

The Subscription Economy

There's a price to pay for convenience.

We don't subscribe to a fork or a spoon. But, if I sign up for snacks, razors, or underwear and my subscriptions run out, I'll be hungry, scruffy, and free-balling.

Although subscription models often make a product or service more accessible, the clear benefit to the producer is liquidity. And, while many consumers subscribe to and renew services they've forgotten or aren't aware of, we can only afford so many before we must ask ourselves what's worth owning or doing ourselves.

Ownership allows us to operate with fewer dependencies, but also with greater privacy. For example, insurance companies offer incentives to share driving data, and they have a history of haunting us over pre-existing conditions. Subscriptions blur the lines of ownership, data, and identity, so we willingly blow past the fine print and forfeit our privacy through social media, phones, and digital currency.

Imagine if self-driving electric cars become the norm and the cost of ownership goes so high that the average person has no choice but to subscribe. Especially when labor and the supply chain are being throttled. By the same token, low housing inventory drives up rental pricing, with cash buyers dominating the market.

Wanna join the 21st century? Sign up for a "subscription" infrastructure plan. No hidden fees, cancel anytime you're ready to return to the Stone Age.

But, let's not get too carried away over the widening gaps in ownership and privacy in exchange for increasingly disposable goods and services, lest we overlook the value of personalization for delivering us satisfaction.

I might prefer to subscribe to a girlfriend. A wife and kids sound like a Ponzi scheme.

And, I wouldn't rule out a mind or body subscription. Genetics, mecha, or metaverse. We already exchange our souls regularly.

Even God offers a subscription plan, but I forgot and let mine run out. My bad, God, I was worried about privacy. Dammit, I should've renewed. It's easy to treat one's conscience like a telemarketer, screening and not returning calls. Even if I'd picked up, it sounds like a scam. "World without end?" Click.

Timelessness.

Wait...a subscription to time! Who owns time?

They say time is money, but they can't print more time. I guess the next closest thing is credit. Borrowed time; just put it on the card.

Tick, tick, tick...