In 2011, Amazon had 30,000 full-time employees in the USA and by the end of 2016, it had 180,000 employees. The company employs 306,800 people worldwide in full and part-time jobs.

In early 2017, Amazon surpassed Walmart as the most valuable retailer in the United States by market capitalization,[41] and was in the third quarter of 2016 the fourth most valuable public company.[42]

Contents

History

Further information: Timeline of Amazon.com

Amazon was founded in 1994, spurred by what Amazon founder Jeff Bezos called his "regret minimization framework," which described his efforts to fend off any regrets for not participating sooner in the Internet business boom during that time.[31] In 1994, Bezos left his employment as vice-president of D. E. Shaw & Co., a Wall Street firm and moved to Seattle. He began to work on a business plan for what would eventually become Amazon.com.

Bezos incorporated the company as "Cadabra" on July 5, 1994. [34] Bezos changed the name to Amazon a year later after a lawyer mishandled its original name as "cadaver".[34] In September 1994, Bezos purchased the URL Relentless.com and briefly considered naming his online store Relentless, but friends told him the sound was a bit sinister. The domain is still owned by Bezos and still redirects to the retailer.

The company went online as Amazon.com in 1995.[35] Bezos selected the name Amazon by looking through the dictionary and settled on "Amazon" because it was a place that was "exotic and different" just as he envisioned for his Internet enterprise, the Amazon river, he noted was by far the "biggest" river in the world and he planned to make his store the "biggest" in the world.[36] Bezos placed a premium on his head start in building a brand, telling a reporter, "There's nothing about our model that can't be copied over time. But you know, it sounded a bit sinister. The domain is still owned by Bezos and still redirects to the retailer.

The company began as an online bookstore, an idea spurred off with discussion with Jeff Bezos in 1990, but the dot-com bubble burst at the start of the 21st century, destroying many e-companies in the process, Amazon survived and grew on past the bubble burst to become a huge player in online sales. It finally turned its first profit in the fourth quarter of 2001: $5 million (i.e., 1¢ per share), on revenues of more than $1 billion. This profit margin, though extremely modest, proved to become a huge player in online sales. It finally turned its first profit in the fourth quarter of 2001: $5 million (i.e., 1¢ per share), on revenues of more than $1 billion. This profit margin, though extremely modest, proved to

Investment

• 2008: Engine Yard, a Ruby-on-Rails platform as a service (Paasly) company[44]
2007, the site had over 650,000 members and over 10,000,000 books had been added. Amazon bought the company in March 2013.

Goodreads is a "social cataloging" website founded in December 2006 and launched in January 2007 by Otis Chandler, a software engineer and entrepreneur and now owned by Amazon. Goodreads is a website for booklovers that allows members to share their reading histories and have the ability to stop by someone else's page to see what they have read. It also has a "wish list" function where members can register books to generate library catalogs and reading lists. They can also create their own groups of book suggestions and discussions. In December 2007, the site had over 650,000 members and over 10,000,000 books had been added. Amazon bought the company in March 2013.

Subsidiaries

- 2003: A9.com, a company focused on researching and building innovative technology.
- 2004: Lab26, developers of integrated consumer electronics such as the Kindle.
- 2009: CreateSpace, self-publishing services for independent content creators, publishers, film studios and music labels; created by internal merger of CustomFlix (on-demand DVDs for independent filmmakers) and BookSurge (self-publishing, on-demand printing, online distribution), both originally acquired 2005.
- Amazon owns over 40 subsidiaries, including Zappos, Shopbop, Diapers.com, Kiva Systems, Goodreads, Teachstreet and IMDb.

Board of directors

As of February 2016, the board of directors is:
- Jeff Bezos, President, CEO and Chairman
- Tom Alberg, Managing partner, Madrona Venture Group
- John Seely Brown, Visiting Scholar and Advisor to the Provost at University of Southern California
- Bing Gordon, partner, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers
- Jamie Gorelick, partner, Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr
- Judy McGrath, former CEO, MTV Networks
- Alain Monié, CEO, Ingram Micro
- Jon Rubinstein, former Chairman and CEO, Palm, Inc.
- Thomas O. Ryder, former Chairman and CEO, Reader's Digest Association
- Patty Stonesifer, President and CEO, Mathfor America
- Wendell P. Weeks, Chairman, President and CEO, Corning Inc.

Merchant partnerships

Until June 30, 2006, typing ToysRUs into a browser would bring up Amazon.com's "Toys & Games" tab; however, this relationship was terminated due to a lawsuit. Amazon also hosted and managed the website for Borders bookstores but this ceased in 2006. From 2001 until August 2011, Amazon hosted the retail website for Target.

Amazon operates retail websites for Sears Canada, bebe Stores, Marks & Spencer, Mothercare and Lacoste. For a growing number of enterprise clients, including the UK merchants Marks & Spencer, Benefit Cosmetics, UK entity, ekids.com and Mothercare, Amazon provides a unified multichannel platform where a customer can interact with the retail website, standalone in-store terminals, or phone-based customer service agents. Amazon Web Services also powers AOL's Shop@AOL.

On October 18, 2011, Amazon.com announced a partnership with D.C. Comics for the exclusive digital rights to many popular comics, including Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, The Sandman and Watchmen. The partnership has caused well-known bookstores like Barnes & Noble to remove these titles from their shelves.

On November 2013, Amazon.com announced a partnership with the United States Postal Service to begin delivering orders on Sundays. The service, included in Amazon's standard shipping rates, initiated in metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and New York due to the high-volume and inability to deliver timely, with plans to expand into Dallas, Houston, New Orleans and Phoenix by 2014.

On July 2016, Amazon.com announced a partnership with the U.K. Civil Aviation Authority to test some of the technologies and may use delivery service via prime air drone in the future.

Products and services

- Main article: List of Amazon.com products and services
- Amazon.com's product lines available at its website include several media (books, DVDs, music CDs, videotapes and software), apparel, baby products, consumer electronics, beauty products, gourmet food, groceries, health and personal-care items, industrial & scientific supplies, kitchen items, jewelry, watches, lawn and garden items, musical instruments, sporting goods, tools, automotive items and toys & games.
- In India, Amazon is now gearing up to play a role in the grocery retail sector aimed at delivering customer needs.
- Amazon.com has a number of products and services available, including but not limited to:
  - AmazonFresh
  - Amazon Prime
  - Amazon Web Services
  - Alexa
  - Appstore
  - Amazon Drive
  - Echo
  - Kindle
  - Fire tablets
  - Fire TV
  - Video
  - Kindle Store
  - Music
  - Music Unlimited
  - Amazon Digital Game Store
  - Amazon Studios
  - AmazonWireless

Subsidiaries

- See also: List of Amazon.com locations

Amazon Maritime, Inc.

Amazon Maritime, Inc. holds a Federal Maritime Commission licence to operate as a non-vessel owning common carrier (NVOCC), which enables the company to manage its own shipments from China into the United States.

Audible.com

Audible.com is a seller and producer of spoken audio entertainment, information and educational programming on the Internet. Audible sells digital audiobooks, radio and TV programs and audio versions of magazines and newspapers. Through its production arm, Audible Studios, Audible has also become the world's largest producer of downloadable audiobooks. On January 31, 2008, Amazon announced it would buy Audible for about $300 million. The deal closed in March 2008 and Audible became a subsidiary of Amazon.

Brilliance Audio

Brilliance Audio is an audiobook publisher founded in 1984 by Michael Snodgrass in Grand Haven, Michigan. The company produced its first 8 audio titles in 1985. The company was purchased by Amazon in 2007 for an undisclosed amount. At the time of the acquisition Brilliance was producing 12–15 new titles a month.

In 1984, Brilliance Audio invented a technique for recording twice as much on the same cassette. The technique involved recording on each of the two channels of each stereo track. It has been credited with revolutionizing the burgeoning audiobook market in the mid-1980s since it made unabridged books affordable.

ComiXology

ComiXology is a cloud-based digital comics platform with over 200 million comic downloads as of September 2013. It offers a selection of more than 40,000 comic books and graphic novels across Android, iOS, Fire OS and Windows 8 devices and over a web browser. Amazon bought the company in April 2014.

Goodreads

Goodreads is a "social cataloging" website founded in December 2006 and launched in January 2007 by Otis Chandler, a software engineer and entrepreneur and Elizabeth Chandler. The website allows individuals to freely search Goodreads' extensive user-populated database of books, annotations and reviews. Users can sign up and register books to generate library catalogs and reading lists. They can also create their own groups of book suggestions and discussions. In December 2007, the site had over 650,000 members and over 10,000,000 books had been added. Amazon bought the company in March 2013.
Beijing Century Joyo Courier Services

Beijing Century Joyo Courier Services is a subsidiary of Amazon and it applied for a Freight forwarding license with the US Maritime Commission. Amazon is also building out its logistics in tracking and air freight to potentially compete with UPS and FedEx.76

Website

The domain amazon.com attracted at least 615 million visitors annually by 2006.77 Amazon attracts over 130 million customers to its US website per month by the start of 2016.78

The company has also invested heavily on a massive amount of server capacity for its website, especially to handle the excessive traffic during the December Christmas shopping season.79

Results generated by Amazon's search engine are partly determined by promotional fees.80

Amazon's localized storefronts, which differ in selection and prices, are differentiated by top-level domain and country code:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sovereignty</th>
<th>Domain name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>china.amazon.com</td>
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<td></td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>brazil.amazon.com.br</td>
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Reviews

See also: Amazon.com controversies | Amazon reviews

Amazon allows users to submit reviews to the web page of each product. Reviewers must rate the product on a rating scale from one to five stars. Amazon provides a badging option for reviewers which indicate the real name of the reviewer (based on confirmation of a credit card account) or which indicate that the reviewer is one of the top reviewers by popularity. Customers may comment or vote on the reviews, indicating whether they found a review helpful to them. If a review is given enough "helpful" votes, it appears on the front page of the product. In 2010, Amazon was reported as being the largest single source of Internet consumer reviews.81

When publishers asked Bazos why Amazon would publish negative reviews, he defended the practice by claiming that Amazon.com was "taking a different approach ... we want to make every book available—the good, the bad and the ugly ... to let truth loose".82

Although reviews are attributed to the credit card name of the reviewer, there have been cases of positive reviews being written and posted by a public relations company on behalf of its clients,83 and instances of writers using pseudonyms to leave negative reviews of their rivals’ works.84

Following the listing of Untouchable: The Strange Life and Tragic Death of Michael Jackson, a disparaging biography of Michael Jackson by Randall Sullivan, his fans, organized via social media as “Michael Jackson’s Rapid Response Team to Media Attacks”, bombarded Amazon with negative reviews and negative ratings of positive reviews.85

Content search

"Search Inside the Book" is a feature which allows customers to search for keywords in the full text of many books in the catalog.86 The feature started with 120,000 titles (or 33 million pages of text) on October 23, 2003.87 There are about 300,000 books in the program. Amazon has cooperated with around 150 publishers to allow users to perform these searches.

To avoid copyright violations, Amazon does not return the computer-readable text of the book. Instead, it returns a picture of the matching page, instructs the web browser to disable printing and puts limits on the number of pages in a book a single user can access. Additionally, customers can purchase online access to some of the same books via the "Amazon Upgrade" program.

Third-party sellers

Amazon derives many of its sales from third-party sellers who sell products on Amazon (around 40% in 2006).88 Associates receive a commission for referring customers to Amazon by placing links to Amazon on their websites if the referral results in a sale. Worldwide, Amazon has "over 900,000 members" in its affiliate programs.89 In the middle of 2014, the Amazon Affiliate Program is used by 1.2% of all websites and it is the second most popular advertising network after Google Ads.90 It is frequently used by websites and non-profits to provide a way for supporters to earn them commission.91 Amazon reported over 1.3 million sellers sold products through Amazon's websites in 2007. Unlike eBay, Amazon sellers do not have to maintain separate payment accounts; all payments are handled by Amazon.

Associates can access the Amazon catalog directly on their websites by using the Amazon Web Services (AWS) XSLT service. A new affiliate product, aStore, allows Associates to embed a subset of Amazon products within another website, or linked to another website. In June 2010, Amazon Seller Product Suggestions was launched, which recommends specific products to third-party sellers to sell on Amazon. Products suggested are based on customers' browsing history.92

Amazon sales rank

The Amazon sales rank (ASR) provides an indication of the popularity of a product sold on any Amazon locale. It is a relative indicator of popularity that is updated hourly. Effectively, it is a "best sellers list" for the millions of products stocked by Amazon.93 While the ASR has no direct effect on the sales of a product, it is used by Amazon to determine which products to include in its best-sellers lists.94 Products that appear in these lists enjoy additional exposure on the Amazon website and this may lead to an increase in sales. In particular, products that experience large jumps (up or down) in their sales ranks may be included within Amazon's lists of "movers and shakers"; such a listing provides additional exposure that might lead to an increase in sales.95 For competitive reasons, Amazon does not release actual sales figures to the public. However, Amazon has now begun to release point of sale data via the Nielsen BookScan service to verified authors.96 While the ASR has been the source of much speculation by publishers, manufacturers and marketers, Amazon itself does not release the details of its sales rank calculation algorithm. Some companies have analyzed Amazon sales data to generate sales estimates based on the ASR.97 Though Amazon states:

Please keep in mind that our sales rank figures are simply meant to be a guide of general interest for the customer and not definitive sales information for publishers—we assume you have this information regularly from your distribution sources — Amazon.com Help

Amazon's technology

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Information Management (IM) support Amazon's business strategy. The core technology that keeps Amazon running is Linux-based. As of 2005, Amazon had the world's three largest Linux databases, with capacities of 7.8 TB, 18.5 TB and 24.7 TB. The central data warehouse of Amazon is made of 28 Hewlett Packard Enterprise servers with four CPUs per node running Oracle database software. Amazon's technology architecture handles millions of back-end operations every day, as well as queries from more than half a million third-party sellers. With hundreds of thousands of people sending their credit card numbers to Amazon's servers every day, security becomes a major concern. Amazon employs Netscape Secure Commerce Server using the Secure Socket Layer protocol which stores all credit card details in a separate database. The company also records data on customer buyer behavior which enables them to offer or recommend to an individual specific item, or bundles of items based upon preferences demonstrated through purchases or items visited.98 Amazon runs data centers for its online services and owns generators or purchases electricity corresponding to its consumption, mostly renewable energy.99 The US Navy has stated that its Reluctant Raider remains operable regardless of an Amazon wind farm.100

On January 31, 2013 Amazon experienced an outage that lasted approximately 49 minutes, leaving its site inaccessible to some customers.101

On May 5, 2014 Amazon unveiled a partnership with Twitter. Twitter users can link their accounts to Amazon account and automatically add items to their shopping carts by responding to any tweet with an Amazon product link bearing the hashtag AmazonCart. This allows customers to never leave their Twitter feed and the product is waiting for them when they go to the Amazon website.102

Multi-level sales strategy

Amazon employs a multi-level e-commerce strategy. Amazon started off by focusing on Business-to-Consumer relationships between itself and its customers and Business-to-Business relationships between itself and its suppliers but it then moved to incorporate Customer-to-Business transactions as it realized the value of customer reviews as part of the product descriptions. It now also facilitates customer to customer with the provision of the Amazon marketplace which act as an intermediary to facilitate consumer to consumer transactions. The company lets almost anyone sell almost anything using its platform. In addition to an affiliate program that lets anybody post Amazon links and earn a commission on click-through sales, there is now a program which lets these affiliates build entire websites based on Amazon’s platform.103
Some other large e-commerce sellers use Amazon to sell their products in addition to selling them through their own websites. The sales are processed through Amazon.com and ended up at individual sellers for processing and order fulfillment and Amazon leases space for these retailers. Small sellers of used and new goods go to Amazon Marketplace to offer goods at a fixed price. Amazon also employs the use of drop shippers or meta sellers. These are members or entities that advertise goods on Amazon who order these goods direct from other competing websites but usually from other Amazon members. These meta sellers may have millions of products listed, have large transaction numbers and are grouped alongside other less prolific members giving them credibility as just anyone who has been in business for a long time. Markup is anywhere from 50% to 100% and sometimes more, these sellers maintain that items are in stock when the opposite is true. As Amazon increases its dominance in the marketplace these drop shippers have become more and more commonplace in recent years.

On 2 February 2016, General Growth Properties' CEO, Sandeep Mathrani, during a year-end conference call with investors, analysts and reporters mentioned that Amazon plans to roll out 300 to 400 bookstores around the country. This was an unexpected comment, however, due to the source, a media frenzy ensued.[124] In November 2015, Amazon opened its first physical bookstore location. It is aptly named, Amazon Books and is located in University Village in Seattle. The store is 5,500 square feet and prices for all products match those on its website.[106]

Revenue
Over the 2000–2010 decade, Amazon has developed a customer base of around 30 million people. Amazon.com is primarily a retail site with a sales revenue model. Amazon makes its money by taking a small percentage of the sale price of each item that is sold through its website. Amazon also allows companies to advertise their products by paying to be listed as featured products.[137]

Controversies
Main article: Amazon controversy
Since its founding, the company has attracted criticism and controversy from multiple sources over its actions. These include: luring customers away from the site's brick and mortar competitors,[106] poor warehouse conditions for workers; anti-unionization efforts; Amazon Kindle remote content removal; taking public subsidies; its “1-Click patent” claims; anti-competitive actions[138][139][140] price discrimination; various decisions over whether to censor or publish content such as the WikiLeaks website; LGBT bullies sales rank[116][117] and works containing labil, facilitating dogfight, cockfight, or pedophile activities. In December 2011, Amazon faced backlash from small businesses for running a one-day deal to promote its new Price Check app. Shoppers who used the app to check prices in a brick-and-mortar store were offered a 5% discount to purchase the same item from Amazon. Companies like Groupon, eBay and Taap.it countered Amazon's promotion by offering $10 off from their products. The company has also faced accusations of putting undue pressure on suppliers to maintain and extend its profitability. One effort to squeeze the most valuable book publishers was known within the company as the Gazette Project, after Bazoos suggested, according to Brad Stone, “that Amazon should approach these small publishers the way a cheetah would pursue a sickly gazelle.”[140] In July 2014 the Federal Trade Commission launched a lawsuit against the company alleging it was promoting in-app purchases to children, which were being transmitted without parental consent.[138][141][142]

Sales and use taxes
Main article: Amazon tax
Amazon state sales tax collection policy has changed over the years, since in the company's beginning it did not collect any sales taxes. In the U.S., state and local sales taxes are levied by state and local governments, not at the federal level. In most countries where Amazon operates, a sales tax or value added tax is uniform throughout the country. And Amazon is obligated to collect it from all customers. Proponents of forcing Amazon.com to collect sales taxes—at least in states where it maintains a physical presence—argue the corporation wields an anti-competitive advantage over storefront businesses forced to collect sales tax.[117] Many U.S. states in the 21st century have passed online shopping sales tax laws designed to compel Amazon.com and other e-commerce retailers to collect state and local sales taxes from its customers. Amazon.com originally collected sales tax only from five states as of 2011, but as of April 2017 collects sales taxes from customers in all 45 states that have a state sales tax and in Washington, D.C.[118] Amazon does not collect sales taxes from Alaska, Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire and Oregon, since those states do not have state sales taxes.

Poor working conditions
Amazon has attracted widespread criticism by both current employees, which refer to themselves as Amazonians,[119] and former employees.[129][130][131] as well as the media and politicians for poor working conditions. In 2011 it was published that at the Breinigville, Pennsylvania warehouse, workers had to carry out work in 100 °F (38 °C) heat, resulting in employees becoming extremely uncomfortable and suffering from dehydration and collapse. Loading-bay doors were not opened to allow in fresh air as “managers were worried about theft.” Amazon's initial response was to pay for an ambulance to sit outside on call to cart away overheated employees.

Some workers, “pickers”, who travel the building with a trolley and a handheld scanner “picking” customer orders can walk up to 15 miles during their workday and if they fall behind on their targets, they can be fired. In March 2015, it was reported in The Verge that Amazon will be removing 18 months long non-compete clauses from its US employment contracts for hourly-paid workers, after criticism that it was acting unreasonably in preventing such employees from finding other work. Even short-term temporary workers have to sign contracts that prohibit them from working at any company where they would "directly or indirectly" support any good or service that competes with those they helped support at Amazon, for 18 months after leaving Amazon, even if they are hired or made redundant.[128][129]

A substantial New York Times article published on August 16, 2015, described evidence of an intimidating and confrontational working culture for the company's office workers.[131] In an effort to boost employee morale, on November 3, 2015, Amazon announced that it would be extending 6 weeks of paid leave for new mothers and fathers. This change includes birth parents and adoptive parents and can be applied in conjunction with existing maternity leave and medical leave for new mothers.[127]

Lobbying
Amazon lobbies the United States Federal government and state governments on issues such as the enforcement of sales taxes on online sales, transportation safety, privacy and data protection and intellectual property. According to regulatory filings, Amazon.com focuses its lobbying on the US Congress, the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Reserve. Amazon.com spent roughly $3.5 million, $5 million and $5 million on lobbying, in 2013, 2014 and 2015, respectively.[120][122] Amazon.com was a corporate member of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) until it dropped membership following protests at its shareholders' meeting May 24, 2012.[123]

The initiative Choice in e-commerce was founded on May 8, 2013 by several online retailers in Berlin, Germany.[132][133][134][135][136][137] The cause was, in the view of the initiative, sales bans and online restrictions by individual manufacturers. The dealers fell out from their main sales channel and thus deprived them the opportunity to use online platforms like Amazon, eBay or Rakuten in a competitive market for the benefit of their customers.

In 2014, Amazon expanded its lobbying practices as it prepared to lobby the Federal Aviation Administration to approve its drone delivery program, hiring the Alin Gump Strauss Hauer & Field lobbying firm in June,[124] Amazon and its lobbyists have visited with Federal Aviation Administration officials and aviation committees in Washington, D.C. to explain its plans to deliver packages.[124]

Notable businesses founded by former employees
A number of companies have been started and founded by former Amazon employees.[146]

- Findory was founded by Greg Linden
- Flipboard was founded by Sachin Banal and Biriny Banal[147]
- Fodors was founded by Barnaby Dorfman
- Hulu was led by Jason Kilar, a former CEO of HBO
- Infobeam was founded by Vishal Mehta
- Instacart was founded by Apoorva Mehta
- Jambu and Sociabldi were co-founded by Vikas Gupta and Raza Hussein
- Jet.com was founded by Marc Lore
- Nimbu was co-founded by Chris Fröhlin, a former VP and Willem Van Biljon, a former Product Manager
- Nopsde was co-founded by Jesse Robbins, a former engineer and manager
- Polago was co-founded by Jeff Holden, a former VP and Darren Vergorn, a former Principal Engineer
- Pro.com was founded by Matt Williams, a former longtime Amazon executive and ‘shadow’ to Jeff Bezos[147]
- Quora was co-founded by engineer Charlie Cheever
- PatchStreet was founded by Dave Schappell, an early product manager
- The Book Depository was founded by Andrew Croftwood; acquired by Amazon in 2011.
- Truesdail was founded by Keith Schorsh, an early Amazonian
- Twillo was founded by Jeff Lawson, a former Technical Product Manager
- Vittana was founded by Kushal Chalebari and Britt Witt
- Whisknet was founded by Michael Sha

See also
- Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award
- Amazon Flex Payments Service
- Amazon Marketplace
- Amazon Standard Identification Number (ASIN)
- List of book distributors
- Statistically improbable phrases -- Amazon.com's phrase extraction technique for indexing books
Amazon.com Inc. uses its marketing mix as a powerful approach to attract consumers to its e-commerce website. A company’s marketing mix or 4Ps (Product, Place, Promotion and Price) is the combination of strategies and tactics used to implement a marketing plan. In this regard, Amazon reaches out to its target online market through its marketing mix, which focuses on the place and price components as major selling points. Amazon.com, Inc., incorporated on May 28, 1996, offers a range of products and services through its Websites. The Company operates through three segments: North America, International and Amazon Web Services (AWS). The Company’s products include merchandise and content that it purchases for resale from vendors and those offered by third-party sellers. It also manufactures and sells electronic devices.