

What subscription box shoppers want and don't want



By [Matt Zajechowski](#)

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Consumers have a lot of choices today when selecting subscription box services, with products ranging from clothing and makeup to pet supplies and coffee. While many people are willing to give subscription services a try, it can be far more challenging to retain them once they've subscribed.

I worked with [Shorr Packaging](#) to survey 500 subscription box consumers to learn more about what it takes to hold their interest. Those who responded tend to be young, female, educated and single, earning an average of around \$64,000 per year. More than half (58 percent) subscribe to one box, 28 percent subscribe to two boxes and less than 10 percent subscribe to three or more boxes. Consumers surveyed spend an average of \$34 per month on these services.

Subscription box popularity

The most popular subscription boxes, according to respondents, are those in the apparel, style and entertainment category. Cosmetics, beauty and grooming are second, with snack foods coming in a distant third. Consumers say they are least interested in subscription baby and kid products, alcohol products, prepared food services and pet supplies.

Even when consumers are fired up about a product category, most cancel their subscription box services well before the one-year mark, with the average time at 125 days. The youngest consumers are most likely to cancel early, while those in the 42- to 59-year-old age group show the greatest loyalty. The top reason for cancelling is that they feel it wasn't worth the money, followed by no longer being able to afford the subscription. Consumers rarely cancel due to customer service issues or receiving products too frequently. More than one-quarter (28 percent) say they've re-subscribed to a service they canceled, with men more likely than women to change their minds.

Many consumers admit to letting subscriptions continue after they've lost interest. Nearly half have forgotten to cancel a free trial and 55 percent have forgotten to cancel a subscription for the next month's shipment.

The overall look of subscription boxes matters, according to the survey. Seventy-six percent of consumers say they are very likely or likely to notice custom packaging compared to plain brown-box packaging. In fact, more than half have shown off custom packaging to friends, family members and coworkers, and one-third have shared images on social media.

Colored paper, fancy ribbons and other embellishments can even influence the decision whether to stick with a subscription. Nearly seven out of 10 surveyed said custom packaging is important to their subscription box experience, so much so that about 30 percent are more likely to continue a subscription simply because of that packaging. Subscription services have recognized this fact and have started creating more intricate packaging. Many are turning to packaging firms

to streamline the packaging process and ensure consumers receive the quality designs they appreciate.

What Subscription Box Shoppers Want and Don't Want



Subscription boxes have grown at breakneck speeds over the past five years. What started as a small, niche market now covers everything imaginable. From razors for shaving to dirt for gold mining, there's now a box for everything.

What fuels these shoppers?

What makes them subscribe and then keep coming back for more?

We surveyed **500 subscription box consumers** in the United States to learn what makes them tick.

Who They Are

The subscribers we surveyed:



Young

60%

are between the ages of 18 and 33.



Female

59%

of the shoppers are female.



Educated

+90%

have some level of college education



Single

54%

are not married.

or higher.



\$64,500

Average household income



\$34

Average households spends
per month on subscription services

Average number of boxes people subscribe to:



Only **9%** of shoppers
subscribe to three boxes.

Only **4%** of shoppers subscribe
to four or more boxes.

What They're Buying (And Not Buying)



What shoppers **DON'T WANT TO BUY:**



Shoppers with an annual household
income of **\$90,000-\$105,000** are the
MOST LIKELY TO SUBSCRIBE
to alcohol products.

How Long Before They Go

The average length a consumer
keeps a subscription service:



Women were more likely to keep
subscriptions longer than men:





125 days



132 days



118 days

How long subscribers keep their boxes, by age:



What Makes Them Cancel?

TOP REASON

"It wasn't worth the money."

64%

of the shoppers canceled for this reason.

1 in 5

shoppers canceled because they simply didn't like the products they received.



SECOND TOP REASON

"I couldn't afford it."

34%

of the shoppers canceled because of this reason.

Shoppers **RARELY CANCELED** because of:

7%

Customer service issues

5%

Receiving products too frequently

Sometimes shoppers actually **FORGET TO CANCEL.**



55%

say they've forgotten to cancel a subscription service **before the next month's shipment.**

47%

have forgotten to **cancel** a free trial.

Gone But Not Forgotten



Most likely to resubscribe to a cancelled service:



Men

33%

are likely to resubscribe, versus 24% of women.



Household income: \$75,000-\$90,000

38%

are most likely to resubscribe.



Age group: 26-33

31%

would resubscribe, compared to 30% of those aged 42-49.

Custom Packaging Makes a Lasting Impression

76%

of shoppers said they were **very likely or likely to NOTICE CUSTOM PACKAGING** versus standard brown-box packaging.



have shown off packaging to friends, family members and coworkers.



1 IN 3 SHOPPERS

have shared an image on social media because of a box's packaging.

Studies show custom packaging impacts how customers feel about

subscription services.



said they feel custom packaging is a key part of **their subscription box experience.**



of shoppers said they're more likely to continue a subscription **because of custom packaging design.**



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ABOUT MATT ZAJECHOWSK

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