

Don't miss out on Google Shopping power because of poor feeds

By [Andrew Smit](#)

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Google Shopping and Facebook Dynamic Product Ads are a powerful way for retailers to reach new customers and drive sales. However, poor feeds can negate even the best efforts of a digital campaign.

Andrew Smit, NMPi's head of data solutions, looks at how optimising feeds can drive click-through rates and deliver real return as Google Shopping hits its stride in South Africa. As local consumers become more accustomed to shopping online, merchants cannot afford to ignore the power of the Google Shopping platform and Facebook Dynamic Product Ads.



Andrew Smit, Head of Data Solutions at NMPi

These ads are prioritised by both companies and result in significantly higher conversion rates due to their high relevancy and visual appeal. Merkle's latest figures show Google Shopping ads grew 31% year-on-year in Q2 2018, more than five times the rate of growth for Google text ads. And, despite the continued negative publicity around the social media giant, Facebook ad revenue also grew by 40% year-on-year.



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Evidence from our own campaigns with Australian retail clients has shown that as much as 50-60% of volume and revenue is coming from shopping campaigns alone. Understanding how to manipulate feeds to create a dynamic, responsive shopping campaign is one of the most important aspects of a winning digital strategy.

How feeds impact ad results

Data feeds contain information that helps Google, or other platforms, determine when and where to show your ads. The more relevant your product information is to a user's search, the more likely Google or Facebook will show your ads – increasing the chance that someone searching for your product will find it and make a purchase.

To better understand feeds and how they work, let's unpack their various elements.

- **Title**

Getting the product title right is the first place to start. Understanding which search queries are most likely and inserting them into the title makes a significant difference to the click-through rate (CTR). However, this is not as simple as it sounds, since Google may have character restrictions which need to be considered.

For clothing retailers, for example, it would make sense to structure the title by brand, gender, product type, colour, size, and material.

- **Description**

This allows for more detail of the product or service and helps you differentiate your offering from your competitors and entice the shopper to make the purchase. The language used in the description should tie into the greater campaign strategy.

An often overlooked problem in the description is stray HTML, which takes time and effort to clean up if you want to ensure optimal performance.

- **Category**

Google and other platforms all have product taxonomies. Placing the product in the most relevant category will help users find it. Getting the Google shopping category taxonomy right is imperative for a retail client.

This alone can result in a 0.2% increase in the click-through rate, which may sound small, but can have a huge impact on sales and is the holy grail for digital marketing professionals.

- **Image**

Since this is often the first thing your customer will see, using the best image possible will help boost the campaign.

- **Pricing**

This can be one of the most fluid and tricky elements. Retailers are constantly changing their prices based on sales,

seasonal promotions, stock availability etc. Staying on top of your pricing is key to managing merchandise in your online store.

- **GTIN**

These Global Trade Item Numbers are used by Google and others to pull information from the supplier to ensure they group together similar products in order to deliver true comparative shopping for users.

All of the above, together with SKUs (Stock Keeping Units), are used to manage a merchant's online inventory. This gets increasingly complex when merchants have thousands (and sometimes many hundreds of thousands) of products.

Taming the complexities to make feeds work

Perhaps one of our biggest learning experiences came from our first US campaign with one of the largest online car parts retailers. The company had over 10 million SKUs in their product feed (The average feed size for retailers is between 10,000 - 20,000 SKUs) and the complexity of managing this can't be underestimated.



Source: pixabay.com

More often than not, an agency looking to assist a digital business would need to go through the website developers in order to make changes to the feed. This is obviously laborious, time-consuming and costly because the client is paying for the time of both their developer and their agency.

For a company using the more popular CMS platforms like Shopify, Magento, BigCommerce and WooCommerce, extracting the feed is fairly simple. However, many of the larger retailers have customised CMSes and this can complicate things for agencies hoping to optimise feeds.

NMPi has recently partnered with Feedonomics to deliver feed optimisation as part of its digital marketing offering. The Feedonomics solution allows NMPi to spider the retailer's website to access the feed.

Of particular interest to many retailers is a service which makes use of the GTIN to access their competitors' prices which can be used by their agency to change their bidding strategy.

Feed agility can give a retailer a serious edge in a competitive online landscape. For the larger websites, the feeds can be updated a few times each day. In fact, this can happen as frequently as every 10 minutes, which allows retail sites to run specials that can be dynamically managed on the fly, responding to user interest as well as what their competitors are doing.

For merchants hoping to cash in on the returns offered by Shopping and Dynamic Product Ad, hands-on feed management is not only a necessity but can turn a solid holiday campaign into a bumper quarter.

ABOUT ANDREW SMIT

Andrew Smit is a digital data specialist at Incubeta with more than a decade's worth of experience in the online marketing world.

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