

Five Options To Leverage IR in Retail Execution

Option 1 – Packaged IR Solutions

Packaged IR platforms automate in-store execution with a turnkey approach. However, they confine integration, customisation, and innovation within closed ecosystems. The vendor's release cycles and development priorities bind organisations, making it challenging to adapt to specific enterprise needs or swiftly evolve as strategies change.

Option 2 – IR Integrated within SFA Providers

Some SFA platforms bundle IR as a built-in feature, offering convenience for existing users. However, these solutions typically offer generic and inflexible functionalities, driven by the SFA vendor's roadmap. This approach leaves little room for custom rules, AI experimentation, or scalable innovation, resulting in long-term rigidity as your needs grow more complex.

Option 3 – Image Recognition as a Service

IR-as-a-Service is a modular, API-native model that plugs into any tech stack—whether in-house or third-party—giving enterprises full control over how IR connects with CRM, product catalogues, or AI engines. Like Lego blocks, each component can evolve independently, enabling long-term flexibility, customisation, and future-proof integration of AI or LLM-based intelligence.

Option 4 – Hybrid Distributed IR Capture with Central Brain

This emerging architecture separates distributed image capture via fixed cameras, sales representatives, crowdsourcing, customers or other sources fully from a centralised intelligence with visual IR capabilities. This “brain” housed in data lakes or LLMs and operates independently using several inputs to coordinate actions and insights. It offers maximum flexibility and scalability for organisations looking to build adaptive, AI-powered systems—but demands careful orchestration, cross-team alignment, and a long-term vision to execute effectively.



Option 5 – Custom IR Built In-House

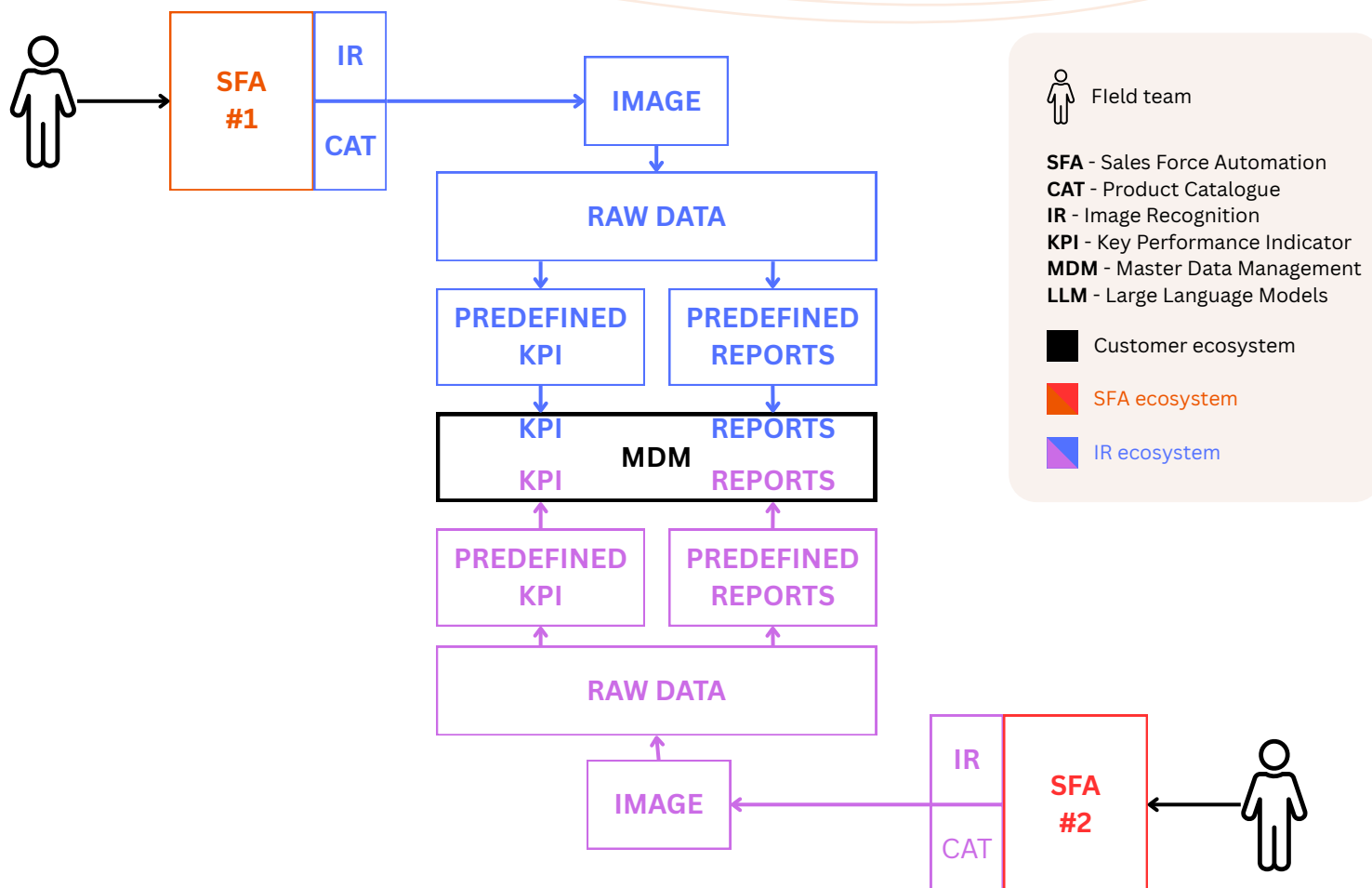
Building IR capabilities internally using cloud platforms offers complete control and tailoring to specific business needs, but comes with high development, maintenance, and resourcing costs. These projects often move slower, rely on internal teams and knowledge, and risk falling behind advances made by dedicated IR providers.



Option 1 – Packaged IR Solutions



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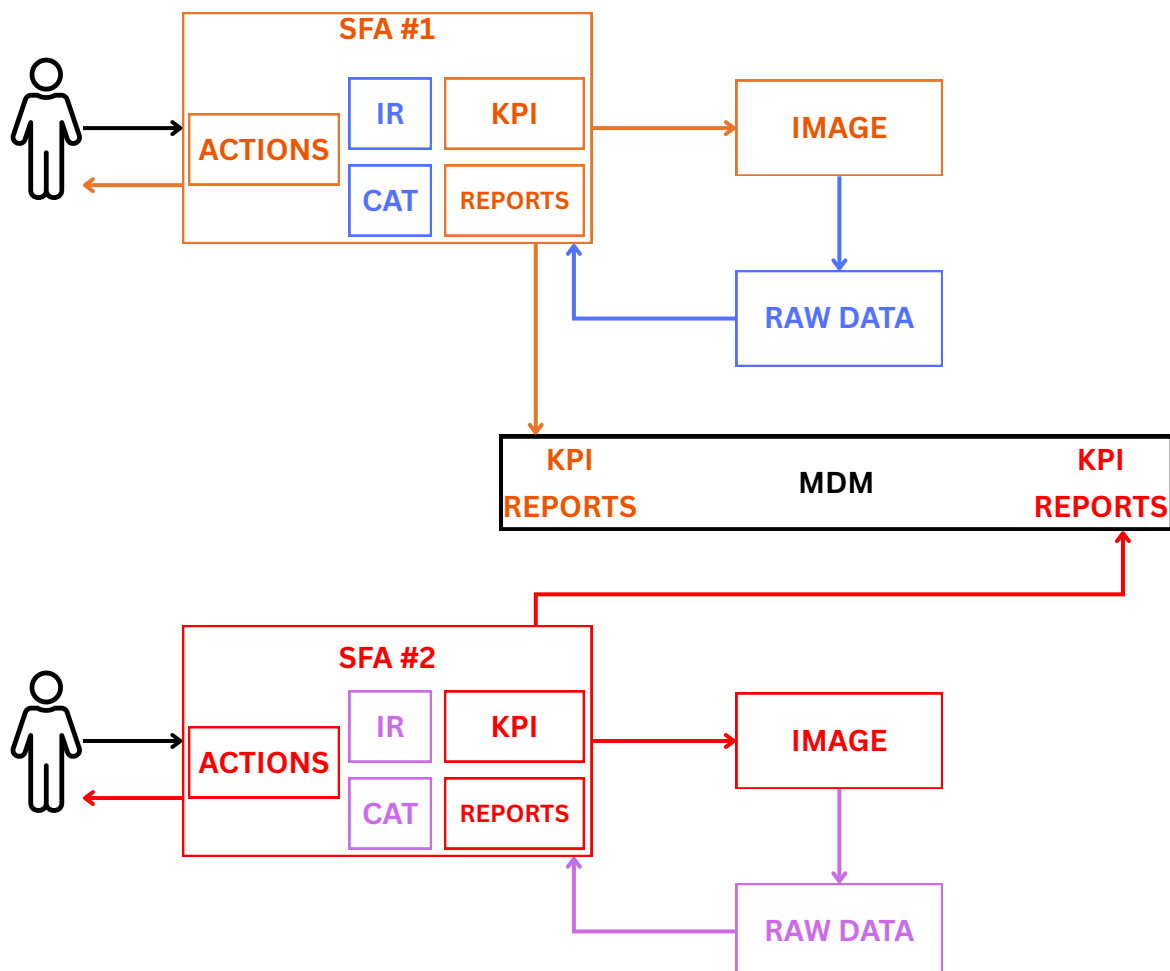
Pros 	Cons 
Quickest to deploy through a standardised implementation process.	Vendor lock-in makes a change to other solutions more complex and expensive.
Provides off-the-shelf functionality as of day 1, using the vendors' standard offering.	No access to raw data, modelling or logic – these stay within the vendors' walled garden.
Pre-defined KPIs and reporting	No control over the level of flexibility and innovation the vendor offers.
Proven solution with high degree of reliability	Level of customisation possible depends on the vendor.
	Product catalogue managed by the vendor with limited visibility for the customer



Option 2 – IR Integrated in SFA Tools



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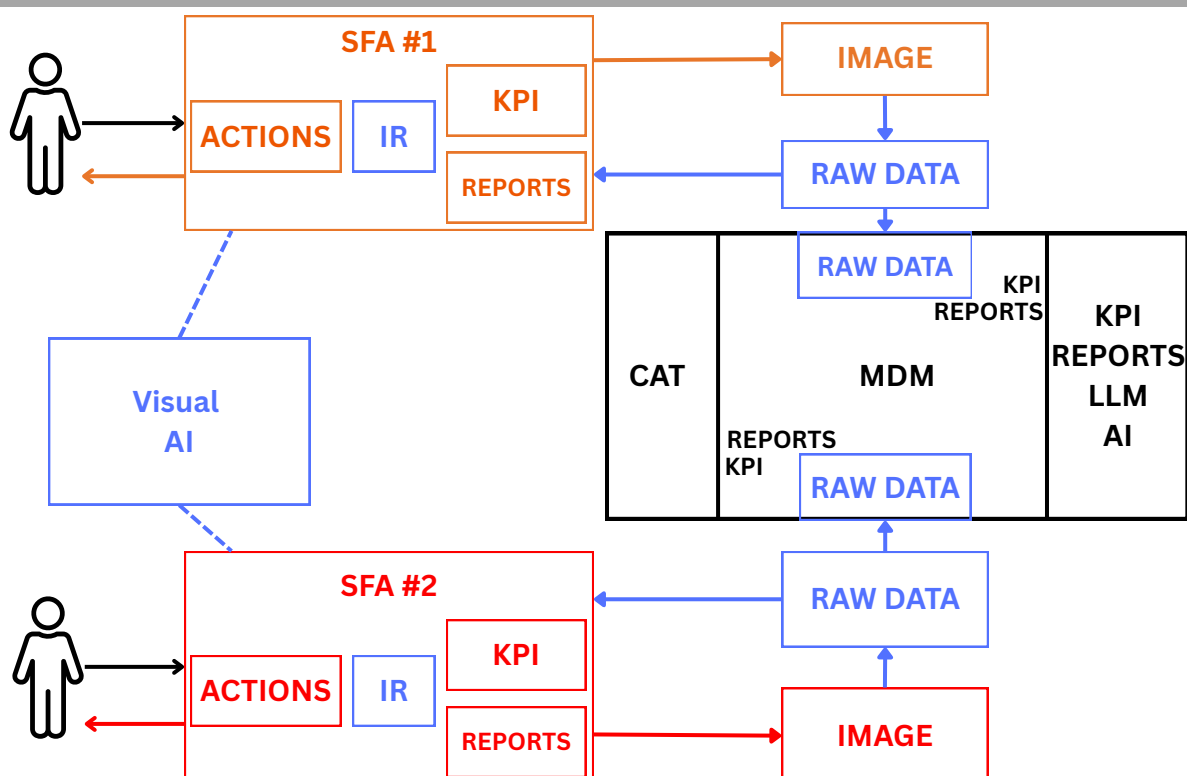
Pros 	Cons 
Native integration into field processes and workflows.	IR capabilities are defined by the SFA vendors' offering but are not core to their business.
"One-stop shop" – no need to integrate other platforms to go from IR to action.	No or restricted access to raw data, modelling or logic.
Simple onboarding and low change management effort for SFA users.	No control over the level of flexibility and innovation the vendor offers.
Integrated reporting available between SFA and IR data.	Level of customisation possible depends on the vendor.
	Product catalogue managed by the vendor with limited visibility for the customer.



Option 3 – Image Recognition as a Service



IR-as-a-Service is a modular, API-native model that plugs into any tech stack, whether in-house or third party, giving enterprises full control over how IR connects with any MDM (local/global), any SFA, product catalogues, or AI engines. Like Lego blocks, each component can evolve independently, enabling long-term flexibility, customisation, and future-proof integration of AI or LLM based intelligence.

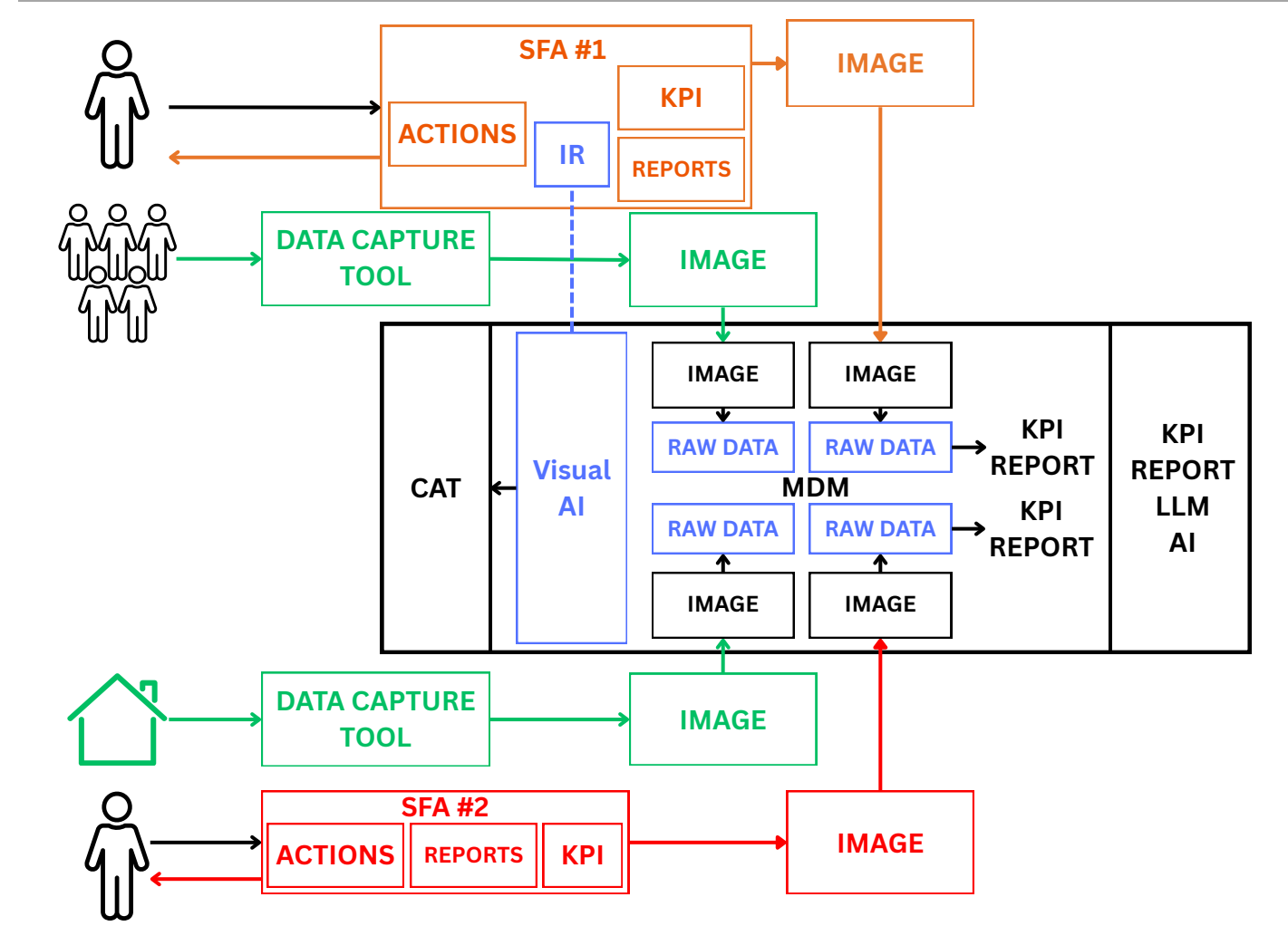
Pros 	Cons 
Modular and API-native approach allows for integration into any existing platform.	Requires a robust architecture and active orchestration by internal teams to operate.
Fast to deploy and integrate across different markets.	Needs internal customer expertise to configure, maintain and ensure integration into the customers' existing business processes.
Standardised IR output data available to integrate into existing platforms.	Customer needs an existing SFA or other capture sources to provide images to the IR services.
Customisable KPIs, reports, and workflows.	
IR product catalogue owned by the customer ,with full control over onboarding and data management.	
IR product catalogue with API connectivity to client's existing product catalogues.	



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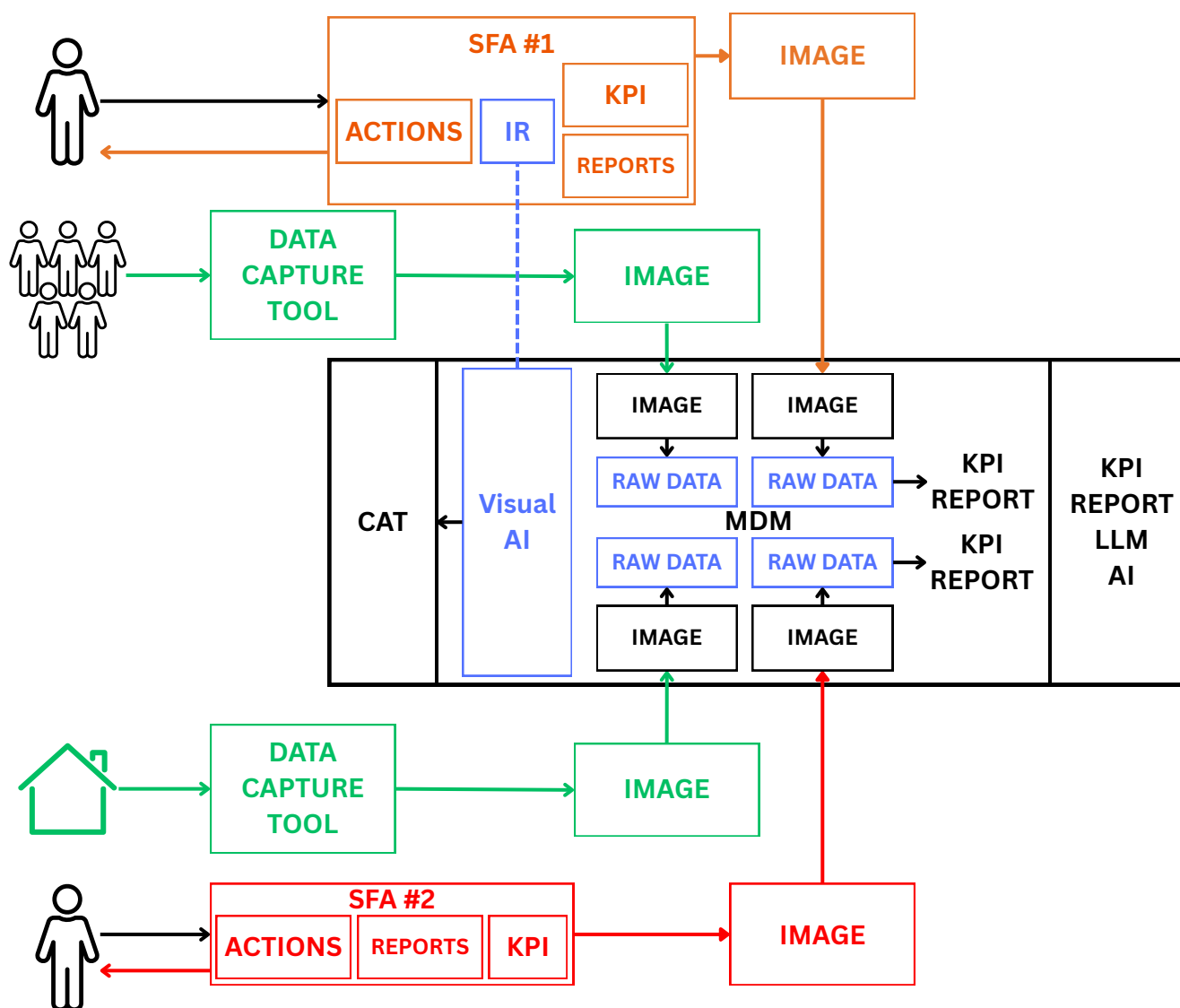
Pros 	Cons 
Supports any image input (dedicated field teams, crowdsourced, retailer, CCTV...)	Needs a clear technical architecture design and strategic vision to implement.
Decouples capture from processing providing a higher degree of flexibility.	Requires complex orchestration with strong technical customer team to manage.
Ideal for large-scale AI and LLM integration.	Demands maturity in internal data, and operations and data science teams to unlock value.
Catalogue managed centrally by client – enables global reuse and efficient integration with MDM/data lakes.	Additional change management is required.



Option 5 – Custom IR Built In-House

Building IR capabilities internally using cloud platforms offers complete control and tailoring to specific business needs, but comes with high development, maintenance, and resourcing costs. These projects often move slower, rely on internal teams and knowledge, and risk falling behind advances made by dedicated IR providers.

Pros 	Cons 
Total control over data and roadmap.	High cost of development and maintenance.
IP remains in-house.	Innovation cycle fully dependent on internal capabilities and progress.
Deep customisation possible.	Requires customisation to deploy in each market.
Catalogue fully owned and managed by client – tightly integrated with internal data systems.	Additional change management is required.



Comparison Table

Criteria	Packaged IR	SFA-Integrated	Visual AI	Hybrid IR Capture	In-House Build
Time to Deploy	Fast	Medium	Fast	Medium	Slow
Integration Flexibility	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Customisation	Low	Low	High	High	High
Innovation Ownership	Vendor	Vendor	Joint	Joint	Internal
Cost of Ownership	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Scalability	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Control Over Data	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Suitable for Trials	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Image Capture Sources	Fixed (vendor app)	Field teams only	Any (API-compatible)	Any (crowd, CCTV, etc.)	Internal only
Support for AI/LLM Evolution	Low	Low	High	High	Medium
Catalogue Management	Vendor-managed (split, slow)	Vendor-managed (split, slow)	Client-managed (API-native)	Client-managed (centralised)	Client-managed (in-house)