WeAdU · Field Guide

Google Ads Best Practices for **Multi-Brand** Resellers

2015 Edition

The year GTINs became compulsory for the big brands, mobile overtook desktop, and automated bidding and customer lists reached Shopping – what a multi-brand reseller should have done.

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1. GTINs for designated brands: the reseller's **supplier** problem

Google's 2015 update to the Shopping feed specification, published on June 8, 2015, tightened the rules on the *id* attribute and GTINs and set September 15, 2015 as the enforcement date. From that day, in Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, every new product from a brand on Google's list of designated brands – about 50 of them, split between consumer-electronics and apparel or footwear brands – needed a valid *gtin* and *brand*, or was disapproved. Google's argument was commercial as much as technical: "early experiments indicate that offers matched to the catalog receive up to 40% more user clicks than those that do not." For a reseller, the list read like a supplier audit: which of your brands are on it, and which of those suppliers can give you GTINs by September?

- Go brand by brand through the designated list, and ask each supplier for GTINs in the price list itself, not on request per product; a supplier who cannot provide them is a brand whose new products will not show from September 15.
- Do not invent or reuse GTINs to pass the check: an invalid GTIN was rejected, and a wrong one attached your offer to the wrong product's listing.
- Treat the catalogue match as a ranking factor, which is what Google's 40% figure says it was: a matched offer sits inside the product listing shoppers compare, an unmatched one sits alone.

2. Mobile becomes the first **screen**

On April 21, 2015, Google's mobile-friendly ranking update took effect worldwide for mobile search results; on May 5, 2015, Google said that "more Google searches take place on mobile devices than on computers in 10 countries including the US and Japan." On July 15 it introduced expandable Shopping ads on mobile and began giving local inventory ads priority for "near me" searches; in October it reported that shopping-related mobile searches had grown more than 120% year on year. For a reseller, the question of 2013 – which brands sell on a phone? – now had to be answered for the majority of traffic.

- Test every brand's landing pages with Google's mobile-friendly test before April 21, starting with the brand pages that Search campaigns point to; a page that failed lost organic and paid quality at once.
- Set the mobile bid adjustment per brand from measured mobile conversion, including cross-device conversions, which counted in the Conversions column from October 27, 2015.
- Submit *mobile_link* where the mobile page differs, and keep price and availability identical on both; automatic item updates read the page a shopper lands on.

3. Bidding automation reaches Shopping **campaigns**

On August 13, 2015, Google announced "a suite of bidding strategies for Shopping campaigns": Maximize clicks and Enhanced CPC for everyone, and "currently a beta, target ROAS is available to a handful of retailers." Bid-strategy status and target-over-time reports followed on December 8. For a reseller, the arrival of a return target in Shopping was the moment the brand-by-brand structure paid off: a return target is a margin decision, and margins differ by brand.

- Start with Enhanced CPC on the brand campaigns whose conversion data is dense enough, keep manual bids on thin brands, and ask for the Target ROAS beta with a return per brand tier already in mind.
- Set one return target per brand tier when the beta arrives, never one for the account – a thin-margin brand needs a higher return to break even than a thick-margin one at the same bid.
- Use Maximize clicks only for a launch or a clearance where volume matters more than return, and only in that brand's own campaign.

4. Customer Match: your customer file becomes an **audience**

On September 28, 2015, Google launched Customer Match: upload a list of customer email addresses and reach those people on Search, YouTube and Gmail, with similar audiences built from the list on YouTube and Gmail. Shopping campaigns were not included; a month later, on October 21, 2015, remarketing lists reached Shopping ads and local inventory ads, with launch examples citing conversion rates up by 285% and 78%. For a multi-brand reseller, a customer file is the one asset that spans every brand it sells.

- Build the store-level list first – every buyer, every brand – and apply it to every brand's Search and Shopping campaigns with a bid increase; a customer who bought one brand is your best prospect for the next.
- Add brand-level buyer lists only where the message differs: the buyers of a brand with a manufacturer promotion this month, or a brand with accessories to sell after the main purchase.
- Check each brand's distribution agreement before using its buyers in another brand's campaign; some manufacturers restrict how their customer data is used.

5. Manufacturer Center: the brand's own data enters the **listing**

On July 21, 2015, Google introduced Manufacturer Center, a tool through which brand owners submit authoritative product data – titles, descriptions, images, variants – for the products they make. "Product data submitted to Manufacturer Center influences how your brand is represented across Google." Google made no statement that manufacturer data overrides a retailer's feed, but the direction was clear: the product listing that shoppers compare would increasingly be the brand's version, and a reseller's offer would attach to it through the GTIN.

- Align your feed with the manufacturer's data rather than against it: the same model name, the same variant structure, the same key attributes, so that your offer matches the catalogue entry cleanly.
- Ask the brands you sell whether they use Manufacturer Center, and ask for the same images and attribute values they submit; a reseller who shows the brand's own imagery competes on price and service, not on presentation.

6. YouTube joins **Shopping**

On May 21, 2015, Google announced TrueView for shopping: product cards from the Merchant Center feed shown alongside in-stream video ads, with launch examples reporting three times the revenue per impression for one retailer. On November 16, both TrueView for shopping and Shopping ads on YouTube became available in AdWords. For a reseller, the video already existed – the manufacturer made it – and the feed already existed; what was new was the bridge between them.

- Use the manufacturer's product videos, with permission, and attach your own product cards: the brand supplies the story, the reseller supplies the price and the stock.
- Filter the product cards by brand for each video, so a brand's video never sells a competitor's model from your catalogue.
- Fund it with co-op money where the program allows video; keep the invoice, the creative and the landing page for the claim.

7. Promotions replace promotional text; ratings and **snippets** spread

On August 19, 2015, Google added automated free-shipping and price-drop extensions to Shopping ads, and announced that the ad-group promotional text line would be retired at the end of September 2015: from then on, an offer on the tile meant Merchant Promotions. Product ratings had reached the United Kingdom, France and Germany on March 26, 2015, with an average 5% higher click-through rate. On August 27, structured snippet extensions launched for text ads, with predefined headers that included "Brands" and "Product types". Dynamic Search Ads gained recommended categories on July 27.

- Move every brand's offers into Merchant Promotions before the end of September; a promotion typed into an ad group disappeared with the promotional text.
- Let the automated extensions work: a price drop on a brand's model displayed itself, provided the feed price actually dropped on time.
- Use the "Brands" structured snippet on the store's generic campaigns to list the brands you carry, and the "Product types" snippet on each brand campaign to list what you carry from that brand.

8. Shopping Insights and the Assortment Report: gaps by **brand**

On October 20 and 21, 2015, Google launched Shopping Insights, showing demand by city and device for thousands of products, and the Assortment Report in Merchant Center, which listed popular products missing from a merchant's feed together with benchmark prices. On November 9 and 16 it added a product-groups tab across campaigns, a mobile bid simulator and a "click share" metric for Shopping. For a reseller, the Assortment Report answered a question no account report could: which models of the brands you carry are people searching for that you do not stock?

- Read the Assortment Report per brand, and take the gaps to the supplier: the models shoppers search for and you cannot show are the models to add to the next order.
- Use the benchmark prices to decide where a brand belongs – pushed, held, or excluded – before bidding; a model priced far above the benchmark converts badly at any bid.
- Read click share per brand campaign as the Shopping equivalent of impression share: it says how much of the available clicks the brand's tiles actually won.

9. What was **new** in 2015 – and what each thing turned into

Nine dated changes from the year, in order, each with what it became:

- **February 4 – shipping dimensions in Merchant Center** for dimensional-weight rates. Shipping settings are now a listing requirement.
- **March 26 – product ratings in the UK, France and Germany.**
- **April 21 – the mobile-friendly ranking update.**
- **July 15 – expandable mobile Shopping ads, "near me" priority for local inventory, Purchases on Google test.**
- **July 28 – online inventory update feeds and a Google Sheets add-on.**
- **August 13 – bidding strategies for Shopping; Target ROAS in beta.** Smart Bidding, then Smart Shopping, then Performance Max.
- **September 28 – Customer Match.** The most valuable audience signal for Performance Max today.
- **October 21 – remarketing lists for Shopping and local inventory ads.** Audience signals in every Shopping campaign since.
- **November 16 – Shopping ads on YouTube.** Product feeds in Video action campaigns, then Demand Gen.

10. What the numbers showed: phones and Shopping, **together**

Merkle|RKG's report for the third quarter of 2015 put Google US paid search spend up 18% year on year, with Product Listing Ad clicks from phones up 166% and phones at 27% of all paid search clicks. Over Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday 2015, Kenshoo measured Shopping-campaign spend up 35% year on year and mobile product-ad spend up 85%, to 10% of total search spend, with mobile delivering half of retail search clicks on Thanksgiving and Black Friday. comScore put Cyber Monday at $3.1 billion, up 21%, with 27% of it on mobile.

- The two growth curves met in one place – Shopping ads on phones – so the brand-by-brand mobile reading (section 2) and the brand-by-brand Shopping structure were the same piece of work.

- Budget the holiday by brand and by device, with the daily pacing checked on the peak days; a brand cut off at 3 p.m. on Black Friday is a brand whose day is over.

11. Europe: the Statement of **Objections**

On April 15, 2015, the European Commission sent Google a Statement of Objections, its preliminary view that Google "gives systematic favourable treatment to its comparison shopping product in its general search results pages", and opened a separate investigation into Android. Google had ten weeks to reply. For a European reseller, nothing changed in the account in 2015; the case that would decide how Shopping ads are bought in the European Economic Area had simply moved from negotiation to charges.

- Nothing to change in 2015. Watch the objection about the Shopping unit's placement.

12. A five-minute **check**

CHECK	WHY IT MATTERS
Every designated brand in the catalogue has valid GTINs from the supplier's price list before September 15	New products from those brands were disapproved without them
Every brand landing page passes the mobile-friendly test; mobile_link submitted where pages differ	Mobile-friendly ranking from April 21; more searches on mobile than desktop
Mobile bid adjustment per brand, set from cross-device conversions	Cross-device counted in Conversions from October 27
Enhanced CPC on dense brand campaigns; Target ROAS beta requested with a return per brand tier	A return target is a margin decision, and margins are brand-level
Store-level Customer Match list applied to every brand's Search campaign; remarketing lists on Shopping	The customer file spans every brand you sell
Feed aligned with the manufacturer's product data: model names, variants, images	The listing shoppers compare is increasingly the brand's version
Every offer moved into Merchant Promotions before the end of September	Promotional text retired
Assortment Report read per brand; gaps taken to the supplier; benchmark prices checked	Demand you cannot show is demand a competitor wins

About **WeAdU**

WeAdU is a Google Premier Partner and the current home of a Google Ads practice founded in 2002, focused on AI-boosted Google Ads for brand product resellers.

Across the client book: **$241M+** in sales generated, **$132M+** tracked in Google Ads, **$32M+** in ad spend managed and **5.3M+** conversions. **14 of 20** clients (**70%**) saw a higher ROAS, measured over 12 months.

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This edition is a retrospective written in September 2026, not a document from 2015: it describes Google AdWords, Product Listing Ads, Google Shopping and Merchant Center as they worked that year, checked against sources published at the time or reliable later accounts, listed below.

Sources & further reading

Google, Inside AdWords / Google Commerce blog: "Dimensional weight support in Google Merchant Center" (February 4, 2015); "Product ratings on Google Shopping now in the UK, France and Germany" (March 26, 2015); "Building for the next moment" (May 5, 2015); "Introducing TrueView for shopping" (May 21, 2015); "2015 update to the Google Shopping feed specification" (June 8, 2015); "Winning shopping micro-moments" (July 15, 2015); "Introducing Manufacturer Center" (July 21, 2015); "Introducing more powerful Dynamic Search Ads" (July 27, 2015); "Easily update and validate ads with new enhancements to Merchant Center data feeds" (July 28, 2015); "A suite of automated bidding solutions for Shopping campaigns" (August 13, 2015); "New automated extension for Shopping ads" – promotional text retired (August 19, 2015); "Highlight a specific aspect of your products with structured snippets" (August 27, 2015); "Reach more customers online: add GTINs" (September 8, 2015); "Google brings you closer to your customers" – Customer Match (September 28, 2015); "Shopping ads on YouTube" preview (September 29, 2015); "Shopping Insights" (October 20, 2015); "Seize holiday shopping moments with new tools" – Assortment Report, Shopping remarketing lists (October 21, 2015); "Make every conversion count: cross-device conversions" (October 27, 2015); "New tools and insights to optimize your Shopping campaigns" (November 9, 2015); "Capture more holiday traffic with click share" and "Drive sales and app downloads" (November 16, 2015); "Get deeper insight into your automated bidding" (December 8, 2015); "Ways to be useful for mobile shoppers" (May 16, 2016); "Find your next customer" – Customer Match for Shopping (May 1, 2017). Google Search Central blog: "Finding more mobile-friendly search results" (February 26, 2015) and "Rolling out the mobile-friendly update" (April 21, 2015). Independent: ChannelAdvisor – six changes to the feed specification (June 9, 2015); Search Engine Land – GTINs required from September 15 (September 2015) and from May 16, 2016 (February 2016), Merkle report on Shopping ads' share of clicks (2018); PPC Hero – Customer Match (October 28, 2015), Customer Match for Shopping beta (July 1, 2016), remarketing lists for Shopping (October 22, 2015), Merchant Center disapprovals and GTINs (November 13, 2019); Search Engine Watch – Merkle|RKG Q3 2015 figures (October 23, 2015), Kenshoo and comScore holiday 2015 figures (December 4, 2015); European Commission press release IP/15/4780 (April 15, 2015). Policies and product names have changed since 2015; the 2026 edition describes the current rules.