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# Headless, SaaS, or Cloud? A Marketer's Guide to Ecommerce Website Platforms

An extract from "Ecommerce Unleashed:  
Maximising Your Website's Impact for Marketing  
Success

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## Headless, Saas, or Cloud? A Marketer's Guide to Ecommerce Website Platforms

An extract from "Ecommerce Unleashed: Maximising Your Website's Impact for Marketing Success".

The corporate world is rife with acronyms and jargon. In fact, when I worked in one of my client-side roles it had so many of them it had a specific area on its intranet called "acropodia"!

And I'm not sure there can be many disciplines that have more jargon than marketing and ecommerce. The Covid period jump-started how many brands view ecommerce and we've seen many marketing roles taking on new responsibilities for aspects of it. So we thought we'd continue the excerpts from the guide we've developed with ISBA "**Ecommerce Unleashed: Maximising Your Website's Impact for Marketing Success**" with a 101 breaking down some of the common types of platforms you may come across.

To perhaps state the obvious the platform you use is crucial. It is the foundation of your website, and it enables brands to manage different aspects of it including the front-end customer experience, (e.g. homepage, product pages) and some back-end functionality (e.g. order management).

Without a strong foundation, you can end up with a pretty suboptimal customer experience. Your business goals, tech setup, and budget usually dictate the type of platform brands decide to go for.



## Different types of platforms

### SaaS (Software as a Service)

SaaS is a software licensing and delivery model where you license the software on a subscription basis and the software is hosted centrally. This type of platform is increasingly popular in ecommerce because it removes the need to purchase and manage web hosting separately. For example, both Shopify and Salesforce offer cloud-based SaaS ecommerce solutions.

### On-Premise

In contrast to SaaS, On-Premise software requires you to host the software. In other words, you need to purchase separate hosting equipment to host your website. Adobe Commerce (previously known as Magento) is an example of an on-premise ecommerce platform, although they also recently started offering a SaaS cloud-based option.

### Cloud

Cloud solutions and SaaS are often referred to interchangeably but incorrectly. Cloud commerce still requires you to handle upgrades and maintenance (similar to On-Premise platforms) but the server is hosted remotely by a 3rd party.

### Open Source

Open Source refers to source code that you can modify and redistribute so your ecommerce platform is highly customisable. For example, Magento started as an open source platform but has shifted away from this option, especially since its acquisition by Adobe.

### Headless

Headless commerce is increasingly popular in ecommerce and refers to separating the back-end architecture from the (customer facing) front-end functionality. Most ecommerce platforms now offer headless commerce capabilities, with Big Commerce for example, focusing their capabilities in this type of platform. However, headless can be a more complex solution for those early in their ecommerce journey and you should have a team of development or IT professionals if you want to use this option.

It can often be hard to navigate between vendor sales pitches and internal stakeholder demands to set your website up to maximise its impact.

Luckily for you, based on our experience with clients we've provided some frameworks, processes and best practice to make sure you make the right decisions in the full guide we've developed with ISBA. You can request a copy [here](#).

Alex Tait, Founder  
Entropy

## **About Entropy**

[Entropy](#) is a hybrid business consultancy and agency specialising in [digital commerce](#) and [digital media](#).

Our client side, agency and data science experts work in partnership with digital commerce focussed brands to accelerate delivery against their organisations' KPIs.

We've significant client-side experience. For example, Jim Clear has led eCommerce at varied organisations including Argos and Wyevale Garden Centres and before setting up Entropy our founder Alex Tait was Unilever's Media and Marketing Services Director. He was also a member of ISBA's Executive Committee and chaired their Digital Action Group for 5 years.

Entropy has been an ISBA partner since 2018 and provides best practice across digital advertising, eCommerce and econometrics / marketing mix modelling (MMM).

You can find out more about us at [entropyconsulting.io](https://entropyconsulting.io).

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