SHOPIFY MASTERY COURSE · SECTION 2 RESOURCE

Business Model Comparison Sheet

Understand Your Operating Model Before Planning the Store

Section 2: Ecommerce Business Fundamentals

Resource Purpose

Before building your store, it is important to understand what kind of ecommerce operation you are creating.

Different business models may need different approaches for:

- Products
- Inventory
- Fulfilment
- Payments
- Shipping
- Content
- Customer communication
- Store structure

Use this comparison sheet to understand the main differences between common ecommerce business models and identify which model is closest to your own business.

This is not a scored assessment.

The goal is to understand your operating model before planning the store.

How to Use This Sheet

Read each business model. For every model, review:

- How products are sourced
- How inventory works
- How fulfilment works
- What operational areas need more attention
- Whether the model fits the standard beginner course path

At the end, record which model most closely matches your business.

1 Own Product or D2C Brand

What this model means

You sell products under your own brand.

You may manufacture the products yourself or have them manufactured for your business.

You control how the product is positioned, presented and sold.

PRODUCT SOURCE

- Own brand
- Own manufacturing or third-party manufacturing
- Product quality and positioning are controlled by the business

INVENTORY

- Inventory may be stored by you or your fulfilment partner
- Stock planning becomes important
- Inventory depends on production and demand

FULFILMENT

- You may handle packaging
- You may coordinate courier/shipping
- You may use a fulfilment partner

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Brand positioning
- Product quality
- Packaging
- Product presentation
- Customer trust
- Repeat purchase
- Long-term customer relationship

TYPICAL STORE NEEDS

- Strong product pages
- Brand story
- Clear collections
- Product images
- Reviews or trust signals
- Shipping and payment setup

This model may fit you if:

- [ ] You sell products under your own brand
- [ ] You control the product or manufacturing
- [ ] You want to build a long-term brand
- [ ] You manage or control inventory
- [ ] You want direct customer relationships

My notes:

2 Reselling or Curated Product Store

What this model means

You sell products sourced from other suppliers.

You may not manufacture the products yourself.

Your store creates value through product selection, pricing, presentation and customer experience.

PRODUCT SOURCE

- Supplier
- Distributor
- Wholesaler
- Multiple vendors

INVENTORY

- You may buy and hold stock
- Stock availability may depend on suppliers
- Supplier reliability becomes important

FULFILMENT

- Orders may be packed and shipped by you
- Inventory may come from one or multiple suppliers
- Supplier lead times can affect fulfilment

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Supplier reliability
- Product selection
- Margins
- Pricing
- Stock availability
- Clear product information

TYPICAL STORE NEEDS

- Easy product browsing
- Clear categories
- Accurate pricing
- Inventory management
- Supplier coordination
- Good product descriptions

This model may fit you if:

- [ ] You source products from other suppliers
- [ ] You do not manufacture most products yourself
- [ ] Product selection is an important part of your business
- [ ] Supplier reliability affects your store
- [ ] Margins and pricing require careful planning

My notes:

3 Local Retail Moving Online

What this model means

You already have an offline shop or local retail business and want to add ecommerce.

The online store supports an existing business rather than starting everything from zero.

PRODUCT SOURCE

- Existing retail inventory
- Existing suppliers
- Products already sold offline

INVENTORY

- Inventory may be shared between offline and online sales
- Stock accuracy becomes especially important
- Manual inventory changes may create problems if not tracked properly

FULFILMENT

- Possible methods may include:
- Courier
- Local delivery
- Store pickup
- Cash on Delivery
- Self-delivery

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Inventory coordination
- Local delivery planning
- Store pickup process
- COD planning
- Existing customer communication
- Trust and contact information

TYPICAL STORE NEEDS

- Store/contact information
- Local delivery rules
- Pickup options
- Inventory visibility
- Payment options
- Clear support details

This model may fit you if:

- [ ] You already sell offline
- [ ] You have an existing shop or retail business
- [ ] You want to add online ordering
- [ ] Offline and online inventory may overlap
- [ ] Local delivery, pickup or COD may be important

My notes:

4 Made-to-Order or Custom Products

What this model means

The product is created, prepared or customised after the customer places an order.

Examples may include personalised products, custom clothing, customised gifts or products made according to customer instructions.

PRODUCT SOURCE

- Made after order confirmation
- Customised after order
- May require customer details or specifications

INVENTORY

- Finished stock may be low or unnecessary
- Raw materials may need inventory tracking
- Availability may depend on production capacity

FULFILMENT

- Production happens after the order
- Delivery times may be longer
- Customer communication becomes more important

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Clear delivery timelines
- Customisation options
- Customer instructions
- Variants
- Product expectations
- Clear refund/return rules

TYPICAL STORE NEEDS

- Product options
- Custom fields or instructions
- Detailed product descriptions
- Delivery-time information
- Clear policies
- Customer communication

This model may fit you if:

- [ ] Products are created after an order is received
- [ ] Customers provide custom instructions
- [ ] Delivery times vary
- [ ] Product options or variants are important
- [ ] Clear customer communication is essential

My notes:

5 Special or Complex Ecommerce Models

Some business models can work with Shopify but may need additional planning beyond the standard beginner store path. Examples include:

DIGITAL PRODUCTS – MAY REQUIRE

- File delivery
- Download access
- Licence or access management

SERVICES – MAY REQUIRE

- Enquiry flow
- Booking
- Appointment scheduling
- Service availability

SUBSCRIPTIONS – MAY REQUIRE

- Recurring billing
- Subscription management
- Cancellation logic
- Customer account management

WHOLESALE / B2B – MAY REQUIRE

- Bulk pricing
- Customer-specific pricing
- Minimum order quantities
- Enquiry or approval processes

OTHER SPECIAL WORKFLOWS MAY INCLUDE

- Rentals
- Marketplace models
- Multi-vendor operations
- Complex product configuration
- Custom fulfilment
- Special payment logic

> **Important**
>
> These business models are not necessarily unsuitable for Shopify.
>
> They simply need more planning than a standard physical-product ecommerce store.

Does my business have any special requirement?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Digital products
- ☐ Services / booking
- ☐ Subscription
- ☐ Wholesale / B2B
- ☐ Rental
- ☐ Marketplace / multi-vendor
- ☐ Complex custom products
- ☐ Other

My special requirement:

_____

_____

Quick Comparison Table

Business model	Product source	Inventory	Main focus	Fulfilment	Complexity
Own Product / D2C	Own brand / manufacturing	Usually controlled by business	Brand, quality, trust	Business / fulfilment partner	Standard to moderate
Reselling / Curated Store	External suppliers	Depends on supplier and stock model	Selection, margin, supplier reliability	Usually seller-managed	Standard
Local Retail Moving Online	Existing retail stock	May be shared offline and online	Inventory, local delivery, trust	Courier / pickup / local delivery / COD	Standard to moderate
Made-to-Order / Custom	Created after order	Raw material / limited finished stock	Customisation, delivery time, communication	After production	Moderate
Special / Complex Model	Depends on model	Depends on model	Business-specific workflow	May require custom setup	Advanced / needs planning

My Business Model

Which model is closest to your business?

- [ ] Own Product / D2C Brand
- [ ] Reselling / Curated Product Store
- [ ] Local Retail Moving Online
- [ ] Made-to-Order / Custom Products
- [ ] Special / Complex Ecommerce Model
- [ ] My business combines more than one model
- [ ] I am still unsure

Why does this model fit my business?

MY PRODUCT SOURCE – I sell:

- [ ] Products under my own brand
- [ ] Products sourced from suppliers
- [ ] Both own and sourced products
- [ ] Not decided yet

MY PRODUCT AVAILABILITY – My products are mainly:

- [ ] Ready-stock
- [ ] Made-to-order
- [ ] Customised after purchase
- [ ] Mix of ready-stock and made-to-order
- [ ] Not decided yet

MY MAIN FULFILMENT APPROACH – I expect to use:

- [ ] Courier / shipping partner
- [ ] Local delivery
- [ ] Store pickup
- [ ] Self-delivery
- [ ] Supplier fulfilment
- [ ] Not decided yet

MY PAYMENT / ORDER REQUIREMENTS – I may need:

- [ ] Online payment
- [ ] Cash on Delivery
- [ ] Manual payment
- [ ] Store pickup payment
- [ ] Special payment arrangement
- [ ] Not decided yet

What I Still Need to Clarify

Final Reminder

Your ecommerce store should be planned around how your business actually operates.

Do not copy another store blindly.

Your business model can affect:

Product structure • Inventory • Fulfilment • Payments • Shipping • Store content • Customer support

Once your business model is reasonably clear, use the One-Page Store Brief to summarise your own store before moving deeper into planning.

Next Resource

Continue to:

ONE-PAGE STORE BRIEF

Use that resource to convert what you identified here into a simple summary of your own ecommerce business.