

Amazon Shareholder Meeting Question
Horace Cooper
The National Center for Public Policy Research
May 23, 2013

I'm Horace Cooper, here as proxy for my colleague Amy Ridenour, representing the National Center for Public Policy Research – a conservative, free-market think-tank.

Mr. Bezos, Businessweek and other publications reported that Amazon has joined with other major corporations, a list that includes Google, Comcast, Ebay and Time Warner, in limiting commerce related to guns, ammunition and a variety of gun parts and supplies.

Mr. Bezos, a research associate with our institution developed, using data from independent third-parties, a list of the "Top 10 Most Violent Video Games" and another list of the "Top Ten Most Violent Movies" of all time.

Having compiled the list, and having no idea which, if any, of these products would be for sale on Amazon, she then looked to see if Amazon sells them. Guess what? It sells not a third of them, not half of them, but each and every one of them.

I won't even tell you what is in the film "Cannibal Holocaust," but if you're curious, you are selling it for \$22.50. If you want the most violent video game, Manhunt, you're in luck. What Amazon describes as an exploration of "the depths of human depravity in a vicious, sadistic tale of urban horror," is not only available on Amazon, you sell "Manhunt 2" as well. Apparently it is the go-to game for people who want to, as Amazon's product page puts it, execute their kills in 3 deadly threats - Hasty, Violent and Gruesome."

Mr. Bezos, many make the argument that selling an item does not make the seller responsible for it. If a teenager plays hundreds of hours of games that consist of never-ending gun massacres, becomes desensitized to the violence, and becomes a mass killer, that's his fault, not the fault of the retailer.

I'm not here to argue with that philosophy, but to ask: how is Amazon.com deciding where its responsibility lies? Amazon bans the sale of legal gun parts to adults, but not videos and games depicting mass murder and torture for entertainment to impressionable minds? Guns, as I'm sure you know, are often used in self-defense. The NRA says 2 million times a year; the NRA's opponents say the number is closer to 67,000. Either way, that's a lot of people protecting themselves. But who benefits from learning how to strangle an enemy in a toilet while playing Manhunt?

Mr. Bezos, we do not dispute Amazon's right to sell any of these items, but as staunch defenders of the Second Amendment, we would like to know how Amazon made this decision: Selling legal guns and ammo to adults, no; selling vicious, sadistic torture and murder depictions to adolescents, yes. What is your thinking?

Contact: Judy Kent at (703) 759-7476 or jkent@nationalcenter.org

