Google Smart Shopping: How it’s different from standard Shopping campaigns [Video]

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“[It’s] a totally fascinating product, but has some drawbacks as well,” Mike Ryan, product management lead at Smarter Ecommerce, said of Google’s Smart Shopping campaigns, which use automated ad placement and bidding to optimize for a given conversion or return on ad spend (ROAS) goal.

During our Google Shopping session of Live with Search Engine Land, Ryan shared some of the pros and cons of the newer Smart Shopping campaign type compared to Google’s standard Shopping campaigns.

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“You can get some kind of full-funnel coverage with a single campaign,” Ryan pointed out as one of the strengths of Smart Shopping, adding that this campaign type also comes with unique features, like dynamic prospecting.

Smart Shopping campaigns use machine learning to automate bidding and serve product listing ads across the Google Search Network, Display Network, YouTube, and Gmail, making it a good option for newer advertisers or those that don’t have the resources to manage standard Shopping campaigns.

“Similar to what we’re seeing with the free Shopping clicks . . . it looks like [Google’s] product strategy here is to drive adoption for Shopping, perhaps pick up late adopters [and] small and medium businesses where maybe Shopping is too complicated,” he said.

However, Smart Shopping advertisers have no control over how their budgets are allocated across channels. In contrast to standard Shopping campaigns, Smart Shopping campaigns also don’t provide audience or search term reporting data, making cost per action (CPA) or ROAS goal-setting based on type of user, type of ad or search intent impossible.

“I think that it performs well, and in most cases, it seems to deliver on its promises, but . . . due to the lack of sophistication there, I think we’re just going to run into problems where the question is, ‘Alright, I’ve hit a ceiling, what can I do now?’ or, ‘Traffic has fallen off, why?’” Ryan said, noting that none of the reporting or intervention possibilities advertisers would want in situations like these are available through Smart Shopping.

Why we care. Smart Shopping offers a more beginner-friendly entry point into digital advertising than Google’s standard Shopping campaigns. Knowing the advantages and limitations of each format can enable advertisers to make more informed choices, given their goals and the resources at their disposal.

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About The Author

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