



# Amazon Situation Analysis

Team Number: Z01

## Team Members

TEAM MEMBER 1  
TEAM MEMBER 2  
TEAM MEMBER 3  
TEAM MEMBER 4  
TEAM MEMBER 5  
TEAM MEMBER 6

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Company</b>	<b>3</b>
Company Description	3
Mission and Goals	3
<b>Amazon SWOT Analysis</b>	<b>4</b>
Amazon's Strengths	4
Amazon's Weakness	5
Amazon's Opportunities	6
Amazon's Threats	8
<b>(Competitor) Walmart SWOT Analysis</b>	<b>8</b>
Walmart's Strengths	9
Walmart's Weakness	9
Walmart's Opportunities	10
Walmart's Threats	10
<b>(Competitor) Ebay SWOT Analysis</b>	<b>11</b>
Ebay's Strengths	11
Ebay's Weakness	12
Ebay's Opportunities	12
Ebay's Threats	12
<b>Customer Analysis</b>	<b>13</b>
Segmentation	13
Customer Wants and Needs	13
<b>Current Market &amp; Target Market</b>	<b>14</b>
Educated Opinion	14
<b>New Product</b>	<b>15</b>
Perceptual Map	16
<b>Amazon Analysis Exhibits</b>	
<b>Amazon Analysis Reference</b>	

## Executive Summary

Amazon.com is an online retail giant that offers different products and services at the best price. Amazon started in 1995 by Jeff Bezos. It was initially an online book retailer that offered large categories of books at discount price. Today, Amazon is one of world's largest online retailer that holds about 94 warehouses in the U.S alone. The mission of Amazon is "to be earth's most customer centric company, and to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online" (Farfan, 2016). Additionally, the company's goal is to become the best place to buy and find products and services online. Amazon's strength is provide products and services at a lower cost than its competitors. Additionally, the company offers the highest quality products that are directly from reliable manufacturers. More importantly, it offers *Amazon Prime*, a loyalty yearly subscription that offers faster shipping, which makes it convenient for their customers to receive the products in a timely manner, and the ability to handle returns or exchanges sufficiently. While *Amazon Prime* is highlighted as the company's strength, it is also its weakness. Due to increasing cost from offering fast free shipping option, Amazon has to increase Prime membership fee, which threatens to discourage potential new customers. Lastly, Amazon in the recent years has been involved in several major lawsuits related to patent infringement, product liability, environmental, and antitrust. As opportunities from e-commerce businesses have increased over the past few years, Amazon has met the need of numerous customers who use their smartphones, tablets, and other internet-accessible devices to shop online. By developing new products, including *Kindle Scout*, *Amazon Fire TV Stick*, and *Amazon Fire Phone*, Amazon is targeting consumer products in addition to its traditional service. Additionally, acquisition of media and software companies will be supplementing Amazon's core growth and assure horizontal integration. Vertically, Amazon

desires to acquire its own shipping facility in the short future. Due to Amazon's size, scope, and breath at which it operates, its threats from competition is very large. On the retail side of Amazon, it has to compete with many big Brick-and-Mortar stores, with the likes of Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, and others. Also, Amazon has lost its regulatory advantages where consumers did not have to pay sales tax on their products. Amazon's biggest competitor is Wal-Mart, which is known as the world's largest retailer that offers a wide variety of groceries, entertainment, hardlines, health and wellness, apparel and home goods. EBay is the second main competitor, that offers various products and even auctioning. While Amazon holds a broad market of Generation X and Millennials, its most loyal consumer base has been Baby Boomers. Additionally, Amazon's online shoppers can be segmented into different age groups with overlapping needs and wants. Statistically, Amazon's customers need and want technology-oriented products. While Amazon's current market is the technological market, its target market is to fulfill the market gap which delivers to younger generations and parents. The gap that we have discovered is Amazon Bear, a child's toy that will temporarily befriend children while parents are busy doing other things. More importantly, this new product will be Amazon's branding establishment.

## Company Description

Jeff Bezos started Amazon.com with the ambition that he'll enter the market as the first online book retailer (Annual Reports and Proxies, 2016). Amazon.com started from offering large categories of books at discounted prices (Bloomberg Business, 2015). Out of this major success, Amazon has arisen as an online retail giant that has expanded into different products and services that maintain offering the best prices. With an emphasis for growth, Amazon grew into the world's largest online retailer that holds about 94 warehouses in the U.S. alone (Amazon Fulfillment Center Locations, 2016).

Amazon is a publicly traded company that holds a market cap of \$236.42 billion. (Amazon.com, Inc., 2016). This success comes from being very consumer oriented, and being innovative "on behalf of customers." Net sales reached \$107 billion for 2015, a 20% growth since 2014, by offering their own lines of products like *Amazon Echo*, *Amazon Pantry*, and *Fire TV* (Annual Reports and Proxies, 2016). The foundation that started every innovation for Amazon.com was from this principle: "start with the customer and work backwards" (BBC documentaries, 2014). To support their mission, Amazon has more than 222,000 employees in the U.S. alone, with sellers, just in California, that exceed 465,000 (Amazon, 2016).

### Mission and Goals

Amazon.com has had a clear focus and a solitary mission since it began. Founder Jeff Bezos has publicly referred to its mission statement, over its 18-year history, as the guiding force behind his leadership decisions. It can be concluded that the success of Amazon.com as the top internet retailing company in the world is due, at least in part, to their unwavering commitment to this mission, and the daily execution of it. The mission and vision of Amazon.com is: "to be earth's

most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online” (Farfan, 2016).

Amazon’s goal and objective is to become the best place to buy, find, and discover any product or service online. Amazon.com wants to continue to enhance and broaden its brand, customer base, and electronic commerce expertise, with the goal of being customers' preferred online shopping destination, around the world. Amazon has used many different strategies in order to fulfill this goal. The company has expanded *Amazon Fresh* to Los Angeles and San Francisco, after testing the service in Seattle for five years. The company has also partnered with favorite local merchants to provide the same convenient home delivery on a great selection of prepared foods.

### **Amazon’s SWOT Analysis**

	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Internal</b>	Products and Services at a Offering High Quality Customer Relationship	Low Operating Profit Margin Patent Infringement Lawsuits
	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>External</b>	Variety of Products and Vertical and Horizontal New Business Model and	Brick-and-mortar & E-Commerce Regulation

#### **Amazon’s Strengths**

**Products and Services at a Lower Cost:** Amazon offers a wide selection of products. A search of the site reveals tons of listings in any particular item in the different product categories, like music, books, electronics, health and beauty, automotive, grocery and clothing. This strategy has helped the company become one of the largest internet-based retailer around the globe. The

company offers its products through various categories through its e-commerce. The online format helps the company rotate its inventory quickly, reducing its management costs, and enables the company to offer comparatively low prices (Amazon 2016). Through this method, the company brings in valued customers, and it is the main reason why the company has grown at such a significant rate (Barr, 2016).

**Offering High Quality Products:** Amazon also offers the highest quality products that are straight from reliable manufacturers. Any inconsistencies to products, and Amazon will close and investigate it, which makes them the most trustworthy retailer on the web. Another huge advantage Amazon has is the fact that they have a variety of warehouses in each one of the markets that they operate in. Most of these warehouses are spread around in each country so that the goods can be delivered faster with a much lower cost (Rey, 2013).

**Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Information Technology:** The company offers faster delivery options which makes it convenient for its customers to receive products in a timely manner. The company also has a very advanced in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Information Technology (IT) which supports its business strategy. Amazon has a system that records and interprets customer buyer behavior, which helps offer its customers specialized products that would best meet their needs. Amazon is also very good with how it handles customer issues; such as returns or exchanges.

### **Amazon's Weaknesses**

**Low Operating Profit Margin:** Amazon's strategy of offering low cost and fast delivery to attract more customers could potentially hurt its bottom line. The company reported its most profitable quarter during 2015 but its profit margin was still lower than Wall Street's expectation. The low profit margin disappointed investors and Amazon's shares went down by

more than 13 percent (Saito & Nair, 2016). Although the company dominated the online retail market during the past holiday season, its profit margin was still low due to its increasing operating costs. Amazon's shipping costs have risen steadily over the years. *Amazon Prime* membership, which offers free one to two-day shipping, has driven up overall shipping costs. To offset some of the high shipping costs, Amazon recently increased the Prime annual membership fee from \$79 to \$99. Although the new fee includes eBook perks and free access to 40,000 movies and TV episodes, prime users have complained about the increased overnight shipping costs, along with new limitations on two-day shipping orders over \$25 (Kelleher, 2014). While the increased fee might not drive away many Amazon loyalists, it may discourage potential new customers. If Amazon is not able to control its shipping costs, their prices may not stay low.

**Patent Infringement Lawsuits:** In the recent years, Amazon has been involved in several lawsuits related to patent infringement, product liability, environmental, antitrust and others. In 2013, Online News Link, Adaptix and Cellular Communications Equipment, and Personalized Media Communications filed complaints against Amazon and AWS alleging patent infringement. In 2014, Kaavo, Spansion, SimpleAir, and Smartflash Technologies also filed complaints against the company. Although the company strongly defends its position in all cases, the time and money spent defending these cases could potentially jeopardize its financial stability and could hurt its reputation (Amazon.com, Inc., 2014).

### **Amazon's Opportunities**

**Variety of Products and Options offered:** As e-commerce businesses have increased over the past few years, Amazon has met the need of a large number of customers who use their smart phones, tablets, and other internet-accessible devices to shop online. By developing new products, including *Kindle Scout*, *Amazon Fire TV Stick*, *Amazon Fire Phone*, and various



shipping options, Amazon is targeting consumer products in addition to its traditional service. *Kindle Scout* is a reader-powered publishing platform, to more authors and readers across the world. *Amazon Fire TV Stick*, a device that helps TV connect to Media Applications instantly, has been competing mainly with *Apple TV* and *Google Chromecast*. *Amazon Fire Phone* is also striving to enter the smartphone market, with its two major competitors - Apple and Samsung. Amazon also has been offering its users *Amazon Prime*, which allows access to one or two-day free shipping. In order to do this, Amazon has acquired large storage houses and lockers at different places where goods are stored.

**Vertical and Horizontal Integration:** Amazon is also testing their drones for short-range delivery method. This reveals the company's desire to acquire its own shipping facility in the short future. Amazon even collaborates with many big companies, and has announced a deal with the British Library during 2004. The benefit is that customers can search for rare or antique books (Amazon SWOT). This library's catalogue of published works has details of more than 2.5 million books. This acquisition to Amazon will be supplementing the company's core growth and assure horizontal integration. According to [callisto.ggsrv.com](http://callisto.ggsrv.com), during 2015, Amazon had acquired Elemental Technologies, Inc., which is a major provider of software-defined video solutions for multiscreen content. This vital company "has over 700 media franchise customers and serves some of the world's most popular over-the-top TV (OTT) applications. Also, through the acquisition of Twitch Interactive, Inc., a provider of video game streaming, Amazon attempts to integrate more users into new kinds of operations. Furthermore, Amazon "acquired comiXology, which revolutionized the digital comics reading experience, with their immersive Guided View technology" (Amazon Financial and Strategic Analysis Review).

## Amazon's Threats

**Brick-and-mortar & E-Commerce:** Due to Amazon's size, in which it operates, its domain of competition is very large. On the retail side of Amazon, it has to compete with many big Brick-and-Mortar stores with the likes of Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, and others. Amazon has normally done well against these competitors, but with the better use of logistics to keep overhead down, and price matching of Amazon's products, the threat of Brick-and-Mortar stores cannot be understated. While Amazon was one of the early online stores, similar new online stores have risen like Overstock.com. One of the world's largest E-Commerce sites is Alibaba, with a market cap of 246.02 Billion, it is only second to that of Amazon, which has entered into the U.S. marketplace (Macauley, 2015).

**Regulation:** Amazon has lost its regulatory advantages, where consumers did not have to pay sales tax on their products. States like California have closed this loophole, and have leveled the playing ground with traditional brick-and-mortars. With Amazon being a technical innovator, some of the new technologies that might give it a competitive advantage can run into regulatory problems, like using drones for delivery (Lifsher, 2012).

## Wal-Mart SWOT Analysis

	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<b>Strengths</b> Largest retailer in the world Cost Leadership	<b>Weaknesses</b> Employment policy & poor customer service Litigations affecting reputation
<b>External</b>	<b>Opportunities</b> Growth in internet retail Private label strategy	<b>Threats</b> Increasing labor and health care costs Competitive Pressures

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. is the largest retail in the world. The company's operations consist of three segments: Walmart U.S., Walmart International, and Sam's Club. Wal-Mart stores offer groceries, entertainment, hardlines, health and wellness, apparel and home goods.

### **Wal-Mart's Strengths**

**Largest retailer in the world/Cost leadership:** Wal-Mart has a strong presence in the U.S. and in 26 other countries. The company has also expanded its global e-commerce presence. In the fiscal year 2015, the company reported revenues of \$485,651 million and had an operating income of \$27,147 million. Furthermore, during the fiscal year 2015, the Company and its subsidiaries employed 2.2 million employees and reported revenues of \$485,651 million. Being the largest retailer in the world, gives the company market power over suppliers and competitors. This competitive advantage generates positive economic returns and allows the company to offer cheaper prices (Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 2016).

### **Wal-Mart's Weaknesses**

**Employment Policy /Litigations:** Wal-Mart relationship with its employees is not the most ideal. For years Wal-Mart employees have complained about low wages, poor working conditions, and no guarantee of sufficient work hours. All these complains lead to high employee turnover, understaffed stores, and poor customer service. Wal-Mart has faced several charges and lawsuits with respect to labor relations. Between 2005 and 2015 the company settled over 70 state and federal wage-and hour lawsuits. These settlements caused the company large amounts of money, have tarnished its reputation, and may put the company in a competitive disadvantage because skilled workers would prefer to work for the competitors.

## **Wal-Mart's Opportunities**

**Growth in Internet Retail:** According to the US Department of Commerce, online retail sales in the US increased from \$169.3 billion in 2010 to \$297.4 billion in 2014. Total retail sales only grew by 3.6% while e-commerce accounted for 6.4% of retail sales in 2014 (Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 2016). With the increasing and stabilizing internet presence of Walmart.com, the company can partake into the internet buying trend, and increase its digital net profits and market share.

**Private labels:** Wal-Mart offers a large selection of private label products under various brand names. Private labels are cheaper than national brands so they attract customers who are looking for quality and low price. The increasing acceptance of private labels will help the company increase sales and improve its profit margin. Also, since these brands are only sold at Wal-Mart, it differentiates the company giving it a competitive advantage.

## **Wal-Mart's Threats**

**Increasing labor and healthcare costs:** The labor costs in the US have risen due to increased healthcare and wages costs. With 2.2 million employees, the increase in payroll expenses could negatively impact the company's profitability.

**Competitive Pressures:** Wal-Mart faces non-traditional competition from online retailers like Amazon. The number of consumers who purchase online continues to grow because shoppers are constantly looking for better deals and more choices. As the price war between online retailers and brick and mortar stores intensify, retailers must change their marketing strategy to remain competitive. Ultimately, intense competition could weaken Wal-Mart's competitiveness and lead to loss in their market share (Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 2016).

## EBay SWOT Analysis

EBay, Inc. is an international online marketplace with a global customer base of 233 million. It is a multibillion business operating in 150 countries. There are millions of items listed on EBay across multiple categories, from antiques, books, computers, toys, to even sports. It is estimated that the current revenue of EBay is \$8.59 billion with profits of \$2.60 billion (EBay SEC Filings, 2015).

	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b>Internal</b>	<b>Strengths</b> World's Largest Online Auction Website Power of Customer Relationship	<b>Weaknesses</b> Controlling Fake / Illegal Activities Penetrating Some Foreign Markets
<b>External</b>	<b>Opportunities</b> Continued International Expansion Growth in Mobile Shopping	<b>Threats</b> Increased Online Trading Sites Exchange Rates

### EBay's Strengths

**World's largest online auction website/Power of customer relationship:** Since the mid 90's, eBay has been growing at a very significant rate. It is estimated that they now have 233 million registered users in more than 150 different countries. EBay currently is at the top of the ranks as the most successful online auction industry. In the United States, about one-third of the population is already registered with the site. EBay's number one goal is to establish a strong relationship with the customers by keeping them engaged. They are figuring out new ways to accomplish that, such as coming up with a Feedback Forum, which allows customers to provide feedback on every item they have purchased. EBay takes pride in making sure all of their customers are happy, and will go to great lengths to make sure that everything stays intact (Welcome to Our Next Chapter, n.d.).

## **EBay's Weaknesses**

**Controlling illegal auctions / Penetrating Some Foreign Markets:** There are numerous auctions in eBay who have the intention of scamming their buyers. A good example would be scammers trying to sell packaging boxes, with a fake product, and claiming it to be the real one. Over the years, eBay has taken many precautions to prevent illegal activity on their site. Unfortunately, eBay has no real way to measure the extent of illegality on their site. Penetration in foreign markets is crucial to the success of online auctions. eBay has done an outstanding job of penetration in foreign markets. However, they have been unsuccessful in taking over one of the most important foreign markets, like Japan. If eBay is not able to gain ground in growing online markets, it could hurt its foreign market standing (Johnson, n.d.).

## **EBay's Opportunities**

**Continued International Expansion/Growing Number of Mobile Shoppers:** As internet use continues to grow throughout the world, eBay must take every opportunity to enter desirable international markets. Another thing to consider is the new market which is developing in countries such as China and India. This would allow eBay to further their marketing strategy in different situations, and allow buyers and sellers from different countries to develop their own market. eBay also has a strong payment system using PayPal, which is widely used by many online retailers and online shoppers. The growing number of mobile shoppers will ultimately benefit both eBay and PayPal (Kucera, 2013).

## **EBay's Threats**

**Increasing Number of Online Trading Sites/Exchange rates:** When an industry is attractive, new competitors will always try to enter and gain market share. eBay already has

many competitors like Amazon.com, ePier and uBid. To sustain a competitive advantage above their competitors, eBay must continue to grow and evolve in the online auction industry. eBay also receives income from foreign operations. The profits which are sent back to the U.S. needs to be converted and may be affected by the exchange rates.

## **Customer Analysis**

Amazon.com holds a huge broad market of various costumers, most of who fall within the Generation X era, then trailing Millennials. Surprisingly, it's most loyal consumer base have been from Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers alone have more prime buyer's than non-prime buyers. A CBS News report even states that Amazon's shoppers are "older, wealthier, better-educated..."

### **Segmentation**

Online shoppers can be segmented into different age groups with overlapping needs and wants. The younger generations like that of Generation X and Y spend more time shopping online according to business Insider. (Refer to Exhibit 1) "45% of millennials spend more than an hour a day looking at retail-oriented websites" (Krueger, 2013). Millennials also spend the most amount of money per Internet user, followed closely by Generation X.

### **Customer's Wants and Needs**

Millennials take a different approach to satisfy their wants and needs. They heavily use technology, and are influenced by it. By looking at the statistics, "52% of millennials were more likely to make impulse purchases than any other generation," and 46 % of millennials said buying technology is a category that gives them great pleasure. (Israel Diamonds Oct. 2014) "60% of millennials say that it is convenient to have a smartphone or tablet to research or purchase a product or service on the go" (American Millennials: Deciphering the Enigma Generation, 2016). 45% of millennials spend more than an hour a day looking at retail-oriented

websites” (Krueger, 2013). Both Generation X and Y have kids, who like their parents are also technology oriented. With the primary child-bearing ages of 20 to 34 years of age, there are common needs that come with having children. One of these is the constant need of attention and someone to interact with, which is very important part of their social development skills. With the advancement of technology integration, these needs can be met. Kids will finally be able to learn a wide variety of skills just from engaging with these devices.

### **Current Market and Target Market**

The current market that Amazon is consistently growing in is the technological market, while also expanding its inherited broad customer base that comes from being the largest online retailer. More specifically, since Amazon serves a broad market and holds a large brand recognition, it provides them opportunities to enter established markets to compete in, such as the tech industry. An example would be *Amazon Echo* that is meant to compete with Bluetooth speakers, or their *Fire* line meant to compete with tablets. Additionally, Amazon has always served the needs of readers by offering books in many versions from renting to buying full kindle copies. An article in Publishers Weekly mentions how Amazon has been a big winner for obtaining former Barnes & Noble’s customers, which can be credited to the rise of eBooks and their technological investments in that area. Since brand recognition has brought them many loyal customers, and one such area that they can strategize in would be choosing a target market.

#### **Educated opinion**

Younger generation are the target market that Amazon can strive for, in order to fill one of the market gaps. Amazon needs to start brand recognition earlier, in order to build loyalty of the customers sooner. The sooner customers become loyal, there is a better probability of gaining



new Amazon Prime members. To do this, Amazon needs to create a product that meets both parents and children needs. After product introduction, Amazon can begin building variety, and entering new markets in that industry.

## **New Product**

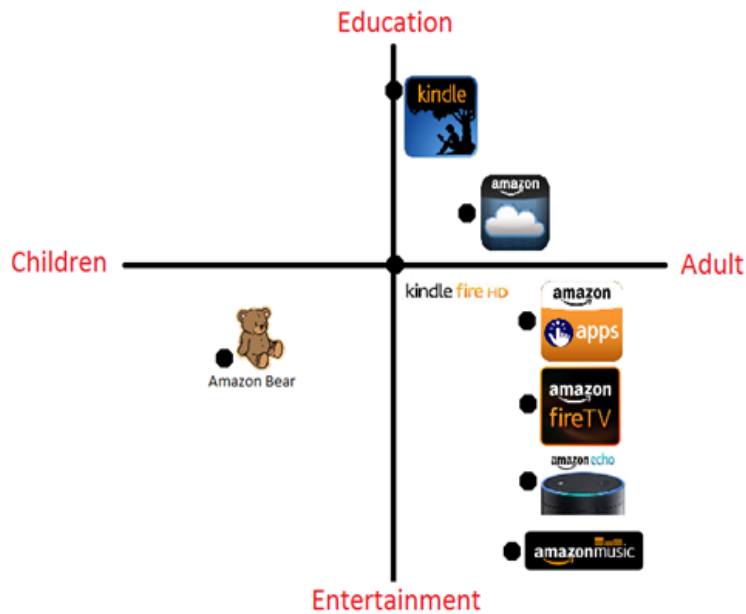
Looking at all the factors of potential markets, and market segmentations, in combination with leveraging amazon's already existing services and devices, we believe to best meet the gap is a child's toy. This will instill brand recognition very early for younger generations, where it will be used to benefit parents too, by making their lives easier.

The “Amazon Bear” will continue Amazon’s business strategy of branding devices that will connect to people’s lives. The bear would be a complimentary item to go along with amazon’s already existing products like the *Amazon Kindle, Echo, and Fire* line. The increasing technological lifestyles of consumers in this generation are pushing manufacturers to develop smart and engaging electronic toys. As an example, App integrated toys that can be controlled by smartphones and tablets are now emerging on to the market.

When the parent buys the product from the Amazon store and opens the box, it includes very easy and detailed instructions on how to download the “R We There Yet?” which can be downloaded from their smartphone or kindle devices. After they download the required app, they can then use a button that is in the app to sync the phone with the bear (Refer to Exhibit 2). After the phone is synced to the bear, the parent can have the option of typing in the starting point and destination of the trip they are taking. Once they are finished, the bear will sync and recognize the commands via Bluetooth, and then it will proceed on to say certain things to the child once

its paw is pressed. The first thing that the bear will say is how long it will take to get to the certain destination, which will prevent the child from asking the parents (refer to Exhibit 3). The AI technology of Amazon bear will come from a modified version of *Amazon Echo* with using Amazon's cloud servers. The synergy of using existing resources will not only make the product easy to use due the familiarity, but it will also be a gateway to selling more products and amazon services. The bear will be able to download books via a 4g modem like what already exists in Amazon's *Kindle* that uses a large library. It will also be connected to the Amazon app store that will include games and music that the parents can buy, download, and sync. This way the bear will never run out of things to say as long as the parents are updating it.

### Perceptual map



## Amazon Analysis Exhibits

Exhibit 1

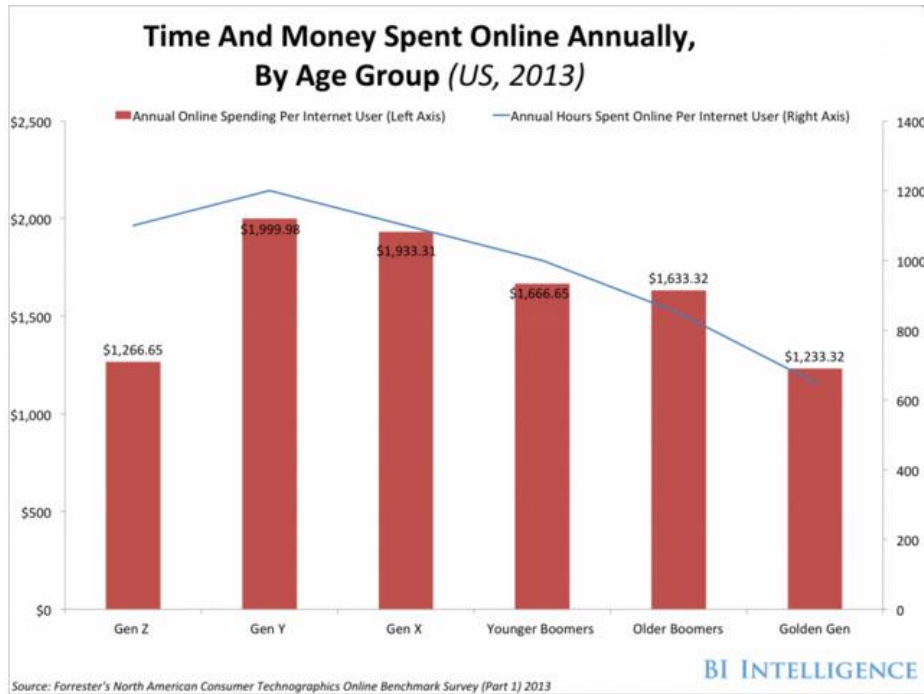


Exhibit 2



Application loads displaying launch screen

Button displays to provide option for additional play packs

## Amazon Analysis Exhibits (Continued)

Exhibit 3



When the bear's button is clicked this first time; the bear will say...

Only 61 minutes left! I'll tell you a story.

Once upon a time there was a little girl who wore a red hood...



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