

TEXTE

Amazon opens first UK non-food store



5 **Amazon is expanding its presence on the High Street by opening its first non-food store in the UK.**

10 The shop, in the Bluewater shopping mall near Dartford, will sell around 2,000 of its most popular and best-rated products. It's called Amazon 4-star, because every item has been given more than four stars by customers. However, one retail expert said the shop could be "muddled and uninspiring". This will be the first Amazon 4-star store outside the US, where there are already more than 30 outlets. The range of products, which takes in books, consumer electronics, toys, games and homeware, reflects what Amazon customers are buying online.

15 There's a "Most Wished For" section, for instance, showing the most popular products from customers' wish lists. Digital price tags are used to ensure the prices are the same in-store and online. Shoppers don't need to have an Amazon account to use it. And customers will also be able to collect items ordered online as well as return items without the need for packaging and labels.

20 Andy Jones, director of Amazon 4-star UK, declined to say how many more stores he plans to open in the UK.

25 This global giant is often accused of killing the High Street by undercutting traditional retailers and paying less tax. Now it's moving onto their physical patch as well. However, retail expert Natalie Berg said the Amazon move "is purely about experimentation".

30 The giant's aim, she said, is to encourage more online shopping. "This is not about shifting more product; it's about baiting shoppers into Amazon's ecosystem," Ms Berg said. "It's about getting shoppers to engage with Amazon's devices, reminding Prime customers of the value in their memberships, and offering additional choice when it comes to collection and returns of online orders."

Amazon has already opened six grocery convenience stores in the UK with checkout-free technology. But Ms Berg said the jury is still out as to whether the world's most disruptive retailer can do one of the most fundamental retail tasks - run stores.

"The 4-star concept has the potential to be a bit muddled and uninspiring," she said.

35 "The store features a smorgasbord of products, the result of Amazon's very scientific, data-led approach to physical retail.

"But when you strip out the high-tech touches, I struggle to see how it differentiates from any other retailer," says Ms Berg.

40 Landlords, though, may welcome the move as they try to find new players to take on empty shops, driven largely by our shopping habits moving online.

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Smorgasbord = variety

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