TikTok Search Ads Adds Brand And Category Keyword Packs via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

TikTok is highlighting two impression share metrics for Search Ads and adding curated keyword packs. Here’s what each does.

The post TikTok Search Ads Adds Brand And Category Keyword Packs appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/tiktok-search-ads-brand-category-keyword-packs/595682/

How To Run A Full-Funnel Ecommerce Account Through BFCM Week via @sejournal, @tonyadam

Build demand before BFCM, give Google room to capture peak sales, and turn holiday visitors into December buyers with a phased ad strategy.

The post How To Run A Full-Funnel Ecommerce Account Through BFCM Week appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/how-to-run-a-full-funnel-ecommerce-account-through-bfcm-week/594047/

Google Search Ad Visits Out-Earned ChatGPT Ads In U.S. via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Data finds ChatGPT ad visits brought advertisers a fraction of paid search’s revenue per visit in U.S. traffic, and most saw no sales from them.

The post Google Search Ad Visits Out-Earned ChatGPT Ads In U.S. appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-search-chatgpt-ad-revenue-per-visit/595596/

ChatGPT Ads Turns On Automatic Ad Changes By Default via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Creative enhancements are now on by default in ChatGPT Ads. Here’s what they can change, how to opt out, and the tracking questions still open.

The post ChatGPT Ads Turns On Automatic Ad Changes By Default

appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/chatgpt-ads-turns-on-automatic-ad-changes-by-default/595117/

Google Says Changing tCPA & Budgets Won’t Reset Learning – 6 BFCM Takeaways via @sejournal, @siliconvallaeys

Six Google Ads details on Smart Bidding, seasonality adjustments, channel controls and budgeting that PPC teams should check before BFCM.

The post Google Says Changing tCPA & Budgets Won’t Reset Learning – 6 BFCM Takeaways appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-ads-product-manager-revealed-details-that-matter-before-black-friday/594102/

Google Ads Expands Customer Lifecycle Goals In Search And

Shopping via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

Google Ads is bringing High Value acquisition mode to Shopping campaigns and expanding customer retention modes across Search, Shopping, and Performance Max.

Google Ads Liaison Ginny Marvin shared the updates on LinkedIn. Google’s announcement confirms the features are rolling out in October, with retention modes becoming more widely available following beta testing.

The updates follow the dedicated Customer Lifecycle Optimization section spotted within conversion goals earlier in August 2026. That update brought acquisition, lapsed customer, and loyalty member settings into one section.

High Value Acquisition Comes To Shopping

Google is extending High Value mode from Search and Performance Max to Shopping campaigns. The setting lets advertisers bid higher for new customers who resemble their most valuable existing buyers.

Advertisers can prioritize high-value prospects, other new customers, and existing buyers differently. Google’s documentation specifies value-based bidding and requires at least one Purchase conversion goal.

Retailers will need to decide which customers justify a higher acquisition cost. A large first order could be one indicator, but repeat purchases and profitability might need a different

customer list defined.

For example, a shopper who places one large, heavily discounted order may generate less profit than someone making smaller, regular purchases. Using either group as the model gives Google different information about which new customers to prioritize.

Retention Modes Expand Across Campaign Types

Google is also rolling out three retention modes across Performance Max, Search, and Shopping campaigns:

- **Re-engagement:** Prioritizes lapsed customers while continuing to reach other shoppers.
- **Loyalty:** Helps advertisers reach loyalty program members with tailored messaging and member-only offers.
- **Retention-only:** Limits campaigns to the existing customer segments advertisers specify.

Advertisers define when a customer qualifies as lapsed based on their company's purchase cycle. They can use Customer Match lists to identify those customers, then assign additional conversion value so Smart Bidding prioritizes them.

Google's support page hasn't fully caught up with the rollout announcement. It still lists Re-engagement as available only in Performance Max and Loyalty in Performance Max and Shopping. Retention-only is missing from the overview.

For now, advertisers should check their account settings for availability as the rollout continues.

What This Means For Advertisers

For advertisers looking to test these updates, the setup begins in Google Ads' Customer Lifecycle Optimization section

under ‘Goals’. Customer lists tell Google which buyers to prioritize, while the campaign setting determines how to bid for them.

For re-engagement, you can build a list of past buyers who have gone longer than usual without purchasing. Upload that list as a Customer Match audience in Google Ads and identify it as lapsed customers in the lifecycle settings.

The timing should obviously reflect what those customers bought.

Someone who hasn’t ordered coffee in 90 days might be overdue for another purchase. Someone who bought a refrigerator 90 days ago probably isn’t shopping for a replacement. Retailers selling both would need more specific lists than everyone who hasn’t purchased in three months.

Once the mode becomes available in an eligible campaign, select ‘Re-engagement’ to prioritize lapsed buyers while continuing to reach other shoppers. Choose ‘Retention-only’ when the campaign budget is dedicated to the selected existing customer segments.

For High Value acquisition in Shopping, you should review which existing buyers populate the high-value customer list before enabling the setting. A list based on repeat purchases gives Google a different model than one based on large first orders.

When setting additional conversion value, use what the business can afford to pay for that customer. Then, you can compare campaign results with actual sales and margins. When you want to look at profitability, include discounts and the cost of advertising when assessing.

Customer History Plays A Larger Role In Bidding

A purchase tells Google what an order is worth. Customer history can help explain why a retailer might pay more to win it, whether from a promising first-time buyer or a previously frequent shopper who stopped ordering.

With this rollout, more Search and Shopping campaigns can use that history to influence which customers receive a higher bidding priority.

Featured image: fengdr2020 / Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-ads-expands-customer-lifecycle-goals-in-search-and-shopping/594458/

Your Google Ads Account Is Hitting Its Targets, So Why Isn’t The Business Growing?

Smart Bidding is optimized to achieve its targets, not necessarily to grow the business. That’s why an ad account can consistently hit its Target CPA or Target ROAS while revenue, profit, and overall business growth barely change.

Unfortunately, this is often the result of a disconnect between advertising metrics and business reality. The algorithm keeps optimizing toward the goal it was given, even when that goal is no longer the bottleneck to growth.

That disconnect may become even more important following

Google’s August 17 bidding update. Google has indicated that budget-constrained campaigns using tCPA and tROAS will now be pulled closer toward their stated targets rather than significantly outperforming them.

In practical terms, the number in the target field in account settings should no longer be viewed as a suggestion. It’s an instruction.

If that instruction is outdated, Smart Bidding may execute it more faithfully than ever.

Which raises an important question: *What causes an account to hit its goals while the business itself stops growing?*

7 Reasons The Google Ads Account Looks Healthy While Business Growth Stalls

1. The Target Was Never Tied To Margin

Very few targets in the ad platform get revisited as COGS, shipping rates, overhead, product mix, and customer behavior shift over time.

Most ROAS and CPA targets get set once and forgotten.

They come from historical performance, an industry benchmark, or a number that felt safe at the time. Very few get revisited as COGS, shipping rates, overhead, or product mix shift.

A 4.0x ROAS on a product line running a 20% margin produces a completely different financial reality than a 4.0x ROAS on a line running 60%. If your targets don’t reflect current unit economics, hitting them might mean breaking even or acquiring customers at a loss while the ad account reports a massive win.

See also: How To Calculate Your ROAS & Ways To Use It

2. The Easiest Conversions Come From Existing Customers

Smart Bidding tends to favor the audiences and queries most likely to help it achieve its target. Returning customers and people already familiar with your brand convert faster and cheaper than cold prospects, so bids naturally drift toward them.

An account can hit every target on paper simply by repeatedly converting people who were going to buy anyway. The metrics look strong, but the actual customer base never expands.

See also: The Conversion Setup Errors That Break Smart Bidding

3. Brand Terms Are Claiming Credit For Existing Demand

Accounts weighted heavily toward branded search or retargeting tend to post the best ROAS in the portfolio. In many businesses, a significant share of that revenue would have arrived anyway through organic search, direct traffic, or existing customer demand.

When those campaigns take full attribution credit, reported ROAS climbs while true incremental revenue stays flat. The account looks like it's growing when it's really just attributing performance to Google Ads.

See also: The PPC Clean-Up: How to Audit and Fix 'Value Inflation' in Google Ads

4. The Conversion Action Is A Proxy, Not A Sale

Lead generation and B2B accounts frequently optimize for form fills, PDF downloads, or booked calls. Those are reasonable proxy signals, but they aren't revenue.

- **Lead quality drift:** The algorithm learns to find more people who submit forms, not more people who buy. Over time, it gets exceptionally efficient at finding people who fill in forms, whether or not they ever buy.
- **The missing feedback loop:** If closed-won data never makes it back into Google Ads, the system has no way of knowing which leads mattered. It can only count submissions.

The ad account can produce a record month of conversions while the actual sales pipeline produces nothing new. In many accounts, the bidding system continues optimizing based on

historical conversion patterns long after the quality of those conversions has changed.

5. Efficiency Targets Are Capping Your Reach

Strict efficiency targets force the algorithm to sit out auctions that cost more, even when those auctions would have produced profitable, net-new volume.

Campaign Focus	Platform Metrics	What Happens to the Business
Efficiency-first	High ROAS / low CPA	Low impression share, restricted reach, capped volume
Growth-first	Moderate ROAS / higher CPA	Broader reach, more incremental revenue, higher net profit

A highly efficient campaign that has stopped growing is often doing precisely what its target allows.

The ceiling is in your account settings, not the market of new potential customers.

The highest-growth opportunities are often more expensive than the easiest conversions.

By insisting on an extremely low CPA or extremely high ROAS target, you're effectively telling the algorithm to ignore portions of the market that may still be profitable. The result is an account that becomes increasingly efficient while capturing less of the available demand in the larger market.

6. Every Conversion Is Treated As Equal

When every conversion is valued equally, Smart Bidding has no way to distinguish between your best customers and your worst customers.

Not every customer brings the same value to the table.

If bidding is built around immediate CPA, the algorithm will naturally favor price-sensitive, low-tier buyers who convert easily and churn just as fast.

For subscription models, SaaS, or any business where lifetime value matters, a wave of cheap acquisitions that cancel after month one will drag company growth down while the ad account

reports stellar efficiency.

7. The Leak Is Downstream Of The Ad Account

Sometimes the ad account is doing everything right, but the rest of the business breaks the chain. Leads come in and sit untouched for three days. Orders arrive for products that are out of stock. Onboarding stalls out.

Google Ads can only deliver demand to the front door. If revenue leaks out between the conversion event and the balance sheet, no bid strategy will show it, and no bid strategy can fix it.

Where To Look First

Diagnosing these issues means asking questions the platform doesn't prompt you to ask on its own:

- **Question the target:** When was the current tCPA or tROAS last set, and what was it based on? Can anyone in the room explain how it connects to current profit margins?
- **Question the customer mix:** What share of conversions and conversion value comes from new customers versus returning ones? Is that share stable, shrinking, or completely unmonitored?
- **Question the brand contribution:** How much reported revenue sits in branded campaigns? When non-brand spend rose in the past, did total business revenue rise with it, or did only the platform numbers move?
- **Question the conversion definition:** Is your primary conversion action a real sale, or something that merely might become a sale? How often do those conversions turn into revenue, and does the account ever find out?
- **Question the constraint:** Is impression share being lost to rank on campaigns that are hitting target? Is the

account limited by demand, or by what the target allows?
- **Question what happens after the click:** How fast are leads contacted? What's the close rate on paid search leads compared with other channels? Are there stock or capacity issues the account doesn't know about?

Hitting The Target Isn't The Goal — Growing The Business Is

Success in Google Ads answers one question: Did the ad account hit the target it was instructed to hit?

Business growth answers a different question entirely.

What really matters is whether that target still reflects what the business needs to grow. Until someone compares Google Ads targets and conversion goals against actual financial results, the bidding algorithm can appear highly successful while business growth remains flat.

Key Takeaways

- **Targets are instructions:** Smart Bidding optimizes toward the number it's given, and since August 17, budget-limited campaigns deliver much closer to that number instead of beating it.
- **Efficiency isn't growth:** A strong ROAS can easily coexist with zero incremental revenue when conversions skew toward returning customers or branded demand.
- **Conversions aren't revenue:** Proxy actions and equal-weighted goals can reward the account for volume the business doesn't actually need.
- **Not every problem lives in the ad account:** Fulfillment delays, slow sales follow-up, and capacity issues can completely sever the link between ad performance and actual growth.

More Resources:

Featured Image: Who is Danny/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/your-google-ads-account-is-hitting-its-targets-so-why-isnt-the-business-growing/592942/

Microsoft Advertising Rolls Out AI Max Globally via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

Microsoft Advertising has started rolling out AI Max for Search campaigns globally, expanding availability after several months of testing.

The rollout follows Microsoft's April 21 announcement of AI Max and an open pilot that began in May. The feature suite is now becoming generally available across Microsoft Advertising accounts.

Additionally, they've provided clearer guidance around how existing campaigns and Google Ads imports will be handled.

The broader rollout builds on the same three AI Max features Microsoft introduced earlier this spring.

AI Max Moves Beyond the Open Pilot

AI Max adds three automation features to existing Search campaigns:

- search term matching
- text customization
- final URL expansion

Search term matching can reach queries beyond an advertiser's keyword list using signals from keywords, ads, landing pages, and user intent. Microsoft says this can help advertisers appear for more complex conversational searches, including those within Bing and Copilot.

Text customization uses existing assets and website content to generate additional ad messaging. Final URL expansion can

select a different landing page when Microsoft determines it better matches the user’s intent.

Microsoft is encouraging advertisers to test the three features together, although each can be tested individually through optimization experiments.

One of the more noteworthy updates is that Microsoft is retaining ad group-level settings, giving advertisers more control over where AI Max features are applied.

Brand Controls and Reporting Available From Day One

Microsoft is emphasizing advertiser controls as AI Max moves beyond the pilot.

Brand inclusions and exclusions are available with the rollout, along with term exclusions for text asset generation. Advertisers can also use URL rules to limit where final URL expansion can send traffic.

Image credit: Microsoft, August 2026

Microsoft Ads Liaison Navah Hopkins said advertiser feedback played a role in making those controls available at launch:

> *We heard your feedback it’s a really critical tool to include.*

Some advertisers may also notice AI Max settings already enabled in existing campaigns.

Microsoft is moving Predictive matching and autogenerated text assets under AI Max. Campaigns already using either feature will have the corresponding AI Max setting enabled automatically.

The remaining AI Max features will not be activated unless an

advertiser opts into them.

What Happens With Google Ads Imports?

AI Max settings can also carry over when advertisers import campaigns from Google Ads.

If a Google Search campaign has supported AI Max features enabled, those settings will be enabled in the corresponding Microsoft Advertising campaign after import.

However, there is an exception for campaigns that originated as Dynamic Search Ads (DSA).

If an imported Google AI Max campaign was previously upgraded from DSA, Microsoft will convert it back into a DSA campaign while it continues building additional AI Max functionality.

The main reason behind this shift is that Microsoft has not announced an official sunset date for Dynamic Search Ads, where Google already has a firm date.

What Comes Next For AI Max

AI Max is moving into general availability at a time when both Microsoft and Google are asking advertisers to give Search campaigns more room to find queries beyond traditional keyword targeting.

Microsoft is starting its broader rollout with many of those controls already in place, rather than adding them later in response to advertiser concerns.

Now that AI Max is reaching accounts globally, the next test is whether advertisers see enough incremental value from that additional automation to keep it enabled.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/microsoft-advertising-rolls-out-ai-max-globally/586459/

Microsoft Advertising Adds AI Visibility Insights, PMax Testing, And Creative Preview Updates via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

Microsoft Advertising introduced its first monthly product newsletter on LinkedIn this week. It brings together several features announced over the past few months while introducing new capabilities across AI reporting, Performance Max testing, and creative review.

Rather than focusing on entirely new products, the August update expands existing tools with additional reporting, experimentation, and workflow improvements.

Together, the updates provide a clearer picture of how Microsoft expects advertisers to measure AI visibility, evaluate Performance Max, and review creative before campaigns launch.

Read on to understand what this means for your Microsoft Ads campaigns.

Microsoft Clarity AI Visibility Now Includes Topic Insights

Microsoft is expanding its AI Visibility reporting in Clarity with Topic Insights.

The new reports group AI citations by subject, allowing advertisers to see which topics AI systems associate with their brand, how frequently those topics appear, and where they may have gaps in coverage.

The feature builds on the AI Visibility reporting Microsoft introduced earlier this year by adding another layer of analysis. Instead of reviewing individual citations, advertisers can identify the topics driving those citations and how AI systems understand their content.

The newsletter also defines several AI reporting metrics that advertisers will see inside the new reports, including:

- **Grounding queries:** The retrieval searches AI systems generate before producing an answer.
- **Citation share:** Measures how frequently a domain appears as a cited source.
- **Share of authority:** Shows how often one domain is cited compared with competing sources.

Microsoft also outlined how advertisers can apply those insights to paid search.

They recommend comparing grounding queries with existing search terms, identifying opportunities for new keywords and negative keywords, and adjusting landing pages or ad creative based on competitive AI citation data.

Those recommendations suggest Microsoft views AI visibility reporting as useful beyond organic search by encouraging advertisers to use those insights when optimizing paid

campaigns.

While Topic Insights focuses on understanding AI visibility, Microsoft's next set of updates centers on measuring the impact of AI-powered campaign automation.

Expanding Performance Max Experimentation

Performance Max has become one of Microsoft's primary AI-powered campaign types, but measuring its incremental impact remains one of the biggest questions for advertisers.

The August newsletter highlights two recently released experiment types designed to help answer that question.

- **Uplift experiments:** Measure the impact of adding Performance Max alongside existing campaigns.
- **Upgrade experiments:** Compare existing Search or Shopping campaigns against Performance Max after migration.

Together, the two experiment types give advertisers a structured way to evaluate whether Performance Max improves results before making broader campaign changes. The approach also aligns with Microsoft's recent emphasis on experimentation and measurement across its AI-powered products. Microsoft continues to cite an average 8% increase in incremental conversions from Performance Max campaigns.

Microsoft's newsletter also included practical guidance for setting up those test. Their recommendation to advertisers:

- Have at least 30 conversions during the previous 30 days before running experiments.
- Keep bidding targets, product groups, and campaign settings consistent between test and control groups.
- Allow 4-12 weeks before evaluating results, depending on conversion volume and conversion lag times.

While these experiments focus on measuring campaign performance, Microsoft’s next update gives advertisers more visibility into how Performance Max creative will appear before launch.

Ad Preview Hub Adds Performance Max Support

Ad Preview Hub previously allowed advertisers to preview Audience ads before launch. The August update extends that functionality to Performance Max while adding Bing Search results page previews.

The expansion could simplify campaign approvals for agencies and in-house teams that rely on creative, legal, or brand reviews before launch.

Teams can generate shareable preview links showing how ads may appear before campaigns go live rather than relying on screenshots captured after ads begin serving. The addition of Bing SERP previews also gives reviewers visibility into Search placements alongside Audience inventory.

Because Performance Max automatically assembles and serves ads across multiple placements, previewing creative before launch can help advertisers identify formatting issues, messaging inconsistencies, or stakeholder concerns before campaigns begin serving.

Taken together with Topic Insights and the new Performance Max experiments, the Ad Preview Hub update reinforces Microsoft’s recent focus on expanding the tools that support AI-powered campaigns, not just the campaign types themselves.

What These Updates Suggest About

Microsoft’s Priorities

Looking at these updates together, they point to a consistent pattern across Microsoft’s recent product releases. Rather than introducing entirely new campaign types, Microsoft continues adding reporting, experimentation, and review capabilities around products advertisers are already using.

Across the August updates, Microsoft focuses on helping advertisers answer three necessary questions:

- How visible is my content in AI experiences?
- Is Performance Max generating incremental business results?
- What will my ads look like before they go live?

Each update pairs AI-powered automation with additional reporting, testing, or review capabilities. That gives advertisers more information before making campaign changes instead of relying solely on automated recommendations. During Microsoft Advertising Activate earlier this year, Ads Liaison Navah Hopkins described the company’s approach as “building with you, not just for you.”

Assuming that direction continues, future Microsoft Advertising releases may focus less on introducing entirely new AI products and more on expanding the measurement, experimentation, and workflow tools surrounding them. Those supporting capabilities may have as much day-to-day impact as brand new product releases.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/microsoft-advertising-adds-ai-visibility-insights-pmax-testing-and-creative-preview-updates/584760/

Google Ads Bidding Strategies: Where To Spend Your Time In 2026 via @sejournal, @LisaRocksSEM

Lead-gen and ecommerce managers: two Google Ads bidding changes landed this summer. Here’s what shifts, what doesn’t, and which campaigns to audit first.

The post Google Ads Bidding Strategies: Where To Spend Your Time In 2026 appeared first on Search Engine Journal.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-ads-bidding-strategies-where-to-spend-your-time-in-2026/581479/