

# Stop Guessing, Start Knowing: Predicting Product Performance with PMax & Search

Inderpaul Rai



#FOS2026



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**WeDiscover**

We're increasingly  
**relying on AI**

We're all **feeling it**



Google Ads  
has become  
**a gilded cage**



2017

**Exact Match brutalised**





**2017**

**Exact Match brutalised**



**2018**

**RSAs launched**





**2017**

**Exact Match brutalised**



**2018**

**RSAs launched**



**2020**

**Search terms restricted**





**2017**

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**2020**

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**2021**

**PMax launched, BMM deprecated**





**2017**

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**2020**

**Search terms restricted**

**2021**

**PMax launched, BMM deprecated**

**2025**

**AI Max**



**The truth is**

**our jobs have changed**





# The Great Hanoi Rat Massacre of 1902



A black and white photograph of a busy street in Vietnam. The street is crowded with people, many wearing traditional conical hats. In the foreground, a large number of rats are scattered across the ground, some walking and some lying down. The background shows buildings and more people, creating a sense of a bustling, populated area.

**The Goal:**

**Get rid of the rats**

A historical black and white photograph of a busy street market in Vietnam. The scene is filled with people, many wearing traditional conical hats, and a large number of pigs. The pigs are scattered across the street, some standing and some lying down. The background shows buildings with awnings and a crowd of people. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, traditional market.

**The System:**  
**Pay a bounty for every tail**



**The Outcome:**

**People began farming rats**

This is known as a  
**Perverse Incentive**



# PMax feels like a leaky bucket

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# Take back control of PMax?



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# Stop guessing, start knowing



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## PMax Structures

Workshop to assess the current testing and opportunities to improve

 Our goal is to iterate our PMax campaigns to improve commission growth & ensure Google isn't lazy with the product mix it serves ads for



**Where we are today**

Not segmented by category

Overly-segmented

Rigid structure without room to move

Segmented by price point but not performance

Feed only - not using the full asset suite - which I expect will open us to risks if Google decides to stop that

Fairly difficult to predict how Google will react to bidding changes

Unsure on best bidding strategy

Multiple targets (for same type of target)

fairly un-optimised product information

Not currently utilising attributes since testing ended

Not considering LTV



**What do we think the issues are**

Not sure tROAS is the right bidding for

Potentially overlapping with tactical campaigns

Google is optimising to different attribution than we judge success

Giving Google a conversion value which does not align with what the business is looking at internally

Difficult to iterate

Feed optimisation

CPCs vs product mix affects commission growth

Products in multiple campaigns competing against each other

Trade-off between value and ROI unclear

Google best sellers misaligned with website best sellers

too much data to know what actually is a significantly contributing attribute

Unclear re. any differentiation between new and existing customers in bid strategy

Offline conversions a day behind - how to mitigate during peak periods

Struggling with competitor price matching

Outdated PIM that's not aligned with GMC

Confidently knowing what defines our 'best' products

Unsure of the amount of products that should be in each campaign

Unsure of how Google optimises using smart bid strategies

We're unclear how we define success or failure of testing given too many views of reality in terms of measurement



**What do we think will help get us closer to our goal**

Testing tCPA vs tROAS

Utilising AI to clean up the product feed

Identifying seasonal products and pushing hard on those when their time has come

Forward planning at a product level - work with curators and commercial

Aligning on what makes a 'best' product

Expected commission per basket value - work out correct CPA to optimise to

Geographical and other insights such as time of day - levers to be pulled here to give Google more guidance

Adjust budgets by rules to better leverage time of day



**Ownership & Actions**

WD to check if Merchant ID/Feed can be sent via conversion tracking

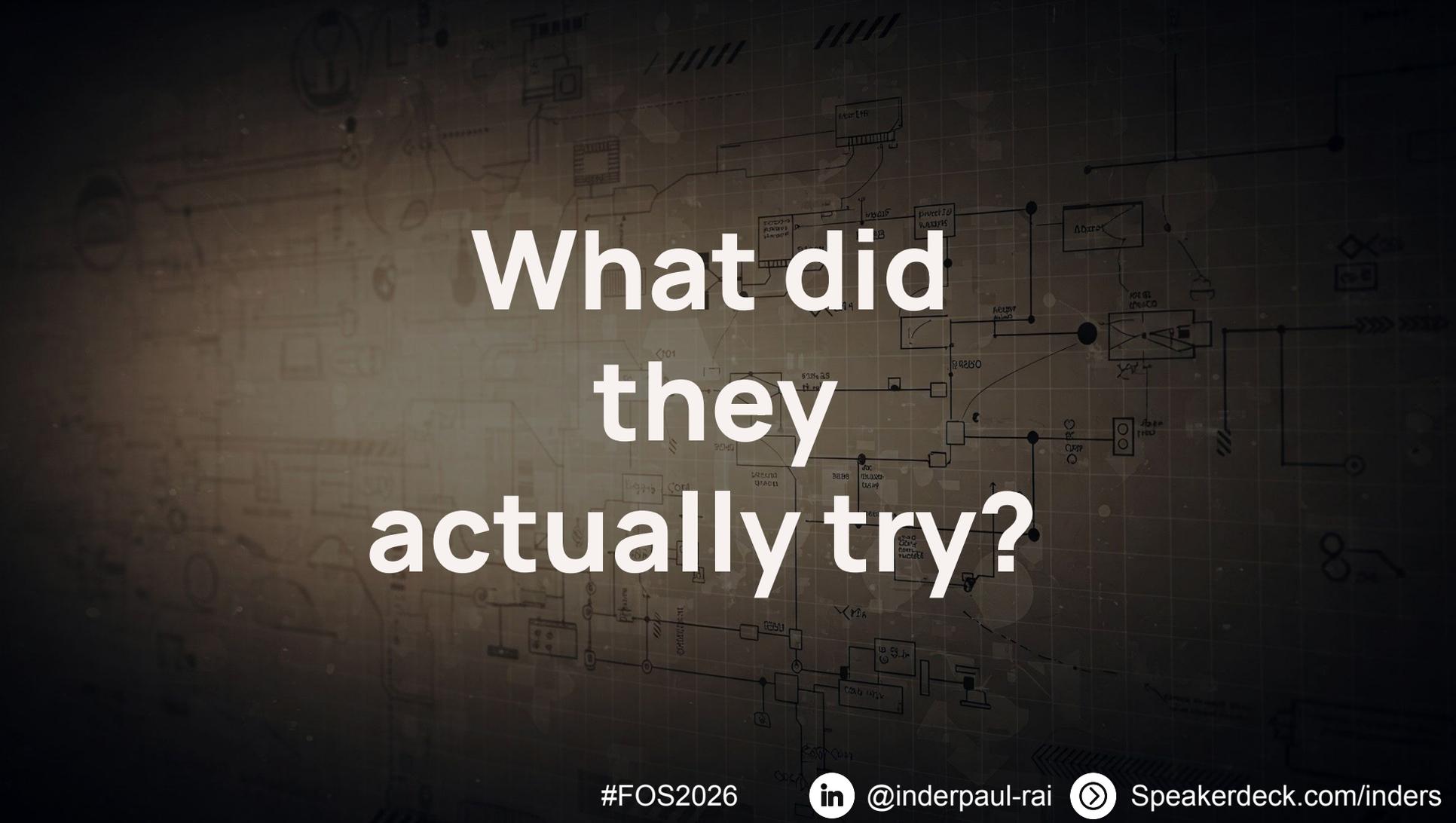
Impression share for later hours in the day, does this change drastically

Formalise structure plan - testing plan vs old structure

tCPA vs tROAS testing against commission/LTV goal

Potential test: Top performers tCPA (segmented by price range) vs tROAS (bundled by all)

Roadmap - consolidate ideas & testing ideas



What did  
they  
actually try?

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by category**

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**Segmented by  
price point**

# Segmented by ROAS

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# Identifying seasonal products

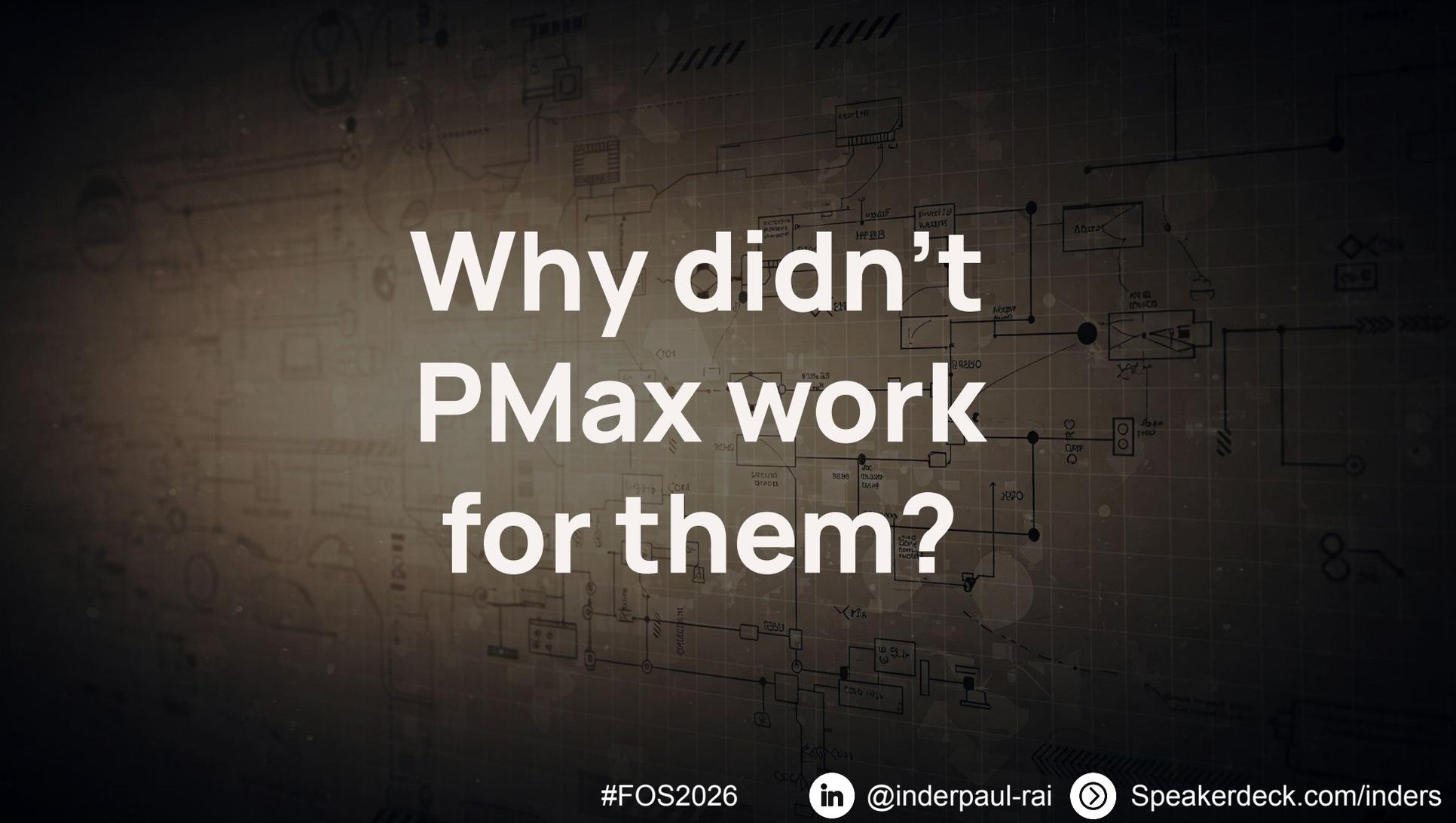
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# Why didn't PMax work for them?

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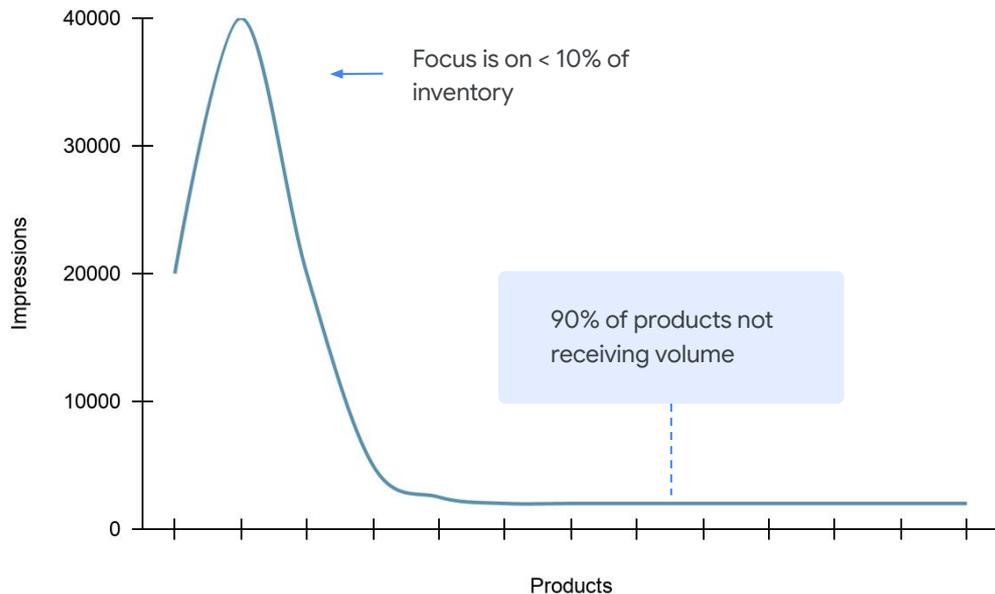


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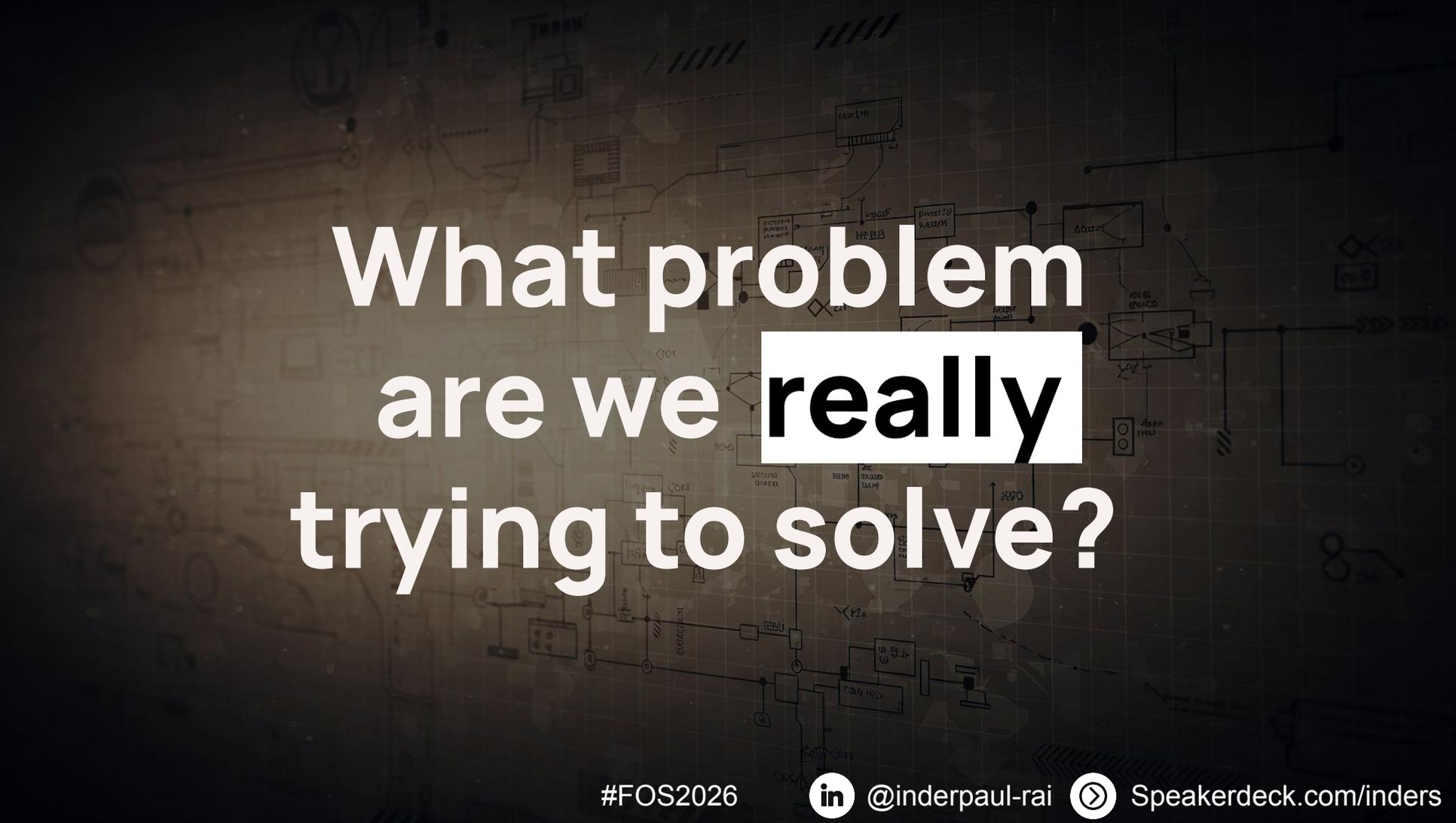
# Trapped by the Algorithm



**The Scaling Challenge:** Due to tight target ROAS constraints, Google Ads focuses on the top 1-10% of products with historical volume and proven PPC performance

**Recency Bias:** Algorithms prioritise what sold in the last 30 days, ignoring potential, new items lack the history needed for Google to push in the auction

**The Result:** High-potential SKUs remain dormant, starved of impressions

The background of the slide is a dark, textured image of a circuit board. It features various electronic components such as integrated circuits, resistors, and capacitors, all interconnected by a network of fine lines representing traces. The overall aesthetic is technical and industrial, with a muted color palette of greys and blacks.

What problem  
are we **really**  
trying to solve?

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**Align on what  
makes a 'best'  
product**

**Help Google  
prioritise the  
right products**



...based on  
actual  
business data



# The Framework: Reworking your portfolio



## Seasonal Stars

Key seasonal collections and trending fashion items which perform exceptionally well during specific times of the year. Our processes will ensure maximum visibility & promotion when demand peaks.



## Champions

Consistently high-performing fashion staples and wardrobe essentials that drive sales year-round. We focus on strong visibility and differentiation to ensure they remain top choices for customers.



## Challengers

Emerging high-potential fashion pieces showing moderate customer interest. We'll be doing everything we can to optimise our offering here and drive substantial sales growth.



## Seeds

Lower-performing or new products with sporadic sales. We aim to fulfil growth opportunities by highlighting USPs, testing creative strategies and identifying customer interest niches.



## Dormants

This is the long tail of products that rarely have engagement and see very few sales. We'll likely look to alternative strategies to boost organic performance and improve their chances.

# Champions

**Your superstars.  
Your best-sellers all  
year around.**

**The Goal: Defend and  
dominate. Ensure  
always visible.**



# Champions

```
when (  
    r.rating >= 4  
    and p.price between 5 and 80  
    and a.amount_of_atb > 100  
    and lead_time < 10  
)  
then 'Top'
```

# Challengers

High-potential  
products showing  
signs of becoming  
champions

**The Goal: Grow &  
optimise to  
push to next level**



# Challengers

```
when (  
    r.rating >= 4  
    and p.price between 5 and 80  
    -- Excludin ATB condition  
    -- and a.amount_of_atb > 100  
    and lead_time < 10  
)  
then 'Middle'
```

# Seeds

New or niche products  
with sporadic sales but  
potential

**The Goal: Nurture  
and test, finding the  
right audience**



# Seeds

```
when (  
    page_views > 10  
    and purchases >= 1  
)  
then 'Seed'
```

# Seasonal

Products that peak during specific times of the year

**Goal: Anticipate and capitalise for max visibility**

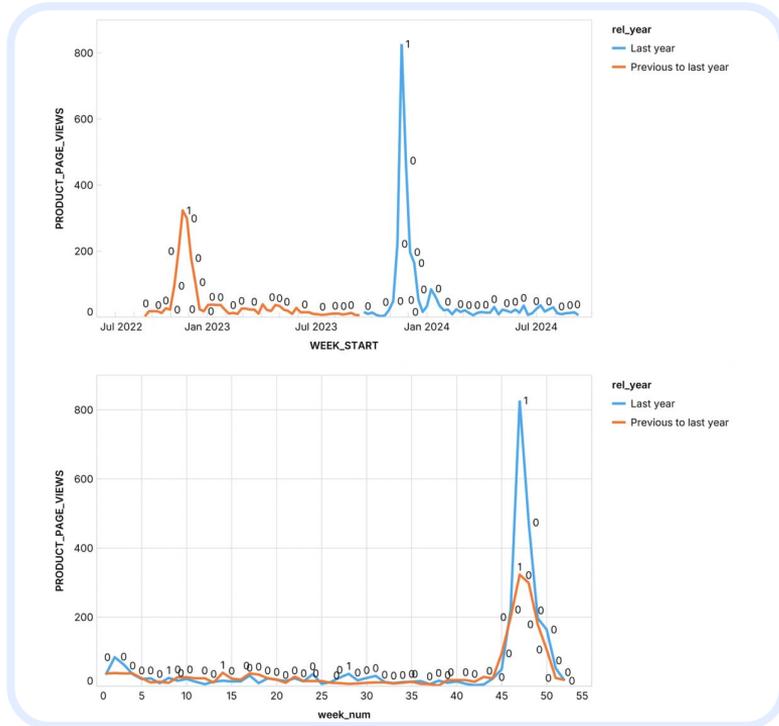


# Seasonal

```
when a.initial_category = 'Top' then 'Top'  
when b.in_season_current_week = True then 'Seasonal - In season'  
when b.product_code is not null then 'Seasonal - Out of season'  
else initial_category  
end as category
```

# Accelerating Time-to-Profit: Anticipating The Peak

Identifying 'Seasonal Stars' weeks in advance to capture demand before the auction heats up.



```
VALIDATION
select
  a.product_code
  , a.product_name
  , array_agg(c.event_name) as events
  , array_agg(c.next_peak_date::date)::string as next_peak_dates
  , a.week_start
  , date_part('week', a.week_start) as week_num
  , a.product_page_views
  -- , normalised page_views (if necessary)
  , if(b.is_peak, 1, 0) as is_peak
  , if(a.week_start > current_date - 365, 'Last year', 'Previous to last year') as rel_year
FROM PRODUCT_PAGE_VIEWS_2 a
LEFT JOIN PRODUCT_PEAKS_AND_EVENTS AS b
  ON a.product_code = b.product_code
  and a.week_start = b.peak_date
LEFT JOIN PREDICTED_SEASONS AS c
  ON a.product_code = c.product_code
WHERE 1=1
and a.product_code = 1170523
group by all
order by 4
```

PRODUCT...	PRODUCT_NAME	events	next_peak_dates	WEEK_STAR
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-08-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-05-1
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-04-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-02-0
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2023-08-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2023-08-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2023-05-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2023-03-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2022-11-0
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-05-2
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2024-01-1
1170523	Personalised Prescription Design Ginger Whisky	[black_friday]	[2024-11-19]	2023-09-2

DuckDB 367 ms (Just now) 9 columns - 104 rows

# Dormants

Products with declining  
or no sales that may  
need to be retired

**The Goal: Evaluate  
and decide to retire  
or optimise**



## Commercial Attributes

- Conversion Rates
- Purchases
- Add-to-baskets
- Rating
- Price Point
- Stock depth

Commercial  
Attractiveness  
Algorithm

Commercial  
Attractiveness

High

Mid

Low

Zero

Peak Expected

In-Season

Out of Season

Statistical &  
Regression Modelling

## Popularity Indicators

- Product Page Views
- Add-to-baskets
- Purchases
- Recently Added
- Business Context
- Fashion Trends



### Seasonal Stars

Key seasonal collections and trending fashion items which perform exceptionally well during specific times of the year. Our processes will ensure maximum visibility & promotion when demand peaks.



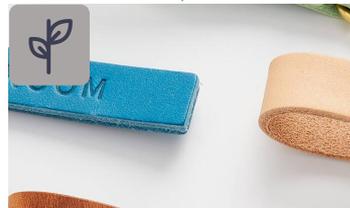
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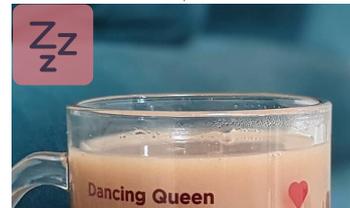
### Challengers

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### Seeds

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### Dormants

This is the long tail of products that rarely have engagement and see very few sales. We'll likely look to alternative strategies to boost organic performance and improve their chances.

# Uncover hidden opportunities



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• boo box  
Search term

+ Compare

United Kingdom ▾

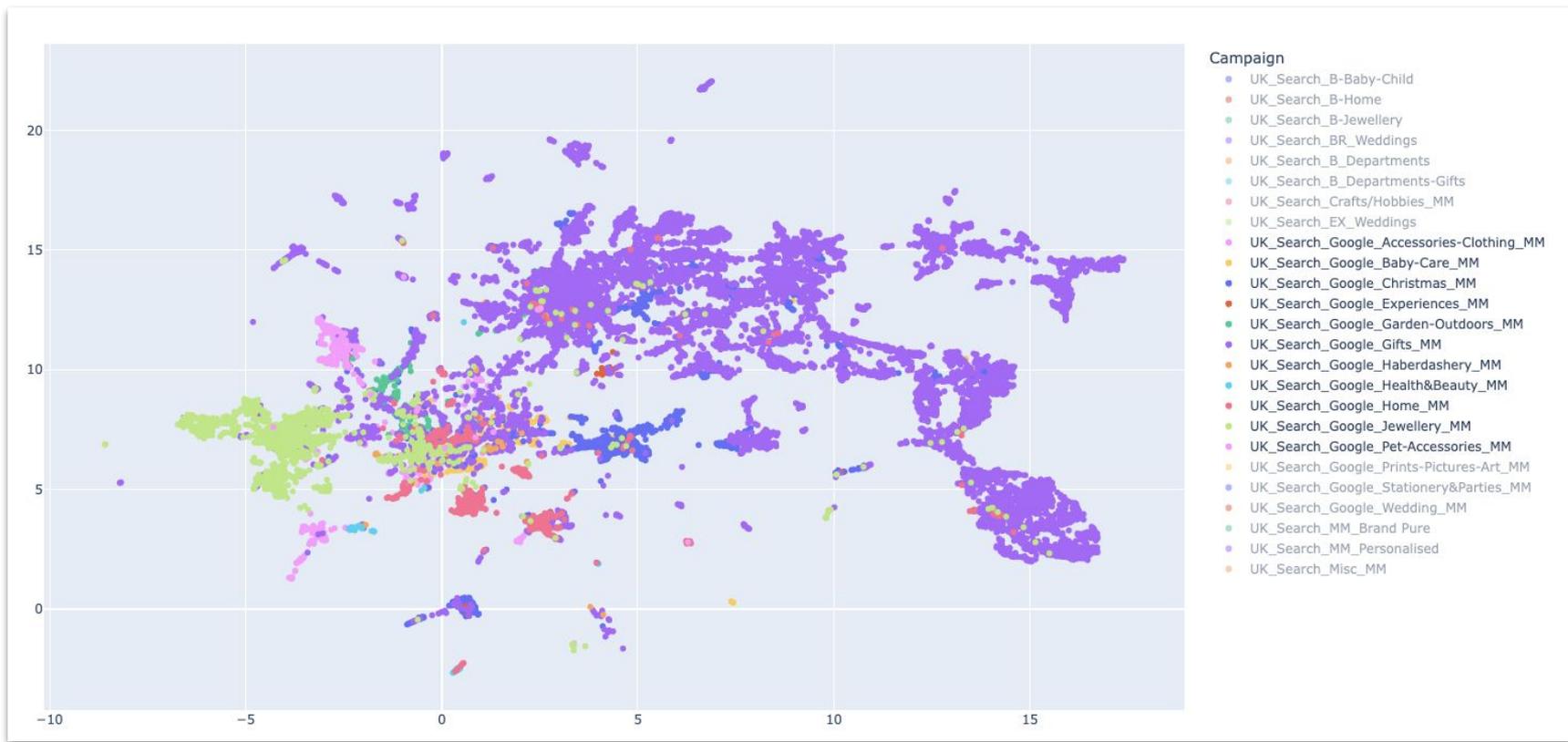
Past 5 years ▾

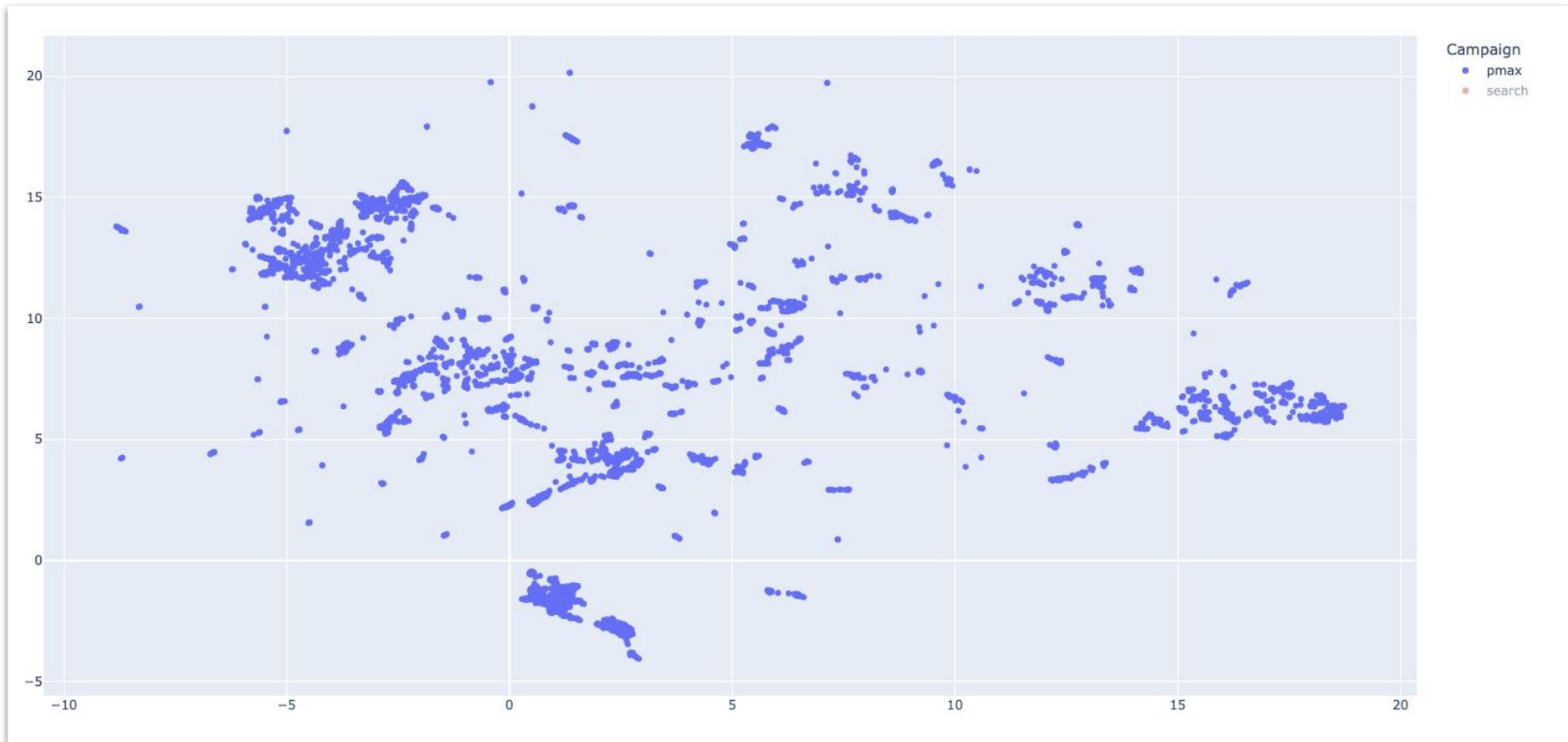
All categories ▾

Web Search ▾

Interest over time ⓘ







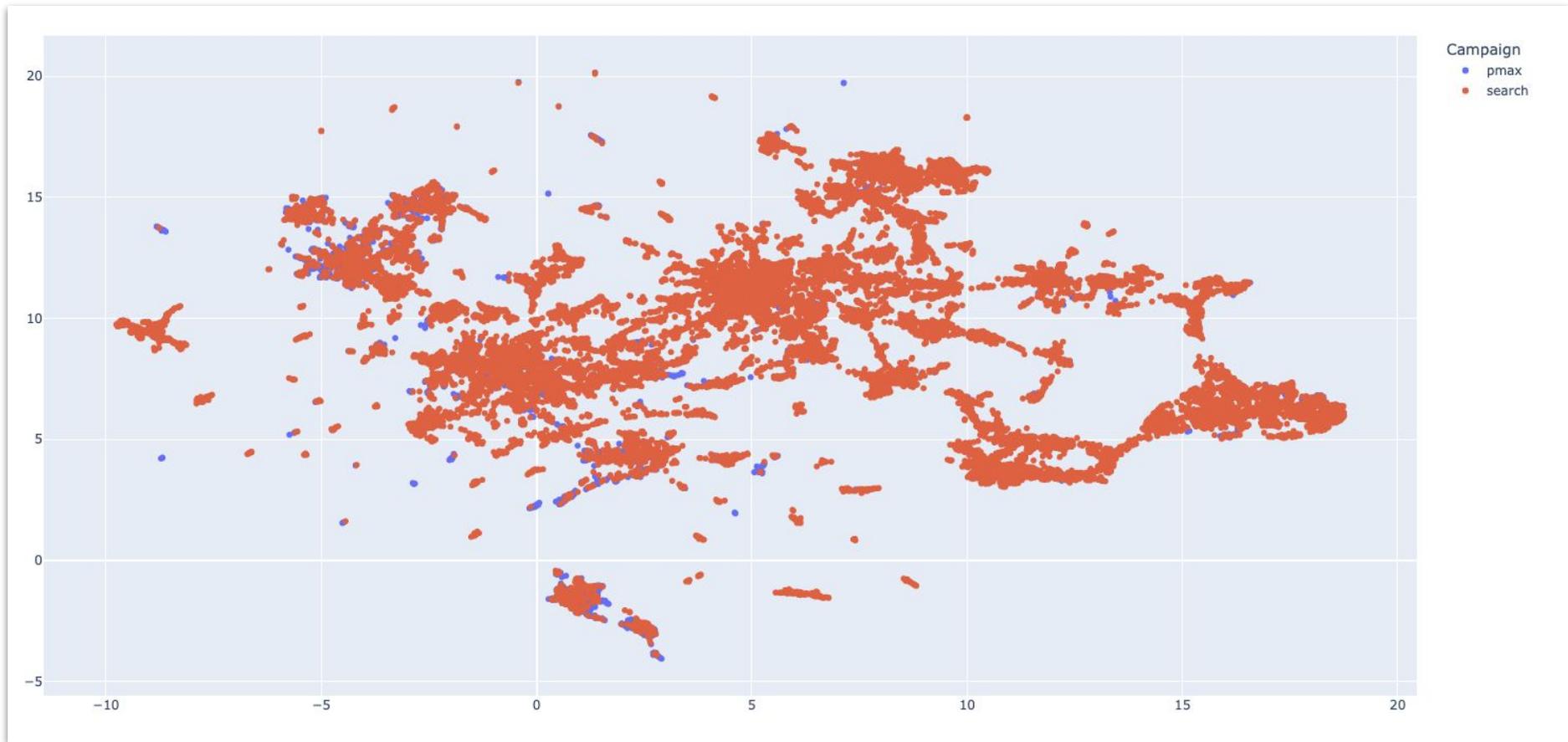
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## Keywords

Category	Keyword
Halloween	boo basket
Halloween	boo box
Halloween	boo basket ideas
Halloween	boo basket for girlfriend
Halloween	boo basket for her
Halloween	buy boo basket
Halloween	boo baskets
Halloween	boo box ideas
Halloween	boo box for girlfriend
Halloween	boo basket already made
Halloween	halloween boo box
Halloween	boo basket maker
Halloween	things to go in a boo basket
Halloween	halloween boo basket
Halloween	boo basket ideas for wife
Halloween	stuff for boo basket
Halloween	autumn boo basket
Halloween	buy a boo basket
Halloween	boo basket for girlfriend halloween
Halloween	halloween boo basket ideas
Halloween	pre made boo basket
Halloween	boo basket items
Halloween	boo baskets for women
Halloween	boo basket delivery
Halloween	boo basket for girl
Halloween	boo basket uk
Halloween	boo box halloween
Halloween	boo baskets for her



```

when (
    r.rating >= 4
    and p.price between 5 and 80
    and a.amount_of_atb > 100
    and lead_time < 10
)
then 'Top'
when (
    r.rating >= 4
    and p.price between 5 and 80
    -- Excludin ATB condition
    -- and a.amount_of_atb > 100
    and lead_time < 10
)
then 'Middle'
when (
    page_views > 10
    and purchases >= 1
)
then 'Seed'
else 'Low'
end as category

```

```

when a.initial_category = 'Top' then 'Top'
when b.in_season_current_week = True then 'Seasonal - In season'
when b.product_code is not null then 'Seasonal - Out of season'
else initial_category
end as category

```

category	cnt
Low	259057
Middle	55042
Seed	15982
Top	5272
Seasonal - Out of season	1246
Seasonal - In season	196

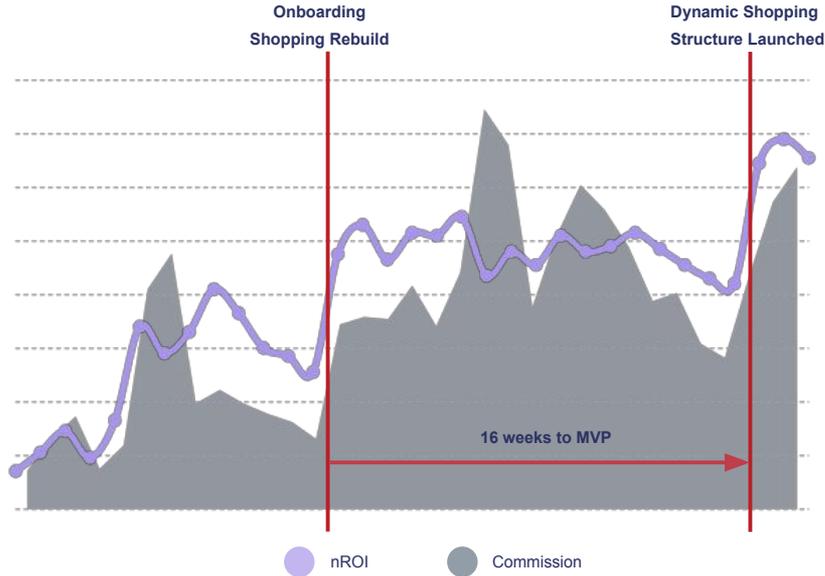
# NOT ON THE HIGH ST.

The results speak for  
themselves

**+65%**  
ROI  
(at comparable spend)

**+5%**  
Seasonal Volume  
(at comparable spend)

**+62%**  
Product  
Discoverability  
(products with >1 impression)



## 1. Initial rebuild of shopping campaigns

- 272% commission increase and 100% nROI increase in 16 weeks
- Identified potential for further improvement due to inventory scale

## 2. Dynamic scoring model for inventory management

- Existing custom labels only benefitted long-lifecycle products
- New model: commercial + behavioural data to segment products

# Take back control of PMax?



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Take back  
**control** of  
PMax?

# Feed PMax with better intelligence



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**Your winning hand**

**isn't in the Google Ads UI**

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A photograph of a paved path leading towards a bright sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The path is flanked by grass and trees, some of which are out of focus. In the foreground, a pair of dark sunglasses lies on the path, casting a shadow. The overall mood is peaceful and reflective.

# Thank you

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