



May 2020

Make Amazon Your Servant, Not Your Master

Lisa Takabori

Brigham Young University, Provo, lctakabori@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview>



Part of the [Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons](#), [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#), [E-Commerce Commons](#), and the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#)

Marriott Student Review is a student journal created and published as a project for the Writing for Business Communications course at Brigham Young University (BYU). The views expressed in Marriott Student Review are not necessarily endorsed by BYU or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Recommended Citation

Takabori, Lisa (2020) "Make Amazon Your Servant, Not Your Master," *Marriott Student Review*. Vol. 3 : Iss. 4 , Article 36.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview/vol3/iss4/36>

This Blog is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marriott Student Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

MAKE AMAZON YOUR SERVANT, NOT YOUR MASTER

By Lisa Takabori



After hours of sifting through reviews for electric kettles, I still couldn't decide what I should add to my Amazon wedding registry. I had always imagined Amazon to be a place where I could buy items inexpensively, quickly, and easily. However, the Amazon I thought I knew has become home to a whole new shopping experience.



Figure 1 Source: Feedvisor, "The 2019 Amazon Consumer Behavior Report"

Though Amazon has over 150 million paying subscribers in the U.S. alone,¹ the advantages of buying from Amazon are starting to become more imaginative than real. In a majority of cases, shopping from a local brick-and-mortar Target is more beneficial to shoppers than ordering from Amazon. This report discusses the following points on why consumers should break out of the habit of using Amazon every time they need to make a purchase:

- Price
- Reliability
- Selection Size
- Convenience

PRICE

Amazon first got a name for itself through its low prices, and the reputation for inexpensiveness carries on today. As Figure 1 (to the right) shows, 82% of Amazon shoppers consider price to be “extremely important” when making purchasing decisions.² However, well-known brands sell their products in physical stores with prices that are the same, or even cheaper, compared to Amazon. For example, a Hamilton Beach 1L Electric Kettle costs \$29.99 on Amazon, but only \$24.99 at Target.

Amazon still may be a more affordable option if reputable brand names are of no consequence to the shopper. Amazon gives easy access to thousands of third-party sellers who tend to sell their products at a much less expensive rate. The cheapest electric kettle on Amazon is \$9.99, as opposed to Target’s \$14.99. Unfortunately, that price difference comes with trade-offs, and the lower quality may be disappointing when the customer opens the package.

RELIABILITY

The disappointment of not getting what is expected upon arrival of a purchase is becoming a more common experience for Amazon users.

Marc Bain, reporter for business news organization *Quartz*, addresses how Amazon is losing the ability to monitor the products being sold on its website.³ The situation stems from millions of third-party sellers supplying the majority of items listed on the e-commerce website. These third-party sellers get away with buying reviews and selling counterfeit items because they get hidden in the vastness of Amazon Marketplace.

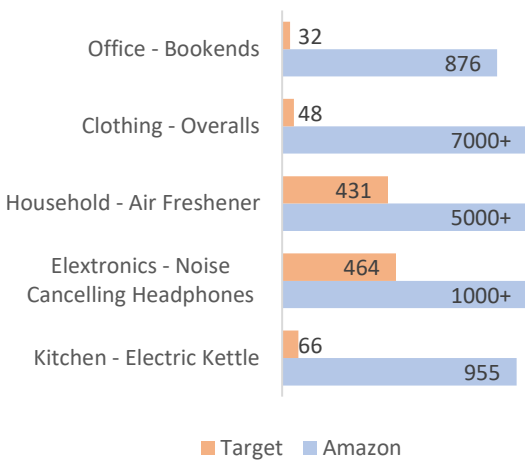
On the other hand, stores such as Target and Walmart are fully responsible for their product sourcing. Though not every third-party seller on Amazon sells faulty products, Target’s meticulous process to approve of all its products boosts its reliability.

Another benefit of shopping smaller is that their products are all controlled for quality. Amazon’s large inventory makes it difficult to control all of its products. However, this larger selection size may be attractive to shoppers, regardless of the quality unpredictability it carries with it.

SELECTION SIZE

Why did I take hours to find a suitable electric kettle on Amazon? The answer lies in the number of products available. Figure 2 (see below) illustrates how, in five different items of completely separate departments, Amazon outranks Target by hundreds (and sometimes thousands) of products.

Figure 2: Amazon Has Hundreds More in Selection Size Than Target



Source: Target.com, Amazon.com

Janelle Nanos, business reporter for the *Boston Globe*, explains that when one is faced with too many purchasing options, a decision to make becomes overwhelming, a shopping list takes longer to check off, and the final decision may still leave the shopper disappointed.⁴

In a local store, customers are limited to what they see. Deciding what is best out of five options is easier, quicker, and much less stressful than having to decide what is best out of five thousand.

Amazon may still be the best way to go when looking for a niche product or something that is hard to find locally. But when looking for basic items, local retail stores and their websites will craft a more enjoyable shopping experience.

Not only is shopping locally more enjoyable because one can avoid decision- fatigue, but it is also more convenient than many think.

CONVENIENCE

With Amazon’s “Buy Now” button, one can make a purchase with just a few clicks and shortly have the item at their home-- without even getting up from the couch!

However, while Amazon feels convenient, competitors aren’t being left behind so easily.

More and more retail stores are offering services such as in-store or curbside pick- up and free delivery on purchases over \$25. For busy people who need items as quickly as possible and are constantly on the go, ordering an item on Target’s website and getting it brought to

their car is a much simpler option than waiting several days and hoping the package doesn't get stolen before getting home.

In addition, *Wall Street Journal's* Katherine Bindley recommends being aware that, contrary to popular belief, not every item on Amazon includes free two-day shipping.⁵ The idea of Amazon's convenience may be exaggerated in the minds of many shoppers.

CONCLUSION

Had I known that Amazon wasn't all I thought it to be, I might have had more fun creating a wedding registry by choosing different stores to shop from. I might have found better prices, felt confident in my selection, and spent less time browsing. Furthermore, my overall pre-wedding stress could have been reduced, and I could have had more time to enjoy the excitement of getting married. I chose Amazon because it was what I was used to, but other stores could have gotten the job done just as well, if not better.

Despite its features being overrated, Amazon can still be the best source for good deals, depending on the needs of the shopper. Shoppers should use Amazon when it is advantageous for themselves, but they shouldn't let the habit of Amazon keep them from finding a better way to spend their time and money.

1 "Amazon.com Announces Fourth Quarter Sales up 21% to \$87.4 Billion," Business Wire, last modified January 30, 2020

2 "The 2019 Amazon Consumer Behavior Report," Feedvisor, last modified March 19, 2019

3 Marc Bain, "Amazon's Unruly third-party marketplace now sells more stuff than Amazon itself," Quartz, last modified April 19, 2018

4 Janelle Nanos, "Reviews to consider. Coupons to find. For many online shoppers, FOBO is real," Boston Globe, last modified December 23, 2019

5 Katherine Bindley, "Don't Just 'Buy Now'! When Shopping on Amazon, You Need to Pay Attention," Wall Street Journal, last modified March 26, 2019