

# The Market Stall vs. Your Own Shop

*A business guide to understanding marketplace fees and digital ownership*

EXCLUSIVE DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCE GUIDE

When you start selling a product online, third-party marketplaces like eBay, Etsy, or Amazon are brilliant for getting off the ground. They provide a ready-made audience. However, as your sales volume grows, the cost of staying on these platforms can become your single biggest business overhead.

Many business owners hesitate to build an independent e-commerce website because of the upfront cost. But if you sit down with a calculator and look at the recurring fees you hand over every month, independent ownership often pays for itself incredibly quickly.

## The Cupcake Analogy

To understand why this happens, look at a simple, real-world retail example:

### The Weekly Market Table

Imagine you bake exceptional cupcakes. To sell them, you set up a table inside a busy indoor weekend market. The market is great because lots of people walk through the doors every single Saturday.

But there is a catch: every single time a customer buys a £2 cupcake from you, the market organiser takes 30p of your money.

When you are only selling ten cupcakes a week, handing over £3 feels completely fine. The footfall justifies the cost. But soon, your cupcakes become famous. You begin selling one thousand cupcakes a week. Suddenly, you look at your figures and realise you are handing over £300 every single week to the organiser just for the right to stand there.

Eventually, you look across the street and see an empty high street shop unit available for rent. The landlord says: *"The rent here is a flat £100 a month. I do not care if you sell ten cupcakes or ten thousand cupcakes; I will never take a percentage of your sales. The fee stays exactly the same."*

Moving into that shop requires an upfront investment to paint the sign, put in counters, and install a till. But once those doors open, every penny stays inside your till. The savings on those transaction percentages quickly cover the initial setup cost.

## The Digital Equivalent

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This is the exact transition online retailers face. Platforms like eBay are the indoor market. They host your items but charge significant final value fees—often between 10% and 15% of your total order value, including what you charge for postage.

Operating your own independent website via a platform like Rocketspark changes the model to the high street shop:

- **Fixed Monthly Hosting:** You pay a predictable, flat monthly subscription to keep your shop live. This fee never changes, regardless of how busy you get.
- **Minimal Gateway Fees:** Payment systems like Stripe do not charge marketplace percentages. They take a tiny fraction purely to safely process the payment from your customer's bank to yours (typically 1.4% + 20p for standard UK cards).

### ★ Exclusive Guide Bonus: Regaining Operational Autonomy

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Moving to your own digital property does not just stop transaction fee leakage; it returns complete operational control to you. Here are the core areas where you get to make the rules:

- **Taking Control of Postage Fees:** This is a massive hidden drain on third-party platforms. Marketplaces calculate their 10% to 15% final value fee on the \*entire\* amount paid by the customer, including shipping. If a parcel costs £5 to post and you charge the customer £5, the platform takes up to 75p of that delivery money. You are actively losing cash on postage stamps. With your own independent website, 100% of the shipping cost goes directly to fulfillment without any platform deductions.
- **Freedom of Promotions and Coupons:** On massive marketplaces, you are bound by their structural constraints or forced to participate in site-wide discount schemes that strip your margins. When you own the site, you can instantly launch custom coupon codes, multi-buy bundle offers, or loyalty incentives tailored perfectly to your seasonal stock levels and cash flow.
- **Bespoke Customer Experiences:** You escape the trap of having competitor advertisements displayed directly below your product listings. Your brand gets the full spotlight.

## Choosing the Right Tool for Your Volume

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It is important to note that e-commerce infrastructure is not one-size-fits-all. While platforms like Rocketspark offer an ideal, user-friendly, and cost-effective home for the vast majority of independent small-to-medium businesses, they may not be the optimal engine if you operate at massive, complex enterprise scales.

If your business handles exceptionally huge volumes or thousands of complex product variations, a heavyweight infrastructure such as BigCommerce might be required to manage your data traffic and

inventory. Every business has a distinct tipping point, which is why a practical evaluation of your specific operational needs is essential before building.

## Helpful Tips: How to Audit Your Business Costs

Before you decide to move, run a simple financial health check on your current marketplace setup:

1. **Calculate your true fee percentage:** Take your total invoice from eBay or Etsy at the end of the month and divide it by your total sales revenue. This gives you your true cost of renting space.
2. **Audit your delivery loss:** Check how much commission you paid purely on the postage costs your customers paid last month.
3. **Identify your tipping point:** Use the basic framework below to see where your money is currently going.

Expense Type	Third-Party Marketplace (e.g., eBay)	Your Own Website (e.g., Rocketspark & Stripe)
Monthly Rent	Usually low or free to list	Flat, predictable monthly subscription
Commission per Sale	10% to 15% of order total	0%
Postage Commission	Platform takes 10%–15% cut of shipping cost	0% (You keep full delivery cost)
Promotions & Coupons	Restricted by platform templates and rules	Bespoke setups, bundles, and codes
Customer Ownership	None (They belong to the platform)	100% yours (Direct email list building)

**The Golden Rule:** If your monthly marketplace commission fees are consistently higher than the cost of a flat website hosting subscription, you have passed the tipping point. Investing in your own platform is no longer a marketing expense—it is a logical business step to protect your profit margins.

*Disclaimer: All platform fee structures, transaction percentages, and data points presented in this guide were correct at the time of printing (June 2026) and are subject to change based on third-party provider updates.*