

THE OPERATOR'S PLAYBOOK



AMAZON
SOURCING
AGAINST
THE HERD

*How experienced Amazon sellers find under-contested
brands before everyone else does*

FREE PREVIEW
INTRODUCTION + FIRST 3 CHAPTERS

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FOUNDER OF WEBOTEE

AMAZON SOURCING AGAINST THE HERD

How experienced Amazon sellers find under-contested brands before everyone else does

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ABOUT THIS PREVIEW

What you're holding

This is a free preview of *Amazon Sourcing Against the Herd*. You're getting the full Introduction and the first three chapters — not a sales brochure, but the real opening of the book: the problem the herd has created, the operator's mindset that beats it, and your first genuinely usable skill — reading a market's true saturation by hand.

By the end of these pages you'll be able to look at any Amazon listing and read its *Heat* — how hard the Buy Box has really been fought, and whether a market is a knife fight or a quiet opening — in about two minutes, with free tools. That's a real edge you can use today.

What the preview stops short of is the engine: the **cross-brand operator graph** — the method for following proven sellers sideways into the under-contested brands the crowd hasn't found — plus the six-dimension Sourcing Score, the verification and profit-math discipline, and how to turn it all into a pipeline that surfaces opportunities while you sleep. That's the rest of the book.

THE COMPLETE BOOK IS FREE

The full *Amazon Sourcing Against the Herd* — all fourteen chapters, the worksheets, and the glossary — is available as a free download at **webotee.com**. If this preview earns it, that's where to get the whole method.



INTRODUCTION

Everyone Is Using the Same Map

OPEN ANY "HOW TO FIND PRODUCTS TO SELL ON AMAZON" VIDEO and you already know how it goes. The presenter pulls up a popular product, points at a seller count, screenshots an estimated revenue number, and says, "Look how much money this is making." Thirty thousand people watch that video. A meaningful fraction of them go and try to sell the same thing. Six months later the listing has fifteen new sellers fighting over the Buy Box, the price has been bid down past the point of profit, and everyone wonders why "Amazon is so saturated now."

It isn't that Amazon ran out of room. It's that everyone is using the same map.

The popular research tools are good tools. I am not here to tell you they are broken. But they all draw from a similar well of estimated metrics, and they all show roughly the same signals to everyone who pays for them. When a hundred thousand operators query the same database and sort by the same columns, they converge on the same few hundred opportunities. The tool didn't fail. It did exactly what it promised. The problem is that a shared signal stops being an edge the moment it is shared.

A shared signal stops being an edge the moment it is shared.

This book is about the other way to source — the way experienced operators actually work once they have been burned a few times by the herd. It is not faster. It is not easier. There is no button. What it is, is *asymmetric*: it starts from something you already know and walks outward into territory the crowd hasn't

trampled yet, using a kind of data and a way of reading it that most sellers never touch.

Who this book is for

This is a book for people who already sell on Amazon, or who are serious enough about starting that they think in terms of net profit, cash flow, and execution rather than "passive income." If you are looking for a five-step roadmap to ten thousand dollars a month from your couch, this is the wrong book, and I would rather tell you that on page two than waste your time.

You will get the most out of these pages if you are one of the following:

- **A wholesale or online-arbitrage operator** who is tired of chasing the same lead lists that every other reseller in your Facebook group is also chasing.
- **A private-label or brand seller** who wants to understand the competitive structure of a category before committing capital to it.
- **A brand owner or distributor** who needs to see who is selling your products, where, and at what price: the mirror image of the sourcing problem, covered in its own chapter.
- **A store owner (physical or online, on Amazon or nowhere near it)** deciding what to put on your shelves. Amazon is the largest product-demand laboratory on earth; even if you never sell a single unit there, what's selling and who's distributing it is a powerful guide to what belongs in *your* store. We'll work this exact case in Chapter Thirteen.
- **An analyst or agency** building sourcing intelligence for clients and wanting a defensible framework rather than a gut feel.

What unites all of these is the same instinct: you want to find opportunity *before* it is obvious, not after, and you are willing to do real work to get there.

What this book promises: and what it doesn't

I will give you a complete, repeatable method for finding under-contested brands and products to source. You can run every step of it by hand, with a spreadsheet and a few browser tabs, on the day you finish reading. That is deliberate. A method you can only execute if you buy something is not a method; it is a sales pitch wearing a method's clothes.

Here is the honest shape of what's coming. We start with the landscape as it actually is in 2026 (thinner margins, more gating, an Amazon that keeps changing the rules) and the mindset that survives it. Then we build the method, one tool-agnostic piece at a time: reading saturation, mapping the operators behind a brand, scoring an opportunity across six dimensions, verifying it at the listing level, reading the sellers themselves as a signal, checking the truth outside Amazon, and doing profit math you can actually trust. Finally we turn that method into a standing pipeline so you are not starting from a blank page every week, and we look at the brand-owner's side of the same coin. We also show how the same method serves anyone choosing what to put on a shelf (physical store, Shopify, eBay), even if they never sell a unit on Amazon themselves.

What I will *not* do is promise you a number. Anyone who promises you a specific income from Amazon sourcing is either naive or selling something. The market moves, your execution varies, and Amazon gets a vote. What I can promise is a way of looking that is genuinely different from what the herd is doing — and being different is the whole game.

A NOTE ON HONESTY IN ESTIMATES

You will notice throughout this book that I am allergic to false precision. When I talk about sales volumes, saturation, or profit, I will give you ranges and confidence levels, not single magic numbers. The seller community is rightly jaded by "85% accurate" claims. Estimates are estimates. Treating them as truth is how people lose money. The discipline of holding numbers loosely (and knowing *which* numbers you can trust) is itself one of the edges this book is trying to give you.

Where I'm coming from

I should tell you who is talking, because it explains both what I know and what I'm selling.

I'm Nikola Cosic. For more than two years I have run an independent, automated daily monitoring operation over the top tier of Amazon's US Best Sellers: on the order of a million products tracked every day, with a multi-year record of who has been winning the Buy Box, at what price, on which listings. I didn't build that to write a book. I built it because I kept needing answers the existing tools couldn't give me: not "how many sellers are on this listing," but "which *other* brands are those same sellers also winning, and what does that tell me about where to look next."

That question (the cross-brand, operator-level question) turned out to be the most useful one I had ever asked about Amazon. The system I built to answer it became a product called Webotee, which is my company. So let me be completely straight with you: I have a commercial interest in you eventually becoming a Webotee customer. I'm not going to pretend otherwise, and I'm not going to hide it behind a thin wall of "objective" advice.

But here's the deal I'm offering. This book teaches the *method*, not the product. Roughly nine-tenths of it is technique you can

run with free and public information. Webottee shows up in one dedicated chapter, near the end, as the answer to a specific question: "This is a lot of manual work — how do I make it run by itself?" If you read the whole thing and never sign up for anything, you will still be a sharper sourcer than you were when you started. If that happens, the book did its job. If you also decide the automation is worth it, even better. Both of those outcomes are fine with me, and I built the book so that either one leaves you ahead.

This is a first edition. Errata, corrections, and reader suggestions are welcome at **webottee.com/book**, the current errata list lives there, and the next edition will be sharper because of the readers who send notes on this one.

Let's start with the thing nobody selling a course wants to admit: why the easy way stopped working.



PART ONE

The Ground Truth

Why the easy way stopped working — and the way of thinking that replaces it.

CHAPTER ONE

The Saturation Trap

THERE IS A SPECIFIC WAY THAT A GOOD AMAZON OPPORTUNITY DIES, and once you have watched it happen a few times you start to recognize the shape of it in advance. It looks like this. A product is selling well. Somebody with an audience notices, points a camera at it, and says some version of "this listing is making a hundred thousand dollars a month." The number is an estimate, pulled from a tool, and it is probably wrong by a wide margin in one direction or the other: but it doesn't matter, because it is exciting and it is specific, and specificity feels like truth.

Within weeks, sellers who watched that video start sourcing the same product. They find the same supplier, or they buy the same item at retail to flip. They list. Now there are five sellers on a listing that had two. The Buy Box starts rotating. Someone drops their price a dollar to win it back. Someone else matches. The price ratchets downward, not because anyone wants it to, but because each individual seller is making a locally rational decision to take the sale at a thinner margin rather than no sale at all. Six months later the listing is a knife fight. The margin that made it attractive is gone, eaten by the very attention that made it visible.

The product didn't get worse. The *information about it* got distributed. And distributed information is the opposite of an edge.

The product didn't get worse. The information about it got distributed.

Saturation is a distribution problem, not a supply problem

Amazon's catalog grows every single day. New brands appear, old brands expand their lines, categories that didn't exist three years ago now have hundreds of viable products. The supply of opportunity is not shrinking.

What is shrinking is the supply of opportunity that *only you can see*. And that is a function of how information moves, not how many products exist. The popular research tools are extraordinarily good at taking a question that used to require real work ("how is this product selling, how many sellers are on it, what's the trend") and answering it instantly for anyone who pays a subscription. That is genuinely valuable. It is also, by construction, a shared answer. Hundreds of thousands of operators run versions of the same query, sort by the same columns, and apply the same filters they learned from the same videos. They are all standing at the same lookout point, looking through the same telescope, at the same horizon.

The result is a strange kind of crowding. Not crowding of the marketplace — crowding of *attention*. A small set of products and brands gets looked at by everyone, while a vast remainder gets looked at by almost no one, even though plenty of that remainder is perfectly sellable. The herd isn't wrong that the products it's chasing are good. The herd is wrong that being able to see a good product is the same as having an opportunity. By the time a product is easy to see, the opportunity in it has usually already been competed away.

THE CORE IDEA OF THIS BOOK

An opportunity is not "a product that sells well." An opportunity is *a gap between what you can see and what your competitors can see*. Everything in this book is built to widen that gap, to give you a way of looking that the herd does not share, starting from information you already have and walking into territory the crowd hasn't reached.

The 2026 landscape, without the rose tint

Before we build the method, you should have a clear-eyed picture of the ground you're standing on. Sourcing in 2026 is harder than it was, and pretending otherwise would make this book one of the ones I warned you about. Several forces have tightened at once:

- **Margins are thinner.** Referral fees, fulfillment fees, storage, returns, and the steady drip of new surcharges have compressed the spread on the average product. A deal that pencils at thirty percent margin on paper often nets far less once every real cost is counted. The math is less forgiving than it was, which makes *accurate* profit estimation (covered later) more important than ever.
- **Gating is everywhere.** More brands and more categories require approval to sell. A product can look perfect and be completely unavailable to you because you can't get ungated for it. Sourcing without checking gating first is a way to fall in love with things you can't have.
- **Brands fight back.** Brand Registry, IP complaints, and authorized-distribution enforcement have real teeth now. A brand that polices its listings can remove unauthorized sellers, and a hot product behind an aggressive brand is a trap, not a prize.

- **The rules keep moving.** Fulfillment program terms, prep requirements, and fee schedules change on Amazon's timetable, not yours. One specific 2026 example: Amazon now requires Brand Registry enrollment to use manufacturer UPC barcodes with FBA, so sellers without it must put Amazon's own FN-SKU labels on every unit: a quiet rise in the bar for unbranded private-label and small-batch reseller plays. Any strategy that depends on a specific policy staying put is fragile by design.
- **The crowd is faster.** Information propagates through the seller community in days, not months. The window between "this is a good opportunity" and "everyone knows about this opportunity" has collapsed.
- **AI compresses the cycle.** The herd now uses language models to read listings, summarize review patterns at scale, and surface candidates from public data. What used to take a video and a wave of imitators now takes a script and an afternoon. AI doesn't change which signals are shared: it accelerates how fast a shared signal reaches the crowd. Methods built on shared signals decay faster than they used to; methods built on non-shared structure (the operator graph, multi-year history, off-Amazon truth) hold up better, because AI is good at reading data the herd already has and structurally bad at acquiring data the herd doesn't.

None of this means Amazon is closed for business. Plenty of operators are building real, profitable, growing operations right now. But they are not doing it by chasing the same lists as everyone else. They are doing it by reading the market more carefully and looking where the crowd isn't.

Why "fewer sellers" is too crude a filter

The instinctive response to saturation is to filter for it directly: show me products with only one or two sellers. This is better than

nothing, but it is a blunt instrument, and on its own it will mislead you in both directions.

In one direction, a low seller count can be a sign of a problem, not an opening. A listing with one seller might be a brand that gates hard and removes everyone else — meaning you'll be removed too. It might be a dying product that nobody bothers with anymore. It might be a single seller with an exclusive supply relationship you have no way to replicate. Low competition and low opportunity look identical on a seller-count filter.

In the other direction, a moderately contested listing can still be a fine opportunity if the contest is stable, a handful of established sellers holding steady prices over a long period is a very different thing from a handful of sellers in a downward price spiral, even though both might show "five sellers" in a tool. The number tells you how many. It doesn't tell you the *character* of the competition: how long they've been there, whether they're fighting or coexisting, whether they're real stock-holding operators or transient flippers.

What you actually want to read is not a count but a *temperature*, how hard the Buy Box has been fought over time, and by whom. That reading is what I call Heat, and it gets its own chapter. For now, hold the idea loosely: saturation is a spectrum and a moving target, and your job is to read it, not to fear it.

The asymmetric move, in one sentence

Here is the whole strategy of this book compressed into a single instruction, which we will spend the rest of the chapters unpacking and operationalizing:

Start from a brand or product you already know is selling, find the operators who are winning it, and follow those operators sideways into the other brands

they're quietly winning, brands the herd hasn't found because the herd doesn't think in operators.

That sentence is the asymmetry. The crowd starts from a product and stops at the product. You're going to start from a product, pivot to the *people* selling it, and use them as a map to opportunities that share their commercial DNA but not their crowd. It is a structurally different search, and structurally different searches are the only ones that produce non-shared answers.

To run that search you need a particular way of thinking — less like a shopper, more like an operator. That mindset is the subject of the next chapter, and it's the foundation everything else is built on.



CHAPTER TWO

The Operator's Mindset

TWO PEOPLE CAN LOOK AT THE EXACT SAME AMAZON LISTING AND see completely different things. The first sees a product: a price, a rating, an estimated sales number. The second sees a market: who is winning the sale, how long they've held it, what else those same sellers are doing across the catalog, and whether the structure of the competition is stable or about to break. The first is a product hunter. The second is an operator. This book is about becoming the second person, because the product hunter's view is the one the herd already has.

The difference isn't intelligence or experience. It's the unit of analysis. The hunter's unit is the *product*. The operator's unit is the *operator* — including themselves. That shift in what you treat as the basic object of study changes everything downstream. Let's make it concrete.

Think in portfolios, not products

A product hunter is looking for *the* product — the one winner that will make the quarter. This framing is seductive and it is a trap, because it concentrates all your risk in a single decision and all your attention on a single listing that, as we just saw, is probably already visible to everyone else looking for the same thing.

An operator is building a *portfolio*. The question is never "is this the product" but "is this a worthwhile addition to a basket of bets, given what I already carry and what I'm trying to build." That reframing does three useful things at once. It lowers the stakes on any single decision, so you can disqualify candidates ruthlessly without feeling like you're losing your one shot. It

pushes you toward repeatable processes instead of one-time wins, because a portfolio has to be fed continuously. And it makes you think about *correlation* (whether your bets rise and fall together) which is exactly the kind of structural thinking that leads you to operator graphs and category dynamics instead of isolated listings.

OPERATOR'S NOTE

The healthiest sourcing pipelines disqualify the overwhelming majority of what they look at, fast. If you find yourself trying to talk yourself *into* a candidate, that's usually the candidate telling you the answer is no. Your edge is not in rescuing marginal opportunities; it's in cheaply killing them so you can spend your real attention on the few that don't need rescuing.

Obsess over net profit and cash flow, not revenue

Revenue is the number in the screenshot. It is also the number that means the least. A product doing a hundred thousand dollars a month in revenue at two percent net margin in a category with high return rates and slow-moving inventory is a worse business than a product doing eight thousand a month at twenty percent net with fast turns and few returns. The first ties up enormous capital for almost nothing and exposes you to a brutal downside if the price war intensifies. The second compounds.

Operators think in terms that the revenue screenshot hides:

- **Net profit per unit** after every real cost: referral fee, fulfillment, storage, returns, the prep and inbound costs, the financing cost of the capital sitting in inventory.
- **Velocity and turns:** how fast the capital comes back so it can be redeployed. A thin margin at high velocity can beat a fat margin that sits.

- **Cash conversion:** the time between paying for inventory and getting paid for selling it, which is the thing that actually constrains how fast you can grow.
- **Downside exposure:** what happens to this position if three more sellers show up, or if the brand decides to enforce, or if Amazon changes a fee. The operator prices the bad case, not just the good one.

We'll do the actual arithmetic later, in the chapter on honest profit math. The point here is the habit of mind: when you look at a candidate, the revenue number is the least interesting thing on the screen, and the operator trains themselves to look past it immediately.

Every search starts from a seed

The blank page is the enemy of good sourcing. "Find me a winning product" is an impossible prompt because it has no constraints, no context, and no connection to anything you actually know. It's also exactly the prompt the herd runs, which is why the herd converges.

The operator never starts from a blank page. They start from a *seed*: a single brand or product they already have a reason to care about. The seed might be something you've seen moving in your own store. It might be a brand a supplier mentioned. The seed doesn't even have to be a brand. It can be an *operator*: a seller whose results you've come to trust, or your own store. If you already know a sharp multi-brand seller, start from them, look at the brands they carry, and walk to the other operators who share those brands. If you run a store of your own, you are already a node on this map: begin from what sells for you, see who else wins those brands, and follow them outward. Brand-first and operator-first are the same walk entered from opposite ends, and

the graph runs both directions equally well. It might even be one of the obvious, over-chased, everybody-knows-it products (and here is the counterintuitive part) a saturated brand makes an excellent seed precisely *because* it is saturated. A heavily contested brand has, by definition, attracted a lot of capable operators. Those operators are the map. You don't want to compete with them on the brand they're all fighting over. You want to follow them to the brands they're *quietly* winning that nobody's pointing a camera at.

A saturated brand is a terrible destination and an excellent seed.

This is the seed-and-walk pattern, and it's the spine of the method. Start from something known. Pivot to the operators behind it. Walk outward through the relationships those operators reveal. Every chapter in Part II is a tool for some step of that walk: reading the temperature of the seed, mapping the operators around it, scoring where the walk leads, and verifying that the destination is real.

Information asymmetry is only half the edge

I want to be honest about something that a lot of sourcing content skips, because skipping it is how people end up disappointed. Finding an under-contested opportunity is necessary but not sufficient. Discovery is half the edge. *Execution* is the other half, and it's the half no tool and no book can do for you.

An under-contested brand is only an opportunity if you can actually source the product at a cost that works, get ungated if it's gated, handle the logistics, manage the cash, and operate the listing well enough to win and hold your share. The discovery

method in this book will reliably point you at openings the herd hasn't found. It will not negotiate your supplier terms or front your inventory. The operators you'll learn to follow got good at *both* halves, and so must you. I emphasize this not to discourage you but to calibrate you: when the method surfaces a candidate, that's the start of work, not the end of it.

THE HONEST CAVEAT

No discovery method, manual or automated, removes the need to execute. If anyone (including me) implies that finding the opportunity is the whole job, treat that as a warning sign. The data tells you *where* to dig. Whether there's anything in the ground when you get there, and whether you can get it out at a profit, is still on you.

Read behavior, not just numbers

The last piece of the operator's mindset is the most subtle and the most powerful: treat the *behavior* of other sellers as information. A number tells you a state. Behavior tells you a story, and stories are predictive in a way that snapshots are not.

When a sophisticated, multi-brand operator quietly starts winning the Buy Box on a brand nobody's talking about, that is a signal, someone who knows how to evaluate opportunities has evaluated this one and acted. When a brand's listings are dominated by sellers carrying real stock rather than transient flippers, that tells you something about the supply structure and the brand's posture. When the set of sellers on a brand is stable for a long time and then suddenly churns, something changed: a supply source opened, a brand stopped enforcing, a price floor broke. The operators are constantly leaving footprints, and the footprints are readable if you know to look for them.

That is the thread that runs through everything ahead. The herd reads products. You're going to read operators. Let's start by learning to read the temperature of a market — the thing I call Heat.



PART TWO

Reading the Market by Hand

*The complete method, one tool-agnostic piece at a time.
Everything here you can do today with a spreadsheet and
a browser.*

CHAPTER THREE

Heat: Reading Saturation Before You Commit

IN THE LAST CHAPTER I SAID THAT WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO read about a listing is not a seller count but a temperature: how hard the Buy Box has been fought over, and by whom, over time. I call that temperature *Heat*, and learning to read it is the first concrete skill of the method. Heat is the difference between "five sellers" as a meaningless snapshot and "five sellers who have been quietly coexisting at a stable price for a year" versus "five sellers who appeared in the last sixty days and are in a price war." Same count. Opposite opportunities.

Heat is a composite read, not a single metric. It blends four things you can observe directly: how many distinct sellers have contested the Buy Box over a meaningful window, how often the Buy Box changes hands, what the price has done over that window, and how recently the competitive picture changed. High Heat means the buy box has been actively fought by many operators with a downward price trend — the market shouting "known target." Low Heat means a stable cast of sellers holding steady prices — the market quietly minding its own business. Most listings live somewhere in between, and the in-between is where the interesting work happens.

The four inputs, and what each one tells you

1. Distinct sellers over a window

Not the count right now: the count of *different* sellers who have held or contested the Buy Box across, say, the last twelve to

sixteen months. A listing that shows three sellers today but has cycled through twenty over the past year is hot: it's a revolving door, which usually means thin, transient flippers chasing a deal and bailing when it dries up. A listing showing three sellers today that has shown those same three for a year is cold and stable.

2. Buy Box rotation frequency

How often does the Buy Box change hands? Frequent rotation among many sellers signals active price competition — everyone undercutting to grab the sale. A Buy Box that sits with one seller for long stretches signals either a dominant position (possibly an enforcing brand or an exclusive supply) or a genuinely uncontested product. Rotation is the pulse; a racing pulse is high Heat.

3. Price slope

This is the single most important input, because price is where saturation becomes visible and irreversible. A price that has trended steadily *down* over the window is the fingerprint of a maturing price war — margin being competed away in real time. A price that has held flat or moved with the brand's own pricing (rather than below it) signals discipline: sellers coexisting rather than cannibalizing. A price floor that holds suspiciously firmly can also signal an enforced minimum, which is its own kind of information.

4. Recency of change

When did the current picture form? A listing that has looked the same for a year is in equilibrium. A listing where the seller set or the price changed sharply in the last sixty days is *in motion*, and motion is the most actionable state of all, something just opened or just closed, and being early to understand which is where edges live.

DO THIS BY HAND

You can read Heat today with free price-history tools and a few minutes per listing. For any candidate listing:

1. Pull up the long-range price history. Note the slope over the last 12–16 months: rising, flat, or falling. Falling = hotter.
2. Note how "busy" the Buy Box history looks — frequent price/seller changes versus long flat stretches. Busy = hotter.
3. Count the distinct sellers the listing has shown over time, not just today. More churn = hotter.
4. Check whether the current state is recent or long-standing. Recent change = in motion = worth a closer look either way.

Give it a gut score from 1 (cold, stable, sleepy) to 10 (knife fight). With practice this takes under two minutes and is more useful than any single number a tool will hand you.

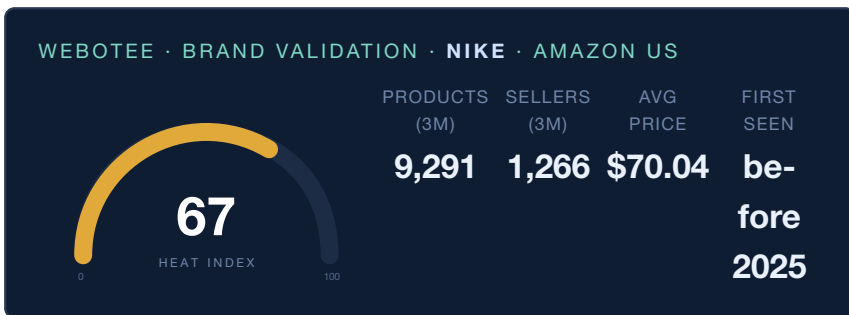
A simple Heat heuristic you can compute

If you want something more repeatable than a gut score (useful when you're comparing many candidates and want consistency) here is a lightweight scoring rubric you can keep in a spreadsheet. Score each input 0 to 10, then weight:

- **Price slope (weight 40%):** 0 if price has held or risen over the window; 10 if it's in a sustained decline. This gets the most weight because it's the clearest evidence of value being competed away.
- **Distinct sellers over window (weight 30%):** scale by how much churn you've seen relative to typical listings in the category. A revolving door scores high.
- **Rotation frequency (weight 20%):** high if the Buy Box trades hands constantly, low if it's sticky.

- **Recency penalty/bonus (weight 10%):** nudge the score based on whether the picture is fresh or stale: and flag anything "in motion" for manual attention regardless of the composite.

The output is a 0–10 Heat read. The exact weights matter less than applying the *same* rubric to everything, so your candidates are comparable. Consistency is the point: a rough score applied uniformly beats a precise score applied inconsistently.



A live WebotEE Heat reading for Nike on Amazon US: index 67 of 100 — a moderately-to-heavily contested brand, with over a thousand distinct sellers observed. (Note "first seen: before 2025" — the tool refuses to fake a date earlier than its own data horizon.)
Illustrative snapshot; live figures move over time.

How to use Heat (it's not "avoid hot")

The naive use of Heat is "avoid anything hot." That's too simple, and it throws away the most valuable use of the metric. Heat is a *positioning* tool, not just a filter:

- **A hot seed is good.** Remember the seed-and-walk pattern. You *want* to start from hot, heavily contested brands, because heat attracts capable operators, and capable operators are the map you're about to follow. You're reading the seed's heat to confirm it has gathered a serious operator base: not to source it directly.

- **A cold destination is good: if it's cold for the right reason.**

When you walk the operator graph (next chapter) to a brand with low Heat, that's promising. But cold can mean "undiscovered opening" or it can mean "dead, gated, or exclusive." Heat alone can't tell you which. That's why the next several chapters add dimensions (gating, sellers, off-Amazon truth) that disambiguate a good cold from a bad cold.

- **Anything "in motion" deserves a look.** A brand whose Heat is changing (cooling as a price war resolves, or warming as something gets discovered) is telling you the story is still being written. Early readers of those stories have the edge.

THE HONEST CAVEAT

Heat is a read of *history*, and history is not destiny. A brand can be cold for a year and heat up the week after you source it because someone else's video finally pointed at it. Heat lowers your odds of walking into a saturated fight; it does not eliminate the chance that one finds you. Treat it as one strong input among several, never as a guarantee.

Where the data comes from: and its honest limits

Reading Heat well depends on having a long, honest record of Buy Box and price activity. Free price-history tools give you a usable version of this for individual listings, and for manual, listing-by-listing work that is genuinely enough to get started, you can run the entire method in this book on public and free information.

The limits show up at scale and at depth. Public price history is strongest on price and weaker on *who* held the Buy Box and for how long across the whole seller universe. Reading Heat across hundreds of candidate brands by hand is slow. And the deeper, operator-level questions (which is what the next chapter is about)

are hard to answer from listing-level price history alone. We'll return to how the work scales in Part III. For now, the skill is what matters: you can read the temperature of any single market today, with tools you already have, in about two minutes. Do that enough and you'll start to feel Heat before you even open the history. That instinct is the foundation for everything that follows.



THE PREVIEW ENDS HERE

Get the complete method

You've read the problem and the mindset, and you can now read Heat by hand. That's the foundation. The rest of the book is where the foundation turns into an edge — the cross-brand operator graph that finds the quiet brands, the scoring that ranks them, and the discipline that keeps you from fooling yourself. Here's everything in the full edition:

PART	IN THE COMPLETE BOOK
I — The Ground Truth	1. The Saturation Trap · 2. The Operator's Mindset (in this preview)
II — Reading the Market by Hand	3. Heat (in this preview) · 4. The Cross-Brand Operator Graph · 5. The Six-Dimension Sourcing Score · 6. ASIN-Level Verification · 7. Sellers as a Signal · 8. The Web-Wide Truth · 9. Honest Estimates & Real Profit Math
III — Turning Method into a Machine	10. From Hunting to a Standing Pipeline · 11. From Manual to Automated · 12. The Brand-Owner's Mirror Image
IV — Putting It to Work	13. Six Sourcing Walk-Throughs · 14. Building a Sourcing Operation That Lasts · Conclusion
Appendices	The Sourcing Scorecard · The Verification Checklist · Glossary · Resources

The standout is **Chapter 4 — The Cross-Brand Operator Graph**. It's the chapter the rest of the book is built around: how to stop thinking in products and start following the *operators* sideways, into the brands the herd hasn't piled into yet. The preview gets you ready for it; the full book delivers it.

GET THE FULL BOOK – FREE

The complete *Amazon Sourcing Against the Herd* — all fourteen chapters, worksheets, and glossary — is a free download at:

[webotee.com](https://www.webotee.com)

While you're there: Webotee is the software that automates this entire method — the Heat score, the operator graph, the six-dimension score, and nightly alerts that surface opportunities for you. There's a free tier, no card required.

