

# 5 tips to avoid brand hijacking when Amazon launches in SA

By [Tim van der Bilt](#)

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With news out that Amazon online shopping will be available to South Africans in February 2023, what should local CMOs be doing?



Supplied. Tim van der Bilt, founder and CEO of Incubeta Maze-One gives 5 tips to local CMOs in preparation of the launch of Amazon in SA

They should be acting to avoid risking their brands and their intellectual property (IP), as opportunistic resellers will look to take advantage of the new commercial opportunity.

Most people were already dabbling with online shopping, but Covid fast-tracked those plans, with Amazon seeing significant growth over the last two years. While this offers local brands a huge opportunity, many marketing leaders will be understandably nervous of unscrupulous resellers taking advantage of all their hard work.

Looking at what companies can do to mitigate the risk of bad actors selling counterfeit or similar versions of their products, there are practical actions local CMOs can take as soon as the local service goes live – and before.

## 1. Stake your claim or risk losing brand control

The first and most urgent action is to claim your brand. If you haven't claimed your brand you can't register to trade and you are not able to stop others from misusing your intellectual property. And, if you think that this is an unlikely scenario, Amazon shared that they had stopped four million bad actors from fraudulently using brands in 2021 alone.

So, even if you don't want to sell on Amazon, or simply want to bide your time before beginning, at least you know your brand and your IP is protected.

## 2. Get the legwork done upfront, even if you choose not to trade

Understand that there are a good few steps involved in setting up a seller account as well as a fair amount of documentation that needs to be completed.

Once you have gone through the legwork, companies are able to control all elements of their brand, including the titles, descriptions, images and videos etc. of their branded products.

This means resellers are only able to compete for the prices at which they sell those products. Brands must understand that they can't control who sells products on Amazon.

What's more, the platform is designed to drive prices down. While brands can get frustrated by that, they have to accept that this is a worldwide supply network and you can't control that. However, you can control your brand and how it is experienced – just as you would across every other physical and digital channel. You either get in early and control your brand, or you will be in a world of pain a few months down the line.

### 3. Check your pricing models to inform your strategy

Although not available just yet, local brands will soon be able to check how profitable it will be to use the global network by checking out the [FBA fee calculator](#), although I believe the logistics and last-mile delivery in South Africa may make it a little more expensive for local sellers than the more mature markets which have robust postal services.

### 4. Amazon's not the only game in town

When CMOs look at how to deal with the Amazon launch they should also use the opportunity to explore a broader marketplace strategy.

The niched vertical marketplaces are very strong and should be included as part of your bigger marketplace strategy. No matter where your customers find themselves they should have the same brand experience, whether on Amazon, Zalando or ASOS. Brands must also control the prices on each platform.

Just as a brand would have a branding and pricing strategy across all supermarkets, they need to take ownership of their global marketplace strategies as well.



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### 5. It's not nearly as painful as you might think

If South African companies have products they want to sell and distribute globally they should not feel overwhelmed.

The fifth piece of advice is to keep calm.

When we onboard a new client we would set up an Amazon account locally and, if they want to trade globally, in all EU markets as well as the US, we would build relevant product content in seven languages, ship the product to one central fulfilment centre and then distribute it globally from there. Our work with enterprise clients around the world has shown us the efficacy of Amazon.

With the right content and the right partners, you can easily take advantage of the biggest digital marketplace in the world.

## **Pay attention to your content strategy**

Finally, one aspect that will need close attention is a company's content strategy, and this is something that marketing leaders should waste no time in actioning.

My colleague Roan Mackintosh, Incubeta MD, Middle East and Africa imparts a final tip: "With one account and one backend integration, you can sell your products across the globe without any further infrastructure or personnel investment, making an Amazon play a no-brainer for many consumer brands.

"However, within a very high density, high competition marketplace environment, if a brand has not properly invested in their images, product descriptions and all the rich media associated with their product, they are wasting their time and money as they will get lost in the noise as consumers gravitate to higher quality and enticing content."

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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