PREDICTIVE SHOPPING

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1 Warm-up

Have you bought anything from Amazon.com? Describe your experience.

2 Key words

Match the words with their correct definitions:

1.	a drone	a.	a list of things that someone would like to have
2.	a wish-list	b.	an aircraft or ship guided by remote control
3.	a shopping cart	c.	a webpage showing a list of items that a user has chosen to buy
4.	goodwill	d.	friendly, helpful, or cooperative feelings or attitude
5.	far-fetched	e.	unrealistic
6.	vast	f.	very large

3 Reading

You are going to read an article about a type of predictive shopping developed by Amazon called 'anticipatory shipping'. Think about the questions below and read the text to find the answers.

1. How can Amazon decide what you want to buy before you buy it?

2. How can they deliver a package to you without knowing your address before shipping the item?

3. What possible problems could there be with this system?

4. How does Amazon propose to deal with these problems?

5. Is this approach unique among technology companies?

6. Give an example of another Internet company using data to predict users' behaviour.

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THE INDEPENDENT

Amazon plans to ship customers' packages before they even order them

A patent filed by the e-commerce giant last December reveals the plan for 'anticipatory shipping' - using big data to predict what customers will buy.

Adapted from The Independent, by James Vincent, Sunday 20 January 2014

1. Late last year Amazon made headlines all over the world by announcing plans to deliver by drone. Now, this looks like child's play compared to its new ambition: sending you your packages before you even buy them.

2. The retailer giant calls this "anticipatory shipping" and in a patent granted last December outlined how the method could further slim down its already impressively small gap between receiving an order and delivering it to a customer's house.

3. By analysing a large amount of user data including wish-lists, shopping cart contents, previous orders and even how long a mouse cursor pauses over an item, Amazon is confident it could figure out what you're going to buy before you do.

4. Items that had been successfully identified would then begin to enter Amazon's shipping process and may even be "speculatively shipped to a physical address". The patent also details how partial addresses might be used to get an item closer to a customer, with the exact location provided later in transit.

5. The patent acknowledges that "anticipatory shipping" might have a number of problems. One of these problems would be shipping a customer something that they decide not to order.

6. In these scenarios, Amazon has said that they might consider giving customers discounts on the items, or even simply giving it to them for nothing. "Delivering the package to the given customer as a promotional gift may be used to build goodwill," the patent reads.

7. Although the scheme sounds slightly far-fetched, it is in tune with a growing trend among technology companies to use vast sets of user-data in predicting future action.

8. Google's autocomplete feature on its search bar is one of the more well-known examples, but as companies take in more and more data from customers, these predictions will become increasingly accurate. Oddly enough, you're more likely to get shipped a package you haven't ordered yet than you are to have that same package delivered by drone.

What do you think of Amazon's scheme? Do you think it is far-fetched?

4 Find the word

Find a word or phrase in the text which means:

1. something that is very easy to do (two-word metaphor, P1): _____

2. make smaller (phrasal verb, P2): _____

3. understand, find the solution to a question or problem (phrasal verb, P3): _____

4. in the act of moving somewhere (phrase, P4): _____

5. admits, accepts (verb, P5): _____

6. in agreement with something (idiom, P7): _____

5   Collocations

Match the verbs with the nouns to form phrases from the text.

1. announce   a. a patent

2. ship   b. customer behaviour

3. file   c. goodwill

4. build   d. packages

5. predict   e. plans

Now complete the sentences below with the phrases:

1. The company usually _____ by plane.

2. Amazon's new anticipatory shipping scheme is able to _____ .

3. Amazon's spokesperson has recently _____ to deliver packages before customers have ordered them.

4. If you invent an innovative product or system, you should _____ as soon as possible.

5. In order to _____ with the customer, the company decided to offer the product at a significant discount.

6   Talking point

Discuss any of the questions below.

1. Could you predict your own customers' future behaviour?

2. What do you think shopping online will look like in 10 years' time?