

Product Gap

3 analyses · 27 Jul 2026

SYNTHESIS

Fernwood Coffee Roasters is strategically well-positioned within the specialty coffee wholesale market, leveraging its direct trade relationships, 'roasted to order' model, and proven subscription infrastructure to deliver consistency and convenience. However, its wholesale portal faces a critical 'product gap' where generic e-commerce solutions like Shopify fall short; the market demands specialized B2B functionality, integrated supply chain transparency, and flexible financial terms. To solidify its competitive edge and meet the evolving needs of sophisticated B2B buyers, Fernwood must now prioritize enhancing its digital platform with advanced features that deepen origin transparency and streamline operational integrations.

PLATFORM SUITABILITY

Unsuitable (Generic)

Shopify's limitations for B2B wholesale in this niche due to app reliance and lack of native features.

COMPETITIVE STANDING

Strong Base (Differentiated)

Fernwood's direct approach and subscription auto-reorder are key differentiators.

FEATURE PRIORITY

Critical (Enhancement)

Need flexible payments, ERP/CRM integrations, deeper origin transparency.

WHAT MATTERS

- The specialty coffee wholesale sector requires highly specific, integrated B2B functionalities that generic e-commerce platforms cannot natively provide, necessitating specialized solutions for supply chain transparency and financial tracking.
- Fernwood's existing direct trade relationships, 'roasted to order' process, and subscription-based auto-reorder capability provide a significant competitive advantage for securing recurring revenue and ensuring product freshness.
- To capture future market share, the wholesale portal must evolve by introducing flexible payment terms (e.g., Net-60) and robust integrations with common ERP/CRM systems, alongside deeper, verifiable origin transparency.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Develop and implement flexible payment terms (e.g., Net-60) and robust integrations with common ERP/CRM systems into the wholesale portal to improve buyer financial flexibility and operational efficiency.
- Enhance the portal's origin transparency features by providing deeper, verifiable producer profiles, traceability data, and insights into financial support within the green coffee supply chain.
- Actively market and refine the subscription-based auto-reorder functionality and 'roasted to order' model as key differentiators that reduce logistical burden and ensure optimal freshness for wholesale buyers.

What this means on your doorstep

ECONOMIC: THE UNPRECEDENTED 91% SURGE IN GREEN COFFEE PRICES IN 2025, LARGELY DRIVEN BY CLIMATE DISRUPTIONS AND LOW INVENTORIES, SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND STABILITY OF THE GLOBAL SPECIALTY COFFEE SUPPLY CHAIN FROM PRODUCERS TO ROASTERS.

Impact: This surge directly increases raw material costs for Fernwood Coffee Roasters, impacting their margins and potentially requiring wholesale price adjustments. This also creates financial pressure for their cafe customers.

Opportunity: Fernwood's existing direct trade relationships can offer more stable sourcing and differentiation. Integrating flexible payment terms (e.g., Net-60) into their wholesale portal becomes critical to support cafe buyers facing higher costs, enhancing customer loyalty.

grounded · high

ECONOMIC: THE GLOBAL SPECIALTY COFFEE MARKET IS EXPERIENCING SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH, PROJECTED TO REACH \$381.52 BILLION BY 2034, WITH B2B CHANNELS DRIVING 63% OF THIS MARKET, INDICATING SIGNIFICANT COMMERCIAL EXPANSION AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE SECTOR.

Impact: Fernwood's core business, specialty coffee wholesale, operates within a rapidly expanding market, affirming the strategic importance of their portal and its future development.

Opportunity: This growth validates investment in advanced B2B portal features (like ERP/CRM integrations and enhanced transparency) to capture a larger share of the projected market expansion and solidify Fernwood's position as a preferred wholesale supplier.

grounded · high

SOCIAL: INCREASING CONSUMER DEMAND FOR ETHICALLY SOURCED AND SUSTAINABLY PRODUCED COFFEE IS COMPELLING PLATFORMS TO INTEGRATE FEATURES THAT HIGHLIGHT TRANSPARENT FARM PARTNERSHIPS AND TRACEABLE SUPPLY CHAINS, PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND SUPPORTING PRODUCER WELFARE.

Impact: This demand aligns perfectly with Fernwood's established direct trade relationships and existing commitment to quality sourcing, positioning them favorably.

Opportunity: Enhance the wholesale portal with richer, verifiable producer profiles, traceability data, and perhaps even financial impact reports to deepen origin transparency, which can be a strong differentiator and attract ethically-minded wholesale buyers.

inferred · medium

TECHNOLOGICAL: THE INDUSTRY IS SEEING AN ACCELERATION IN E-COMMERCE DOMINANCE, DATA-DRIVEN OPERATIONS FOR PLANNING AND INVENTORY, AND THE INTEGRATION OF AI FOR TASKS LIKE CONTENT CREATION AND ENHANCED SEARCH, TRANSFORMING WHOLESALE LOGISTICS AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

Impact: While Fernwood has a robust operational backbone, its wholesale portal needs to evolve beyond basic e-commerce to embrace advanced data-driven functionalities and seamless integrations to maintain competitiveness.

Opportunity: Prioritize robust integrations with common ERP/CRM systems for improved operational efficiency and explore advanced analytics or AI-driven tools within the portal to enhance inventory management, personalize buyer experiences, and streamline content generation for products.

inferred · medium

Review Friction Miner

FRICION POINTS

ISSUE

Shopify's template-based system feels restrictive for unique brand experiences, often requiring significant development budget or expertise beyond basic changes.

SEVERITY

High

catsy.com

ecorn.agency

ISSUE

Many essential features on Shopify require paid third-party apps, significantly increasing overall monthly expenses beyond the base plan.

SEVERITY

High

[ecorn.agency](#)[softwarefinder.com](#)**ISSUE**

Shopify's customer service is frequently reported as 'non-existent or terrible,' unhelpful, unresponsive, and difficult to reach.

SEVERITY

High

[catsy.com](#)[ecorn.agency](#)**ISSUE**

The specialty coffee supply chain is fragmented, with producers, roasters, and coffee shops lacking direct connection, hindering fair pricing and traceability.

SEVERITY

High

[reddit.com](#)[reddit.com](#)**ISSUE**

Small to medium-sized roasters struggle with accurate Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) tracking, relying on manual methods like Excel, and need affordable automation.

SEVERITY

High

[reddit.com](#)[reddit.com](#)**ISSUE**

The industry faces significant price volatility and rising green coffee costs (91% surge in 2025), challenging roaster profit margins and wholesale retention.

SEVERITY

High

[reddit.com](#)[reddit.com](#)

ISSUE

Logistical bottlenecks, including port congestion and truck driver shortages, cause significant delays in coffee transportation, impacting green coffee freshness and quality.

SEVERITY

High

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

ISSUE

Shopify's native B2B and wholesale features are often found insufficient, leading to reliance on apps that may not fully meet specialized needs.

SEVERITY

Medium

[ecorn.agency](#)

ISSUE

Shopify limits products to 3 options and 100 variants, which can be restrictive for businesses with diverse product lines like specialty coffee.

SEVERITY

Medium

[ecorn.agency](#)

ISSUE

Online marketplaces for coffee raise concerns among roasters about losing brand control, getting 'buried' by competitors, and platforms prioritizing their own products.

SEVERITY

Medium

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

[cofeeness.de](#)

ISSUE

There is a reluctance in the coffee industry to adopt online portals that might depersonalize long-standing relationships valued for direct human interaction.

SEVERITY

Medium

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

LOVED FEATURES

FEATURE

Shopify is designed to scale effortlessly with business growth, handling significant traffic spikes and thousands of SKUs.

[ecorn.agency](#)[shopify.com](#)

FEATURE

Shopify's checkout process is highly effective, converting 12% better than BigCommerce's, with Shop Pay potentially boosting conversion rates by up to 50%.

[ecorn.agency](#)[shugert.com.mx](#)

FEATURE

Shopify offers cost efficiency and a lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), averaging 31% cheaper than BigCommerce and 41% lower operational costs than WooCommerce.

[ecorn.agency](#)[trustpilot.com](#)

FEATURE

The platform provides an intuitive interface, making it easy for non-technical teams to launch and manage stores, reducing reliance on developers.

[ecorn.agency](#)[trustpilot.com](#)

FEATURE

Shopify unifies various sales channels, including online, in-person, B2B, and social media, into a single management platform.

[ecorn.agency](#)

FEATURE

The platform offers high reliability with 99.99% uptime and enterprise-grade security including built-in SSL certificates and PCI-DSS compliance.

[ecorn.agency](#)

OPPORTUNITY

Develop integrated 'living network' platforms that directly connect producers, roasters, and coffee shops to foster relationships, ensure fair pricing, and provide genuine traceability.

DEMAND EVIDENCE

Industry discussions highlight a significant frustration with the fragmented supply chain and a desire for platforms that go beyond simple marketplaces.

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

OPPORTUNITY

Create affordable, automated COGS tracking software for small to mid-sized roasters, allowing automatic input of purchases and online sales, with manual entry for other sales channels.

DEMAND EVIDENCE

Roasters find it difficult to accurately track COGS using manual methods like Excel and express a strong desire for streamlined financial management solutions.

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

OPPORTUNITY

Offer specialized wholesale management systems that allow cafe buyers to purchase directly, request samples, and include features like automatic order compilation, roast scheduling, and inventory tracking.

DEMAND EVIDENCE

Roasters are looking for platforms to efficiently manage wholesale accounts and streamline the ordering process for their B2B clients.

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

OPPORTUNITY

Provide enhanced tools for transparency and storytelling, enabling coffee shops to share authentic origin stories with customers and potentially allowing consumers to 'tip' farmers directly.

DEMAND EVIDENCE

The industry seeks better ways to communicate genuine value and connect consumers more directly with the source of their coffee.

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

OPPORTUNITY

Explore innovative product formats and B2B solutions beyond whole beans, such as single-serve pods for B2B channels (grocery, hotel, office coffee service), to access larger markets.

DEMAND EVIDENCE

Roasters are encouraged to diversify offerings to navigate consumer fatigue and access broader commercial markets.

[reddit.com](#)

[reddit.com](#)

SENTIMENT SUMMARY

Shopify generally enjoys positive sentiment for its core e-commerce capabilities like scalability and ease of use, making it a strong choice for direct-to-consumer businesses. However, within the highly specialized specialty coffee wholesale supply market, its sentiment is more mixed. Users in this niche express significant frustrations with Shopify's limitations in B2B functionality, customization, reliance on expensive apps, and its failure to address critical supply chain disconnects and financial tracking needs specific to coffee. The market actively seeks more integrated, transparent, and relationship-focused solutions that a generic platform currently struggles to provide, as exemplified by Fernwood Coffee's personalized approach.

TIMELINE

- **2025:** Green coffee prices surged by an unprecedented 91% compared to the previous year, driven by climate disruptions, low inventories, and tariffs.
- **2025:** Major U.S. ports experienced congestion and a shortage of over 70,000 truck drivers, causing logistical bottlenecks in the supply chain.
- **June 2025:** 42.2% of new enterprise launches and over a third of enterprise brands migrating platforms in the prior two years chose Shopify.
- **August 28, 2025:** Shopify deprecated Shopify Scripts in favor of Shopify Functions, a significant architectural deadline for mid-market and Plus brands.
- **Winter 2026:** Shopify's 'RenAIssance Edition' emphasized agentic AI tools and integrations to enhance personalization.
- **June 2026:** There were approximately 2.87 million live Shopify stores, marking an 11% increase year-over-year.
- **July 17, 2026:** Serious concerns were raised about the Shopify App Reviews system, including reports of genuine reviews being removed and reviews from closed stores reappearing.
- **July 22, 2026:** Shopify's stock dropped over 4% following a downgrade from Rothschild Redburn, citing concerns about increased competition from Meta's AI-driven business tools, with ARK Invest also selling over \$25 million in Shopify shares.

BIGGER PICTURE — KNOCK-ON EFFECTS

- **Economic:** The unprecedented 91% surge in green coffee prices in 2025, largely driven by climate disruptions and low inventories, significantly impacts the financial viability and stability of the global specialty coffee supply chain from producers to roasters.

- **Technological:** Shopify's architectural shift from Shopify Scripts to Shopify Functions by August 28, 2025, highlights an industry-wide trend towards more modern, extensible, and flexible e-commerce checkout experiences.

GAPS / WHAT WE COULD NOT DETERMINE

- Specific user reviews or detailed feedback on Shopify being actively used and rated *as a specialty coffee wholesale platform* by roasters or coffee shops.
- Data on the current market share or most commonly adopted platforms within the specialty coffee wholesale niche.
- Detailed financial or operational metrics from specialty coffee roasters using various platforms to quantify the impact of current frictions.
- Information on the typical number of SKUs and variant complexity for specialty coffee roasters, which would help further assess the impact of Shopify's product variant limitations.

ASSUMPTIONS MADE

- The 'specialty coffee wholesale supply platforms' discussion is broadly representative of the challenges and desires relevant to the wholesale operations of businesses like Fernwood Coffee Roasters, even though Fernwood itself lacks specific portal reviews.
- Shopify's general platform limitations, such as customization restrictions and app dependency, apply to its use case as a B2B/wholesale platform within the specialty coffee industry.
- The primary focus of this analysis is on Shopify's suitability and performance as a wholesale platform specifically for specialty coffee, rather than its general direct-to-consumer e-commerce capabilities.

AMBIGUITIES

- The extent to which Shopify's existing B2B features, noted under 'Omnichannel Capabilities,' actually address the nuanced and specific needs of specialty coffee wholesale, such as detailed traceability or farmer tipping mechanisms.
- The precise scale of Fernwood Coffee Roasters' wholesale operations, which would influence the optimal balance between a fully automated platform and their current personalized, direct approach.

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Feature Matrix Builder

TABLE STAKES

FEATURE Online ordering and reordering WHO HAS IT Faire Who's Brew Algrano Shopify faire.com whosbrewshop.com whosbrewshop.com
FEATURE Wholesale account pricing tiers WHO HAS IT Who's Brew BigCommerce B2B Edition Growmax Shopify Plus whosbrewshop.com shopify.com

FEATURE

Direct trade origin transparency pages

WHO HAS IT

- Algrano
- Who's Brew

whosbrewshop.com

algrano.com

algrano.com

FEATURE

Roast date freshness tracking

WHO HAS IT

- Who's Brew

whosbrewshop.com

DIFFERENTIATORS

FEATURE

Subscription-based auto-reorder

EVIDENCE

No explicit mention of this feature for Faire or Algrano, and Who's Brew explicitly states it does not require a subscription, implying this is not a core offering for them. While Shopify offers a subscription app, it is an add-on.

whosbrewshop.com

shopify.com

DEFICITS

FEATURE

Net-60 payment terms and free returns on opening orders

WHO HAS IT

- Faire

SEVERITY

High

faire.com

FEATURE

Robust ERP/CRM/Accounting System Integrations

WHO HAS IT

- Growmax
- Sana Commerce
- Corevist
- Shopify Plus

SEVERITY

High

growmax.io

shopify.com

FEATURE

In-depth producer profiles and direct sourcing facilitation (for green coffee)

WHO HAS IT

- Algrano

SEVERITY

Medium

algrano.com

algrano.com

FEATURE

AI-powered search tool for coffee preferences

WHO HAS IT

- Who's Brew

SEVERITY

Medium

whosbrewshop.com

MARKETING ANGLES

- Highlight seamless, consistent supply for businesses with subscription-based auto-reorder, reducing manual effort and ensuring optimal freshness.
- Emphasize the unique convenience of automated, recurring coffee orders tailored to business needs, a feature not commonly found in direct specialty coffee platform alternatives.
- Position the portal as the 'set-it-and-forget-it' solution for premium specialty coffee procurement, leveraging the auto-reorder functionality.

ROADMAP PRIORITIES

Impact (rows, high low) vs. Effort (columns, low high)

EFFORT: LOW

EFFORT: MEDIUM

EFFORT: HIGH

IMPACT: HIGH	—	Implement Net-60 payment terms and free returns on opening orders	Develop robust integrations with common ERP, CRM, and accounting systems (e.g., Zoho, SAP, QuickBooks)
IMPACT: MEDIUM	—	Enhance direct trade transparency with more detailed producer profiles and deeper origin insights, aligning with increasing market demand for ethical sourcing.	—
IMPACT: LOW	—	—	—

TIMELINE

- **2021:** Algrano platform upgrades and new features were introduced.
- **March 2024:** Shopify's Hydrogen moved to a monthly release cadence with new features.
- **2024:** Shopify pricing plans saw significant increases (some over 30%) and new functionalities were rolled out via the Shopify Summer Update.
- **2024:** Online retail platforms dominate coffee subscription orders (72%).
- **May 2026:** Faire features and offerings were accurate as of this date.
- **May 2026:** Who's Brew functions as an open marketplace emphasizing choice and transparency.
- **2034:** The overall specialty coffee market is projected to reach \$381.52 billion, with B2B channels commanding 63% of the global market share.

BIGGER PICTURE — KNOCK-ON EFFECTS

- **Economic:** The global specialty coffee market is experiencing substantial growth, projected to reach \$381.52 billion by 2034, with B2B channels driving 63% of this market, indicating significant commercial expansion and opportunities within the sector.
- **Social:** Increasing consumer demand for ethically sourced and sustainably produced coffee is compelling platforms to integrate features that highlight transparent farm partnerships and traceable supply chains, promoting responsible consumption and supporting producer welfare.
- **Technological:** The industry is seeing an acceleration in e-commerce dominance, data-driven operations for planning and inventory, and the integration of AI for tasks like content creation and enhanced search, transforming wholesale logistics and customer experience.

GAPS / WHAT WE COULD NOT DETERMINE

- Specific details regarding Fernwood's current technology stack, which would influence the effort required for integrations and new feature development.
- Information about Fernwood's existing customer base, their pain points, and specific feature requests.
- Clear business objectives for the Fernwood portal (e.g., market share targets, customer retention goals, internal operational efficiencies).

- Market share or specific performance data for Faire, Who's Brew, and Algrano within the specialty coffee wholesale sector.
- Explicit user feedback or internal requirements document for Fernwood's future roadmap features.

ASSUMPTIONS MADE

- Fernwood Coffee Roasters wholesale portal primarily facilitates sales of Fernwood's own roasted coffee, rather than operating as a multi-roaster marketplace itself.
- "Online ordering and reordering" encompasses standard e-commerce functionalities such as product browsing, cart management, order history, and repeat purchases.
- The 'effort' for roadmap priorities is estimated based on general understanding of software development complexity, as specific development resources for Fernwood are unknown.

AMBIGUITIES

- The precise depth and scope of Fernwood's existing "Direct trade origin transparency pages" are not fully detailed, making a direct comparison to Algrano's extensive producer profiles partially inferred.
- The range of 'wholesale portal alternatives' is broad; the most directly competitive platforms for Fernwood's specific scale and target market beyond the named specialty coffee platforms are not explicitly defined.

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Content Generator

VARIANTS

ANGLE

Emphasizing convenience and consistent quality for cafe operations.

HEADLINE

Elevate Your Cafe's Coffee with Effortless Freshness, Every Time.

BODY

For cafe buyers seeking unparalleled quality without the logistical hassle, Fernwood Coffee Roasters delivers. Our roasted-to-order model ensures optimal freshness for every bean. Leveraging an infrastructure built for consistent, hands-off supply, we help you reduce manual reordering efforts and guarantee your customers always enjoy peak flavor. Experience the peace of mind that comes with reliable, tailored service.

CALL TO ACTION

Discover our wholesale partnerships and streamline your coffee supply today.

HASHTAGS

- #WholesaleCoffee
- #CafeSupply
- #RoastedToOrder
- #FreshCoffee
- #EffortlessSupply

ANGLE

Highlighting reliability and partnership for business growth.

HEADLINE

Partner with Confidence: Reliable Coffee Supply, Optimized for Your Cafe's Success.

BODY

Fernwood Coffee Roasters understands the demands of your business. Our wholesale program is built on a foundation of roasted-to-order freshness and a commitment to consistent, responsive supply. With our proven ability to manage recurring deliveries and recent roastery expansion, we're equipped to ensure your cafe always has the premium, fresh coffee it needs, precisely when you need it. Focus on your customers; we'll handle the beans.

CALL TO ACTION

Connect with our coffee professionals to tailor your perfect supply solution.

HASHTAGS

- #CoffeePartner
- #CafeBusiness
- #ConsistentSupply
- #FreshlyRoasted
- #WholesaleBeans

NOTES

The generated copy variants focus on Fernwood Coffee Roasters' ability to provide seamless, consistent supply and optimal freshness. While a specific wholesale 'subscription-based auto-reorder' portal is not explicitly detailed in the source, the copy highlights the 'roasted to order' model, 'responsive, steady, and genuinely helpful' service, and the robust infrastructure demonstrated by their retail subscription system and recent roastery expansion. This allows the copy to land the differentiator by emphasizing the *benefits* of reduced manual effort and guaranteed freshness through reliable supply, grounded in their operational capabilities.

TIMELINE

- **2010:** Co-owner Ben Cram won Canadian Barista Champion
- **2011:** Co-owner Ben Cram won Canadian Barista Champion
- **2015:** Co-owner Ben Cram served as World Barista Championship Sensory Judge
- **2017:** Established direct trade relationship with a coffee farm in Brazil
- **May 2021:** Wholesale operations constituted 60-70% of total revenue
- **2023:** Rebranded grocery bags
- **November 2023:** Company celebrated 17 years in business
- **Late 2023:** Moved into a new, larger roastery and acquired a new, more fuel-efficient roaster
- **April 2024:** A retail customer noted paying almost \$20 CAD for 454 grams of medium roast whole bean coffee
- **Ongoing (2024-2026):** Regular updates via their 'Journal' covering coffee science, brewing guides, and origin trips

GAPS / WHAT WE COULD NOT DETERMINE

- Specific details on the current implementation or features of a subscription-based auto-reorder system explicitly designed for wholesale clients are not provided.
- Explicit wholesale pricing details, beyond free shipping for minimum orders, are not available in the provided source material.

ASSUMPTIONS MADE

- The existing robust retail subscription infrastructure is indicative of Fernwood Coffee Roasters' capability and willingness to implement or provide similar seamless, consistent auto-reorder solutions for wholesale clients, even if a dedicated wholesale portal is not explicitly described.
- Cafe buyers prioritize reduced manual effort and guaranteed freshness as key decision factors when selecting a coffee supplier platform.
- The social post format implies a need for concise, engaging copy with relevant hashtags to attract wholesale cafe buyers.

AMBIGUITIES

- The source material notes that a 'specific 'wholesale subscription-based auto-reorder' portal isn't explicitly detailed'. This introduces ambiguity regarding the precise mechanism and current availability of a fully

automated wholesale subscription system, requiring the copy to focus on the **capability** and **commitment** to consistent, hands-off supply rather than a specific portal name or feature.

SOURCES

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