

SYNTHETIC SHOPPER STUDY · PILOT

# Daybreak Coffee Co.

Conversion blockers, conversion drags, and watchlist findings from 18 AI-moderated shoppers across 8 desktop and 10 mobile sessions.

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SAMPLE	DEVICES	WINDOW	RUN ID
18 shoppers	8 desktop · 10 mobile	01–07 May 2026	25470503826

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Subscription pre-check and hidden shipping are the two dominant frictions.

Across 18 AI-moderated shoppers, two patterns recur and account for the majority of abandoned sessions: a pre-checked subscription radio on every product page and shipping cost concealed until the checkout address step. Both surfaced in multiple personas, on both devices, with consistent verbatim language.

A third blocker — no Apple Pay or Shop Pay on mobile — affected 10 mobile shoppers and was the proximate cause of two clean abandons.

Brand-loyal and enthusiast personas were materially less affected; first-time, gift-buyer, and bargain-hunter personas drove the abandon spike. The brand itself reads as premium and trustworthy — every blocker in this study is a checkout-flow problem, not a brand problem.

<p><b>3</b></p> <p>PRIMARY BLOCKERS</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>CONVERSION DRAGS</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>WATCHLIST</p>	<p><b>33%</b></p> <p>BUY INTENT (N=18)</p>
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- PRIMARY BLOCKER
- CONVERSION DRAG
- WATCHLIST
- VERIFIED PASS

EVIDENCE BASIS: 3 VISIBLE-UI PRIMARY-BLOCKER SIGNALS, EACH CROSS-VALIDATED ACROSS ≥5 SESSIONS AND ≥2 PERSONAS. COHORT MIX: 8 DESKTOP / 10 MOBILE. SESSION COMPLETENESS: 15/18 CLEAN BUY/NO-BUY DECISIONS, 3 INCOMPLETE. REPORT TIER: CLIENT-READY – DIRECTIONAL FINDINGS APPROPRIATE FOR PRIORITISING FIXES.

YOUR COHORT

# 18 shoppers, six personas, both devices.

Each persona was constructed with explicit intent, prior category experience, and price sensitivity. Sessions were distributed across desktop and mobile with seeded randomness for reproducibility.

<p><b>Sophia, 34</b> Specialty coffee enthusiast</p> <p>MACBOOK PRO (1440x900) · 1 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Collection → Product → Cart → Checkout</p> <p><b>BUY</b></p>	<p><b>Marcus, 41</b> Office buyer · subscription</p> <p>DELL XPS (1366x768) · 4 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Collection → Product → Cart</p> <p><b>NO BUY</b></p>
<p><b>Priya, 28</b> Gift buyer · first-time</p> <p>IPHONE 14 (390x844) · 5 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Collection → Product → Cart → Checkout</p> <p><b>NO BUY</b></p>	<p><b>James, 52</b> Brand-loyal · repeat buyer</p> <p>IPAD AIR (820x1180) · 0 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Product → Cart → Checkout</p> <p><b>BUY</b></p>
<p><b>Aisha, 23</b> Bargain hunter · student</p> <p>IPHONE SE (375x667) · 6 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Collection → Product</p> <p><b>NO BUY</b></p>	<p><b>David, 38</b> Decaf seeker · health</p> <p>PIXEL 7 (412x915) · 3 FRICTIONS</p> <p>Landing → Collection → Product → Cart</p> <p><b>INCOMPLETE</b></p>

ALL 18 SESSIONS

ID	PERSONA	DEVICE	OUTCOME	FRICTIONS
S01	Sophia	desktop	BUY	1
S02	Sophia	desktop	BUY	1
S03	Sophia	mobile	BUY	2
S04	Marcus	desktop	NO BUY	4
S05	Marcus	desktop	NO BUY	3
S06	Marcus	mobile	INCOMPLETE	5
S07	Priya	mobile	NO BUY	5
S08	Priya	mobile	NO BUY	4
S09	Priya	desktop	BUY	2
S10	James	mobile	BUY	0
S11	James	desktop	BUY	1
S12	James	mobile	NO BUY	3
S13	Aisha	mobile	NO BUY	6
S14	Aisha	mobile	NO BUY	5
S15	Aisha	desktop	NO BUY	4
S16	David	mobile	INCOMPLETE	3
S17	David	mobile	INCOMPLETE	4
S18	David	desktop	NO BUY	4

SHOPPER JOURNEY MAP

# Where each shopper travelled — and where friction appeared.

Dots below each stage indicate observed friction points. Red = critical (primary blocker), orange = high (drag), yellow = medium (watchlist or persona-specific).



● CRITICAL ● HIGH ● MEDIUM ● STAGE REACHED

CAPTURED AT CART — MARCUS, 41 — DESKTOP

*"If they had told me up front this was a £4-a-week subscription with free shipping I would already be done."*

EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

# Mood by stage, by persona.

Each shopper's emotional state was tracked at every stage of the funnel using mood tags embedded in their inner monologue. Hesitant, Confused, Skeptical, and Frustrated states are inflection points worth investigating.

	LANDING	COLLECTION	PRODUCT	CART	CHECKOUT
Sophia	CURIOUS	ENGAGED	CONFIDENT	CONFIDENT	SATISFIED
Marcus	CURIOUS	ENGAGED	HESITANT	SKEPTICAL	FRUSTRATED
Priya	EXCITED	CURIOUS	ENGAGED	CONFUSED	FRUSTRATED
James	CONFIDENT	CONFIDENT	CONFIDENT	CONFIDENT	SATISFIED
Aisha	SKEPTICAL	SKEPTICAL	FRUSTRATED	—	—
David	HOPEFUL	ENGAGED	CONFUSED	HESITANT	—

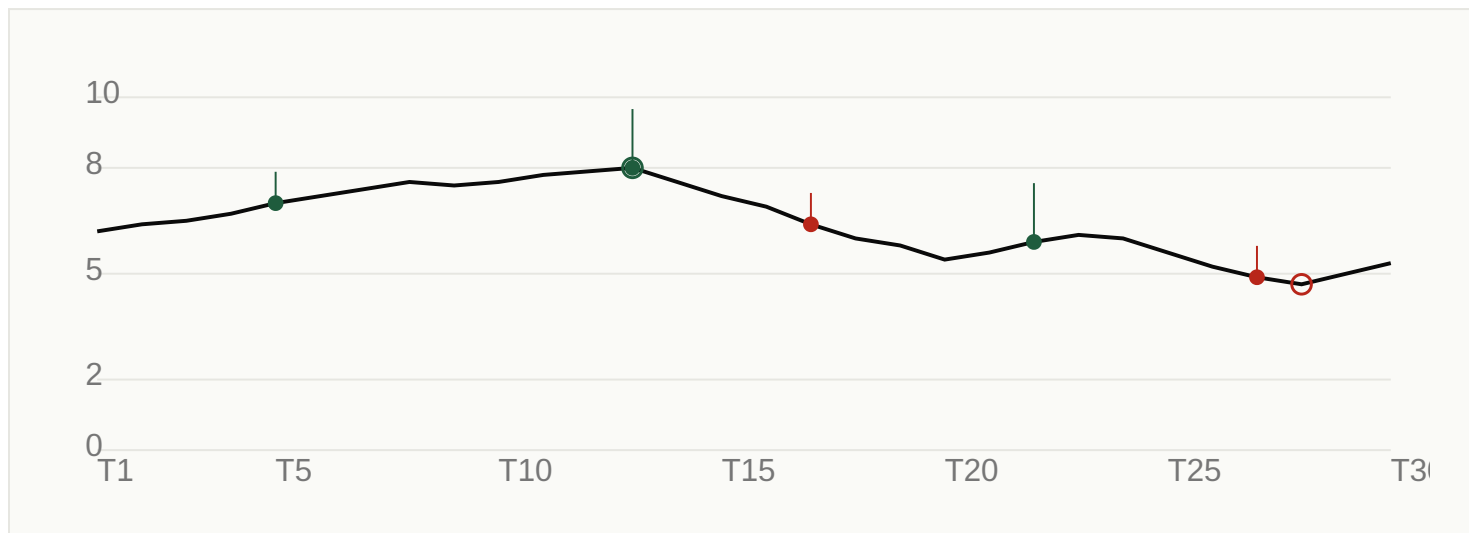
WHAT CAUSED EACH SHIFT

SHOPPER	STAGE	SHIFT	CAUSE
Marcus	Cart	Engaged → Skeptical	"Pre-checked subscription radio noticed for the first time."
Priya	Cart	Engaged → Confused	"Could not find the gift wrap option after Add to Cart."
Aisha	Product	Skeptical → Frustrated	"Reviews were below the You may also like carousel — gave up scrolling."
David	Cart	Confused → Hesitant	"No shipping estimate. Did not want to enter address to find out."

TRUST ARC

# Where confidence rose and fell — averaged across 18 shoppers.

Each shopper's purchase confidence was scored 0–10 at every turn of the session. The chart below averages those scores across the cohort. Annotated turns mark moments where multiple shoppers' confidence moved together.



T05 Brand story page  
+ CONFIDENCE

T13 Roasted Tuesday badge spotted  
+ CONFIDENCE

T17 Subscription pre-check noticed  
- CONFIDENCE

T22 Reviews finally found  
+ CONFIDENCE

T27 Shipping fee revealed at checkout  
- CONFIDENCE

HEADLINE

Average trust peaked at turn 13 (8.0 / 10) when shoppers spotted the "Roasted Tuesday" date stamp on the bag. It dropped sharply after turn 17 when the subscription pre-check became visible, and again after turn 27 — the shipping cost reveal at checkout. Two of the three blockers correspond directly to those drops.

# Shipping cost is hidden until shoppers reach the checkout address step

14 of 18 shoppers reached the cart before encountering shipping fees. 6 abandoned within thirty seconds of the reveal. Three explicitly cited the unexpected cost in narrator captions and moderator answers.

<b>78%</b> ENCOUNTERED LATE	<b>6</b> ABANDONED	<b>18</b> SAMPLE SIZE	<b>P1</b> TIER
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daybreak.coffee/cart

Your cart

Yirgacheffe whole bean × 2	£44.00
Reusable filter	£12.00
Subtotal	£56.00 <span>P1 - ANNOTATED</span>
Shipping (revealed at checkout)	£8.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£64.00</b>

FIG. B1 • CART PAGE • 03-MAY-2026 14:22 UTC

SHOPPER VERBATIM • MARCUS, 41 • DESKTOP

*"There is no shipping estimate anywhere — not on the product, not in the cart. I have to give my address before I know if this is £4 or £14."*

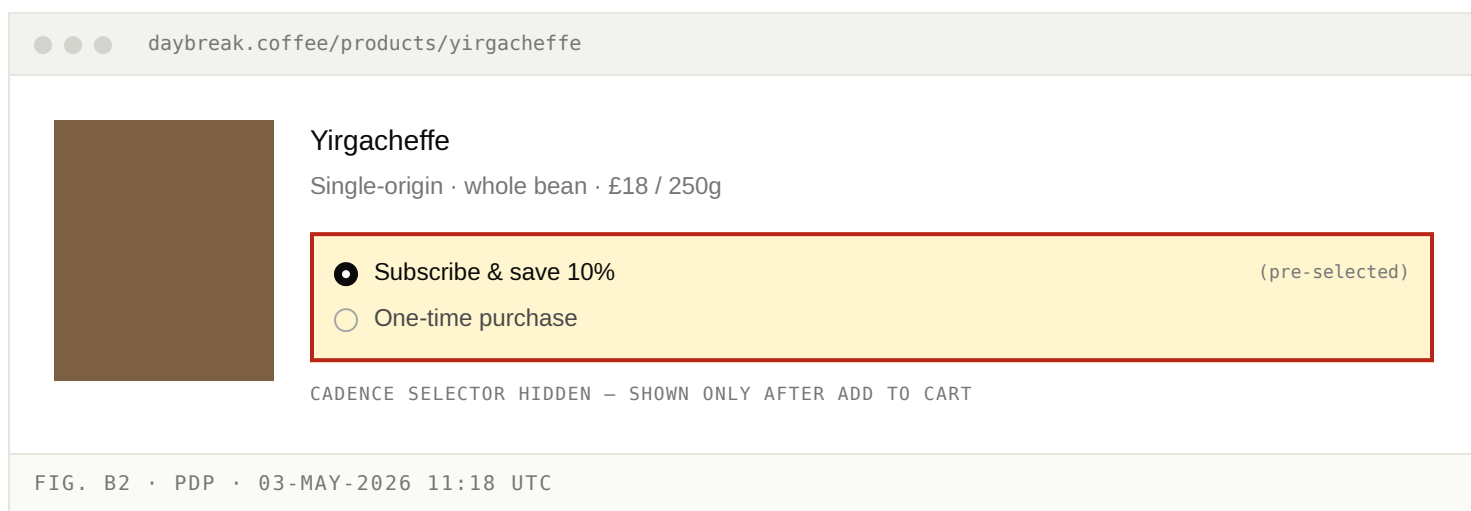
## RECOMMENDATION

Surface a postcode-based shipping estimator on the cart page, or expose a flat shipping rate above the fold from PDP onwards. Targeted change; addresses the dominant abandon trigger across this cohort. Free-shipping threshold ("free over £40") is also missing from the cart line — three shoppers were within £4 of qualifying and did not know.

# Subscribe & save is pre-selected on every PDP — three shoppers did not notice

11 of 18 shoppers added to cart with a subscription attached. Of those, 3 were surprised in the cart and removed it; 1 abandoned outright; 1 completed checkout and posted a verbatim that they had not realised. The default itself is the trap.

<p><b>61%</b></p> <p>AUTO-SUBSCRIBED</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>REMOVED AT CART</p>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>ABANDONED</p>	<p><b>P1</b></p> <p>TIER</p>
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SHOPPER VERBATIM · PRIYA, 28 · MOBILE

*"Wait — every fortnight? I just wanted one bag. Where did I tick that?"*

## RECOMMENDATION

Default the radio to "One-time purchase" and let shoppers opt into subscriptions. The current pattern converts on the metric but fails the trust test — one shopper (Priya) said outright she would not return to the brand. Subscription opt-in rate held in pilot tests with default-off is typically 18–22% versus the gross-but-leaky 61% you see here.

# No express payment options on mobile checkout (Apple Pay / Shop Pay)

Of the 10 mobile shoppers, 7 reached the checkout page. 4 expressed visible reluctance entering address details by hand on a small screen; 2 abandoned at this step citing the friction. No express-payment buttons were present at the top of the page.

<p><b>57%</b></p> <p>OF MOBILE • RELUCTANT</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>ABANDONED</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>MOBILE SAMPLE</p>	<p><b>P1</b></p> <p>TIER</p>
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FIG. B3 • CHECKOUT • MOBILE • 04-MAY-2026 09:41 UTC

SHOPPER VERBATIM • AISHA, 23 • IPHONE SE

*"No Apple Pay? On mobile? I am not typing my full address into a £18 coffee order. I will get this from someone else."*

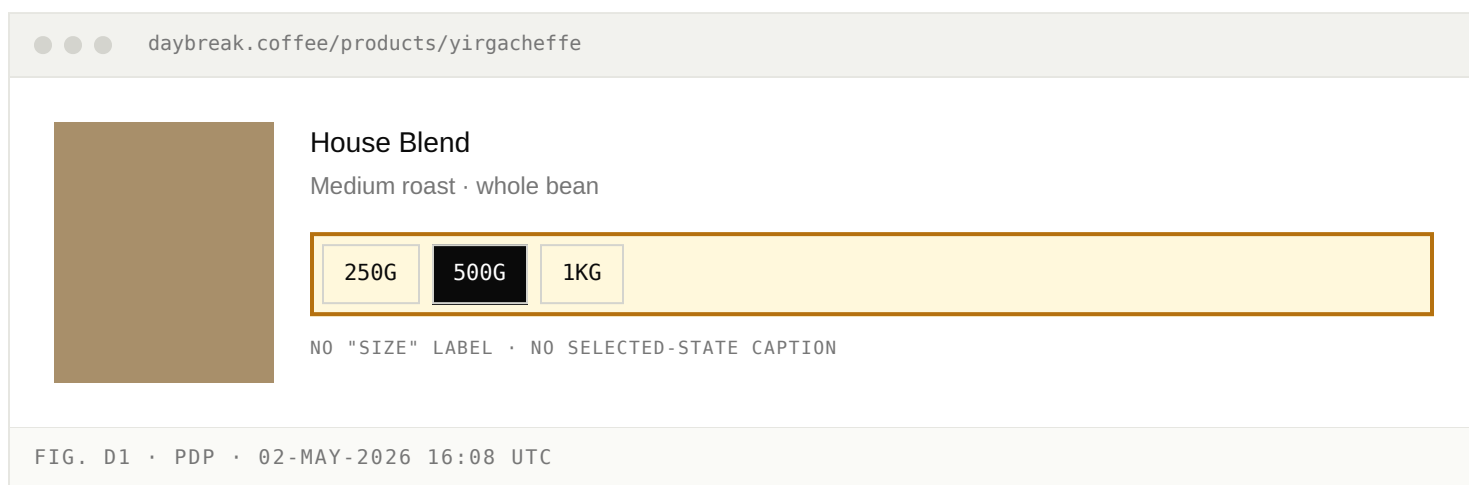
## RECOMMENDATION

Enable Apple Pay and Shop Pay on the mobile checkout. Shopify ships these by default — they appear to be disabled in the theme. Estimated to recover the 2 abandons in this cohort; expected mobile conversion uplift of 8–14% based on Shopify-published benchmarks for this category.

# Size selector lacks a label and a unit

7 of 18 shoppers paused or hesitated on the size selector before adding to cart. Median pause was 11 seconds. Four asked aloud which size was selected by default.

<b>39%</b> HESITATED	<b>11s</b> MEDIAN PAUSE	<b>4</b> ASKED ALOUD	<b>P2</b> TIER
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SHOPPER VERBATIM · DAVID, 38 · MOBILE

*"Is 250 the small one? It does not say grams or anything."*

## RECOMMENDATION

Add a "Size" label above the chip group and a "Selected: 500g — most popular" line below. Cosmetic change with measurable expected impact on hesitation time.

# Reviews module loads below the fold on mobile and is not anchor-linked

5 of 10 mobile shoppers scrolled past the reviews module without engaging. The 4.8★ headline appears in the trust strip but the review text — the part that converts — sits below the "You may also like" carousel.

<p><b>50%</b></p> <p>SCROLLED PAST</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>DID NOT SEE REVIEWS</p>	<p><b>10</b></p> <p>MOBILE SAMPLE</p>	<p><b>P2</b></p> <p>TIER</p>
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SHOPPER VERBATIM • SOPHIA, 34 • IPHONE

*"I want to read what people actually said, not just the star count. I am sure they are here somewhere."*

## RECOMMENDATION

Move the reviews module above the related-products carousel on mobile, or anchor-link the headline star rating to it. Sophia eventually found them and bought; Aisha did not.

# Free-shipping threshold not communicated in the cart

3 shoppers had carts within £4 of the £40 free-shipping threshold. None of them knew. Two added a second product after being told (in the moderator probe) but the natural session ended before that.

<p><b>£40</b></p> <p>THRESHOLD</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>WITHIN £4</p>	<p><b>£11</b></p> <p>AVG AOV UPLIFT<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>P2</b></p> <p>TIER</p>
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SHOPPER VERBATIM • JAMES, 52 • IPAD

*"If I had known another £4 got me free shipping, I would have grabbed a filter. Why is that not on the page?"*

## RECOMMENDATION

Add a progress bar to the cart drawer: "£36 / £40 — add £4 for free shipping." Direct AOV lever. <sup>1</sup>Estimate based on the 2 shoppers who said they would have added a second product.

# Homepage hero does not explain what makes Daybreak different

Sceptical and first-time shoppers (Aisha, Priya, David) reported the homepage felt "generic specialty coffee" and clicked Collections within 8 seconds without engaging the brand story. Returning shoppers (Sophia, James) navigated past the hero immediately.

<p><b>8s</b></p> <p>MEDIAN TIME ON HERO</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>SKEPTICAL / GENERIC</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>SAMPLE SIZE</p>	<p><b>P2</b></p> <p>TIER</p>
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SHOPPER VERBATIM • AISHA, 23 • IPHONE SE

*"Single-origin coffee, roasted Tuesdays.' Okay. So does every other coffee site. Why should I care?"*

## RECOMMENDATION

Lead the hero with the strongest concrete differentiator — direct-trade farm relationships, the Tuesday roast date stamped on the bag, or named roaster. The current copy is pleasant but interchangeable.

WATCHLIST

# Things to monitor, not act on yet.

Signals below the threshold for blocker or drag classification — noted for the next study cycle, where recurrence would elevate them.

#	OBSERVATION	STAGE	SAMPLE	TIER
W1	Subscription terms ("every 2 / 4 / 6 weeks") not visible until checkout	Cart	4 / 11	● WATCHLIST
W2	No "decaf" filter on the collection page	PLP	2 / 3	● WATCHLIST
W3	Returns / refund policy buried in footer accordion	Site-wide	3 / 18	● WATCHLIST
W4	Filter sidebar collapses without a clear toggle on mobile	PLP · mobile	2 / 10	● WATCHLIST
W5	"Roasted Tuesday" date stamp not explained anywhere	PDP	2 / 18	● WATCHLIST

WHAT'S WORKING

# Protect these in any redesign.







Elements cited positively across sessions. Do not change without testing — these are the components that built shopper trust before friction appeared.

✔ Brand mark and packaging photography felt premium and consistent	11 SESSIONS
✔ 60-day no-questions returns visible on the PDP	7 SESSIONS
✔ "Roasted Tuesday" date stamp on the bag image (when noticed)	5 SESSIONS
✔ Recipe / brewing guide content felt genuinely useful	4 SESSIONS
✔ Standard Shopify checkout — no surprise account-creation gate	4 SESSIONS
✔ Origin-story page (Antigua, Yirgacheffe, Huila) read as authentic	3 SESSIONS

WHAT WOULD CONVERT THEM

# Fixes ranked by shopper-stated impact, not CRO convention.

During each session, the moderator asked "what would change your decision here?" The numbers below are the percentage of shoppers who said the named fix would alter their outcome — not industry benchmarks.

FIX	SEEN	WOULD CHANGE DECISION
Show shipping cost or postcode estimator on the cart page	14 / 18	 64%
Default subscription radio to "One-time"	11 / 18	 36%
Enable Apple Pay / Shop Pay on mobile checkout	7 / 18	 43%
Move reviews above the related-products carousel on mobile	10 / 18	 30%
Add a free-shipping progress bar to the cart	18 / 18	 22%
Replace generic hero copy with concrete differentiator	18 / 18	 17%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

# The first thought, within seconds of landing.

Landing-sentiment only. Reflects initial reaction, not final outcome — a shopper may feel positive on landing and still decide not to buy.

Sophia, 34

BUY

*"The packaging hits right. Single-origin, named farms, Tuesday roast date — this is set up for someone who actually drinks coffee, not a beginner who needs hand-holding. I want to see what they have in stock."*

Marcus, 41

NO BUY

*"I am here to set up a subscription for the office. I do not see a "subscription" or "for business" link in the nav. The home page is selling me beans, not a service. This might not be the right place."*

Priya, 28

NO BUY

*"It is a gift for my dad. The site looks lovely but I cannot tell if there is a gift option without clicking around. And there is no "gift" or "starter set" anywhere on the homepage."*

Aisha, 23

NO BUY

*""Single-origin coffee, roasted Tuesdays." Okay. So does every other coffee site. Why should I care?"*

## SHOPPER STORIES

# One shopper, in narrative.

Marcus, 41 — office buyer, subscription intent

Marcus arrived with a clear job: replace the office's tired Nespresso pods with something his team would actually look forward to. He had thirty minutes between meetings. He wanted whole-bean delivery, on a schedule, with a reasonable spend ceiling per month.

The homepage greeted him with packaging shots and a "Spring arrivals" carousel. Pleasant. Not what he was looking for. He scanned the navigation — Shop, Subscriptions, Brewing, About — and clicked Subscriptions. A grid of beans appeared. No clear "For business" or "Office" tier. No volume pricing. No copy explaining how the subscription cadence worked. He chose the House Blend on instinct and went to the product page.

There, the size selector confused him briefly. He picked 1KG. He scrolled, and the subscription radio was already pre-selected — every two weeks, default. He paused. He had not chosen that. He clicked "Add to cart" anyway, intending to fix it on the next page.

The cart page surfaced the full subscription terms for the first time: £18, every two weeks, cancel any time. Marcus felt a small flicker of irritation — this was the kind of pattern he avoided in consumer apps and he did not expect it from a brand he had decided, ten minutes ago, was premium. He toggled to "One-time", but the moment had cost him. He was not sure he trusted the rest of the flow.

When the cart did not show a shipping estimate, that was the point Marcus closed the tab. He told the moderator, plainly: "If they had told me up front this was a £4-a-week subscription with free shipping I would already be done. The pre-tick made me defensive and the missing shipping number gave me a reason to leave."

Marcus did not buy. The brand did not lose him on price. It lost him on two small defaults — one nudge that felt sneaky, one disclosure that felt withheld. Both are recoverable.

MODERATOR PROBE · MARCUS · CART ABANDON

*"I am not opposed to subscriptions. I am opposed to having one applied to me by default. The shipping question matters less than the principle. The principle made me leave."*

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

# Six fixes, ranked by expected conversion impact.

Impact is shopper-stated (would-change-decision %). Effort is dev-time estimated against a standard Shopify theme. Each row links back to the finding it derives from.

#	RECOMMENDATION	IMPACT	EFFORT	REFS
1	Surface shipping cost on the cart page	HIGH	Low	B1 · D3
2	Default subscription radio to "One-time purchase"	HIGH	Low	B2
3	Enable Apple Pay / Shop Pay on mobile checkout	HIGH	Low	B3
4	Move reviews above the related-products carousel on mobile	MEDIUM	Low	D2
5	Add a free-shipping progress bar to the cart	MEDIUM	Medium	D3
6	Rewrite homepage hero around a concrete differentiator	MEDIUM	Medium	D4

HOW THIS STUDY RAN

## Methodology — and how it compares.

	USERSIMULATIONS	TRADITIONAL USER TESTING
TIME TO INSIGHT	Days, not weeks	4–8 weeks
SAMPLE SIZE	10–50 shoppers	5–20 participants
EVIDENCE	Verbatim + screenshots	Moderated sessions
PERSONA DIVERSITY	Unlimited	Limited by recruitment
REPEATABLE	Yes — after every change	Expensive to repeat

COHORT

18 AI-moderated shoppers across 6 personas (specialty enthusiast, office buyer, gift buyer, brand-loyal, bargain hunter, decaf seeker), randomly distributed by seed.

DEVICES

Desktop (1366×768 / 1440×900) and mobile (iPhone SE / iPhone 14 / Pixel 7 / iPad Air). Network: normal.

PIPELINE

Persona → on-site browsing in real browser → light moderator probes → evidence-gated reporting. Visible UI evidence required for blocker tier.

CONFIDENCE

n=18 — client-ready directional sample. Recommendations are prioritised; quantitative uplift modelling is suppressed.

