Google on building a better holiday omnichannel strategy

NEW YORK — Today's customers alternate between shopping online and offline, searching for the products and services they need at the exact moment they need them, said Zack Bailey, head of omnichannel solutions at Google. Bailey opened up a keynote session at SMX East on Thursday alongside his colleague Irem Erkaya, global product lead at Google.

Three-quarters (76%) of holiday shoppers will search on three or more channels (think retailer websites, social, and marketplaces) when making purchase decisions, according to Google. To drive toward success for the holidays, Bailey and Erkaya offered up several tips and best practices for advertisers managing omnichannel campaigns this season.

Google's presentation touched on three areas that advertisers will want to keep in mind for holiday campaign activations. These include: expanded inventory for Showcase Shopping ads, tips for maximizing online and offline ROI across all touchpoints of the customer journey, and a discussion on driving holiday shoppers to physical storefronts.

Image search as a shopping channel. Google introduced Shopping ads to Image search a couple of years ago. Now, Showcase Shopping Ads are rolling out in Google Images. Bailey said that U.S. shoppers are increasingly using Google Images to discover new brands and products, with 50% of shoppers saying images of products inspired them to make a purchase.

"That's why we've expanded Showcase Shopping ads [SSA] to Google Images," Bailey said. "Based on insights gleaned about how consumers use the Images page to research and shop, expanding SSA to Google Images was a natural next step."

Showcase Shopping Ads show a group of related products when shoppers search for broader terms, like “holiday makeup.” The sponsored images highlight products that, when moused over, reveal brand, price and other details.

Until now, Showcase Shopping ads have only been available for apparel and furniture-related searches. It is expanding to new categories like beauty and electronics.

Shopping ads coming to YouTube. To tap into shopping intent for video audiences, Bailey said Google will expand Shopping ads to the YouTube home feed and YouTube search results. The initial announcement was made earlier this month.

“This offers another great way to show up where shoppers already are –exploring relevant content in news feeds,” Bailey explained.

Maximizing online and offline ROI

Local inventory ads to drive online-offline conversions. Irem Erkaya explained that Local Inventory Ads can help give customers visibility into the products currently in-stock both online and at a nearby physical store. Plus, a new expanded store pickup feature will give customers more options to retrieve their purchased items from the local retailer.

Store visits in smart bidding. Google first launched Store Visits four years ago to help Advertisers measure full value of the customer’s lifecycle. In the past year, Erkaya said that Google has “nearly doubled the number of businesses that can see Store Visits reporting in Google Ads.” While many advertisers are familiar with Store Visits measurements, the feature can now be integrated into smart bidding to help take foot traffic and online conversion actions into account. Soon advertisers will be able to incorporate Store Visits in select

Shopping campaigns.

Driving shoppers to local stores

“While omnichannel is important to meet overall business goals, sometimes your objective is simple: get people into your stores,” Bailey said. When looking at store-specific strategies that only drive customers to physical locations, Google’s research found that 78% of holiday shoppers turn to online search before going in-store.

Local actions optimization. For brands, Local campaigns (introduced last year) offer the ability to reach customers across Search, Maps, Display, and YouTube through a streamlined, cross-channel campaign. Soon, Bailey explained, advertisers will be able to optimize towards a wider range of conversion types – such as location directions or calls. Local actions optimization is currently in beta testing.

Direction planning ads. Local businesses can now feature their store’s location to help users get directions and plan their route. “In just a few taps, [customers] can add your location as a convenient stop on a Christmas shopping route. You can also add logos that are easily recognizable and legible in a small format to help shoppers spot your brand,” Bailey explained.

For example, businesses can include creative elements like color, symbols, and logos to create a more identifiable visual for customers.

Location groups. For local businesses that offer different inventory at different locations – or for franchises with business goals that vary by location – Bailey suggests using Location groups to promote a specific subset location.

As an example, Bailey said, “This makes it easier for auto dealership groups to focus advertising on lower-performing

dealerships that need to move out 2019 inventory. Retailers featuring doorbusters in select cities might want to drive extra foot traffic to specific locations."

Richer creative reporting. Local campaigns can help businesses reach shoppers across a range of Google properties (like Search, YouTube and Google Maps), but compelling ad creative can be the key factor in standing out against the competition.

Bailey recommended building Local campaigns with a wide array of creative assets (headlines, descriptions, CTAs) to enable Google Ads to assemble the best-performing combinations. To help advertisers fine-tune creative assets, Google has added a performance column to the asset report which ranks creative assets against other assets of the same type.

Bailey explained that the column can show which text, images, and videos perform best, and which ones are worth swapping out. This new level of visibility, he added, can help marketers find insights that may inform other marketing campaigns and channels for the holidays.

More about SMX

About The Author

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