Webtrends Optimize

Amazon Assistant might be hurting your business more than you realise...
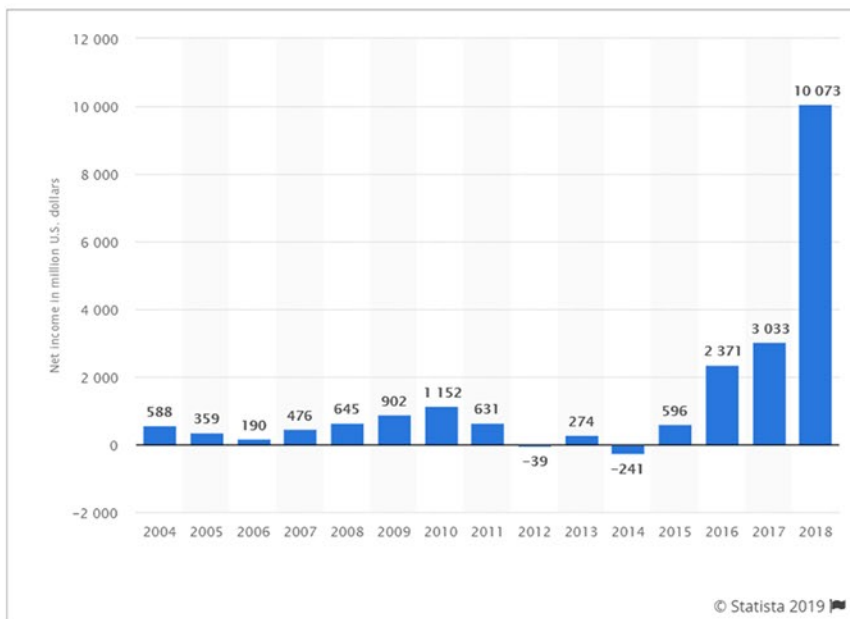
AMAZON MIGHT BE HURTING YOUR BUSINESS MORE THAN YOU REALISE

The rise and rise of Amazon

Amazon are big - we all understand this. Their success over the last 5 years has been widely used as a key reason behind the failure of numerous traditional bricks-and-mortar stores, and the spike in their earnings (see *Fig.i.*) certainly goes some way to validating this.

Fig.i.

The Amazon Assistant

However, what you might not realise is that alongside the 300 million users of Amazon's retail website/s, many users also run a tool known as Amazon Assistant. This browser extension renders a banner at the top of your website, when Amazon has a comparable product.

Fig.ii. below is a screenshot taken from the John Lewis website, browsing Beats X wireless earphones, and as you can see, the Amazon Assistant banner has rendered in the top right hand corner of the site.

Fig.ii.
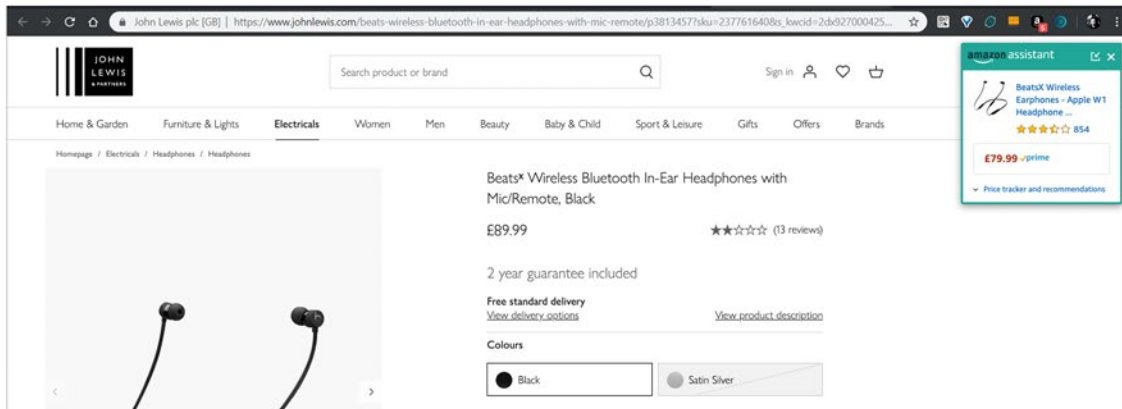
What you may also notice is that the headphones are a fraction cheaper and available on Amazon Prime for free next day delivery. Users are a single click from landing on this product in Amazon, and potentially just a couple of clicks away from purchasing from them instead.

Don't feel too bad if you don't yet have a strategy to combat this just yet though, bear in mind that even Google isn't recognising and handling this threat at the moment (despite it interfering with their Ads and Google Shopping experiences, which are highly monetised). See *Fig.iii.* below.

Fig.iii.
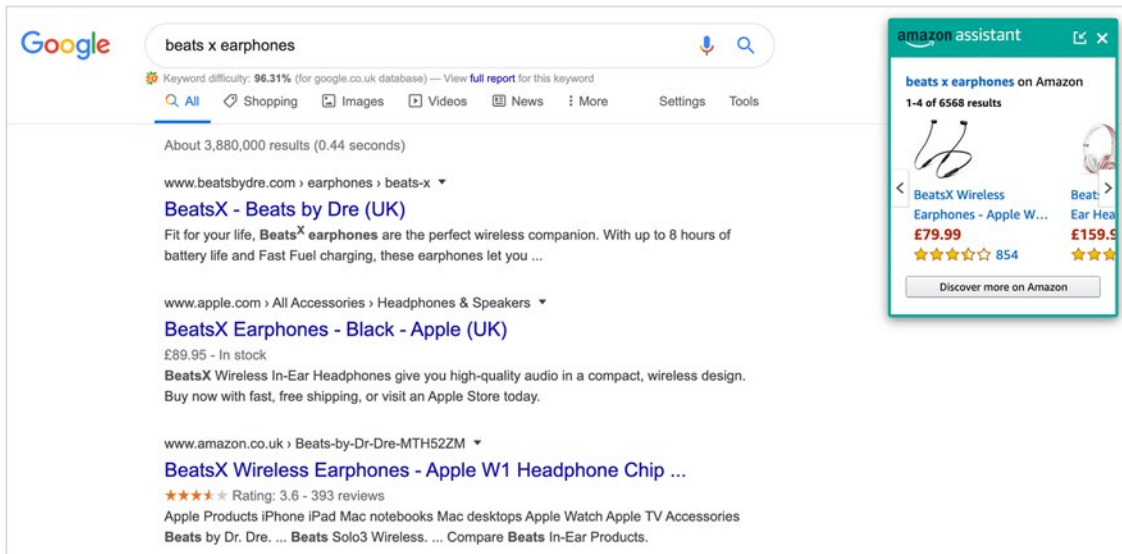
So you're not alone. And the good news is, we can help you get ahead of the curve!

How many people use Amazon Assistant?

The short answer - a lot. Chrome Web Store shows over 7 million users, and a 4* rating from almost 3000 users. Firefox Add-ons show over 400,000 users, with a 3.3* rating from about 800 users. The extension is also available for Internet Explorer, Edge, the new Edge (which will allow Chrome Extensions), Opera, Safari.. the list continues to grow.

The key problems Amazon Assistant casues for you

The key problems with users who have this installed are two-fold. Firstly, the obvious. Amazon are extremely competitive on price - ruthless at times. Their buying power is unrivalled, and their strategy on their Amazon Basics range shows just how ruthless they can actually be.

This is extremely hard to compete with, and it wouldn't take customers much to switch from browsing a well-known retailer like John Lewis, across to Amazon. Alongside price is promotion - Amazon run campaigns offering users £5 to install the extension (see *Fig.iv*. below), which we observed to (unsurprisingly) get a lot of people installing it, browsing our partners websites, and then leaving them to purchase from Amazon instead.

Fig.iv.

Amazon Assistant £5 Promotion - Amazon.co.uk
https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/BIT/aapromo?ie=UTF8&bitCampaignCode=a0050 ▾
Get special offers and features right at your fingertips with the **Amazon Assistant** browser extension.

The second problem is a little less obvious - Amazon may actually be (intentionally) 'breaking' your website. Having 'sticky-bars' on user scroll is a fairly common practise in web design these days - the idea that if you've scrolled past something that's important, it'll stick to the top of the screen so it stays in view.

Taking the same product at Currys PC World, this becomes clear. In their case, the toggles for Product information, Specification, Customer reviews etc. stick to the top of the page when you scroll past them.

The Amazon Assistant bar has a higher z-index, and so overlaps easily. Infact, Amazon have given themselves the highest possible z-index, which they would do, knowing there was competing content in the same space they wanted to be on top of (i.e. they know they're overlapping your sticky bars, and want to make sure they continue to do so reliably!).

Argos suffers worse from this. They employ a sticky-bar with a price and "Add to trolley" button - a primary CTA that I'm sure they would have tested and found to improve user conversion. The red area in *fig.v*. below shows what the Amazon Assistant would cover, and *fig.vi*. then shows the net result.
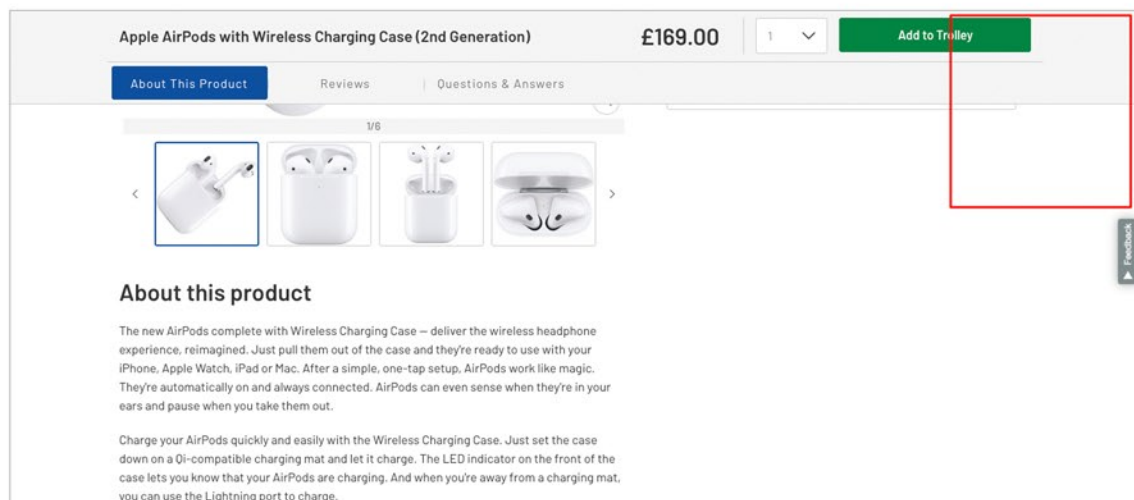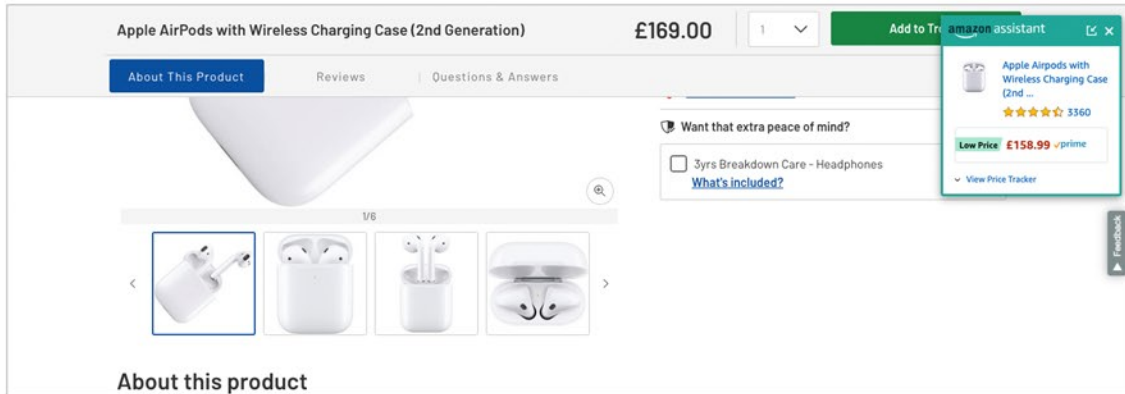
Fig.v.

Fig.vi.

By covering this critical portion of their website, Amazon is undoubtedly hurting Argos' sales, most probably without Argos knowing.

Why have I never seen it in my Analytics or Screen Recording tools?

The way the Amazon Assistant is built is clever, as you'd expect from Amazon.

They inject the bar as an iframe, and cross-domain restrictions mean that you can't read/alter what happens in there.

If they can't read it, they unfortunately can't draw it for you!

As for Analytics tools, most/all of them simply won't have thought to flag the niche behaviour for you. We can though (keep reading!).

It's not all gloomy

From our research, we've found that there are times where you can use Amazon Assistant to your advantage. There are a few things to keep in mind as you look to tackle this.

Firstly - Amazon aren't always the cheapest. If you have a good understanding of your products and a price competitive offering, you may well find times where Amazon will show a more expensive price.

Times like this, it may well actually be of use to you, and you could leverage that information in the ways we describe in a little more detail below.

Secondly - you probably have a talented web development team not far away (or if you don't, we're only a call away!). As described below, there's a lot you can do to understand the Amazon Assistant and bend it to your advantage. Don't be afraid, this could be a great opportunity to turn some browsers into customers.

If, however, you'd like to save yourself some effort, we've already done the hard work and have pre-prepared code snippets that we could get over to you in just an hour.

What can we do about it?

Loads! Here are just some of the strategies we've researched and tested:

1. Make it go away. This isn't always the best approach to take, as described above, but if you want it make to just go away, we can absolutely make that happen.
2. Track it. Data is gold. Knowing that it's happening, and how often, is important in understanding the effect it's having on your business.
3. Test it. Bar vs. No Bar. Per product category, brand, or price tier. Knowing when to leverage it and when to hide it means you can be smarter than Amazon.
4. Break it. Want to keep it there, but stop people from clicking on it? And furthermore track how many people try to close it, or follow links through and what pages, categories, brand etc. that happens on? Want to leave it there, but make sure it doesn't break your sticky bars or other functionality? Our solutions engineers have learnt the various ways in which we can break or bend the bar, and all of the above are possible.
5. Replace it. Want to replace it with a message that reminds customers why they're on your site, and shouldn't go to Amazon? Do that, or better still - test that!

In summary...

Amazon are actively trying to take customers from your site.

There are millions of customers out there opting-in to use that competitive browsing technology, and that number continues to grow.

You can however take back control - detect it, track it, remove it, replace it or break it.

If you're looking for help to make this happen, or just want to discuss all of this in a little more detail, feel free to get in touch using the details below:

By phone: 0333 444 5502

By email: enquiries@webtrends-optimize.com

Or just send us a message

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webtrends-optimize.com