

Amazon: a smile that goes from A to Z

Amazon.com is the biggest internet retailer in the world. It sells books, music, films, household goods, electronics, toys and thousands of other goods online. The company has separate retail websites in 15 different countries, including the USA, the UK and Italy. In the USA, Amazon sales represent nearly 50% of all e-commerce sales and 55% of Americans begin their product searches on the site.

But did you know that when Amazon started in 1995 it only sold books? The founder, Jeff Bezos, decided to set up an e-commerce site after reading a report that predicted an annual Web growth of 2,300%. He chose to focus on book sales because books were relatively cheap and there was a worldwide market for literature. At first the company operated out of a garage, but it soon had to relocate because of its success.

Within one month of launching the web site, Amazon.com had received orders from all US states and 45 other countries. It soon became the number one book-related site on the Web and a few years later it began to sell other products, including music, films, toys and the electronics.

When the dotcom bubble burst at the start of the new millennium, Amazon survived and prospered, while other start-ups failed, because of its clever business strategy. It cut down on marketing expenses and invested in keeping the customer happy, offering a vast selection of goods, discounted prices and cheap shipping. It also made its website as customer-friendly as possible with powerful search capabilities, easy categorisation and customer reviews of all of its products.

In the years that followed, Amazon expanded at an incredible rate. It launched Amazon Marketplace, a platform that allows independent retailers to sell directly to customers through the Amazon system; it started to offer cloud computing services via its Amazon Web Services platform, and it even started an online fresh food delivery service, Amazon Fresh. In the 2007, the launch of its Kindle ebook made it easier for people to buy and download electronic books and changed the way many people read.

Today, Amazon has conquered online retail and is starting to challenge brick-and-mortar retailers in a more direct way.

In 2017, it bought Whole Foods, a high-end supermarket chain with over 400 stores. It also recently launched its own store, Amazon Go, a new kind of shop with no check-out. Amazon Go app users simply enter the store, take the products they want and walk out. Their purchases are automatically scanned and charged to their accounts.

Amazon has already revolutionised e-commerce. Will it now do the same to the High Street?

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