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Shopify Theme Customization Cost: Quote Sheet With Updates

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Executive Summary

A Shopify theme change is cheap to ask for and expensive to leave undefined. The cost of a theme customization is not one number: it is an implementation quote, any new app or licence fees, the price of testing and repairing the change when the theme is next updated, and the internal time spent managing the work. This report argues that buyers should price those four parts on the same one-page sheet, send the sheet unchanged to every supplier, and allow two outcomes that proposals rarely offer: "no build needed" and "outside this subscription's scope".

The platform facts drive the sheet. Shopify states that edits made in the theme editor are copied into an updated theme (help.shopify.com), while code edits are carried over only if they do not conflict with the update. When they do, the theme card reports that "code edits could not be included", and Shopify advises saving a copy of customized code before updating (help.shopify.com). Shopify's own support service does not write custom code (help.shopify.com), so repair has to be assigned to someone in writing. Developer documentation adds that merchants can reorder sections on JSON template pages without a developer (shopify.dev), which is why a request that looks like "development" is sometimes a settings task.

Public supplier pages show why one sheet is needed. A recurring design plan may list coding among work it does not do (manypixels.co), another may include full front-end development only on its highest tier (penji.co), and a Shopify-focused subscription may list new theme sections as included while excluding third-party app licences. None of the pages reviewed states whether a future theme-version update is covered, so that obligation must be asked for explicitly. This report supplies a blank sheet, a rehearsal record and a symbolic worked example, and deliberately includes no typical rates.

The twelve-month comparison is: accepted implementation quote, plus incremental confirmed app or licence fees, plus separately quoted update testing and repair, plus the buyer's own management cost. A Shopify plan that is already paid and unchanged is not added, and an unpriced maintenance line stays "unknown". Keyword estimates supplied for this report put US monthly searches for "shopify theme customization" at about 390

(retrieved October 29, 2026), a small volume that varies by month. Tapflare, the publisher, offers a flat-rate subscription that is one option among several; its scope appears in the supplier table with a recommendation to obtain written confirmation.

Introduction and Background

Commissioning storefront changes on Shopify is usually described as a choice between "a theme setting", "an app" and "custom code". That framing is correct but stops at launch. Two proposals can describe identical visible results while differing in who can edit the content afterwards, which templates were touched, whether an app is now required, and who pays when the theme vendor ships its next version. Competitor guidance already covers the layer choice: a September 2026 guide explains that a custom section is built once with Liquid plus a schema file and can then be edited by merchants without touching code (truzzinfotech.com), and an August 2026 article recommends auditing each pain point against the theme editor, existing apps and small code changes before choosing a path (theshopninjas.com). This report addresses the remaining gap: making proposals comparable on the obligation that arrives after delivery.

The audience is e-commerce founders, marketing operations leads and agency account managers who commission repeat storefront changes. Their decision has three parts: whether a request can be met with existing settings, whether it needs a developer or an app specialist, and whether a subscription or a project quote actually covers the requested implementation and its next theme update.

Terms used.

- **Section.** A Liquid file that provides a reusable, merchant-customizable module of content (shopify.dev). **Liquid** is Shopify's template language (shopify.dev).
- **Theme update.** A new version of a Theme Store theme that the merchant adds to draft themes, which Shopify says can be done for free (help.shopify.com).
- **Rehearsal.** This report's term for performing that update on a draft copy, with recorded paths and results, before a quote is accepted.

Evidence limits.

- **Keyword volumes.** These come from a Google Ads estimate batch retrieved October 29, 2026 for the US in English. They were supplied to the publisher's research workflow, were not re-fetched in this run and carry no source link.
- **Monthly series.** Estimates for "shopify theme customization" were 320, 210 and 260 for July, August and September 2026, with a March 2026 peak of 720. An identical series was returned for "custom shopify theme" and is treated as overlapping, not additive.
- **Cost queries.** "Shopify theme development cost" was estimated at 10 per month, and "shopify theme customization cost" returned no estimate (null, not zero).
- **Caveats.** Advertising competition is not organic difficulty, and none of these numbers measures sales. Supplier facts below are dated November 10, 2026, when the pages were read.

Publisher position. Tapflare publishes this report and is a direct provider of a flat-rate monthly design and development subscription run through a dedicated project manager. It is not a marketing, SEO or copywriting service, not an app developer, and not suited to a single one-off job. It appears in one table as a scoped option, and the sheet is designed to be completed by any supplier.

What a Theme Customization Quote Must Contain

Four cost components, one horizon

The cost of one change over a chosen period is the sum of four items. Each must be defined so that suppliers cannot bundle or omit them.

- **Accepted implementation quote.** The price for the initial build, stated as a fixed amount or as a ceiling with the estimating basis, with currency and tax treatment.
- **Incremental confirmed app or licence fees.** Only fees that are new because of this change. Shopify notes that apps can carry a recurring monthly fee, a one-time fee or usage-based charges (help.shopify.com), and its developer documentation says app pricing supports free, recurring and usage-based plan types (shopify.dev). As a dated example, a page-builder listing displayed on November 10, 2026 offered an extra-capacity option of $5 per 5 extra pages or sections (apps.shopify.com). Fees on a listing belong to the app developer, not the implementer.
- **Separately quoted update testing and repair.** The price, or the explicit statement "not included", for rehearsing the next theme version and repairing what does not transfer.
- **Buyer-entered management cost.** Internal time to brief, review and accept the work, entered by the buyer, never estimated by a supplier.

Do not add the monthly Shopify plan if it is already paid and unchanged. Do not add a paid theme's one-time price unless the change forces a new theme. A paid Theme Store theme is sold as a one-time payment with a lifetime licence for one store (themes.shopify.com), and that licence is exclusive to the store where the purchase was made (help.shopify.com). A listing for the Impulse theme displayed $500 USD on November 10, 2026 (themes.shopify.com); that is a dated licence price, not a customization rate.

Why an unpriced maintenance line stays unknown

Shopify's help documentation says that upgrading a theme "can be a complex process" (help.shopify.com). Neither Shopify nor the theme vendors reviewed publish a price for repair. One theme designer states that it cannot transfer customizations to new theme versions (help.archetypethemes.co) and advises developers on client projects to factor in professional fees for customizations it cannot support (help.archetypethemes.co). The correct entry for an unquoted update-repair line is therefore "unknown", carried into the total as a flagged gap. Averages from blogs are not a substitute, and this report adopts none.

Per-change pricing and what "per change" hides

Searches for "shopify theme edit pricing per change" usually assume a per-edit price list. A change that looks identical on the storefront may be a settings edit, an app block or a code edit, and these layers behave differently at update time. Shopify's Growth Services team makes the point from the implementer side: hard-

coded Liquid values require developer intervention to change (growth-services.shopify.com). A per-change price is comparable only when the sheet records the layer, the editable fields and the update obligation for each row.

Choosing the Layer Before Pricing the Code

Step 1: inventory the theme, version, source and apps

Start with facts a supplier cannot see from outside. Shopify's guidance is to open Online Store and click the version number of the theme to check (help.shopify.com). Record these items before any request is written:

- **Theme name and version.** Taken from the admin, not from memory.
- **Licence source.** Theme Store purchase, a designer's own site, or a free Shopify theme.
- **Installed apps.** Every app that touches the storefront, with its plan and billing owner.
- **Existing custom code.** Any prior edits, and who made them.

Provenance matters: Shopify says themes from outside the Theme Store are not vetted for quality or compatibility with core Shopify features (help.shopify.com), and updates for themes bought from outside the Theme Store come from the designer (help.shopify.com).

Then write one observable requested behavior per row. "Make product pages more trustworthy" is not observable; "show a heading, three icon-plus-text items and a link to the returns page under the add-to-cart button on the product template" is. This follows practitioner advice to prepare a clear written brief before consulting providers (gempages.net) and to run the audit yourself before requesting any quote (theshopninjas.com).

Step 2: ask for a demonstration in existing settings

Before any code is priced, ask each supplier to show the behavior in a duplicate theme using only the theme editor or an app block. Shopify's documentation supports this order of attempts: merchants can add, remove and reorder sections on JSON-template pages in the editor (shopify.dev), app blocks can be added and customized in the editor (help.shopify.com), and a backup copy lets changes be discarded (help.shopify.com). Limits apply: some theme sections may not support app blocks (help.shopify.com), and a partially migrated theme may lack JSON templates for some pages (help.shopify.com). A demonstration that succeeds ends the engagement at "no build needed", which is a legitimate quote outcome. A feature absent from the editor does not imply a new custom theme: a custom section added to the existing theme is a smaller scope than a replacement, and one practitioner source cautions that some customization work does not carry over cleanly into a new custom theme (theshopninjas.com).

Step 3: for a custom section, name what the merchant can change

If a section must be built, the quote has to list the fields that stay editable afterwards. Shopify documents setting types that give merchants a single-line text field (shopify.dev) and an image picker (shopify.dev), and section presets let merchants select a predefined configuration when adding the section (shopify.dev). Practitioners note that structural changes, such as a new kind of setting or changed section behavior, still

require a developer (truzzinfotech.com). The sheet therefore needs two columns: fields a merchant role can edit, and changes that need a developer. Staff roles matter as well, because the "Edit code" permission allows modifying theme code in the code editor (help.shopify.com).

Step 4: separate presentation, app logic and platform-controlled behavior

Mark each row with one of three labels:

- **Storefront presentation (theme).** Layout, copy, images and styling inside theme files and the editor.
- **Business logic (app).** Behavior that depends on an app, its data or its billing.
- **Platform-controlled behavior.** Anything Shopify documents as governed by the platform, with checkout as the clearest case.

For checkout, Shopify documents that app blocks and app embed blocks cannot be rendered on checkout pages (shopify.dev), that the Shopify command line tool cannot preview checkout customizations (shopify.dev), and that new checkout functionality is added by building an app with extensions (shopify.dev). The primary technology for custom checkout interface is checkout UI extensions (shopify.dev), and the legacy checkout.liquid layout is documented as unsupported for the Information, Shipping and Payment steps (shopify.dev). For any checkout-related row, require the supplier to cite the Shopify documentation page that makes the request possible on the store's plan, since availability differs by plan and step. A theme-file implementer should mark such rows "outside theme scope" unless the supplier is an app specialist.

Supplier Models and Where Scope Ends

Sending the identical sheet to two kinds of supplier

Step 5 is to send the same sheet to at least one project developer and one suitable recurring development provider. Shopify's Partner Directory describes store building as including storefront and theme customization (shopify.com). For access, Shopify prohibits asking a merchant for a password (help.shopify.com), so use a collaborator or staff account. Collaborator access expires automatically after 90 days without login (help.shopify.com), a useful trigger for re-confirming access before the update rehearsal.

Table 1 below records what public pages said on November 10, 2026 about code-level storefront work. It is a scope reference, not a ranking, and shows only statements providers made for themselves. Plan prices change; reconfirm before use.

Supplier model	Published model and price (as displayed)	Statement on code or theme work	Left unstated, so ask on the sheet
Tapflare (publisher; direct provider)	**Publisher's own description: flat monthly subscription; daily design and development hours set by the plan; managed by a dedicated project manager.** Price: see the live pricing page (not reproduced here because it was not independently verified for this article).	This scope is the publisher's own description and was not independently verified here; obtain the scope in writing, including whether theme files, apps or both are covered. No app development should be assumed.	Theme-version update testing, repair allowance, deployment owner, turnaround for the specific request.

Supplier model	Published model and price (as displayed)	Statement on code or theme work	Left unstated, so ask on the sheet
Penji	Essentials $995 per month, Dedicated Team $4,500 per month (monthly checkout)	Essentials does not currently include web design (penji.co); full front-end development is on the Dedicated Team plan (penji.co); backend development is outside the scope of most plans (penji.co).	Shopify theme files, theme updates, repair.
ManyPixels	Flat monthly pricing with unlimited requests and revisions (manypixels.co)	Scope page lists coding (HTML/CSS/JS) among work it does not do (manypixels.co).	Hand-off format to a developer.
Flocksy	Daily-hours plans from 2 to 10 hours (flocksy.com)	States it does not write HTML, CSS, JavaScript or backend code (flocksy.com).	Whether any Shopify build is available elsewhere.
Superside	Subscriptions start at a $15,000 monthly minimum on an annual term (superside.com), and the same page lists a $1,000 monthly software fee on both plans and a Dedicated tier from $30,000 a month, so reconfirm the total before comparing	Web page names landing page design with Webflow development as its standard model (superside.com).	Shopify theme scope.
Design Pickle	Flat-rate, not hourly, no retainers (designpickle.com); quarterly or annual billing (designpickle.com)	Plans are scoped to what the team needs (designpickle.com); no Shopify code statement found.	Everything specific to theme files.
Kimp	Three month-to-month plans with no contracts (kimp.io)	Pricing page says website and app development turn designs into working products (kimp.io); no platform named.	Whether Shopify Liquid is in scope.
Uncover Commerce (Shopify-focused)	£2,995 a month, no contract, 30 days' notice (uncovercommerce.com)	Lists new theme sections and components (uncovercommerce.com); excludes third-party app licences or platform fees (uncovercommerce.com).	Theme-version updates.
Your Shop Dev (Shopify-focused)	Starts at $2499 per month (yourshopdev.com); confirm the current price	Larger requests are scoped into deliverables and milestones (yourshopdev.com).	Maintenance, updates, exclusions.

Three observations follow from *Table 1*:

- **Scope differs more than price.** The same request can be in scope, a separate project or design only, depending on the page read.
- **Task definitions matter.** One Shopify-focused provider defines a task as anything it can complete in about a day (uncovercommerce.com); definitions like this decide whether an update rehearsal fits inside a subscription or is quoted as a project.
- **Update coverage is unstated.** None of the pages states theme-version update coverage, so that column must come from the supplier in writing.

Larger app or integration work needs an appropriate specialist, and strategy, SEO and copywriting are separate services that none of these models covers by default.

Hourly, flat and effort-based quotes

The query "hire shopify developer hourly rate vs flat rate" is a contract-structure question, and public procurement rules define the structures neutrally. The US Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) states that time-and-materials and labor-hour contracts are not fixed-price contracts (acquisition.gov). Firm fixed price gives the contractor the maximum incentive to control costs (acquisition.gov) and suits work with reasonably definite specifications (acquisition.gov). A time-and-materials contract provides no positive profit incentive for cost control or labor efficiency (acquisition.gov), so the buyer supplies the control through a ceiling price that the contractor exceeds at its own risk (acquisition.gov). The FAR also notes that contractor risk usually decreases as a requirement is repeatedly acquired (acquisition.gov).

For theme work this suggests a practical rule: a well-specified first build is a candidate for a fixed quote, whereas an unknown update repair is better handled as a capped, separately quoted line. A subscription resembles a level-of-effort arrangement, where payment is based on effort expended rather than on results achieved (acquisition.gov). That is not a criticism; it means the accepted request scope, not the monthly fee, defines the deliverable. These are government contracting definitions used as neutral vocabulary, not Shopify rules.

The Update Rehearsal and Repair Responsibility

What Shopify documents about updates

The baseline is set out in the Executive Summary: editor customizations transfer, conflicting code edits need manual reapplication, and a copy of customized code should be saved first. One further limit matters for repair: Shopify Support does not troubleshoot themes that contain significant code changes (help.shopify.com). Apps add a second dimension. Some apps inject code directly into theme code (help.shopify.com), whereas apps built with the theme app extension framework do not edit theme code (shopify.dev). A practitioner source notes that code edits are the only thing genuinely at risk on Online Store 2.0 themes (fuelthemes.net), and Shopify's Growth Services team says editing vendor sections directly creates conflicts during every update (growth-services.shopify.com). The sheet should therefore ask, per row, whether the implementation edits a vendor file, adds a new file, or uses an app block.

Steps 6 and 7: the draft-theme test and the next-version rehearsal

The rehearsal has distinct phases, and the quote should state who performs each.

- **Duplicate test (before acceptance).** Build and review on a duplicate. Visitor preview links for unpublished themes expire 2 days after creation (help.shopify.com), so record the draft URL and plan around the expiry.
- **Update rehearsal (at the next release).** When a new theme version exists, add it to draft themes, reapply or compare the custom changes, and test the actual paths. As a dated version example, the free Dawn theme listing showed version 16.1.1 dated November 02, 2026 (themes.shopify.com).

- **Repair.** If code did not transfer, the named owner reapplies it on the draft copy and a confirmation test follows. The glossary of the International Software Testing Qualifications Board (ISTQB) defines confirmation testing as testing after fixing a defect to confirm that the failure does not reoccur (glossary.istqb.org).
- **Rollback.** Keep the prior theme available. Shopify's growth team advises always duplicating the live theme (growth-services.shopify.com), and one practitioner source recommends keeping the old duplicate for at least 7 days as a rollback path (fuelthemes.net).

Developers who use version control can make the rehearsal reproducible. Shopify's GitHub integration commits changes made in the admin back to the connected branch (shopify.dev) but supports only the default theme folder structure (shopify.dev), and the Horizon theme README describes adding an upstream remote so a derived theme can pull later changes (github.com). The Pro Git book describes a topic branch as a short-lived branch for a single feature (git-scm.com) and notes that changing the same part of the same file differently in two branches creates a conflict (git-scm.com), which is the situation a theme update creates.

Acceptance evidence

Acceptance criteria are the criteria a work product must satisfy to be accepted by stakeholders (glossary.istqb.org). In FAR vocabulary, acceptance is approval of specific services as partial or complete performance (acquisition.gov), and conditional acceptance covers non-conforming work the contractor must correct by a specified date (acquisition.gov). Both convert directly into the repair clause. A test case sets preconditions, inputs, actions and expected results (glossary.istqb.org), regression testing detects defects introduced in unchanged areas (glossary.istqb.org), and the change record should hold tested paths and results as a chronological record of test execution (glossary.istqb.org). The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) defines configuration control as controlling modifications to hardware, firmware, software and documentation (csrc.nist.gov), a useful label for the implementation log that Shopify's Growth Services recommends (growth-services.shopify.com).

Specific, checkable criteria for a storefront section can come from platform standards:

- **Performance (field first).** Good Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) is 2.5 seconds or less (web.dev); good Interaction to Next Paint (INP) is 200 milliseconds or less (web.dev); good Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) is 0.1 or less (web.dev). A page passes when it meets the targets at the 75th percentile (web.dev), and lab data is not a substitute for field measurement (web.dev). Require a before-and-after record, not a promised uplift.
- **Accessibility.** Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 requires text alternatives for non-text content (w3.org), a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text at Level AA (w3.org), and keyboard operability (w3.org). Pointer targets of at least 24 by 24 CSS pixels apply under criterion 2.5.8 (w3.org). The W3C Web Accessibility Initiative offers Easy Checks for a rough first review (w3.org).
- **Images.** Lazy loading defers an image until it nears the viewport (developer.mozilla.org), and srcset and sizes give the browser hints for choosing among sources (developer.mozilla.org).

The Quote Sheet: Blank Template

Table 2 is the fillable procurement sheet. Copy it to a spreadsheet, send the identical file to every supplier, and require every cell to be completed or marked "not included". One row of the live sheet is one observable behavior. Blank cells are scored as unresolved obligations, not as zero.

Column	Entry (blank)	What a complete answer looks like
1. Request (one observable behavior)	_____	Where, what the shopper sees, which template.
2. Present implementation	_____	Theme name and version; source (Theme Store or designer); existing apps and custom files touched.
3. Proposed layer	_____	Existing setting / app block / new section / edit to vendor file / app logic / platform-controlled.
4. Theme and app dependencies	_____	App name, plan, who bills; theme sections that must support app blocks.
5. Merchant-editable fields	_____	Each text, image, link or toggle, and the staff role that can edit it.
6. Needs a developer afterwards	_____	Structural changes the merchant cannot make in the editor.
7. Affected templates	_____	Template and layout files, JSON templates, snippets, assets.
8. Initial quote	_____	Amount, currency, tax treatment, fixed or capped, expiry date.
9. Recurring fees	_____	Plan fee, verified billing period and minimum term, accepted request scope (never a per-output division).
10. Incremental app or licence fees	_____	Confirmed, with source page and date; "none" is a valid entry.
11. Update testing and repair	_____	Included / separately quoted (amount) / not included; repair allowance in hours or amount; response time.
12. Testing evidence	_____	Draft URL, theme version before and after, changed files and settings, tested paths, result, repair quotation.
13. Exclusions	_____	Anything outside scope, including checkout, app files, copy, SEO strategy.
14. Owner	_____	Named person for deployment, repair, rollback and sign-off.
15. Outcome allowed	_____	"No build needed" / "Outside subscription scope" / quote.

Column 12 doubles as the update rehearsal record, with these fields:

- **Theme name and version.** Before and after the update.
- **Changed files and settings.** What the customization touched.
- **Draft URL.** The duplicate or "Updated copy of" draft that was tested.
- **Actual tested paths.** The pages and actions exercised, such as product page to cart.

- **Result.** Pass, fail or partial, per path.
- **Repair quotation.** Amount or hours, owner, and date.

The record is evidence about one version pair only; it does not promise universal compatibility with every later version or app combination.

Worked Example (Hypothetical Example)

This worked example is entirely hypothetical and uses symbols, not prices, so no invented market rate is implied. The request: show a reassurance strip with a heading, three icon-plus-text items and a link to the returns page on the product template. The store runs a free Theme Store theme and one page-builder app.

Table 3 shows how the same row is completed by three respondents.

Field	Path 0: existing settings demo	Supplier A: project developer	Supplier B: recurring provider
Proposed layer	App block or existing section in the editor, demonstrated in a duplicate	New custom section added to the product JSON template	Same new section, accepted as a request in the queue
Merchant-editable fields	Heading, three items, link (all in the editor)	Heading, three image pickers, three rich-text fields, link; structural changes need a developer	Same fields, confirmed in writing
Affected templates	Product template only	New section file plus product JSON template	Same
App dependency	Page-builder app (incremental fee F_app, only if the plan must change)	None	None
Initial quote	0 (no build needed)	Q_A (fixed)	Included in accepted scope, or Q_B
Recurring fee	None	None	M_B per month for a verified term of T months, only if the plan is new
Update rehearsal and repair	Owner: buyer; app vendor maintains the block	Quoted line R_A, or "not included" (unknown)	Included / allowance of H_B hours / "outside scope"
Testing evidence	Duplicate URL, tested paths	Duplicate URL, theme versions before and after, tested paths	Same record
Exclusions	Checkout, app logic	Checkout, copywriting, SEO	Larger app work, strategy

Over a 12-month horizon the costs are computed with the formula above:

- **Path 0.** F_app (zero if no plan change) plus the buyer's management cost M_buyer.
- **Supplier A.** Q_A plus any incremental fee plus R_A (or "unknown") plus M_buyer.

- **Supplier B.** M_B multiplied by T only if the plan is newly purchased for this scope, plus any separately quoted Q_B and repair, plus M_buyer. If the plan is already paid and the request fits the accepted scope, the incremental plan fee is zero and the buyer notes capacity use instead.

The monthly fee is never divided by assumed outputs.

In this example the comparison turns on column 11. If Supplier A leaves the repair line unquoted, the 12-month total reads "Q_A + M_buyer + unknown", which is a different statement from a lower total. If Supplier B's plan excludes theme-version updates, the buyer must quote that separately or assign it to another party. If the Path 0 demonstration succeeds, the other two paths end at "no build needed" without a quote. Whether the next theme version transfers the custom section's code is not knowable in advance; the rehearsal exists to find out on a draft theme.

Data Analysis and Evidence

This section collects the quantified platform facts the sheet relies on, with dates.

Theme and support facts (November 2026). The Dawn theme listing showed version 16.1.1 dated November 02, 2026 (themes.shopify.com), and its repository README states that the stable version is the one available in the Theme Store (github.com). A paid theme example displayed $500 USD (themes.shopify.com). Free design support from Shopify is capped at 60 minutes in 15-minute increments for eligible plans (help.shopify.com).

Platform limits that bound a custom section. Shopify documents up to 25 sections per template and 1250 blocks across all sections (help.shopify.com); the developer documentation states 25 sections per JSON template and up to 50 blocks per section (shopify.dev). These describe different limits and do not conflict, but a quote for a repeatable-block design should confirm both. Development themes created by the command line tool are temporary and hidden (shopify.dev), so they are not a long-term record. For checkout-related pages, the documented script-tag sunset for non-Plus stores was August 26, 2026 (shopify.dev), a reminder that checkout rows need dated platform evidence.

Performance and accessibility thresholds. The Core Web Vitals "good" thresholds (2.5 seconds, 200 milliseconds, 0.1) and the WCAG 2.2 values (4.5:1 contrast, 24 by 24 CSS pixel targets) can serve as acceptance values, with the caveat that field data should drive prioritization (web.dev).

Supplier pricing observations. Published prices in *Table 1* run from $995 per month to a $15,000 monthly minimum (before a separate $1,000 monthly software fee), plus £2,995 per month for a Shopify-focused subscription, in different currencies, billing terms and scopes, so they cannot be ranked on price. Scope statements, not price, separate the models. A support and maintenance plan from one Shopify-focused provider is listed from £600 per month excluding VAT, with bigger jobs quoted before they start at £120 an hour (uncovercommerce.com); this is one provider's own published price, not a benchmark. No evidence in the sources reviewed shows that a subscription lowers or raises the cost of customization, and no turnaround or savings claim is made here.

Demand context. The supplied estimates (not re-fetched; uncited) put "shopify theme customization" at 390 searches per month in the US, with July to September 2026 values of 320, 210 and 260. Estimates are modeled ranges and do not establish buyer intent or conversion.

Implications and Future Directions

For buyers. The sheet shifts the conversation from "what will this cost" to "what will we hold after delivery".

- **Record the version.** Purchase decisions should carry the theme version they were tested against, because Shopify's documented update behavior depends on whether code edits conflict.
- **Read refusals as information.** "Outside subscription scope" is an honest answer that lets the buyer send the repair to a different party.
- **Compare by scope and term.** A recurring plan is a level-of-effort arrangement, so compare plans by accepted scope and verified term.

For suppliers. Providers that publish clear exclusions make comparison easier. One theme designer's help center points complex update scenarios to partner Shopify Experts who offer theme update services (help.archetypethemes.co) and notes that apps or custom code must be reinstalled into the new theme files on a manual update (help.archetypethemes.co). A provider that states its update obligation publicly reduces clarifying exchanges.

Where this may change. Theme architecture, block models and checkout extensibility change on documented schedules, so re-run the sheet when a theme vendor publishes a new major version, when an app changes plans, or when a supplier's scope page changes. For a one-off job a project developer is usually the better fit than any subscription, and for app logic, integrations or checkout extensions an app specialist is the appropriate supplier.

Open questions. No public benchmark was found that measures how often customizations survive theme updates, so any claim of high compatibility is unverified. No source reviewed prices a theme-update repair, which is why the sheet leaves that line unknown until a supplier quotes it.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How much does Shopify theme customization cost? The sources reviewed support no single figure. The sheet's formula gives a total only when each supplier fills each line. One Shopify-focused practitioner article declines to publish flat prices because exact pricing depends on the specific work (theshopninjas.com).

What goes in a Shopify theme developer quote template? Use *Table 2*: observable request, layer, dependencies, merchant-editable fields, affected templates, initial price, recurring fee with period, update testing and repair inclusion, evidence, exclusions and a named owner.

Will a theme update break existing customizations? Not necessarily. Editor customizations are copied and non-conflicting code edits are included; conflicting edits must be copied over manually, as summarized above. The rehearsal on a draft theme shows which case applies to a given version pair.

What does theme maintenance cost? The sources reviewed contain no neutral price for theme-update repair. Record it as unknown unless a supplier quotes it, and compare maintenance plans only by stated inclusions and period.

Hourly rate or flat rate? Fixed quotes suit well-specified work, while hourly or effort-based arrangements need a ceiling and monitoring, as the FAR definitions above show. For the repair line, a capped, separately quoted amount is the usual compromise.

What to ask before hiring a Shopify developer?

- **Layer.** Which of settings, app block, new section or code edit is proposed, and why.
- **Editable fields.** Which fields stay editable by which staff role.
- **Templates.** Which template and layout files change.
- **Next update.** Who handles it, and what rehearsal evidence is produced.
- **Exclusions.** What is outside scope, with the Shopify documentation behind any checkout claim.

How is pricing per change handled? Price per row, not per click: a row with a different layer has a different update obligation, and Shopify's Growth Services team advises preferring extension points over edits (growth-services.shopify.com).

What is the update process for custom code? Add the update to draft themes, keep a copy of custom code, reapply what did not transfer, test the recorded paths, then publish, keeping the previous theme as rollback.

Conclusion

Theme customization cost is a bundle: an implementation, possible app fees, an update obligation and the buyer's own time. Shopify's documentation distinguishes editor changes, which transfer, from code edits, which transfer only when they do not conflict, and Shopify Support does not write custom code. A buyer who sends one identical sheet to a project developer and a recurring provider, asks for a demonstration in existing settings first, and requires a recorded rehearsal on a draft copy can compare proposals on what matters after launch. "No build needed" and "outside subscription scope" are valid results, and an unpriced maintenance line stays unknown. Re-check supplier pages and Shopify documentation before each purchase; the sheet is only as current as the dates written into it.

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. https://help.shopify.com/en/manual/online-store/themes/managing-themes/updating-themes
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