



Amazon Opens Wearable Tech Outpost

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With Amazon behind it, has wearable tech tributary into the mainstream? Perhaps it's not there yet - but it may be flowing faster. Most consumers still aren't hungry for the various wearables on the market - and some, like Google Glass -- have stirred controversy and drawn negative reactions. Still, if sentiment shifts, the Amazon store could prove very useful to the industry - and to Amazon.

Amazon on Tuesday opened the doors to its Wearable Technology store, a website that sells products in the emerging market.

All of the brands one would expect to find in this category are featured - from Samsung, Jawbone and GoPro to newcomers like Narrative and Bionym.

The site is divided into product categories. Smartwatches, for example, are one category. Others include fitness and wellness, healthcare, wearable cameras, and family, kids and pets.

Acknowledging the relative newness of this category, Amazon has included a Learning Center on the storefront that sports product videos and buying guides. More edgy content can be found in the Editor's Corner. On Wednesday, for example, Gizmodo contributed a piece on machines that run on body heat.

One-Stop Shop for Confusing Gadgets

It is the proverbial one-stop shop, but in this case the concept is truly necessary. Wearable gadgets are only understood by a small portion of the population and most of them are aware of only the most popular products.

"Right now, there is major confusion regarding the functionality of each device, and which one you should buy," Colin House, CEO and founder of [Sleep Genius](#), told the E-Commerce Times.

"I think an online store dedicated to wearable tech might reveal what is truly lacking about the space," he added.

One problem is that consumers likely will understand how the gadget works and its actual tracking of certain data, but they might not be able to put it in larger context, House said.

"While many of these devices integrate with some of the top applications that help consumers digest this information," he observed, "it's taking a while for users to latch on and draw the connection between their quantified data and making actual improvements to their health."

Greater Acceptance

Before this category really takes off, it needs to overcome some initial negative PR: Google Glass has been an ambassador for wearable tech, and several high-profile incidents suggest it hasn't done so well in paving the road for the rest of the industry.

Because of privacy concerns - not to mention high price points - people will not eagerly embrace wearable tech until they are convinced that their lives are enhanced by the technology, said Philip Rooke, CEO of [Spreadshirt](#).

"The lesson here is that electronic content providers have to get very good at providing good content," he told the E-Commerce Times. In that respect, the Amazon store could prove to be very useful to the industry.

The Final Push

However, few believe that it is the only answer. More importantly, the technology itself has to improve, said Artyom Astafurov, chief innovation officer at [DataArt](#).

"I think Amazon opening a store for wearable technology is not as significant as wearable technology becoming better and more useful," he told the E-Commerce Times.

For instance, when Astafurov bought the previous generation of FitBit One, he found it impractical after a few weeks. Then he purchased a Basis B1 watch. When he gets questions about it, he shares how he can track his sleep and how its quality has improved.

"I am by no means endorsing the brand. What I am telling is that rather than having a separate category in the store, there should be a way for people to understand the actual value of the technology," he said. "And there is a lot of room for improvement: sensors, size, connectivity, ease of use and making people overall aware of it." [[*Correction - April 30, 2014](#)]

As the product iterations continue, these issues presumably will be solved, word will get out, and a groundswell of demand will materialize. Then Amazon's store will take off, David Cadden, a professor of entrepreneurship and strategy at [Quinnipiac University](#), told the E-Commerce Times. "Amazon is doing everything to lay the foundation for a dominant position in this potentially huge market."