

AUTOMOTIVE

## Amazon experiments with home-delivered test drives for Prime members

May 29, 2018



Amazon's test drive service begins with Volvo in the U.K. Image credit: Volvo

By DANNY PARISI

Amazon is expanding its already ubiquitous presence into yet another territory as the ecommerce giant prepares to offer on-demand vehicle test drives.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

The online retailer has just announced an exclusive partnership with automaker Volvo to offer on-demand test drives as part of its Amazon Prime membership program. While only Volvo is represented on this program currently, the infrastructure exists for Amazon to extend the capability to many brands, including luxury auto.

"The Prime Now Test Drive by Amazon should not be viewed as a threat against the auto industry on the contrary, it is a tool that can help auto brands reach customers that are intimidated or frustrated by the local car dealership experience," said **Thomai Serdari**, a professor of luxury business marketing at New York University, New York. "In essence, this program caters to the customers who are accustomed to the convenience of shopping online and testing things out before committing to long term leasing or purchasing.

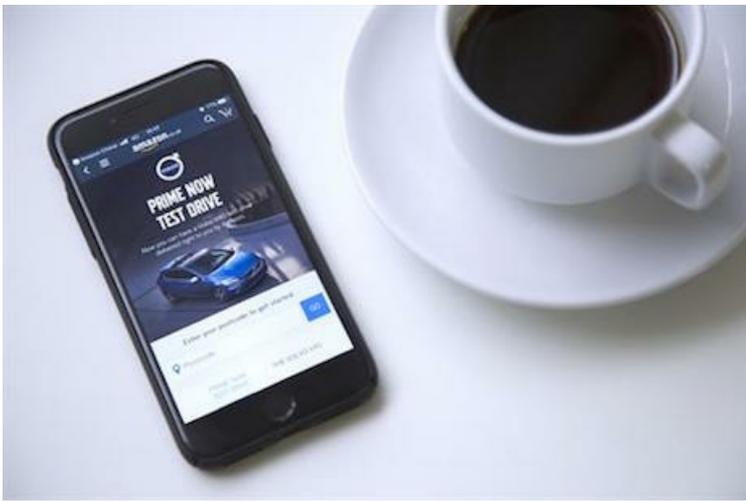
"It is a perfect match between Amazon, a delivery platform already connected to numerous households, and the auto industry that has no or very little control over the experience a customer receives at the local dealership," she said. "The Prime Now Test Drive will eliminate the hurdle of getting to the dealership and replace it with the pleasure of connecting directly with the brand.

"The customer's emotional benefit potential from this unencumbered experience is tremendous. The limited availability of the service both in terms of locations (for the roll out) and in terms of duration of the test drive actually adds to the desirability of the experience."

Prime Now

Beginning in the United Kingdom, Amazon Prime members will be able to order a Volvo test drive through Amazon.

Through the Web site, customers will be able to browse Volvos of their choice, pick their preferred time and order the test drive. Then, a trained professional from Volvo will drive the car to their homes and pick them up, allowing them to take the car for a spin and get a feel for it.



*Customers can book test drives through their phones. Image credit: Volvo*

The program is only available for a limited time in a select few cities in the U.K., although if successful it is likely that Amazon will extend the program to other brands in the future.

Prime Now test drives, as the initiative is called, will run throughout the months of June and July.

Test drives are a particularly important aspect of the vehicle purchasing process. For luxury auto brands in particular, expensive cars are a major investment and customers expect to be able to experience the car as much as possible before they make their final purchase.

Additionally, the hand-delivered aspect of Prime Now test drives aligns well with the sort of boutique customer experience luxury brands strive for.

Test drives

Amazon has been hard at work expanding into every category conceivable.

Its most recent automotive innovation was the concept of in-car delivery. Amazon is upping the ante on shipping services with a delivery model that brings packages directly to a customer's vehicle.

After convincing consumers to open their homes for deliveries with Amazon Key, the retailer is now expanding its capabilities to placing packages in shoppers' cars. In recent years, Amazon has set the trends in ecommerce services, which may turn vehicle deliveries into a mainstream expectation ([see story](#)).



*The program runs through June and July. Image credit: Volvo*

This is also not the only major partnership between auto brands and major ecommerce platforms in recent months. For instance, Chinese ecommerce giant Alibaba is linking consumers' cars to their homes with an automotive artificial intelligence solution.

The retailer's AI + Car solution allows consumers to interact with their vehicles through its Tmall Genie voice assistant, checking the car's status or controlling settings from their home. Daimler, Audi and Volvo are the first automakers to incorporate AI + Car into their vehicles, with more brands expected to follow in the future ([see story](#)).

Amazon's Prime Now test drives are an opportunity for the platform to extend its reach further into the luxury business if it rolls out the program to more high-end brands in the future.

"While the feature is well designed for today's tech savvy, time pressed, and research oriented consumer, luxury car brands may not need it as badly," Ms. Serdari said. "Many more luxury car brands have been able to control their distribution network a little more tightly than mass marketed brands.

"It seems that luxury car brands have nothing to fear by associating their name with the Amazon brand since this is purely a 'white glove' type of service and does not imply listing of inventory or actual sales on the platform, two directions that several luxury brands resist at the moment.

"Coupled with the limited access to test drive appointments based on geographic location and availability of time slots throughout the day, the aura of exclusivity is well preserved. In the end, this is an additional service that shortens the customer journey (literally and figuratively speaking) and as such may very well lead to greater conversion."

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.