

If you could change something about Amazon, what would it be?

Amazon is still running deep and wide. After a year of controversy, punctuated by a battle with book publishers, a lawsuit brought by its warehouse employees and borderline goofy, even Onion-esque, talk of delivering its goods by drone, the online giant remains overwhelmingly popular as a retailer of nearly everything under the sun.

In our latest *Hub* reader survey, 72.8 percent said they shopped Amazon either heavily (31%) or moderately (41.8%), and twenty-five percent lightly. Just six—or two percent—said they had never experienced Amazon. We didn't define these levels, but the intensity was evident in that a majority (52.1%) subscribe to Amazon Prime, currently \$99 a year, which provides 'free' two-day shipping and other benefits including unlimited streaming of movies, television shows and music. Most said they subscribed more for the shipping benefits than any of the other perks.

While Amazon has diversified into virtually every product category, our survey indicates that books remain its biggest category, purchased most frequently by 78 percent, followed by consumer electronics (59%), housewares (44%), clothing (31.4%) and health/beauty items (30.4%). Toys are another popular category, and a few respondents said they were really happy that Amazon ensured they never wanted for toilet paper.

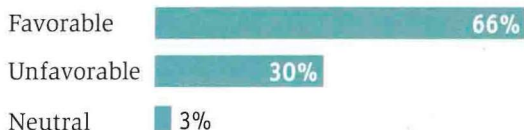
A remarkable 90 percent rated the Amazon shopping experience as either good (42.4%) or excellent (47.7%). Of the 324 people who completed the survey, just five—less than two percent—rated the Amazon experience as poor. A nearly as resounding 83 percent of respondents said they had *never* had a bad shopping experience with the retailer.

If Amazon has been hurt at all by recent controversies, the damage appears to be marginal at best, with 69 percent indicating 'no change' in their opinion of the retailer compared to a year ago. A greater percentage (17.4%) said their opinion of Amazon is better today than it was a year ago, compared to 13.5 percent who said it was worse.

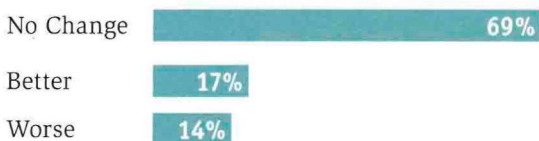
Recent news stories also suggested that

Amazon

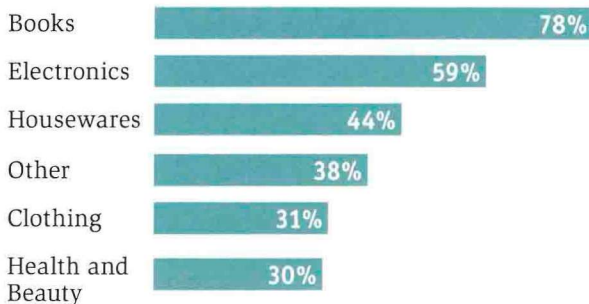
What is your opinion of Amazon?



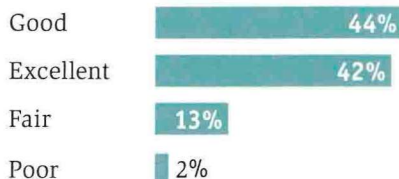
How does your opinion of Amazon today compare to a year ago?



Which categories do you buy on Amazon more frequently?

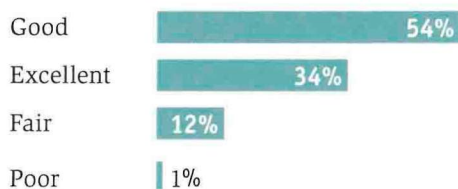


In general, how would you rate Amazon's customer service?



n's Zone

How would you rate Amazon's prices?



How does your opinion of Amazon's prices compare to a year ago?



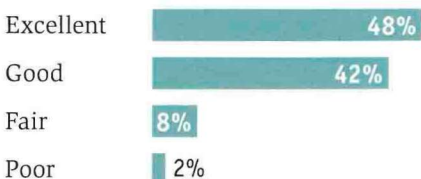
Do you care that Amazon collects data on your purchasing history?



Do Amazon's data collection practices stop you from shopping with them?



Overall, how would you rate the Amazon shopping experience?



Amazon's prices — particularly on books — were not as good as they used to be, but our readers largely have not sensed this, with 80.3 percent saying they thought its prices were the same as a year ago. However, relatively more people (14.5%) thought prices were worse than better (5.2%).

Privacy issues are another area of potential weakness for Amazon — as well as any entity doing business on the web — although 83 percent said they didn't care that Amazon collected data on their purchasing behavior. Of the 17 percent who said they did care, only five percent said it stopped them from shopping with them. A few mentioned that they still bought books from Amazon despite their disapproval of the retailer's tangle with publishers and authors.

Readers gave Amazon similarly high marks, overall, on customer service, with 86.4 percent rating it either good (44.4%) or excellent (42%). Only two people — less than one percent — said Amazon's customer service was poor. About 13 percent termed it only fair.

Of the 16.9 percent who reported having had a bad experience with Amazon, critiques mostly centered on slow, misdirected or damaged shipments, problematic return policies and indifferent responses to complaints. Although most rated customer service highly, several commented that Amazon could stand some improvement in the empathy department, suggesting that its customer service style was perhaps a bit lacking in the human touch.

The most pronounced areas of weakness, perhaps ironically, concerned Amazon's search function and web design. We asked, on an open-ended basis, whether there was something Amazon should change, the most common response was related to site navigation and easier sorting and filtering of search results, which some find overwhelming. Better graphics, simpler page designs and faster shipping also came up, and few respondents pined for Amazon retail showrooms.

All in all, however, customers overwhelmingly feel well served and Amazon is riding high. ■

Complete Results:

<http://hubmagazine.com/amazons-zone>