Case Study: Google "Shopping Ads"

Date: Summer, 2020 (v1.0)

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Introduction

Google's "Shopping Ads" are specialised **Google AdWords Campaigns,** which enable merchants with newly launched or long-established online shopping Websites to promote their products *directly on Google Search Results pages.*

With the exception of Google Image search results, Shopping Ads also represent the ONLY way a Website is currently able to feature *visual* content (in this instance product images) on Google's results listings.

In addition to your products potentially appearing on normal results pages, they will also have the opportunity to be displayed beyond the "Shopping" tab/icon (shown below).
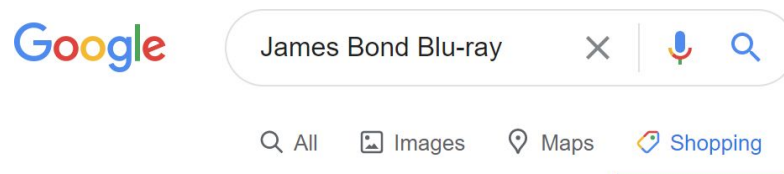
Image: a partial screenshot depicting the dedicated "Shopping" icon on results pages.

Prerequisites

In order to use Google Shopping Ads Campaigns, you will need to have the following:

❏ A secure, **e-Commerce Website** (hosted on your own Domain)

❏ A Google **AdWords Account**

❏ A Google **Merchant Centre Account**

❏ A **data-feed** sent to Google (this can be automatic or manual)

Screenshot: Typical Google Shopping Ads

The initial (illustrated) products here are *Shopping Ads,* followed by one traditional *AdWords Text Ad* (for amazon.co.uk in the above example)..

Wouldn't it be great to see **your products** showcased on Google just like this example?!

The Basics: How do these Ads work?

*Experienced AdWords Users: If you are already familiar with the "AdWords" advertising platform, you can probably skip this part of the Case Study. If you are new to AdWords entirely, read on ~ as this is important information.

❏ Google Ads (of all types) work by simply including **paid-for** adverts, usually *before* any matching standard ("organic") search results.

❏ These are (subtly) labelled as **"Sponsored"** listings" - with many casual Users not even realising that the links in question are actually adverts! This is the genius of Google's massively successful advertising platform.. (reputed to earn the company in excess of 90% of their total revenue)

❏ Site owners ("Merchants") are able to sign-up for Google AdWords for free - and then decide precisely how much they are willing to pay, when advertising on the service. Typically there are *two key amounts to consider:*

> ❏ **The amount you wish to (potentially) spend *Daily* across all Ads.**

> ❏ **The amount you wish to (potentially) spend *Per Click***

One true strength of the entire AdWords offering is that there are *no long-term commitments,* nor any subscription fees involved. As an Advertiser you are free to Start, Stop and even temporarily (or indefinitely) "Pause" Campaigns however often you wish. Google then simply bill you for any advertising costs incurred.

It's a great system.

Please note: The broader topic of Google AdWords is extensive, so will be covered in a separate, dedicated Case Study. For now, we'll focus on Shopping Advertisements (a comparatively more straightforward and more recent option).

Real-world Example:

"The Soundtracks Shop"

Background_

"The Soundtracks Shop" is a specialist side-project of *Mounsey Web Consultancy*, retailing a broad range of collectable soundtrack releases and merchandise items.

Typical products offered for sale include Compact Discs, Vinyl Records, Film, TV and Video Game Memorabilia - and more. The Website operates in a fairly niche market, but competes with major retailers (such as Amazon, Zavvi and HMV) and also other specialists in the sector ~including soundtrack record label Websites (each with their own online stores).
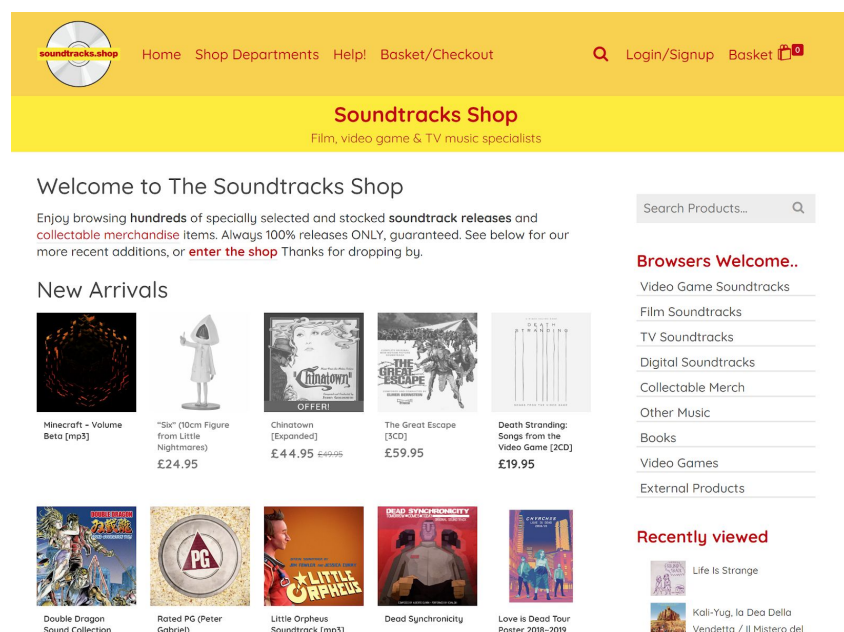
Image: *The current soundtracks.shop Home Page*

Facing the usual (SEO) battle to get a newly-launched Website noticed and listed prominently by Google, I considered the Google Shopping Ads service - the idea being to "leap-frog" more established Webshops (which rank highly on Google, but with Websites built on older technologies and/or with no active Google Advertising Campaigns).

Naturally, if any competing Websites are already (also) advertising using Google Shopping Ads, it is even more important to give this exciting platform serious consideration.

Promoting a **Product** as a Shopping Ad

E.g. "Life is Strange" Soundtrack CD

Being a typically difficult product to obtain (and therefore with few competing advertisers) this is an *ideal product to promote.* Cost-per-click rates are also likely to be lower on unusual products (an obvious bonus).
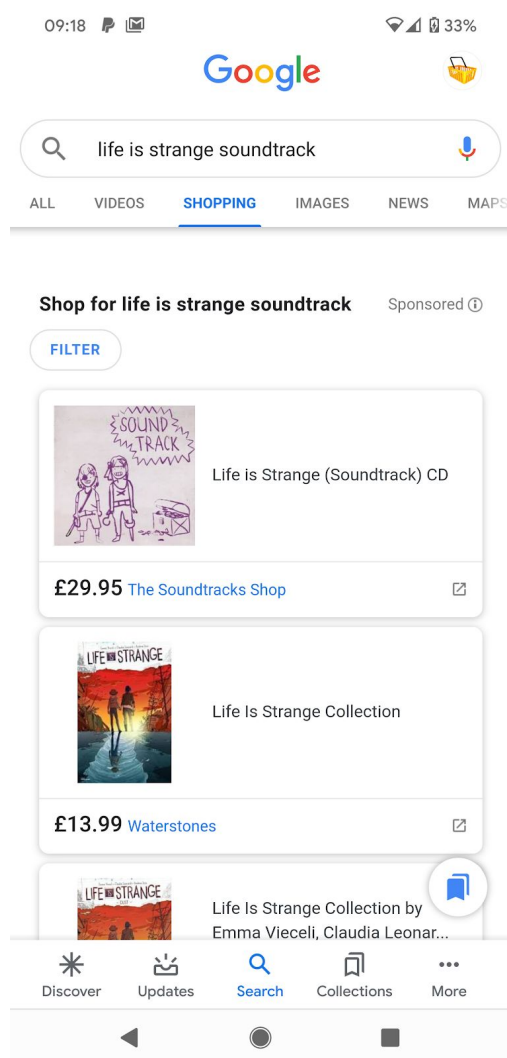
The screen-shot (left) shows this product being successfully advertised on the "Shopping" results tab (on a mobile on this occasion). The **price** is clearly shown to the User - as is the **name of the retailer** ("The Soundtracks Shop").

In this particular example Google has only found *my* ad for this product, so they have also included some *related* (but different) products below. A simple tap/click on the Ad and the User is immediately taken to my Website (to the corresponding product page).

From here, the User (and hopefully soon-to-be Customer!) is clear to proceed with his or her order, directly on my Website shop. Google will have recorded the click action (at the agreed Cost-per-click amount), which is billed to my AdWords account.

Bear in mind that this advertising fee will need to be paid, regardless of if the User decides to purchase the goods, or not. This is how Google make their money!

Screenshot: Desktop "Shopping" Results
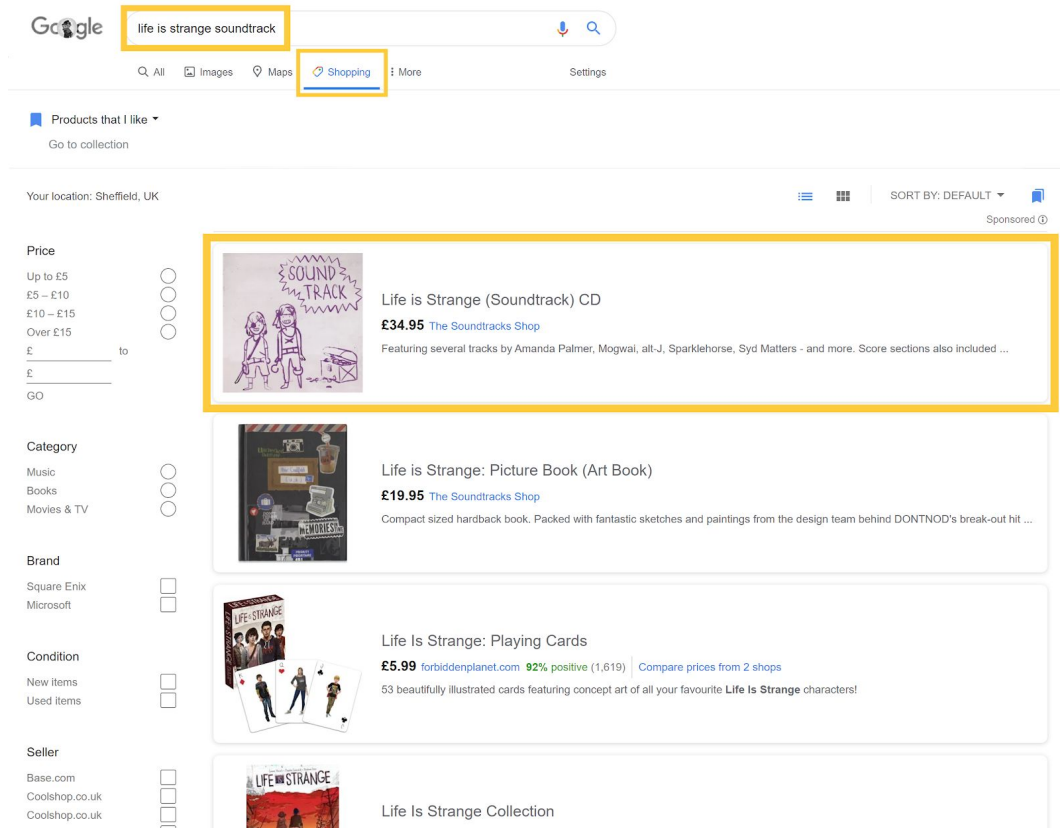
Image: *A single product entry (highlighted) on Google Shopping Ads (Desktop PC layout)*

The above screenshot shows an entry (highlighted in yellow by me, for clarity here) of the same Shopping Ad result - but this time on a traditional desktop computer (the layout is also comparable to this expanded layout on tablets such as iPad devices too).

Once again there is just the **one matching advert** (mine!) - so providing the User is happy with the price and product, they are likely to click through for further information.. (and until they do so this premium-level exposure costs me absolutely *nothing,* remember).

It's worth noting that another benefit of Google Ads is that they are not only restricted to "New" products. "Used" or custom-made products are also possible. This is potentially ideal for retailers offering products which are unique to their Website/shop! Depending on how your Campaign(s) is/are setup, your Shopping Ads could even appear on *external Websites and Apps* (courtesy of Google's "Display Network" and a "Remarketing" style technique).

Try it! *Search for "Life is Strange soundtrack" on Google - this Ad is still currently active (as of June, 2020).*

One Step Beyond: The "Display Network"

As I mentioned at the beginning of this Case Study, Shopping Ads are primarily aimed at enabling online retailers to promote their products directly from the Google Search Results pages and also on their dedicated "Shopping" results tab/icon.

In addition to this, Google also include the option to enable your Ads on what is known as their **"Display Network".** This is a large database of Third Party Websites, all of whom have opted-in to display Google Ads on their own pages. In return for this, the Site owner receives a (variable, but typically small) commission fee, each time a Google Ad served on their content is clicked or tapped on. <u>Any such activity is billed to your AdWords account, as usual</u>

Here are a couple of **genuine screenshots** showing The Soundtracks Shop being promoted elsewhere online, in such a manner (i.e. on the Google Display Network).

Image: *My Shopping Ad on "The Sheffield Star"*
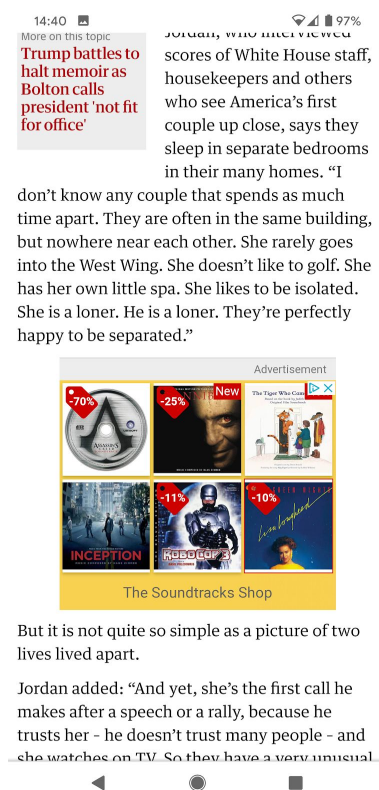
Image: *My Shopping Ad on "The Guardian"*

Enabling the Display Network is **optional.** This is good to know, as although the Network greatly expands the exposure of your Ads, it can sometimes result in potentially lower conversions, if your Ads are shown on unrelated Websites and Apps...

Conclusions_

Having now worked with Google's Shopping Ads for an extended period of time (over 2 years, spanning multiple projects) I have only **positive feedback** to report.

The level of success and conversions to expect will, of course vary from sector to sector (and product to product..) ~that being no different from any other advertising platform.

However, based on personal experiences with this particular Website, I know for certain that on numerous occasions orders have come as *a direct result of a User finding my product(s) via a Google Shopping Ad.*

(such statistics are available via your Google AdWords account manager screens and also the "Google Merchant Center"). By carefully monitoring these metrics (or having them checked over by a Third Party consultant such as myself) your Shopping Campaign(s) can be tweaked over time.

Such fine-tuning, carried out with similar on-going improvements to your actual online shopping Website will most likely result in **even more conversions,** over time.

Would you like to know more..?

If you are interested in discussing the opportunities and benefits of Google's Shopping Ads in more detail please call me on **07969 169888** or Email john@mounsey.co.uk

At Mounsey Web Consultancy I offer a truly bespoke one-time setup option for getting you up & running on Google AdWords. I also offer an ongoing "Account Management" service ~should you wish to have me **manage** and continually **improve** your Ads,on a regular basis.

Thanks for reading.

John Mounsey (June, 2020). Text content copyright © Mounsey Web Consultancy.