



Expertise
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Website Platform Selection for Online Shop

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Master of Engineering

Information Technology

Master's Thesis

23 January 2021

PREFACE

This research study was a long but very interesting and fruitful journey for me as I learnt a lot throughout this study. Things were new for me, but I tried my level best to look for new ways of viewing things around me. The topic was very close to the actual experiences that even I had face in the past while shopping. So, my natural interest was always urging me to go forward with this study.

My supervisor, **Professor Ville Jääskeläinen** helped me a lot at every step of this research study and I am highly obliged for his kindness and guidance. Without his supervision, I would not have been able to complete this study on my own. I learned many things about conducting a scientific research during this study. I am hopeful that all this learning and guidance will help me throughout my academic and professional career.

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, January 26, 2021
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Author Title	Tasleem Akhtar Website Platform Selection for Online Shops
Number of Pages Date	36 pages 23 January 2021
Degree	Master of Engineering
Degree Programme	Information Technology
Instructor(s)	Ville Jääskeläinen, Principal Lecturer, Metropolia UAS
<p>Abstract</p> <p>E-commerce is a highly evolving field of Information Technology. More and more people are using e-commerce to broaden the scopes of their businesses in the online world. Traditional brick and mortar stores have always been there. But in the present times, it has become imperative to develop online web shops as well since the trend of online shopping is increasing day by day.</p> <p>To help people in developing and running online businesses, different e-commerce platforms are available online. Choosing the most suitable platform for an online web shop is challenging as options are several.</p> <p>The present research study aims at selecting the most appropriate e-commerce platform for a beginner level business in the domain of kids' online clothing stores. Features that are functional in 8 well-established kids' online clothing stores were studied. Moreover, features offered by 5 major e-commerce platforms were also compared with each other.</p> <p>The results of the thesis show that, based on the variety of features required by kids' online clothing stores, Shopify is the best online option available.</p>	
Keywords	E-commerce, web shops, platforms

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
ID	Identity Document
ISO	International Organization of Standardization
ML	Machine Learning
SEO	Search Engine Optimization

1 Introduction

21st century is the century of information technology and internet has become an integral part of the human life in this era. Around the globe, people are showing increased interests in utilizing the wide varieties of options being offered by the world of information technology and internet. Among the various areas, the domain of online shopping has gained utmost popularity throughout the world. This can clearly be seen with the increasing number of online companies as well as online buyers with every passing day.

It is human nature that acceptance to novel ideas and innovations are not welcomed in an instant. However, gradually people began to accept the ideas that prove to be beneficial in the longer run. Same is the case with online businesses. The acceptance and fame that is received by e-commerce now was not present right in the beginning. In fact, in some of the countries of the world online shopping has gained acceptance only very recently. There are many aspects that have played pivotal roles in the overall growth and development of the e-commerce sector on a global level.

Talking about how e-commerce gained people's acceptance, the role played by different new technologies can never be overlooked at all. Even in the present times, the field of e-commerce is undergoing rapid changes. Novel innovations, aimed at enhancing customers' buying experiences and sellers' revenue generation, have taken the scope of the field to an entirely new level. Now, more and more companies are interested in establishing their online stores along with their pre-existing market-based stores. Keeping all this in view, the experts of the information technology are coming up with new ideas and plans as well.

When focusing on the novelties in information technology, Artificial Intelligence has become the major field in this regard as far as the current century is concerned. E-commerce has come out as one of the major business domains of this decade. The revenue generated by the global e-commerce sales throughout the world has become a major portion of most of the countries' annual GDPs. Consequently, such countries are putting in more monetary resources in this field to ensure that the upcoming years will turn out to be more financially beneficial in the longer run.

1.1 Website Platforms

Building one's online presence, in the form of a website, is a very common trend now-a-days. Whether it is some small level business or some large enterprise, having a website is

essential in every regard. In the same manner, it also does not matter what type of item is being sold through the website. Companies selling food items, clothing items, medicines, furniture items and many other types of items have their own websites for promoting their online businesses throughout the world. Both national and international levels of businesses are being carried out through such websites globally.

Developing a website for the purpose of online shopping is the most crucial step in the field of ecommerce. A website is just like the seller's first impression on the buyers. It is also like a main front of competition in the ecommerce market. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the websites must be developed in a proper manner. This includes aspects such as programming languages, website platforms, tools for the construction of the websites, different types of operating systems and many others as well. The main crux is to come up with a website that proves to be user-friendly for both the buyers as well as the sellers.

Updating the websites from time to time is also crucial since technology is always undergoing changes and it is the demand of the time to adapt to such changes for the sustainability of online business. All these procedures of development and updating the websites can be managed by the wide variety of website platforms that are easily available in the market these days. Some of the platforms are available free of cost, while some need to be purchased by the owners of the websites. Comparison among these website platforms are quite common as it leads the owners towards the most proficient platform available in the market.

The availability of different types of website platforms have made it somewhat difficult for the prospectus clients to choose the best option for their websites. However, all the major website platforms have undergone changes to adapt to the requirements of most of the websites. Therefore, now bulk of platforms can be found online that support specific features required by different websites.

Although the bulk availability has its own benefits when it comes to the potential users, but there are certain issues as well that arise for the users. The most important issue in this regard is that most of the times the users face difficulties in choosing the right website platforms for their websites. The market is full of hundreds of website platforms and it is somewhat impossible for a person to go through all of them to understand their functionalities and their operations. Also, most of the times the websites require do not require only a single platform. Rather, a group of certain platforms are needed as they work in collaboration with each other to support different aspects of the websites at hand. One way through which this issue can be resolved is the ranking of the best website platforms according to their func-

tions, their price ranges or some other criteria that they offer. In this way, the potential users can have a clear and proper understanding of the entire scenario prior to selecting one or more than one platforms for their websites.

This thesis focuses on the comparison of some of the best website platforms available in the market to ensure that the domain of online shopping will be benefitted from it a lot. Factors such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, pricing, customer services and others play a pivotal role in the market success of online shops. Therefore, platforms that enhance such functions are more suitable when it comes to the sphere of online shopping.

1.2 Scope of Study

In the domain of e-commerce, potential customers focus on different aspects linked with the online websites for buying purposes. The needs and demands of every customer are different, therefore it becomes imperative for the business owners to be able to meet the demands of as much customers as is possible for them. Having a website based on accurate and sophisticated platforms is highly likely to meet such demands in the longer run. Therefore, the scope of this research study is restricted to the domain of ecommerce and the clients/customers of the said field.

This research study aims at descriptively comparing different website platforms that are presently available for customers, be they are open platforms or hosted platforms. The main aim is to come out with the most appropriate platform that can be used for developing an online store of kids clothing – the second step of the present research study. Developing a hypothetical kids clothing online store by keeping in mind the best features of website platform/s aims at providing a case study for the potential customers of the field.

1.3 Problem Statement

The competitive atmosphere is increasing day by day in the domain of online shopping businesses. This is because more and more online shops are being developed on daily basis throughout the world. In the present, the prevalence of a pandemic has further led customers towards online shopping as opposite to the conventional shopping methods. Now, more and more people are interested in buying from within the comfort zone of the houses rather than going to the shops in the market for buying purposes. In such a competitive scenario, it is imperative to have a thorough and all-inclusive online shopping website so that the business can be promoted of firm basis.

This research study compares and evaluates different website platforms that are being used largely in the market for developing websites related to different types of online shops. The

focus of the study lies on selecting the most appropriate website platforms that covers all the aspects linked with the area of online businesses or e-commerce to ensure competitive advantages in the longer run.

1.4 Study Plan

A mixed method approach will be used in this research design comprising two stages as follows:

- In the first step, a general description of the different features required by web shops will be given.
- In the second step, eight major kids online clothing brands will be analysed to present the major features used in their operations.
- In the third step, different major e-commerce platforms will be analysed comparatively to see which platform is more compatible to develop a hypothetical case of “online kids clothing store”.
- Based on the above analysis conclusions and recommendations will be concluded.

This thesis has been divided into five sections. The first section introduces the problem being studied in the thesis, scope of the study and the study plan. The second section describes the different research studies carried out in this domain. This section also gives a general description of the features required by online web stores. The third section analyses different online kids clothing stores and presents the major operational features being used by those web stores. The fourth section compares the major e-commerce platforms based on the features offered by them. In the last section, conclusion of the research study and the implications are discussed.

2 Features of Online Shops

The peaked rise in the demand and usage of the internet has brought clearly visible changes in the way people interact with each other. In addition to the interaction on personal levels, interaction on the business levels has also undergone changes on both major and minor levels. A few years ago, no one has heard about the term e-commerce or online shopping. However, now almost every individual has some idea related to this domain, be it complete or slightly incomplete. E-commerce has become so common these days that almost everything can be bought from the wide variety of online stores available throughout the internet [1].

Comfort of buying from within the boundaries of one's own home is the major facility that is offered by online shops [1]. This aspect has gained a lot of importance and attraction in the present times where the arrival of a pandemic has made it literally impossible for people to go out of their homes for buying even the necessities of life. E-commerce has made it possible for people to buy whatever they need from the internet easily. Food items can be purchased from the internet and so do the medicines. At the same times, apparel industry as well as many other lifestyle industries have also developed online stores for the ease of their customers on a large scale. [2]

In order to enhance the experiences of the wide variety of customers on both the national and international levels, e-commerce businesses have always welcomed changes with an open heart and mind. For instance, shopping from a mall or market appear to be very exciting. However, when it comes to waiting in a queue people simply ignore the excitement at all. Online shops, on the other hand, eliminates this tedious as well as time wasting element of waiting in the line. Instead, buyers simply get the items delivered at their doorsteps. The level of adaptability of an online business in line with the ever-changing domain of information technology lies at the crux of market success for any online business [3]. Initially the focus of most of the online businesses used to be on the different types of marketing strategies to attract as many customers as it possible. In this regard, a wide variety of e-commerce related marketing tactics and strategies have been introduced and implemented over the years. [4]

With the passage of time, novel innovations in the domain of information technology raised to prominence and shifted the basis of functionality of the websites as well. Among the different novel technologies, the advent of artificial intelligence has been the most important one. Artificial intelligence has hugely impacted the lives of people on a global level. Within

the field of online shopping, artificial intelligence has also created a lot of ease for both the sellers as well the buyers. [5]

A lot of research studies have been carried out in the area of artificial intelligence in order to see its benefits as well as its shortcomings. Researchers, from around the world, have shown increased interest in how artificial intelligence has been working towards a better overall life experience for people and e-commerce is no exception in this regard at all. The main idea is to enhance the users' online experiences by focusing on different areas such as online content, spams and their related issues, and many other domains. [6] [7]

Of the different technologies and innovations presented by artificial intelligence in the domain of e-commerce, chatbots have been regarded as among the most popularly used platforms by the online users. These chatbots, that are identical to interaction with a human being on the other side of the online website, have been increasingly reported to positively enhance the users' experience on the online websites globally [8]. Basically, the chatbots are just different types of computer programmes that have been developed by the online websites for facilitating their customers 24/7 on regular basis. No matter what hour (of day or night) it is, chatbots are always available for the customers to answer their queries related to the items of interest, to keep the customers updated regarding new items or policies, to send automated messages to the customers, to provide reviews on the demands of the customers and many other tasks as well.

Initially chatbots were limited to their website-based versions only. However, with the advent of new technology and ideas, mobile applications having their own chatbots have also been introduced in the market. Apps related to the different online websites have made interaction with the chatbots through mobile phones easy and accessible. This has further facilitated the use of chatbots and hence e-commerce in the longer run. [9]

The different minor attributes and features that work for building and maintaining an online website are usually combined to form website platforms. Such platforms provide complete support for any type of online store. Different research studies have been carried out on different dimensions of these website platforms. Some of them have focused on the comparison among the variety of platforms available for potential customers. Such comparisons help the potential customers to know about the pros and cons of every platform on individual basis. Eventually, the potential customers can choose the platform that is ideally suitable and successful in the longer run. [10]

Research has been carried out to study how pre-managed website platforms differ from open website platforms when it comes to different types of online businesses. It has been reported by researchers [11] that for small or initial levels of e-commerce businesses, hosted or pre-managed website platforms tend to be more beneficial and successful in the longer run. Their efficient features like cost, pre-planned design, simplicity and many others help the new business developers in better understanding of the website platform. At the same time, such platforms also help the buyers have a simple user interface to deal with.

An online e-commerce system aims at providing the maximum benefits to both the buyers as well as sellers. To attain this basic purpose, different approaches are used as per levels of ease and availability. Using open website platforms also proves to be beneficial for such websites or businesses where the sellers need to modify the websites in accordance with latest modifications and updates. [10]

In addition to the research studies that focus on comparing different types of available website platforms, there are other research studies as well that focus on one individually selected website platform. Such studies aim at providing detailed information related to the chosen platform [12]. Researchers [13] even have come up with studies that focus on specific features of the e-commerce platforms as well such as developing and maintaining online shopping carts and many others.

2.1 Technical Features Offered by E-Commerce Platforms

Another vital domain of research related to the e-commerce platforms is the technical features being used. Different website platforms utilize different types of technical features in order to enhance their scalability and productivity over the years. Similarly, there are platforms that are hosted i.e. they are pre-planned, and they take care of every minute technical detail on their own, thus facilitating the users. On the other hand, there are open source platforms as well that allow the users to use and change technicalities as per their own accords.

AI/ML

Artificial Intelligence has changed the overall look of e-commerce domain altogether. AI is basically a machine's ability to receive, interpret and react to data just as human beings. With proper AI tools, e-commerce platforms have been able to bring huge changes within the domain. For instance, in the beginning keyword search was the main route for online shops. However, with the passage of time, visual search and context-based search has brought vivid improvements in customers' buying experiences from the online shops.

Chatbots present yet another uniquely beneficial aspect of machine learning when it comes to e-commerce. Chatbots can be considered as customer services representatives' electronic substitutes that work automatically to resolve many of the customers' issues. Most importantly, they have eliminated the issues related to the attitude of manual representatives as complained by the customers. In the same way, AI has worked a lot towards improvements related to fraudulent cases. Research studies have shown that different approaches to machine learning are utilized by different platforms. [14]

Security Systems

Security lies at the core root for the success of online businesses. When an entrepreneur goes for an e-commerce platform, the main concern is related to security. Similarly, when customers go to an online shop for buying, security is needed the most. Cyber threats have always been there and will be there always. Therefore, e-commerce platforms have also developed different coping strategies against such threats. Compliance standards have been set by the authorities such as ISO standards and others and only those platforms which meet these standards can be flourished in the longer run. Moreover, customers put in their trust in companies when giving personal information during financial transactions. Therefore, again security becomes pivotal. Research has been carried out extensively in the area of security issues and their coping strategies in e-commerce [16].

Payment Procedures

Payment procedures also play pivotal role in the working and popularity of e-commerce platforms. Customers always look for such online shops that do not include hidden charges of any sort. Therefore, e-commerce platforms also tend to ensure that everything is clear in black and white. Some e-commerce platforms offer their own in-built payment processors, while others also include third party payment portals like PayPal, Stripe, Square and many others as well. The more payment gateways an e-commerce platform offers, the more likely its business is to flourish on international levels as well. This is because different gateways are supported by different countries of the world. Moreover, there are cases when the potential customers left the shopping cart halfway because of the unavailability of payment option in their homelands. [16]

Language Used

Depending on whether hosted or open source platform is being used, users need to have knowledge of the languages used in the platforms. For hosted platforms, no peculiar requirement for understanding the language is needed since it will tackle with every issue on its own. However, still knowing which language is being used is good in the longer run. In

case of open source e-commerce platforms, a deeper insight and learning of programming languages is needed since the user must perform activities on his own. [17]

Cost Structure of The Platform

Every e-commerce platform has a cost structure that allows the customers to have a clear understanding of the finances required for each case. This also allows the customers to select from the wide variety of platforms available in the market in accordance with the customers' financial resources. Most of the platforms offer different plans on monthly or yearly basis. Moreover, some platforms offer different packages depending on the quality of services, transactions and many other domains. [18]

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization, commonly known as SEO, is a service that enables the web shop to increase its traffic input and then convert that traffic into revenue. Different e-commerce platforms have different ratings when it comes to being SEO-friendly website platforms.

Scalability

Scalability can be considered as the online business's ability to adapt to changes in future and modify itself accordingly as well. Therefore, it is the key step that must be decided prior to starting any online business. A simple example can be the addition of mobile commerce within the working domain of an already established online shop after some time. If scalability would not have been kept under consideration from the beginning, adding new Apps, or third-party systems would be very difficult for such businesses. Scalability welcomes novel innovations, new trends, untimely sales and many other unforeseen features. [19]

Scalability is also important from usage/load point of view. A web shop may initially have very low number of customers, but for example a successful marketing campaign may suddenly increase the number of customers. A good web shop platform should not get congested/overloaded because of this sudden increase of traffic.

3 Features of Kids Online Shops

Online apparel shopping belongs to one of the basic online shopping items of the everyday life around the globe. Within its own domain, clothing can be divided into a wide variety of types. For this research study, online kids clothing has been chosen as the major domain of interest. Different online web shops have been developed in this regard. Popularity of the different kids clothing web shops differ individually. Of the different online web shops, following brands have been very popular, not on national but also on international levels too:

- Carter's
- H&M
- Zara
- GAP
- Nordstrom
- The TOT
- Maisonette
- Burt's Bees Baby

This section describes the different features that are being offered by the above-mentioned kids' online shops. Home pages of all these kids' online shops were visited and studied. Following features have been identified as important in establishing and maintaining online web shops.

3.1 Artificial Intelligence Features

Artificial Intelligence is being used extensively in e-commerce to enhance both the selling and buying experiences of the users. Following are the main features belonging to the domain of AI.

Chatbots

Chatbots allow the customers to have immediate answers related to their queries around the clock. This is because these chatbots are like substitute virtual assistants for their human counterparts. Chatbots are being used by some of the online kids clothing stores such as H&M and Carter's.

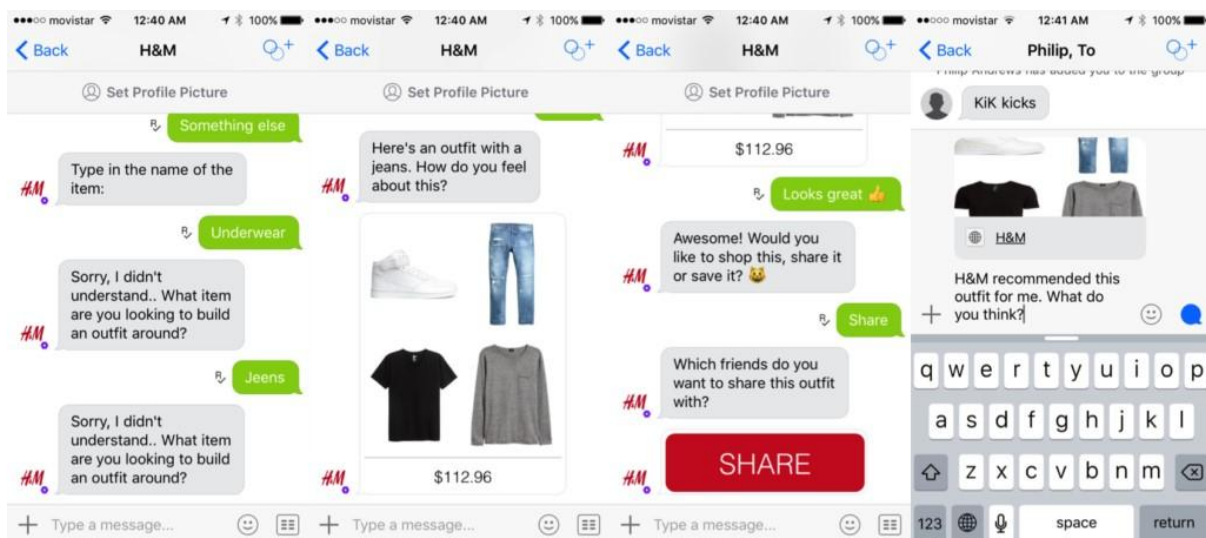


Figure 3.1: Chatbot of H&M Online Web Shop

Figure 3.1 shows how H&M has implemented the feature of chatbots in their online web shop. It helps the customers in getting answers to their questions in an instant so as to enhance the shopping experience of the customers.

Machine Learning

Machine Learning is being deployed by almost every kids online clothing shop as can be experienced by every customer. For instance, if a customer looks for jeans for baby boys only, he/she can automatically see the options for different types of jeans for other ages or other genders as well. Same goes for every item available in the store.

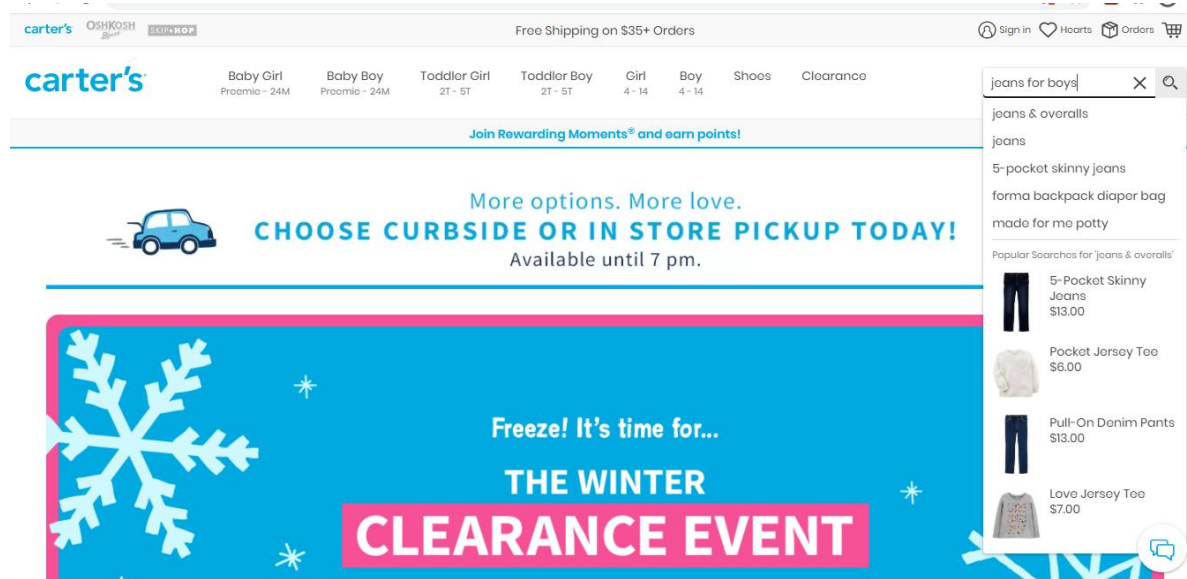


Figure 3.2: Machine Learning works on Carter's Online Web Shop

Figure 3.2 shows how the phenomenon of machine learning operates in the online web shop of Carter's. As can be seen that the option of "jeans for boys" was written in the search bar. The options that came forward included popular searches for jeans such as pocket jersey tees, pull-on denim pants, etc. In this way, other products are also advertised, and customers sometimes benefit from this aspect a lot.

Store Locator

This is an aspect that links the online system with the brick-and-mortar system. If a person is visiting the online shop and wants to know where the stores for the respective brand are located, then this feature helps a lot. At the same time, having an online store locator lets the customer know whether the brand is operational only on national level or on international level as well. All the major kids clothing brands such as H&M, GAP, Carter's, The TOT and others use this feature.

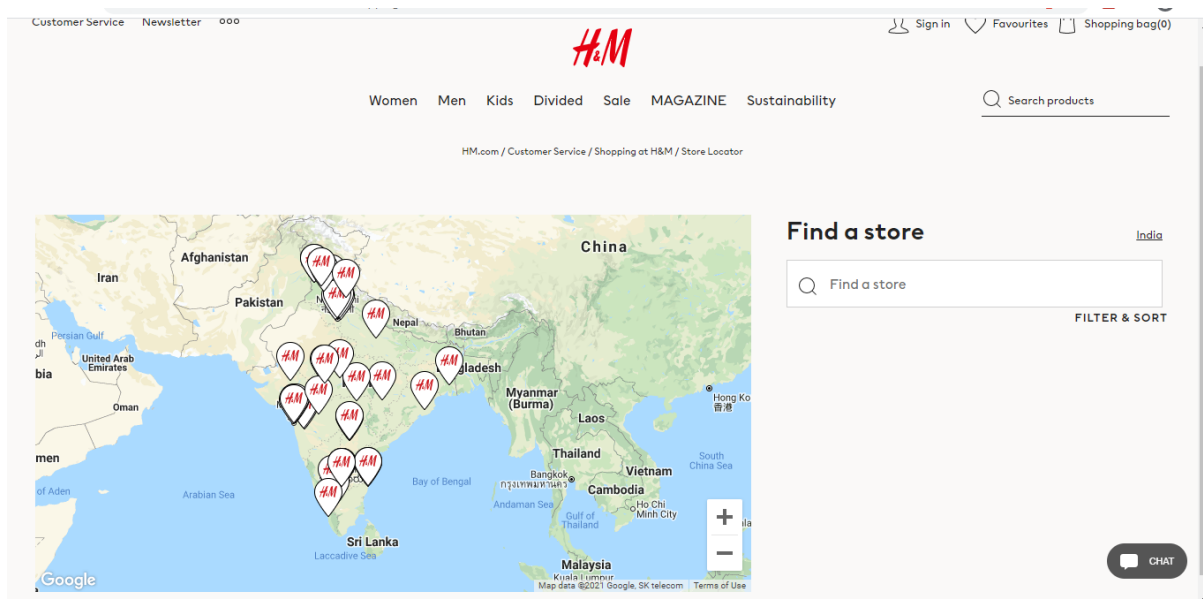


Figure 3.3: Store locator interface of H&M

Figure 3.3 shows the store locator interface of the H&M kids online clothing shop. It helps the customers in finding the stores of the brand near their location. This helps a lot if the customer wants to go to the shop himself for any purpose whatsoever at all.

Themes

When it comes to the appearance of the online web shop, themes play the most important role. Artificial Intelligence has allowed web shops like Carter's, Maisonette, Nordstrom, H&M, and others to bring vibrant and attractive themes and designs for the customers. These web shops allow customers to view major links to items with tags such as boys' clothing, girls' clothing, sportswear, nightwear, sale, etc. A search toolbar is also available on the main page of every website to ensure that customers can look for an article directly by putting its name in it.

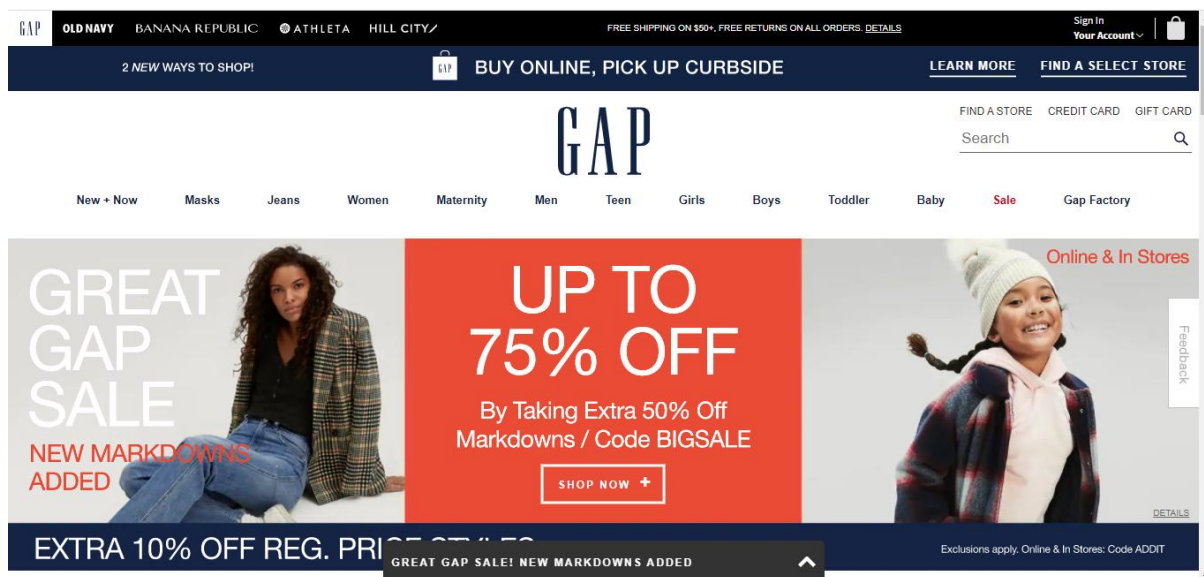


Figure 3.4: Main interface of GAP web shop

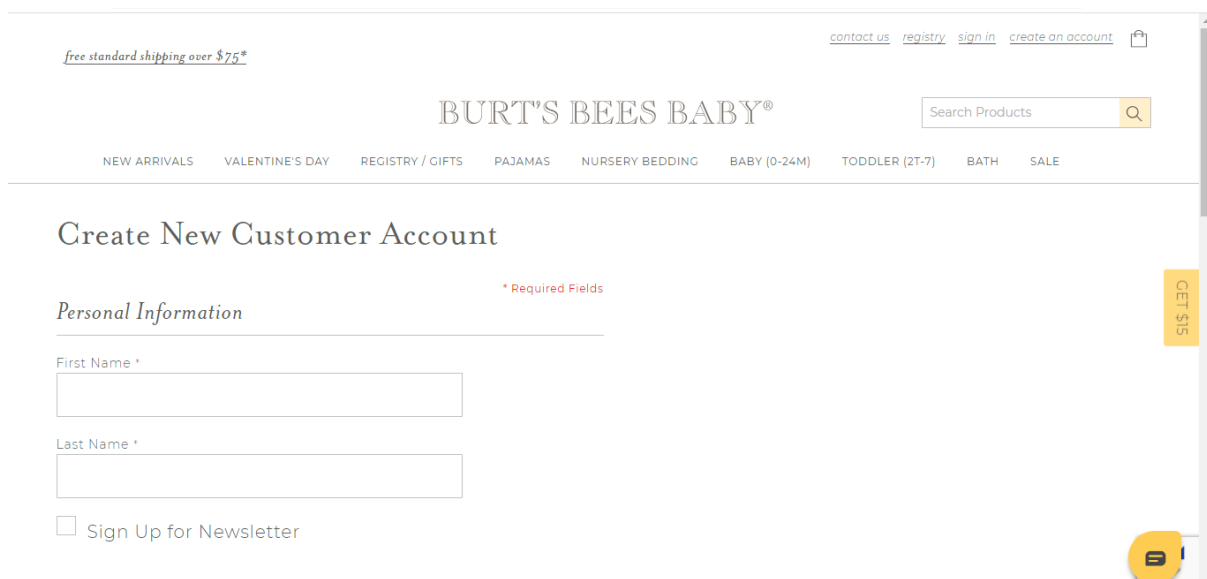
Figure 3.4 shows the main page of the GAP online web shop where different features such as variety of clothing options, sales options, search toolbar for direct search of any article, store locator, etc have been mentioned. A simply themed main page helps the customers understand the working of the website easily and they can search for and order items easily.

3.2 Product Management Features


Product management is yet another feature that plays a pivotal role in the success of online businesses and kids clothing web shops are no exception in this regard. There are different areas that fall under the umbrella of this domain.

Email Subscriptions

The feature of email subscription is offered by all the major as well as minor kids online clothing stores. This feature allows the customer, if they subscribe, to get instant information related to any new update, sale or arrival of any new product. In this way, customers get to know more and chances for online businesses to flourish increase as well.



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Create New Customer Account

Personal Information * Required Fields

First Name *

Last Name *

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Figure 3.5: Email Subscription Interface of Burt's Bees Baby

Figure 3.5 shows the email subscription of Burt's Baby Bees online web shop. Creating a personal account in the web shop allows the customers to get information about the order, news about promotions and new features, etc.

Scalability

Undoubtedly, scalability is among the most important feature that every online business looks forward to. This is the pathway through which businesses can expand/change whenever and however it is required. For instance, the tab for “sale” is available on the web page of every kids clothing brand. Through this tab, such web shops offer different types of sales on different types of products on different occasions. Even if a single sale season becomes famous among the customers, the online shop becomes highly likely to get more orders in the future, thus enhancing the scalability. That is why, the online web shop must be flexible enough to accommodate such huge changes.

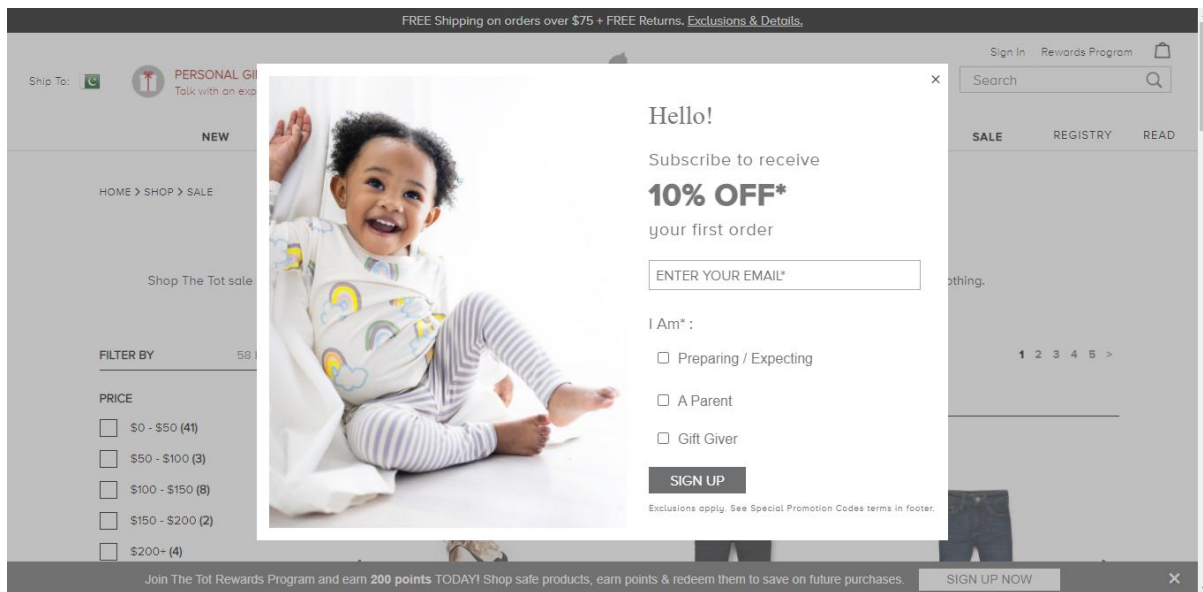


Figure 3.6: Discount on Email Subscription and Scalability

Figure 3.6 shows how The TOT web shop uses the discounts offered on e-mail subscription for attracting more and more customers to improve the levels of scalability. It helps the companies to expand the business more. Other strategies like sales are also used by companies in this regard.

3.3 Payment and Pricing Management Features

If customers' point of view is taken, then payment is perhaps the most vital feature of any online working module. Customers always prefer the online web shops that deal with their native currencies more than the international currencies. Moreover, issues related to payment or pricing can also lead to dissatisfaction on behalf of the customers, thus leading to discontinuation of shopping from the web shop. Following are the major features that come within this domain:

Multiple Payment Gateways

Multiple payment gateways refer to the different online processing technologies that allow swift exchange of money between the customers and the web shop. Kids online clothing stores such as H&M, Carter's, The TOT, Maisonette, Nordstrom and many others offer multiple payment gateways to ensure that every customer can be able to pay for the purchases through the easiest available and functional gateway for himself/herself. Thus, convenience of the customer is the major benefit of having multiple payment gateways.

Furthermore, the more there are payment gateways, the more online business can flourish on international levels. For instance, H&M is a Swedish-based kids online clothing shop. However, it delivers around the globe including countries of Asia, Africa, Middle East, North America, South America, Europe and Australia. This huge level of international business is operated through different payment gateways such as PayPal, Klarna, card payment and other portals.

The screenshot displays the H&M website's 'PAYMENTS OPTIONS' page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Women', 'Men', 'Kids', 'Divided', 'Sale', 'MAGAZINE', and 'Sustainability'. A search bar is positioned on the right side. The main content area is titled 'PAYMENTS OPTIONS' and includes a sub-header 'CARD PAYMENT'. The text on the page states: 'We accept cards with Mastercard or Visa symbol. Encrypted transaction for your safety. H&M guarantees that your details are completely safe with us. All information is sent encrypted to ensure total security of any sensitive information. Please note, that for your safety our Customer Service is not able to place orders with card payment. For more information about card purchases please read about [3d Secure](#) and our [Privacy Notice](#). Debit at dispatch of your order. If the card transaction is approved, the amount will be captured immediately and you will receive an order confirmation to your email. If the card transaction is not approved your order will be cancelled. Please contact your bank or card provider if you have any questions about this.' A 'CHAT' button is visible in the bottom right corner.

Figure 3.7: Payment Gateways used by H&M

The screenshot displays the H&M website's 'PAYMENTS OPTIONS' page. The header includes the H&M logo, navigation links for Women, Men, Kids, Divided, Sale, MAGAZINE, and Sustainability, and a search bar. The main content area features the title 'PAYMENTS OPTIONS' and a sub-header 'PAY ON DELIVERY' which is expanded to show two sub-options: 'Parcel delivered by Blue Dart' and 'Parcel delivered by Delhivery'. The page also includes a sidebar with links for Coronavirus Information, Shopping at H&M, Delivery, Payments, Returns, Download App, and Gift Cards. A chat button is visible in the bottom right corner.

Figure 3.8: Payment Gateways Used by H&M

Figures 3.7 & 3.8 show different payment gateways used by H&M online web shop. This feature helps the customers in finding the most suitable payment method to pay for the product being ordered. Both payment through card and payment on delivery options can be seen in case of H&M web shop.

Discounts & Coupon Codes

Every online kids clothing shop offers different types of discounts on certain selected items. Seasonal discounts are also offered quite commonly on web shops such as H&M, Maisonette, The TOT and many others. This enhances the sales output greatly.

Coupon codes are also offered to the customers, especially on the purchase of certain items or upon reaching a specific pricing range during shopping. This further encourages the customers to come back for more shopping with some lessened prices.

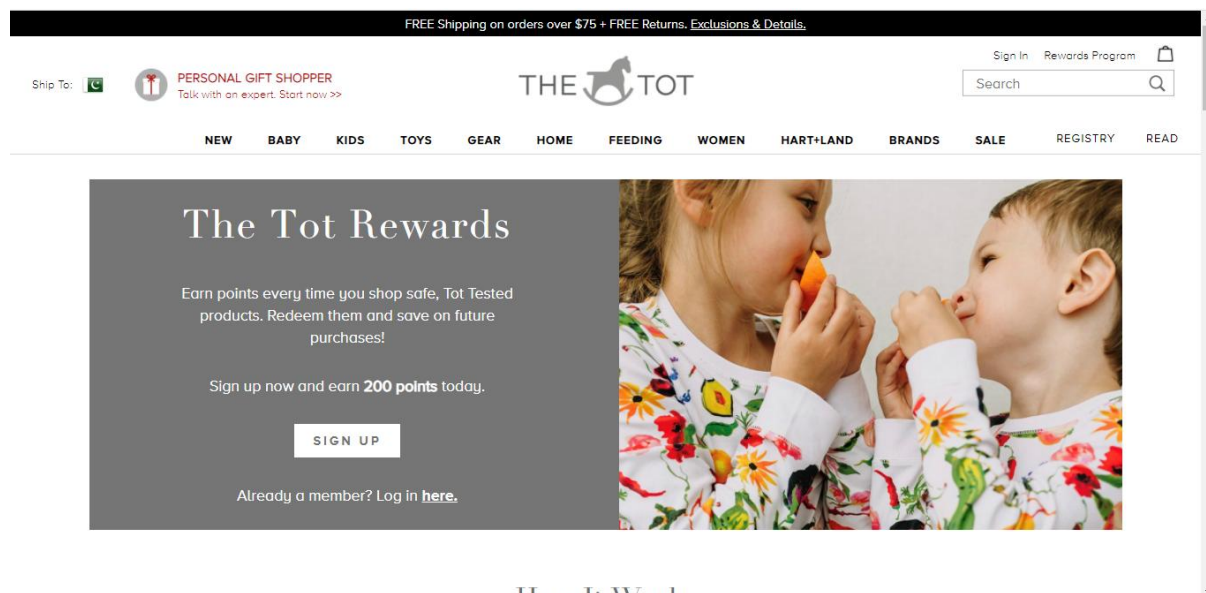


Figure 3.9: The TOT Rewards

Figure 3.9 shows The TOT rewards interface for the web shop. It leads the customers towards earning points on every purchase they will make. Finally, on the accumulation of certain pre-decided points by the company, the customers can either receive gifts or discounts on purchases.

Cart abandonment emails

Cart abandonment is a very common issue that most of the online businesses must face, almost on daily basis. Most of the times, when proper pricing (all-inclusive of taxes and other hidden charges) are not mentioned openly, then upon reaching the final shipping page the customers become dazzled by unexpected costs and leave the shopping cart halfway. Sometimes, the customer faces difficulty in dealing with the foreign currency acceptable by the online web shop and sometimes a more suitable and economical alternative is found by the customer. All these lead towards cart abandonment.

Kids online clothing companies that are successful in the market such as H&M and Carter's have the webpages titled "favourites" or "hearts" where customers can save their liked items and can buy them at any time in the future. Furthermore, such kids online clothing web shops send cart abandonment emails to the customers who left the carts in abandoned states and left without making any purchases.

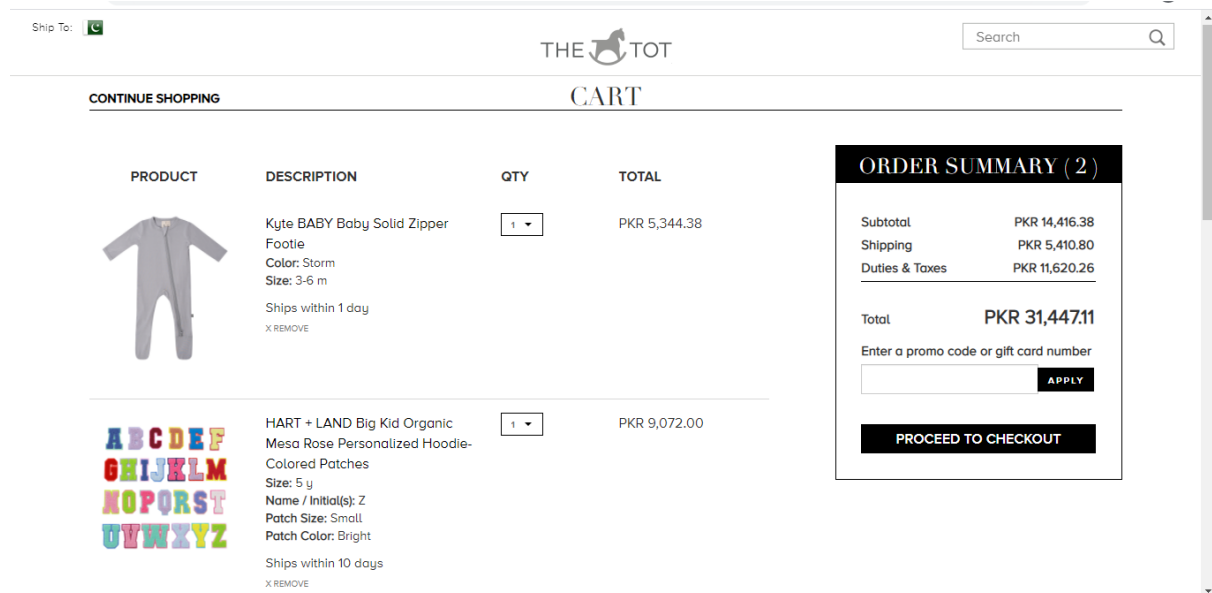


Figure 3.10: Cart Interface of The TOT

Figure 3.10 shows the cart interface of The TOT kids clothing web shop. The cart lets the customers know about what they have chosen for shopping. Before checking out, the customers can add or remove any item as per their liking. If the customer does not proceed to checkout, the company send cart abandonment email to the customer telling that the cart is still waiting. In this way, if the customer wants to recontinue shopping such cart abandonment emails help a lot.

3.4 Order Management Features

Order management is yet another very important feature that need utmost attention of the business owners in the online kids clothing domain. Some important aspects to be kept under consideration in this regard are as follows:

Shipment and Order Tracking

To ensure proper shipment and order tracking, kids online clothing stores offer every customer with an email and a unique tracking ID. The email provides complete information related to the shipment of the order along with the order number and other details. Through the ID, the customer can easily track the order online and see when it will reach its destination.

Pick up today. Curbside Pickup—it's safe, easy and free. [Learn More](#) Pakistan

NORDSTROM Sale Women Men Kids Activewear Home Gifts Beauty Designer Services Brands Search Sign In

Have an account?
Quickly check your order status or start a return online.
[See Your Purchases](#)

Guest
Look up a single order.
Order number

Missing the order number? [Contact us.](#)
ZIP or postal code

[See Order Status](#)

Customer Service About Us Services Nordstrom Card Nordstrom, Inc. Get our app

Figure 3.11: Order Status Interface of Nordstrom

Figure 3.11 shows the order status interface of Nordstrom kids clothing web shop. By putting in the order number and area zip code, the customers can easily track the order to see where the order has reached and how many more days will it take to reach home.

Mobile App

Developing mobile apps for the online web shops have become very common these days as it allows customers even more easy access to the website. Therefore, almost every major kids online web shop such as H&M, The TOT, GAP, Maisonette and others offer mobile apps for the websites as well. With a mobile ap, the customers can easily browse the web shop without any hassle.

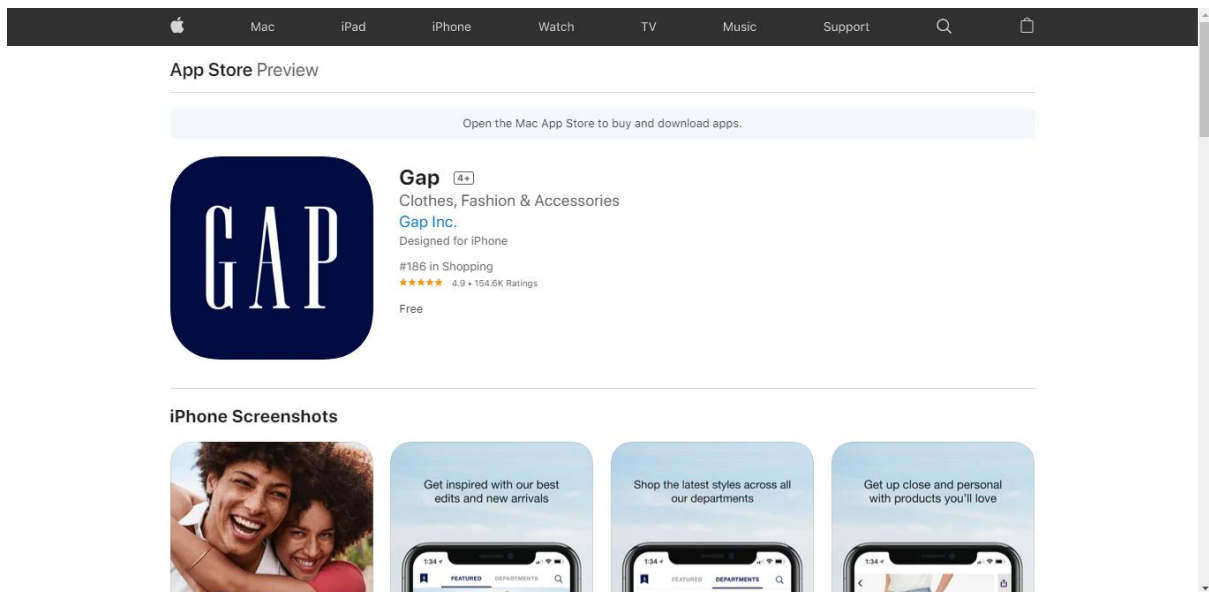


Figure 3.12: App preview of GAP

Figure 3.12 shows the mobile App preview for the GAP online kids clothing web shop. Downloading mobile app helps the customers in having the web shop right at a click of their mobile phone.

3.5 Customer Management Features

Managing the customer itself is a main feature that every online web shop must focus completely. Customers face different types of issues while shopping online and a business that can tackle all such issues successfully can ultimately outstand in the market as well. Some points of interest in this regard as follows:

Customer Services

Customer services is the basic domain belonging to the customer management features. When and how the customers are likely to receive guidance or answers to the queries is what makes online shopping shops attractive to the customers. Therefore, competitive kids online clothing stores such as H&M and Carter's has worked with AI to develop chatbots for instant customer services. On the other hand, guidance through emails is available in almost every online shop, with the difference being in the time to receive reply from the customer services departments of every online shop.

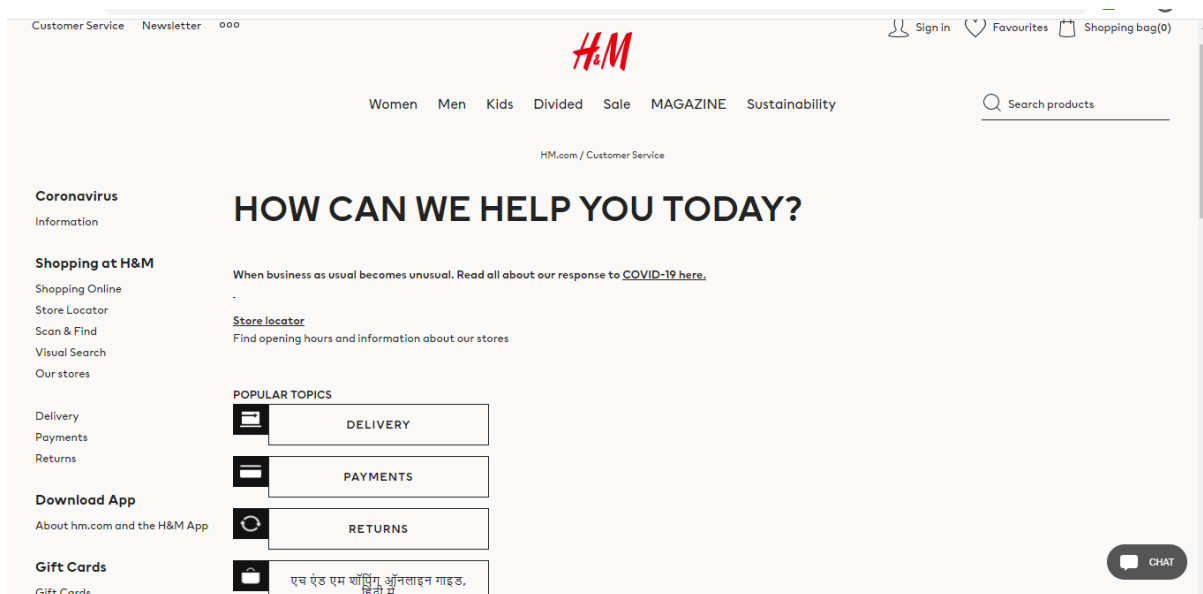


Figure 3.13: Customer Services Interface of H&M

Figure 3.13 shows the customer services interface of H&M kids online web shop. It helps the customers in finding answers to queries related to delivery, payments, returns, refunds and other important information as well.

Security

Online shopping has never been accepted whole-heartedly from the beginning. In fact, even in the present times people usually have certain fears related to the security of sharing their personal information online. Competitive online businesses offer complete security for the personal information of their customers. Personal information is not shared with any third party without the consent of the owner.

The screenshot displays the H&M website's privacy policy page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the H&M logo and links for 'Sign in', 'Favourites', and 'Shopping bag(0)'. Below this, a secondary navigation bar lists categories: 'Women', 'Men', 'Kids', 'Divided', 'Sale', 'MAGAZINE', and 'Sustainability'. A search bar is also present. The main heading is 'H&M GROUP PRIVACY NOTICE'. The content is organized into several sections: 'Customer commitment to data protection and privacy', 'Principles', 'About this Privacy Notice', and 'Who is responsible for processing of your personal data?'. A sidebar on the left provides quick links to various services like 'Shopping at H&M', 'Download App', and 'Gift Cards'. A 'CHAT' button is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

Figure 3.14: Security Policies on website of H&M

Figure 3.14 shows the security policies and protocols followed by H&M web shop while dealing with the personal information of the customers. Putting all the necessary privacy information on the website helps the customers in knowing every important detail.

Ease of Use

The easiest the web shop is to operate; the more customers will be retained by the web shop. That is why, good kids online clothing stores focus on simple yet sophisticated interfaces to enhance the ease of use for the customers. For this purpose, web shops use platforms that provide such easy access.

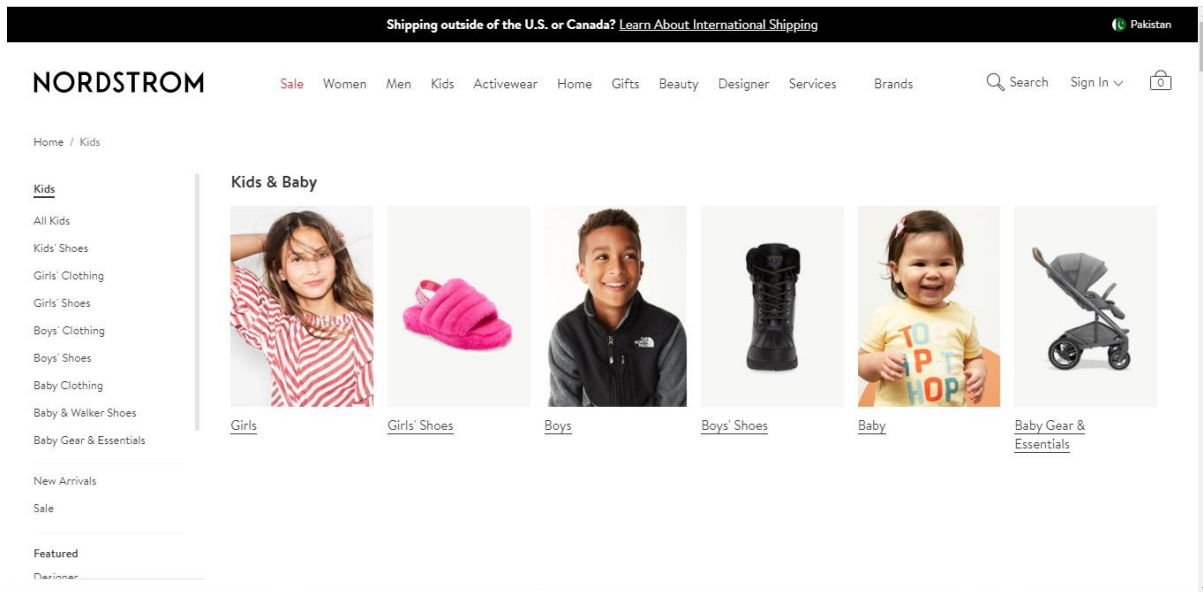


Figure 3.15: Main Page of Nordstorm

Figure 3.15 shows the main page of the Nordstorm web shop for kids clothing articles and other accessories. The presence of different tabs for different items and the grouping of similar items on gender basis makes it easy for the customers to navigate and find their related items.

Privacy policies

Different privacy policies are also offered by the online web stores to ensure that customers become aware of the working functions of the web store easily. How information will be shared at the time of payment, how information will be shared before, during and after shipment and many other domains are covered in this area.

The screenshot shows the Nordstrom website's Privacy Policy page. The header includes the Nordstrom logo and a navigation menu with categories like Sale, Women, Men, Kids, Activewear, Home, Gifts, Beauty, Designer, Services, and Brands. There is also a search bar and a sign-in link. The main content area is titled "Nordstrom Privacy Policy" and includes an overview, a definition of personal information, and a list of links to specific sections of the policy.

Nordstrom Privacy Policy

Nordstrom Privacy Policy Overview

At Nordstrom, we appreciate the trust you place in us when you choose to visit our stores or use our websites and mobile applications—and we take that responsibility seriously. This Nordstrom Privacy Policy (the "Policy") describes how we collect and use personal information about you when you visit our website, use our mobile application, call us on the phone, or visit our stores.

By "personal information," we mean information that directly identifies you, such as your name, address, or email address. In this Policy, "we" and "our" mean Nordstrom, Inc., and "you" means any person who visits our website, uses our mobile application, calls us on the phone, or visits our U.S. stores.

Click on the following links to go directly to the corresponding sections of this Policy:

- [What Categories of Information We Collect](#)
- [How We Collect Information](#)
- [How We Use Information](#)
- [How We Share Information](#)
- [Online Advertising and Third Parties We Work With](#)
- [Your Choices and Access Requests](#)
- [Security and Fraud](#)
- [Notices, Disclosures, and State-Specific Rights](#)
- [International Customers](#)
- [Additional Information and Contacting Us](#)
- [Updates to This Policy](#)
- [Effective Date](#)

Figure 3.16: Privacy Policies of Nordstrom

Figure 3.16 shows the privacy page of the Nordstrom web shop where all the major questions related to privacy of the customers have been given separate FAQ's position to help the customers.

4 Comparative Analysis of Website Platforms

This section compares the main features required by kids' online shops and based on this analysis, following features have been found important as offered by different e-commerce platforms.

4.1 Artificial Intelligence Features

Shopify offers the facilities of artificial intelligence within its system. Chatbots can be developed easily with this e-commerce platform as the backbone of an online web shop. Moreover, although there is a built-in machine learning system in Shopify but there are additional apps for this purpose as well. Shopify also offers the apps for creating the store locator template on the online web shop interface.

As far as the themes offered by Shopify are concerned, Shopify offers bulk of professional themes for the customers to select from. Additionally, Shopify also offers other varieties of themes through the portals of third parties. In short, many more themes become available to the customers. All the themes are modernized and out-of-the-box ideas. However, one drawback is that only a few themes are freely available to the customers. Majority of the themes must be purchased.

Magento also includes artificial intelligence in its basic and extensive operations. Chatbots are one such example. Magento offers store locator extension in its basic interface through which the owners can easily add the locations of their stores on the map. The themes and designs offered by Magento are also very versatile and unique. However, this platform does not offer any of its own themes or designs. All the designs and themes are taken from the third parties. They are available both on free and paid basis.

Big Commerce uses the chatbot "Maisie" that works as an autopilot to guide the customers towards all the queries and requests in a systematic manner. Moreover, machine learning apps are also used by this platform in its associated web shops. As far as the store locator template is concerned, offline apps are also available with Big Commerce.

Big Commerce also offers both paid as well as free themes and designs. The approach is quite like that of Shopify i.e. the free themes available are very few in quantity. Majority are the paid ones. Again, like Shopify, after selection of the theme the customization process is quite easy and up to date.

Woo Commerce also uses many different types of apps that focus on the chatbots or automatic virtual assistants for the online web shops. Such chatbots have been developed with highly advanced features to tackle as many customers' sides issues as are possible. As for the element of machine learning, "Wootomotion" is one of the many apps in this regard. Such apps allow the system to recall and then represent the previously searched pages or items. Woo Commerce offers store locator services as well. The apps as well as the extensions help a lot in downloading and maintaining information of the stores along with the pins of tracks on maps.

When it comes to themes and designs, Woo Commerce provides excellent quality themes and designs for the websites. That is why, this aspect has been a very strong aspect of the Woo Commerce platform, as compared to its counterparts.

Wix uses a vast variety of machine learning approaches and techniques to get help in managing the products of the websites. There are simple machine learning programs along with different complex ones as well. Wix also offers apps for downloading of chatbots for the websites. Wix, just like all its competitors in the market, also provides good variety of themes and designs both paid and free.

4.2 Product Management Features

Shopify offers variety of product management features such as email subscriptions for the future product promotions or changes, images along with the product, managing the matrix of the products in terms of colours, sizes and other details. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) based on the details of the products is, yet another vital product management feature offered by Shopify. All these features enable and ensure high level of scalability when it comes to the platform of Shopify.

Magento can easily be labelled as a feature-rich e-commerce platform, as compared to its counterparts in the market. It provides different types of email subscriptions and other emailing portals for the guidance of the customers. Moreover, images per product are also quite versatile and variant in nature when it comes to Magento. Furthermore, Magento has been universally accepted as the most SEO-friendly platform in the domain of e-commerce and online shopping. Thus, the scalability of the web shops based on this platform is quite good.

Big Commerce also offers different types of product management features such as comparisons among the products, SEO-friendly interface, email subscriptions and many other

ones. Matrix management of the products in terms of colours, sizes and other features is also available in case of Big Commerce. Moreover, there are checkboxes as well that allow the customers to add or remove features from the products, if they want any, before purchasing.

Woo Commerce provides a very big platform for adding as many products as the web shop owners want. It simply depends on how the products are managed that this approach is successful in the longer run. Just as unlimited products, unlimited images of the products can also be uploaded easily through Woo Commerce platform on the websites. Woo Commerce also allows direct uploading of customers' reviews related to every product in front with the product on the website, thus enhancing chances of scalability in the longer run.

Wix also offers almost every product management feature as is offered by its competitors in the market. For instance, there is product subscription emailing, images per products, reviews related to the products, matrix management of every product in terms of sizes, colours and many other domains. Thus, the scalability aspect of this platform is also quite good.

4.3 Payment Management Features

This is among the majorly important features of every clothing online website. Payment processing features, when the website becomes operational, helps the customers in paying for the products. Therefore, all the e-commerce platforms have detailed emphasis on such features.

Shopify offers multiple payment gateways for the customers to pay for the purchased products. This allows an easy transfer of money for both the sellers as well as the buyers. Shopify offers the feature of **Shopify Payments** which provides a very straightforward payment procedure to the customers. There is no involvement of any third party in this case. Other than this, Shopify has a bulk of payment gateways so that customers from different countries of the world can pay in accordance with their own ease. But sometimes there are transaction fees when third party resources are used.

Magento also offer multiple payment gateways to the customers. However basically, Magento only offers a few payment gateways in its free version. Still there is the option of adding many more payment gateways through the utilization of third-party sources.

Big Commerce provides multiple payment gateways to its customers. Local payment options are also available and many renowned payment gateways are also available. **Woo**

Commerce also provides wide variety of payment gateways. Choosing the right gateway in accordance with business and shop needs is the right way to work. **Wix** also operates based on multiple payment gateways like credit cards, digital wallets, offline payments and many others.

4.4 Pricing Features

Different website platforms offer different pricing rates for their customers to start using the platform for their businesses.

Shopify offers different pricing packages which vary according to the customer's financial resources. The packages offer different extensions and elements. Therefore, it becomes easy for the beginner entrepreneurs to choose accordingly. The charges must be paid monthly. The packages are shown in Table 1.

Table 4.1: Pricing and Features of different packages offered by Shopify

	Basic Shopify	Shopify	Advanced Shopify
Per Month Price	\$29	\$79	\$299
Customer Services	24/7 support	24/7 support	24/7 support
SSL Certification	Free SSL Certificate	Free SSL Certificate	Free SSL Certificate
Shipping Discount from DHL, UPS, Express or USPS	Up to 74%	Up to 74%	Up to 76%
Currencies used for selling purposes	133	133	133
Extra fees involving all payment providers	2.0%	1.0%	0.5%

Table 4.1 shows the difference in the price range and features offered by three main packages of Shopify platform.

Magento comes basically in two versions:

- Community Version
- Enterprise Version

The community version is free of cost completely. The customer simply needs to download the version and install it to start running the online business. Unlimited customizations are offered by this version to develop the store as per the customers' demands.

The enterprise version, on the other hand, is a paid version of Magento and its pricing rate starts from \$22,000. These charges need to be paid on annual basis.

BigCommerce also comes in the form of month to month pricing packages which the customers can choose according to their financial budgets (see Table 2). No free version or free services are offered by this e-commerce platform. There are certain differences among all the packages.

Table 4.2: Price range and Features offered by BigCommerce

	BigCommerce Standard Package	BigCommerce Pro Package	BigCommerce Plus Package
Per Month Price	\$29.95	\$79.95	\$299.95
Transaction Fees	0%	0%	0%
Multiple Currency	Yes	Yes	Yes
Custom SSL	Unavailable	Unavailable	Available
Stored Credit Cards	Unavailable	Available	Available
Product Filtering	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

Table 4.2 shows the major differences among the packages that BigCommerce offers to its customers.

Woo Commerce is a platform that is free, and all its major elements also comes in free of cost. However, there are many hidden charges when it comes to the high-level elements and extensions which the website owners cannot go without in the longer run. The charges must be paid annually. Therefore, all the essential points must be kept under consideration.

Wix has its own pricing packages that must be paid on monthly basis by the customers. There are no free packages or installations with this platform.

Table 4.3: Prices and Features Offered by Wix

	Free	Combo	Unlimited	Business Basic
Per Month Charges	\$0	\$18	\$23	\$28
Ad-free	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bandwidth	1GB	2GB	Unlimited	Unlimited
Storage	500 MB	3 GB	10 GB	20 GB
Professional Logo	No	No	No	Yes
SSL Encryption	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4.3 shows the difference in the pricing ranges and different features offered by different packages offered by Wix platform.

4.5 Order Management Features

Shopify offers an extensive order management system that includes superb order shipping and tracking apps and extensions. Moreover, the features of return and exchange policies are quite sophisticated when it comes to this platform. If shipment address needs to be changed, then this can also be done effectively. Cancellation of orders can also be dealt with very nicely with Shopify. Multiple locations that are involved in the shipment process like warehouses, stores, drop shippers and others are also well-managed and well-tracked in Shopify.

Magento offers good order management features too. Refunds, returns, exchanges and cancellation of orders can all be done efficiently through this platform. The feature of BOPIS (Buy Online and Pick-up In Store) is also a good feature offered by Magento.

Big Commerce also offers good order management features like return policies, exchange policies, order cancellation policies and others. Shipment and tracking of the orders also include all the multiple locations in a single loop.

Woo Commerce follows the one click order management system. There is an option of order editor through which an order can be changed as and when required. The options of return, exchange and cancellation of orders are also available through this platform.

Wix makes order tracking and shipment tracking very easy and straight forward. There are different tools that are available on this platform to facilitate these features. If there is bulk of orders arriving at a destination, this can also be managed easily with Wix.

4.6 Customer Management Features

When it comes to customer management features, different e-commerce platforms have come up with different types of approaches such as complete guidelines based on basic knowledge and information of the system, chatbots, emails, phone calls, answering through social media forums such as Facebook, Twitter, etc and others. Additionally, ease of use is the second important feature that falls under this umbrella.

Shopify offers detailed guidelines about how the platform and the website based on it performs. Additionally, the features of chatbots, emailing and social media forums are also present in this platform. However, some of the helping tools are owned by Shopify, while certain others are properties of third parties. Therefore, for such tools, guidance from third party is needed as Shopify cannot help in such cases.

When it comes to ease of use, Shopify has a well-optimized procedure for developing and maintaining the online stores. Signing up for the platform is the initial stage. No manual downloading is needed here. Only a few basic questions are asked and then the rest of all the tasks are performed by Shopify on its own.

Magento also offers a basic guideline package that is free of cost. However, when it to other customer services, it depends on the type of package chosen from Magento. If the basic and free package has been chosen, no customer support is given. On the other hand, if paid package is taken then customer support is given.

As far as ease of use in Magento is concerned, initial installation of the platform has to be done on manual basis with all the basic tasks to be done by the customer on his own. Magento provides two versions: one that is free of cost and second that is paid. Ease of use depends on which version one has bought.

Big Commerce has a very huge and all-inclusive knowledge-based guideline package that is very powerful in its working. It allows customers to obtain information about almost every minor as well as major operational detail of the platform. Moreover, this e-commerce platform also provides chatbot services, emailing and phone call helps round the clock. With Big

Commerce, sign up is the basic deal. Just like in Shopify, basic questions are asked and then rest of the tasks are done by the platform on its own.

WooCommerce has a public knowledge-based guidelines package that is free to use by all the customers. Other than that, the services of chatbots, phone calls and emailing are usually not available when it comes to this e-commerce platform. Installation and understanding of WordPress is important prior to using WooCommerce platform. Therefore, it is not as straightforward process as that with other platforms like Shopify. However, having a good grip on WordPress is the major deal in this case.

Wix also has its own knowledge-based guidelines package. On the other hand, call-back service is also offered by Wix that falls under the category of phone helpline. Additionally, a ticket can also be bought for talking to the customer services representative. Wix platform is also quite easy to use since all the major working areas are controlled by the platform itself. The customers just need to get used to the functioning of the platform and after that things become quite easy.

4.7 Summary of Analysis

Table 4 shows how the main e-commerce platforms differ from each other on the basic features offered by them. On the basis of the above-mentioned comparative analysis and the features that are already functional in well-established online kids' clothing stores in the market, it can be concluded that for a beginner level of business a hosted e-commerce platform such as **Shopify** is clearly the best option. It suits the budget with its various pricing packages, its hosted nature helps beginners to feel easy in using it, its themes and designs are exceptional, customer support servicing is also effective and available 24/7, AI has been effectively implemented and its range for scalability is very wide and future prospects can also be set easily.

Table 4.4: Comparative Analysis of E-commerce Platforms for Online Shops

	Shopify	Magento	BigCommerce	WooCommerce	Wix
AI Management Features	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Product Management Features	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Payment & Pricing Management Features	Good	Not so good	Fine	Good	Good
Order Management Features	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Customer Management Features	Basic to the platform	Basic to the platform	not basic to the platform	not basic to the platform	Basic to the platform

5 Conclusions

This research study compared and evaluated different website platforms that are being used largely in the market for developing websites related to different types of online shops. The focus of the study lies on selecting the most appropriate website platform that covers all the aspects linked with the area of kids online clothing businesses to ensure competitive advantages in the longer run.

Some famous kids online clothing brands and their web shops were selected. Different features offered by those online shops were studied. Then different e-commerce platforms were studied for their features to see which platform provides the best features for kids online clothing shops.

Based on the comparative analysis and the features that are already functional in well-established kids' online clothing stores in the market, it is concluded that for a beginner level of business a hosted e-commerce platform such as **Shopify** is clearly the best option. It suits with its various pricing packages, its hosted nature helps beginners to feel easy in using it, its themes and designs are exceptional, customer support service is also effective and available 24/7, AI has been effectively implemented and its range for scalability is very wide and future prospects can also be set easily.

The way the trend of online shopping is increasing day by day, it has become important that web shops must be developed in such a way that it becomes profitable for the owners and useful for the customers. Good e-commerce platforms can greatly help the web shops in this regard.

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