted to be several thousand dollars higher when comparably equipped
 - The greatest volume of negative commentary is in response to Lexus IS 250C and IS 350C exterior design, as many use negative words to describe
- Beginning on April 24, 2009, the owner of a the owner of a 2000 Toyota Tundra in the Boston Area had posted on Tundra owner and enthusiast site regarding experience with frame rust, and has noted having been interviewed by media personality Susan Wornick. In the days since this story aired on the Boston ABC-affiliate station (WCVB), there is increased buzz as various online enthusiast or owner venues have taken note of the topic.

There is some negative online discussion regarding Toyota or the Tundra in response to this news. In context of this Tundra news, however, is evidence of positive buzz expressed regarding the Tacoma Customer Service Program. Multiple online comments raise question as to how Toyota may or may not handle the "frame rust" issue as associated with the 2000/2001 Toyota Tundra. On one Tundra owner and enthusiast site, TundraHeadquarters.com, a site contributor and administrator Jason states, "*Toyota stepped up and took responsibility on the Tacoma, going so far as to offer to buy back the trucks for full retail value. If there is indeed an issue, we're confident Toyota will do the right thing.*"

Shown immediately at right is the most robust discussion regarding potential Toyota Tundra "frame rust", which began on 3/13/2008 on another Tundra owner and enthusiast site, TundraSolutions.com.

On April 23, 2009, online consumers began reacting to an article by Paul Knight in the alternative urban print publication, *Houston Press*. The report in the *Houston Press* alleges incidences of Toyota Prius unintended acceleration, and intersperses Prius anecdotal unintended acceleration events with various facts and figures or Prius history, and has run observable in several other regional city news sources.

Online consumers are mixed in reaction to the *Houston Press* article; though some do question the safety of the Prius and feel this warrants Toyota's investigation and addressing the situation, many others feel that the article is a flame piece or "call BS". Many on Priuschat.com are dismissive, calling the article "drivel", though some begin discussion of the heavy technology use in the Prius. Buzz on the topic has flared up on Tuesday, April 28, 2009, as influential online blog Jalopnik.com picked up the story, eliciting a fairly substantial number of comments. However, many appear sarcastic regarding "sudden" acceleration or are dismissive of the issue based on the driver's comments. Still, as on other sources, a handful address Toyota or the Prius negatively.

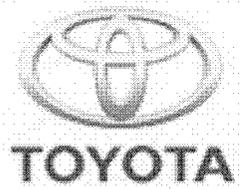
Also during the recent time period, around April 13, 2009 there has been some buzz among message forums of various OEMs that links to a new website,

Source/Representative Link	First Post Date
http://www.autoblog.com/2009/04/24/lexus-is-c-starts-at-38-490-rx450h-at-41-660/	4/24/2009
http://www.tundrasolutions.com/forums/1gen-tundra/127462-tundra-frame-rust-recall-7/	3/13/2008
http://jalopnik.com/5230917/toyota-prius-owners-experience-the-unexpected-adventure-of-sudden-unintended-acceleration	4/28/2009

Total Posts for Representative Link @ Date Indicated

41 @ 4/28/2009

NA



Link @ Date Indicated

108 @ 4/28/2009

14,768 @ 4/28/2009

127 @ 4/28/2009

7,126 @ 4/28/2009

Other Sources >>>>>

<http://rumors.automobilemag.com/6503101/green/pricing-for-2010-lexus-rx-hybrid-and-2010-lexus-is-convertible-announced/index.html>

<http://www.gminsidenews.com/forums/f38/toyota-quality-tundra-follows-tacoma-lead-rusty-frames-78546/>

<http://forums.roadbikereview.com/showthread.php?s=2171897502756eec95f138b9e04932dd&t=170753>

http://www.automedia.com/cs/blogs/auto_news/archive/2009/04/25/pricing-2010-lexus-is-convertible.aspx

<http://www.tundraheadquarters.com/blog/2009/04/27/toyota-tundra-frame-rust/#more-1224>

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-chat/2238595/posts>

<http://www.clublexus.com/forums/hybrid-technology/424258-rx-450h-pricing.html>

<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/news/19294258/detail.html>

<http://www.houstonpress.com/2009-04-23/news/wild-rides/>

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<http://www.thebostonchannel.com/investigative/19294250/detail.html>

http://blogs.houstonpress.com/hairballs/2009/04/prius_safety_accelerate.php

<http://forums.vwvortex.com/zerothread?id=4362006&page=1>

<http://www.tundrasolutions.com/forums/1gen-tundra/163267-tundra-rust-story-ch-5-sunday/>

<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60807-houston-press-investigates-safety-record-toyota-prius-6.html>

<http://www.leftlanenews.com/lexus-is-250c-convertible.html>

<http://www.clublexus.com/forums/car-chat/425060-first-gen-tundras-might-have-wide-spread-frame-rot-issues-like-the-tacomamas-did.html>

<http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-04-22/news/the-flip-side-of-the-perfect-prius/>

<http://www.autospies.com/news/Toyota-Acknowledges-1st-Gen-Tundra-Frame-Rust-Issues-43429/>

<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/2009-04-23/news/hybrid-prius-drivers-may-be-in-for-an-unexpectedly-wild-ride#Comments>

<http://action.publicbroadcasting.net/cartalk/posts/list/2120403.page>

<http://forums.vwvortex.com/zerothread?id=4363591>

<http://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/in-toyota-we-rust/>

<http://www.westword.com/2009-04-23/news/the-prius-can-take-owners-on-a-wild-ride/5#Comments>

<http://autocoverup.com/>

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<http://forums.caranddriver.com/showthread.php?t=1629518>

<http://us.lexusownersclub.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=56647&mode=linear>

<http://www.autotalk.com/forums/46lexus/lexus-sudden-acceleration-i-trapped-car-9279.html>

<http://forums.motivemag.com/zerthread?id=4337223&page=1>

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<http://forums.automobilemag.com/70/7567875/lexus/lexus-video/index.html>

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3lq3839HdA>

CORP

NVL

FV

NEW



4/14/2009

NEW



4/21/2009

NEW



4/20/2009

IIHS gives Yaris, other sub-compacts "Poor" ratings in crash tests vs. midsize cars

Online consumers offer robust commentary on 2010 Prius official pricing

Next-generation Sienna and 4Runner spy shots

On April 14, 2009, IIHS frontal offset crash test results between midsize sedans and sub-compact vehicles have been published on a variety of automotive blogs and news sites, including USAToday.com.

A majority of comments in response note that results are not surprising, or comment on the results of the Smart ForTwo test. Comments regarding the Toyota models are not pervasive, but there are some that note while the Honda Fit also earned a “Poor” rating, it seems to have fared better than both the Yaris and the Smart ForTwo, based on intrusion and dummy injury measures. A few comments also question the Camry’s performance in this test (“Acceptable”) vs. its “solo” test (“Good”). To this end, in its blog entry, Consumer Reports notes, “That somewhat unexpected result came about because of the Camry’s driver’s seat tipping up and the dummy’s head hitting the steering wheel through the air bag.” **Most threatening to the Toyota brand, later on during the day on April 14, 2009, Jalopnik.com posted the video footage of the crash tests, which focused negative commentary especially on the Mini and Yaris, as enthusiasts called safety further into question. There are now nearly 40,000 views of that Jalopnik.com entry.**

There is some speculation that this news, though logical to many enthusiasts, may scare off potential Fit, Yaris, or Smart buyers. A few online individuals beginning in earnest on April 21, 2009, online consumers, automotive enthusiasts, those on environmentally-oriented websites, and individuals on Twitter offered robust reaction to pricing of the 2010 Prius. Early discussion began late on April 20, 2009, as Bloomberg.com first reported a \$21,000 price-point on the entry-level, fueling early conversation and speculation primarily on owner or enthusiast sites. Subsequently, on the morning of April 21, 2009, Toyota’s official press release and Bob Carter video spurred broader conversation online. Overall reaction to the 2010 Prius remains generally positive, and early comments on 2010 Prius pricing are generally favorable. **Discussion in response to the announcement has subsided, but among topics within Prius buzz, price, fuel efficiency, and features are among the most referenced. Also during the time period, there is moderate and non-threatening buzz regarding news that Toyota has received 40,000 orders for the next-generation Prius.**

Key Online Discussion Themes

- Many online consumers express that 2010 Prius pricing is attractive and competitive for today’s marketplace
- Honda’s Insight is often compared to the 2010 Prius as a result of the pricing announcement
- On owner and enthusiast site Priuschat.com, anticipation and excitement build prior to the official release as many react to news posted on Bloomberg. Upon official pricing announcement, forum members analyze pricing and packages. Overall, sentiment is positive
- As in the past, there remains a faction of hard-core automotive enthusiasts, such as on Jalopnik.com, which disparages the Prius and other hybrid vehicles, or the “green” movement in general. Some general consumers, such as on USAToday.com, may display negativity or ambivalence to hybrids. Late in the day on April 16, 2009, influential automotive enthusiast blog Jalopnik.com showed spy photographs of heavily camouflaged vehicles believed to be the 2011/next-generation Toyota Sienna and 4Runner. **Overall buzz is moderate in volume and present only on enthusiast sites or forums, and has largely subsided in days subsequent to the initial post.** Sentiment towards the spy shots is mixed.

Sienna reaction – quick, initial online insights

- Enthusiasts feel the next-generation Sienna will likely be competent and capable, but as bland as they perceive other Toyotas. Several refer to the Previa as unique or interesting for its mid-engine, rear-drive layout. Others indicate they’d like a version of the Estima for sale in the U.S., or question if a hybrid version of the Sienna will be made available
- At least one negative comment is made by an owner reporting quality problems with power-operated sliding doors for the 2004-2009 Sienna
- There is at least one individual speculating that Toyota will make a 4-cylinder available
- A negative reference to the Camry’s recent “Acceptable” crash test performance against its Yaris stablemate is made within the context of next-generation Sienna buzz

4Runner reaction – quick, initial online insights

- Several enthusiasts state that these spy photos make the 4Runner look as if it will grow larger with the next generation, spurring disapproving comments
- Others state that Toyota intends to make its vehicles look like the Tundra/Sequoia

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<http://www.autoblog.com/2009/04/21/2010-prius-starts-at-21-000-one-with-everything-costs-32-500/>

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4/16/2009

371 @ 4/28/2009

NA

77 @ 4/28/2009

NA

51 @ 4/28/2009

11,061@ 4/28/2009

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<http://www.gminsidenews.com/forums/f29/2011-toyota-4runner-sienna-spy-shots-78047/>

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http://blogs.thecarconnection.com/marty-blog/1020174_updated-2010-toyota-prius-pricing-from-21000

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<http://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/iihs-small-cars-not-as-safe-as-bigger-ones/>

<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60752-2010-pricing-available-starts-21k-goes-up-31-770-options.html>

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http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/automobiles/14crash.html?_r=1&hp

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<http://www.toyotanation.com/forum/showthread.php?t=295485>

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1 & 4

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<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60729-pricing-coming-tomorrow-2010-base-price-slashed-below-2009-base-price.html> 4/20/2009 0 N/A 1 & 4

<http://priuschat.com/node/205> 4/20/2009 36 1385 1,4 & 5

<http://priuschat.com/forums/dealers-pricing/60728-toyota-said-slash-prius-price-in-duel-honda.html> 4/20/2009 2 78 1 & 4

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4/20/2009 0 N/A 1 & 4

** NEW or UPDATE to previous Threat Tracker Matrix; if sent as Buzz Alert but not appearing on previous Matrix, marked "NEW"

Category
COMPARE
CORP
CONCEPT
DEALER
GREEN
FV
MKTG
NVL

~ [APG] ~

Current Threat Severity Level

LOW (GREEN)

MEDIUM (YELLOW)

HIGH (RED)

Vehicle Comparisons
Corporate News
Concept
Dealer Related
Environmental / Alternative Fuel Tech
Future Vehicles
Marketing
New Vehicle Launch

Summary

Volume of discussion is low or has not sustained since originally recorded
 Discussion is limited to a few discussion forums and blogs (low dispersion)
 Low client impact (Severity of topic is low)
 Consumer sentiment is not significantly negative or may be positive

ACTION: Awareness of the topic may be useful for Toyota Corporate Communications, but no immediate action is likely needed.

Larger volume of discussion
 Discussion occurring on highly visible discussion forums and blogs
 Discussion is occurring on a larger number of sites (higher dispersion)
 Consumer sentiment is typically mixed/negative
 TMS has requested Nielsen Online to monitor topic
 Higher degree of potential client impact

ACTION: Topic should continue to be monitored. Depending on nature of topic, some action may need to be taken in order to stop the topic from possibly escalating to a High level, such as potentially addressing the topic via the Open Road Blog.

Negative client/brand impact (consumer sentiment is extremely negative)
 Topic may pertain to leaked corporate information, highly sensitive environmental-related issues, quality or recall concerns
 Critically high message volume content or large number of consumer views

ACTION: Topic should continue to be monitored and appropriate actions may be necessary to stop or reduce the spread of discussion.

- Vehicle comparison tests by Automotive Enthusiast publications, or generated organically in CGM
- Sales and incentive news, Leadership announcement, Corporate initiatives
- Concept vehicles, typically conversation in reference to auto or industry shows
- Sales experience, service experience
- Hybrid vehicles, Diesel, Emissions, CAFE, technology, etc.
- Future Vehicles - scheduled for production or rumored
- Marketing or advertising campaigns
- New or redesigned product related CGM - due to consumer ownership, reaction to automotive press, etc.

[http://www.detnews.com/article/20090421/AUTO01/904210411/1148/Prius+pricing+to+start+at+\\$21+000](http://www.detnews.com/article/20090421/AUTO01/904210411/1148/Prius+pricing+to+start+at+$21+000)
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<http://priuschat.com/forums/prius-hybrid-news/60729-pricing-coming-tomorrow-2010-base-price-slashed-below-2009-base-price.html> 4/20/2009 0 N/A 1 & 4

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