

TikTok and Google Performance Max unlock new possibilities for brands

By [Natascha Torres](#)

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Over the past year, social media and programmatic platforms have launched a range of powerful new features and tools for digital marketers and advertisers in their efforts to capture a large slice of businesses' ad spending.



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Facebook, which changed its company name to Meta during the year, for instance, focused heavily on enhancing products such as Instagram Reels to address the growing competition its apps face from TikTok.



Facebook changes corporate name to Meta in major rebrand

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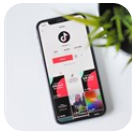
Twitter, meanwhile, has made a range of welcome improvements to its ad formats such as investing heavily in its SKAdNetwork to open up more inventory and launching multi-destination functionality for carousel ads. And, LinkedIn introduced Event Ads to promote LinkedIn Events (digital or in-person events), as well as an Event Analytics tool that enables companies to track metrics such as attendee/visitor engagement with Event posts, unique event visits, total number of attendees, and viewer count at the peak of a live stream.

Of all the developments we saw this year, there were two that we found particularly significant for our South African clients: The launch of TikTok advertising in South Africa in April this year and Google opening up Google Performance Max ads to all advertisers.

TikTok launches Spark Ads

5 Aug 2021





Let's take a closer look at what these developments mean for South African brands and how companies can put these new advertising options to work in their campaigns.

TikTok: authentic engagements with a growing user base

TikTok has rapidly gained momentum in South Africa since the launch of its first set of premium ad reservation buys, including Top View, One Day Max+, Branded Hashtag Challenge, Branded Effect and auction buys. Though these offerings are priced at a premium, many of our clients have enjoyed remarkable success using these buys for launches and large brand-building campaigns. The Branded Hashtag Challenge, especially, works well for driving engagement among the TikTok audience and generating authentic user-generated content.

Similarly to Facebook, TikTok allows brands to control their budget, get real-time insight into their campaign performance, optimise their campaigns for goals such as reach, website and app traffic, app installs and website conversions), and apply a wide range of bidding and optimisation strategies as well as an array of targeting filters. TikTok's machine learning and auto-optimisation capabilities are not yet as powerful as Facebook's but it's early days and I'm excited to see how the platform evolves.

In October, TikTok launched its Commerce Solutions, which are aimed at the bottom of the sales funnel. With TikTok Shopping, brands can use their Business Account to add a shopping tab to their profiles, synchronise their product catalogues, add product links to their videos, and run Dynamic Showcase ads. They can also run Lead Generation Video Ads with forms that deliver leads directly to a company's CRM system. Collection Ads, meanwhile, allow brands to add product cards to their video ads, driving users to an Instant Gallery Page, where they can browse and purchase products.

Facilitating content creation

Since the launch of TikTok ads in South Africa, we've run a number of successful campaigns for brands in the financial services, motoring, and telecoms industries. Cost-per-clicks, click-through rates, and view-through rates are comparable to Facebook. The campaigns that really hit the mark, in our experience, feature authentic content that resonates with the audience. Brands that use influencers who are genuine and can speak to their audience in their lingo with an understanding of their needs will get the best returns.

The good news is that TikTok can facilitate the creation of this content, freeing brands from the need to hire a production house and an expensive celebrity. The platform offers a range of content creation tools for brands of all sizes, including a creator marketplace, where brands can seek influencers for their campaigns, and powerful video production and editing

tools and templates that help brands create videos and use machine learning to customise them for different audiences.

TikTok shouldn't be dismissed as a platform for tweens and teens. With some nine million users in South Africa - the vast majority of them aged above 18 - TikTok is a platform to watch in the future. Brands that are not already experimenting with TikTok's ad options risk falling behind the curve. Not to be left behind, Instagram, a Facebook company, also launched ads for Reels in Sub-Saharan Africa this year. Reels is Facebook's short video format and response to TikTok.

Google Performance Max

Last year, Google rolled out a beta for Performance Max campaigns as a new way to buy Google ads across YouTube, Display, Search, Discover, Gmail and Maps from a single campaign. Following the success of this beta programme, Google launched Performance Max to all advertisers in November.

Google Performance Max promises to take Google's automatic, data-driven campaign optimisation to new heights, in turn enabling brands to even more successfully target the customers who are most likely to convert with the right message.

Google already runs smart campaigns across many of its platforms:

- Google Smart Shopping Campaigns on Search, Display, YouTube, and Gmail
- Google Discovery Campaigns on Discovery (Google Search feed), YouTube Home and Watch Next feeds, and Gmail
- Google Local Campaigns on Search, Google Maps, YouTube, and the Google Display Network

These dynamic campaigns enable brands to use customer data gathered across different platforms to automatically optimise targeting, ad creation and ad delivery on the best performing channel. If the ads are performing better on YouTube than in Gmail, YouTube will receive more of the budget. Google has taken that to another level with Performance Max, which will eventually replace the existing smart campaign options.

Improving efficiencies and reducing wastage

With Google Performance Max campaigns, Google can use data from all of its channels – YouTube, Display, Search, Discover, Gmail, and Maps – to automatically optimise ads across all of them for a single goal (web traffic, lead generation, product sales etc.). This helps brands to avoid errors, improve campaign efficiencies and reduce wastage.

The biggest downside of Google Performance Max is the limited reporting data Google provides - campaign managers cannot see how Google is directing their budget across channels or asset groups. Hopefully, Google will add more transparency in months to come. While we wouldn't recommend that any brands shift all their budgets to Performance Max straightaway, this product launch is an exciting development.

For bigger brands, it may be worthwhile to earmark some budget to Google Performance Max and monitor its performance against their other campaigns. To use Google Performance Max, a brand will need to have Google Ads Conversion Tracking to be set up, a decent budget (R100,000 – R150,000) and at least one month to test it properly. Providing reliable audience signals like first-party data will give Google more tools to optimise with and improve a campaign's performance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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