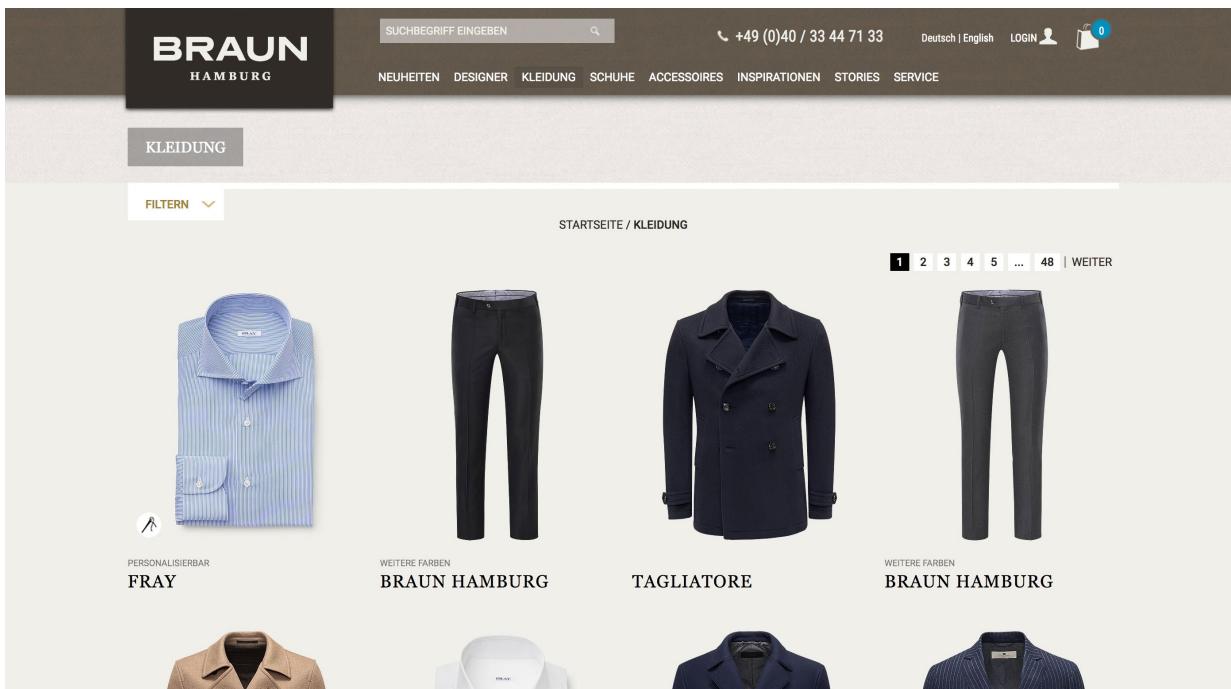


# SOFTWARE UPDATE

Lea Robinot

A ROBUST E-COMMERCE SYSTEM IS KEY TO GROWING ONLINE BUSINESS.  
BUT WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?



There are two types of e-commerce platform. Hosted platforms mean the shop is entirely hosted by the platform's company; self-hosted platforms include only the vending software but not web hosting. Fashion retailers tend to go for the former. **Shopify** and **3DCart** are both hosted platforms, and probably the best choice for retailers who are new to the online world.

Shopify is credited for being easy to use, simple and clean. It offers a lot of explanations and access to analytics, which allows operators to monitor customer behavior and gain insights into how much time users spend on the website per visit, how many of them return, and how many pages are visited. 3DCart's page design does not really offer a fresh, modern feel, but the pre-built templates and tutorials help to create content efficiently. In just a few steps, a retailer can configure important details, such as product descriptions, real-time shipping or tax rates.

**Magento**, too, is a hosted open source e-commerce platform. It is used by 20% of all e-commerce sites and counts some of the biggest fashion retailers, such as **Braun Hamburg**, and brands, such as **Oliver Sweeney** and **Christian Louboutin**, as clients. As a sophisticated system, it requires more skill and effort and is therefore best suited to more advanced users – in other words, to retailers that can afford to hire a web developer.

"Magento can be very confusing, and I am still not sure it is the best option for a small but fast-growing retailer like us, even though we are using it at the moment," opines Sima Rozikova, owner of online store **The Sprezzatura**, which sells edgy French and British labels, such as **Marques' Almeida**, **Être Cécile** and **Veja**. "Most of my designers use Shopify for their own e-tail; however, this platform's range of options is, on the contrary, too limited for our needs." One thing, however, that Rozikova finds useful with Shopify is that the 'sold' and 'in stock' databases

can be merged easily – once a piece has sold out, it is automatically deleted from the website. Magento, too, has this function, but, according to Rozikova, it is less seamless.

Some of the larger retailers, however, are happy with Magento. "The feedback from clients and partners for our new online store is extraordinary," said Lars Braun, owner of menswear giant Braun Hamburg, after the store's e-commerce relaunch in 2014. At that point, the merchandise comprised over 60,000 SKUs – a lot more than The Sprezzatura's assortment.

"Ultimately, the best way to go is to hire a developer and build your own e-commerce platform," says Rozikova. Until then, there are plenty of ready-made options to choose from.

[www.magento.com](http://www.magento.com)  
[www.shopify.com](http://www.shopify.com)  
[www.3dcart.co.uk](http://www.3dcart.co.uk)