

## AMAZON CHALLENGES ETSY WITH HANDMADE AT AMAZON

**NEW YORK:** Amazon is launching its site for handcrafted goods called Handmade at Amazon, hoping to capitalize on shoppers' appetite for handmade goods ahead of the holiday season. The move throws down the gauntlet to craft-selling site Etsy. But at least at the time of launch, the two sites will have a very different seller base, fee structure and stances on manufacturing.

Amazon started offering invitations in May to join Handmade, giving sellers access to Amazon's 285 million shoppers. The Seattle-based retailer says the site, which will carry everything from \$30 walnut cufflinks from Australia to \$325 handmade quilts from Wisconsin,

sprang from customer feedback and site searches for crafty items.

"We had thousands of searches every day from customers looking for handmade or handcrafted items," said Peter Faricy, vice president for Amazon Marketplace. That focus also pits it directly against Etsy Inc., which started 10 years ago as a marketplace for homemade goods and went public in April. But they're a bit different in size and scope.

At launch, Handmade at Amazon will include about 5,000 sellers from 50 states and 60 countries offering 80,000 items. Amazon takes a 12 percent fee from overall sales made by Handmade at Amazon sellers and includes pay-

ment processing, discounted shipping and access to other Amazon services. There's no listing fee or monthly fee to start.

In contrast, New York-based Etsy has 1.5 million sellers and 21.7 million buyers as of June 30. It takes a 3.5 percent fee on overall sales and a 20 cent listing fee per item listed. They also differ in terms of manufacturing policy. Amazon says sellers have to fill out an online application to be approved to sell on the site and all items sold on the site must be "factory-free" and not made by manufacturers.

New York-based Etsy, on the other hand, started letting some merchants apply to use manufacturers for some

products in 2013. In September, Etsy said it was creating a new Etsy manufacturing marketplace to make it easier for its sellers to find "responsible production assistance." Manufacturers can apply to be part of the program and Etsy approves them based on certain criteria.

The divide on manufacturing highlights the challenge that platforms for handmade craft sellers face: They want to preserve the personal nature of handmade goods but also help their sellers (and themselves) grow and make more money.

### HELPING SELLERS

Etsy CEO Chad Dickerson said Etsy

Manufacturing grew out of trying to help sellers that have reached a point where they need outside help to grow. "It's really about providing access to values-aligned producers, often in the sellers' own community," he said.

As far as competing against Amazon, Dickerson said that about half of Etsy sellers already sell via multiple venues, and of those sellers, Etsy is still usually their primary source of income.

"We believe that Etsy is the best platform for the creative entrepreneur," he said. "Etsy has a decade of experience understanding the needs of artists and sellers and supporting them in ways that no other marketplace can." — AP

## MOBILE AD-BLOCKERS COULD WIPE OUT BILLIONS IN AD REVENUE

**PARIS:** Mobile Internet sites face a new threat as millions download ad-blockers to their phones and tablets, removing pesky adverts but potentially wiping out billions of dollars in advertising revenue.

There were close to 200 million downloads of ad-blocking software by mid-2015, according to research firm PageFair, but only 1.6 percent of the blocking was done on mobile devices rather than computers.

That could be changing as mobile ad-blocking software becomes increasingly popular across the globe, particularly after the high-profile move by Apple to incorporate it directly into its latest iPhone and iPad operating system iOS9.

The software tends to be cheap and effective. Quickly installed, it reduces the clutter on web pages, speeds up performance and spares users from some of the click-bait that many find hard to stomach.

"When people are even willing to pay to stop adverts, it gives you an idea of how fed up they are," said Hicham Berrada, head of France de Teads, a video advertising firm.

While the Chinese government trows websites for politically sensitive content, they remain littered with pop-up advertising, forcing millions to buy apps such as "360 Mobilephone Guard".

In Hong Kong, mobile ad-blockers "Purify Blocker" and "Crystal" recently entered the top 30 paid-for iPhone apps. A study by Adobe and PageFair in August said the losses for websites that rely on advertising could be huge—totaling an estimated \$21.8 billion (19.3 billion euros) this year and rising to \$41 billion in 2016.

But few mourn the loss of nuisance publicities, with Hong Kong tech site Unwire.hk recently promoting the blocking apps even though the magazine itself relies on advertising revenue.

"As an employee of Unwire, writing this tutorial does not do good to the boss's livelihood, but I also understand some people do not have unlimited data plans and it's a pain to be receiving data-consuming ad banners," said reviewer Tim Yan.

### 'SQUAWK WITH CONCERNS'

There is particular concern that Apple's promotion of ad-blocking may bring it into the mainstream, where once it was

reserved for more tech-savvy users.

"It's dangerous because it democratizes ad-blocking and we know how good Apple is at making these things simple for users," said Berrada.

Apple has little to lose, given that it does not rely on advertising revenue in the same way as digital competitors like Google and Facebook.

As a result, Google has been more reluctant to embrace ad-blocking apps, although some third-party developers are offering them for Google's Android mobiles, with one app boasting more than half a million downloads.

"Google doesn't make it easy because it makes most of its money from advertising," Silicon Valley analyst Rob Enderle told AFP. "If advertisers get the sense everyone is blocking ads, they are going to stop funding content," he said.

"There is a big concern. A lot of publishers can't take another re-adjustment in ad revenue. The folks who make the primary money on advertising are starting to squawk with concerns."

Digital media advertising had been forecast to grow 15.7 percent in 2015, according to analysis agency Carat, but that could soon look like a peak.

### LIKE PRIVATE TV

"We were in an extremely favourable situation because mobile opened up a huge range of functions that were not available on the web," said Sophie Poncin, head of an Internet advertisers' union in France, highlighting the particular value of GPS positioning for advertisers.

In an industry in which creative destruction is the norm, the ad-men are already reacting to the new environment and calling for change.

Berrada's firm recently published a manifesto urging less-annoying ads: an end to pop-up videos that fill the whole screen and give users the option to skip ones they don't like.

They are also appealing to users to recognise the importance of advertising in keeping the Internet free. "With television, people understand perfectly well that advertising finances private channels," said Poncin. "We never took the time to explain to a user how everything works." — AFP

## GITEX WEEK TO SPUR GROWTH OF REGION'S DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

### OVER 3,600 COMPANIES FROM 62 COUNTRIES TO TAKE PART

**DUBAI:** More than 3,600 companies from over 62 countries are taking part in the 35th edition of the Gitex Technology Week, which is taking place from October 18-22 at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

This year's theme is "The Internet Future of Everything", revolves around the pillars of innovation, connected cloud, big data, mobility and security.

Out of the 3,600 companies, 30 per cent are from the UAE and around eight per cent from Gulf countries.

"For the past many years, 20 per cent of the companies used to be from the UAE and this year many are participating to reflect the strong demand for how Internet of Things technologies such as drones, robotics and 3D printing can impact daily lives and every industry vertical in the Middle East and beyond," said Trixie Loh Mirmand, senior vice-president of Dubai World Trade Centre, organisers of the event.

Aisha Butti Bin Bishr, assistant director general of The Executive Office and Smart Dubai Taskforce leader, said that Dubai is committed to becoming a "global benchmark" for Smart Cities of the future.

"In the last two years, we have been working very closely with our strategic partners to meet the needs of all residents and visitors, from government to education and health care, through a connected and responsive citywide infrastructure.

By 2025, the global Smart Cities market will reach \$3.3 trillion (Dh12.1 trillion), with nearly half of the world's 26 Smart Cities arising in emerging markets such as the Middle East.

"We are continuously reviewing and refining the latest technology innovations, from mobile apps to drones, to understand how we may adopt these tools to make city experiences more seamless, safe, efficient and impactful for all," she said.

### Business differentiator

Dima Kandalaft, smart cities leader for Gulf and Levant at IBM, said that Internet of Things is the future and IBM has estab-



**DUBAI:** Top officials seen during the Press Conference of Gitex Technology Week 2015 at Dubai World Trade Centre.

lished an Internet of Things business unit by investing \$3 billion in developing cloud-based services to serve the industries around the world.

"Over the past year, we have witnessed how technologies are moving from a business enabler to a business differentiator. This year is a milestone. Technology is becoming a game-changer. The digital transformation and the ability the technology allows right now are growing at a rapid pace," said Hannes Liebe, COO of SAP Middle East and North Africa.

By 2020, he said that there is going to be 50 billion connected devices globally

and the business value surround it is going to be around \$14 trillion. In the Middle East, the business value is around \$2 billion. Omar Boulos, regional managing director of Accenture in the Middle East and North Africa, said that digital transformation can boost competitiveness and economic growth, and researches show that unlocking this potential can add trillions to the GDP (gross domestic product) of top global economies.

"This region's appetite for innovation makes it uniquely positioned to take advantage of the digital opportunity," he said.

## SELF-DRIVING CARS WON'T SAVE US FOR VERY LONG TIME

**WASHINGTON:** Each year about 33,000 people in the US die in a car accident. Around the world, that number shoots up to about 1.2 million people. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of these accidents are preventable. The problem, in large part, is human error. Technology companies and automakers alike are trying to end these unnecessary deaths with self-driving cars. The bet is autonomous vehicles decked with sensors and cameras simply have more data about the car's environment than humans, therefore, the computer can more quickly respond to potential dangers.

But while all the major car companies are investing in this technology, the fact remains that there are a number of hurdles to be addressed before fully autonomous cars can hit the streets in any meaningful way in the US.

Most automakers and industry experts estimate these

vehicles will be on the road closer to 2030. However, technology does already exist that can make cars a lot safer. New cars won't be fully autonomous, but they will do a lot more without humans. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 80% of all accidents occur because of some kind of distraction that happens three seconds before an incident. To help prevent these kinds of accidents, you don't need a fully autonomous vehicle, you just need better safety technology, Michael Backman, a general manager at Mobileye, a tech company that makes the software and tech that enables advanced safety systems, told Tech Insider.

### Amazing

About 80 percent of all accidents occur because of a distraction that occurs before an incident. "It's amazing when

you think about it that we allow people to perish at this rate in this country and also around the whole world," Backman said. "It's terrible that this happens and we have the technology to change that right now."

Instead of waiting years for the regulations and technology to be fully developed for fully autonomous vehicles, automakers should already be implementing semi-autonomous systems that help make vehicles safer now.

### Many automakers are doing just that

By 2020, almost every major car company plans to have a vehicle with self-driving features—like autonomous driving for the highway, self-braking, and self-parking—available for sale. In fact, in September, 10 major car companies—including Audi, BMW, Ford, General Motors, and Tesla—agreed to make automatic braking a standard feature in their vehicles. This kind of safety technology could help prevent or cut as many as 1,700 deaths caused by rear-end collisions each year. BMW's all-electric i3 can already park itself and Tesla recently rolled out its latest autopilot features, which enables highway autosteer and parallel autopark, as part of a beta program. But new cars aren't the only vehicles getting safer. Consumers and companies are also beginning to retrofit their dumb cars with smart car tech that helps them avoid accidents.

### Old cars are also getting a tech update

Mobileye, which provides its technology to auto suppliers and manufacturers, powers 85% of cars with collision avoidance or some kind of driving assistance systems, Backman said. The company's software communicates with sensors and cameras placed on a car to help warn drivers of possible hazards and to power self-driving functions. Tesla, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Audi, and BMW are just a few of the companies that use the company's technology.

But Mobileye has another part of its business that uses its technology to basically make dumb cars a lot safer. The product, called Mobileye 5 Series, is a camera-based computer system that attaches to the dashboard to alert the driver to all kinds of hazards. For example, the camera in the system can read speed limits, so it will alert the driver by beeping when they are speeding. It will do the same if the driver is veering out of their lane, tailgating, or if it detects that the vehicle might be on a collision course with a pedestrian or another object.

## TOMTOM APPLYING GPS TECHNOLOGY TO SELF-DRIVING CARS, FITNESS WATCHES

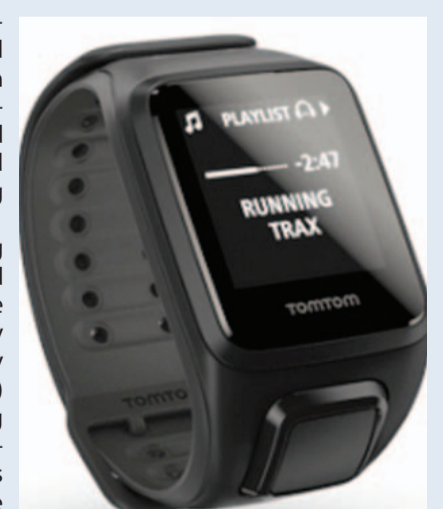
**BERLIN:** GPS device maker TomTom has moved beyond turn-by-turn directions into smartwatches and embedded car software that could be used for self-driving vehicles.

The portable mapping device maker announced in September the release of 24,000 km (roughly 15,000 miles) of highly automated driving (HAD) maps covering Germany's entire highway network. HAD maps are a highly accurate type of 3D mapping technology that enables automated driving vehicles to drive from point A to point B, instead of just sensing what is on the road in front of them.

These types of maps provide self-driving cars with a realistic representation of the road ahead, outlining such things as lane centerlines, lane dividers, road borders, and guard rails, for instance. It can also point out speed limits and lane dividers to keep the car in check and allow it to adjust accordingly.

TomTom has also jumped into fitness with the release of the TomTom Spark watch. This wearable tracks many of the same things as other fitness devices such as steps, mileage and sleep time, but also allows you to listen to your music on the go without your smartphone. It does require a Bluetooth-enabled headset to work, but comes with quite a bit of storage space for plenty of tune options. The watch's 3GB allows for up to 500 songs and can sync via USB cable from your laptop.

Thanks to TomTom's origins in GPS technology, the Spark aims to accurately record mileage, minutes of activity and how many calories you may have burned during that time. The watch also comes with a serious heart rate sensor that the company says rivals that of the Apple Watch.



**TOKYO:** A model is seen showcasing a robot at the Ceatec Japan 2015 in Tokyo. Over 500 technology companies took part in the electronic trade fair. — AFP