

# The Ecommerce Paid Media Playbook

Multi-Platform Ad Strategy for Ecommerce Brands — Meta, Google Shopping, Pinterest, TikTok, and YouTube

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- The 65/25/10 budget framework: prospecting, retargeting, retention
- Platform-by-platform breakdown: when to use each
- Pinterest: the underutilized high-AOV platform
- Google Shopping: capturing existing demand
- TikTok: impulse purchasing at scale
- Cross-platform attribution and MER tracking
- 90-day paid media roadmap

ECOMMERCE

META

GOOGLE SHOPPING

PINTEREST

TIKTOK

YOUTUBE

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## SECTION 01

## The Ecommerce Paid Media Landscape in 2026

Running ecommerce paid media in 2026 means managing multiple platforms, each with different algorithms, different buyer intents, and different strengths at different points in the purchase journey. The brands that win are not the ones spending the most. They are the ones matching the right platform to the right product, the right buyer, and the right stage of the funnel.

The biggest strategic mistake in ecommerce paid media is treating all platforms as interchangeable traffic sources. Meta, Google Shopping, Pinterest, TikTok, and YouTube serve fundamentally different roles. Using them correctly means understanding what each one is actually good at, not just where you can buy impressions cheapest.

### PLATFORM ROLES AT A GLANCE

Platform	Primary Role	Best For
Meta (Facebook/Instagram)	Demand creation and retargeting	Most ecommerce categories; impulse to mid-consideration
Google Shopping	Demand capture	Products with existing search demand or brand recognition
Pinterest	Discovery and long-consideration	Higher AOV, lifestyle, home, fashion, beauty, gifts
TikTok	Impulse and viral discovery	Lower AOV products with strong visual or entertainment appeal
YouTube	Brand building and conversion for higher AOV	Products that benefit from demonstration or storytelling

**Key Insight: The question is not which platform is best. It is which platform is best for your specific product, price point, and buyer. A strategy that works for a \$25 impulse purchase looks completely different from one built for a \$300 considered purchase.**

## SECTION 02

## The 65/25/10 Budget Framework

Before allocating budget across platforms, allocate it across funnel stages. The 65/25/10 framework gives ecommerce brands a starting point that balances growth with efficiency.

Funnel Stage	Budget %	Purpose	What It Looks Like
Prospecting	65%	Find net-new buyers who have not purchased from you	Brand Meta campaigns, Google Shopping, TikTok discovery, Pinterest promoted pins
Retargeting	25%	Re-engage shoppers who visited your site but did not purchase	Website, Google retargeting, Pinterest retargeting to recent visitors and cart abandoners
Retention	10%	Drive repeat purchases from existing customers	Existing retargeting campaigns, email-backed paid social, loyalty offer targeting

These percentages are starting points, not rules. Adjust based on your catalog size, purchase frequency, and customer lifetime value:

- If your LTV is high and repeat purchase rate is low, shift more toward retention (up to 20%) to protect existing customer relationships.
- If you are launching a new product or brand, weight more heavily toward prospecting (up to 75%) during the launch phase.
- If your site traffic is low, your retargeting audience is too small to justify 25%. Build prospecting volume first, then scale retargeting as your audience grows.
- If ROAS on retargeting is significantly higher than prospecting, resist the temptation to over-index on it. Retargeting converts people who were already going to buy. Prospecting is what grows the business.

**Key Insight: Retargeting feels efficient because the ROAS is high. But retargeting can only convert people your prospecting already found. Underfunding prospecting to chase retargeting ROAS is one of the most common ways ecommerce brands stall their own growth.**

## SECTION 03

## Meta: The Ecommerce Workhorse

**META**

Facebook and Instagram — Demand Creation, Retargeting, and Catalog Ads

Meta is the default starting point for most ecommerce paid media strategies because it combines the largest addressable audience, the most sophisticated purchase optimization algorithm (Andromeda), and the highest-performing retargeting format in ecommerce (Dynamic Product Ads). It is not right for every product at every price point, but it is the most versatile platform in the stack.

**WHERE META WINS**

- Products with broad appeal and visual merchandising potential
- Impulse and low-to-mid consideration purchases (AOV under \$150)
- Retargeting and DPA — the highest-ROAS format in ecommerce paid media
- Brands with strong creative assets or UGC content
- Product launches where demand needs to be created, not captured

**WHERE META STRUGGLES**

- Very low AOV products (under \$30 to \$40) where CPM costs make unit economics difficult
- Highly technical products where buyers need deep education before purchasing
- Categories with strict Meta advertising policies (supplements, certain health claims, financial products)

**Tip:** For a complete Meta campaign setup guide including Andromeda structure, pixel configuration, creative strategy, and conversion event setup, see our companion guide: Facebook Ads for Ecommerce Brands at [aiadvantageagency.com/guides](https://aiadvantageagency.com/guides)

## SECTION 04

## Google Shopping: Capturing Existing Demand

GOOGLE  
SHOPPING

## Demand Capture — Reaching Shoppers Who Are Already Looking

Google Shopping does not create demand. It captures it. When a shopper searches for a specific product, Google Shopping puts your listing in front of them at the exact moment of intent. This fundamental difference from social advertising changes everything about when and how to use it.

## WHEN GOOGLE SHOPPING WORKS

- Your brand or product category has existing search volume — people are already looking for what you sell
- Your product has a recognized category name that shoppers search for directly
- You have brand recognition and shoppers search for your brand name specifically
- Your product feed is clean, complete, and up to date with accurate titles, descriptions, and pricing

## WHEN GOOGLE SHOPPING UNDERPERFORMS

- You are launching a new category or product type with no search history
- Your product name is generic and you are competing against established brands with higher bids
- Your product feed has low-quality titles, missing attributes, or incorrect pricing

## PRODUCT FEED QUALITY IS THE LEVER

Google Shopping performance is 80% product feed quality and 20% bidding strategy. A clean feed with keyword-rich titles, accurate categorization, GTINs, and complete attributes will outperform a high-budget campaign built on a weak feed every time.

Feed Element	Impact on Performance	Priority
Product Title	Primary matching signal for search queries	Critical
GTIN / MPN	Enables Google to match your listing to the manufacturer product — improves impression share	High
Product Category	Accurate Google taxonomy category improves relevance matching	High
Images	High-quality white background primary image, lifestyle secondary images	High
Price and Availability	Must match site exactly and update in real time	Critical

**Key Insight: Google Shopping and Meta are complementary, not competing. Google captures shoppers who are already looking. Meta creates demand among shoppers who do not know they want your product yet. Running both together compounds revenue more than either does alone.**

## SECTION 05

## Pinterest: The Long-Consideration Platform

## PINTEREST

Discovery and Aspiration — Where Higher AOV Purchases Begin

Pinterest is the most underutilized platform in ecommerce paid media. Most agencies ignore it. That is a mistake, particularly for brands selling products that benefit from aspiration, discovery, and a longer consideration window. Pinterest users actively save and plan purchases weeks or months before buying. The intent is real; the timeline is longer.

## WHERE PINTEREST CONSISTENTLY OUTPERFORMS

- Home decor, furniture, and interior design
- Fashion, apparel, and accessories — especially seasonal and occasion-based
- Beauty, skincare, and wellness — particularly premium or specialty brands
- Food and kitchen — cookware, specialty ingredients, meal planning
- Weddings, events, and gifting
- Outdoor living, gardening, and DIY
- Baby and children — high purchase intent from planners and gift-givers

## PINTEREST AD FORMATS FOR ECOMMERCE

Format	Best Use	Notes
Standard Promoted Pins	Brand awareness and discovery	High-quality vertical images (2:3 ratio) perform best
Shopping Ads	Product catalog promotion	Pulls directly from your product feed — keep feed clean
Collections Ads	Multi-product storytelling	One hero image with 3 product images below
Video Pins	Demonstrating product use	Short (6 to 15 seconds), sound-off friendly
Idea Ads	Inspiration and how-to content	Highest engagement format — pairs well with lifestyle brands

## PINTEREST STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

- Pinterest is a long-consideration platform. Do not judge it against Meta's conversion timeline. Give campaigns 60 to 90 days before drawing conclusions.
- Organic Pinterest presence amplifies paid performance. Brands with active organic boards generate significantly better results from paid campaigns than brands with no organic presence.
- Keyword targeting on Pinterest is powerful and underused. Pinterest functions as a visual search engine. Target the keywords your buyers use when they are in planning and discovery mode.
- Audience targeting on Pinterest: target by interest category and keyword, not demographic. Pinterest users self-select into intent categories through their pinning behavior.

- Retarget Pinterest engagers on Meta where CPMs are lower. Capture Pinterest-warmed shoppers at a more efficient cost.

*Key Insight: Pinterest shoppers have a 2x higher AOV than shoppers on other social platforms, according to Pinterest's internal research. For brands selling products above \$75, Pinterest deserves a consistent budget allocation, not just a test.*

## SECTION 06

## TikTok: Impulse at Scale

## TIKTOK

Impulse Discovery — Fast Decisions, Visual Products, Lower AOV

TikTok has demonstrated exceptional performance for ecommerce brands selling products with strong visual appeal and impulse purchase potential. The platform rewards entertainment-first creative and generates rapid conversion cycles when the product-content fit is right.

**US availability note:** TikTok's operational status in the US has been subject to regulatory uncertainty. Confirm current availability before allocating budget. The strategic principles below apply regardless of platform status, as TikTok operates freely in most international markets and the entertainment-first creative format transfers to Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.

## WHERE TIKTOK WORKS FOR ECOMMERCE

- Products with strong visual transformation or demonstration potential
- Lower AOV products (\$20 to \$80) where impulse purchase is viable
- Brands targeting 18 to 34 year old demographics
- Products with a clear "wow factor" that translates to short-form video
- Beauty, gadgets, fashion, snacks, and novelty products

## TIKTOK CREATIVE PRINCIPLES

- Hook in the first 2 seconds. TikTok users scroll faster than any other platform. The opening frame determines whether your ad gets watched.
- Native-first creative. Ads that look like TikTok content outperform polished brand videos. Authenticity is the currency.
- Sound-on format. Unlike other platforms, TikTok users watch with sound. Voice-over and music are part of the creative.
- Creator partnerships amplify reach. Collaborating with creators who already have audience trust consistently outperforms brand-produced content.
- Short conversion cycles. TikTok is an impulse platform. Your landing page needs to convert quickly — minimize friction between ad click and purchase.

## SECTION 07

## YouTube: Awareness to Conversion for Higher AOV

## YOUTUBE

Brand Building and Demonstration — For Products That Need a Story

YouTube occupies a unique position in the ecommerce paid media stack. It is the only platform that combines the scale of Google's audience targeting with long-form video storytelling. For products that benefit from demonstration, education, or emotional connection, YouTube can generate purchase intent that shorter-form platforms cannot.

## WHEN YOUTUBE WORKS FOR ECOMMERCE

- Higher AOV products (\$100+) where the purchase decision benefits from more information
- Products with a compelling before-and-after or demonstration story
- Brands building long-term equity where awareness drives future search and social conversions
- Products targeting older demographics (35+) who consume more YouTube than TikTok or Instagram

## YOUTUBE SHOPPING INTEGRATION

YouTube Shopping allows you to connect your Google Merchant Center product catalog to your YouTube ads and channel. Products appear as clickable overlays on your video ads, enabling direct purchase intent capture from video viewers. This format bridges YouTube's awareness strength with Google Shopping's conversion strength.

Format	Best Use	AOV Fit
Skippable In-Stream	Brand storytelling and product demonstration	\$75+
Non-Skippable (15 sec)	High-impact awareness for launch campaigns	Any AOV
YouTube Shopping	Product discovery with direct catalog link	\$50+
Video Action Campaigns	Direct response with conversion optimization	\$50 to \$200

## SECTION 08

## Platform Selection by Product Type and AOV

Platform mix is not a one-size-fits-all decision. These guidelines give you a starting framework based on the two factors that most consistently determine platform fit: product type and average order value.

Product Profile	Primary Platform	Secondary Platform	Skip or Test Last
Impulse/novelty, AOV under \$40	TikTok (if available), Meta	—	Google Shopping, YouTube
Visual/lifestyle, AOV \$40 to \$100	Meta	Pinterest, TikTok	YouTube
Higher consideration, AOV \$100 to \$200	Meta	Google Shopping, Pinterest	TikTok
High AOV, \$200+	Google Shopping	Pinterest, YouTube	TikTok
Gifts/seasonal, any AOV	Pinterest	Meta	TikTok
Brand with strong search demand	Google Shopping	Meta retargeting	Pinterest
New brand, no search demand	Meta (demand creation)	TikTok (if available)	Google Shopping

**Tip:** These are starting points, not rules. Test your second-priority platform within 90 days of launching your primary. Waiting too long to diversify platform mix leaves revenue on the table and creates over-dependence on a single algorithm.

## SECTION 09

## Cross-Platform Attribution and Measurement

Every platform claims credit for your sales. Platform-reported ROAS is always higher than your actual return because every platform attributes conversions to itself using its own window. Managing a multi-platform strategy requires measurement that lives outside the platforms.

### THE ATTRIBUTION PROBLEM

A shopper who sees a Pinterest pin, watches a TikTok, clicks a Meta retargeting ad, and purchases gets counted as a conversion by all four platforms simultaneously. If you add up the ROAS from each platform, the total often exceeds your actual revenue. This is called attribution overlap, and it distorts budget decisions.

### MARKETING EFFICIENCY RATIO: THE METRIC THAT CUTS THROUGH THE NOISE

**MER = Total Revenue / Total Ad Spend (all platforms combined)**

MER does not care about which platform claims credit. It measures whether your total paid media investment is generating profitable revenue. Track it weekly. If MER holds steady or improves as you add platforms, the new platform is additive. If MER drops, something is cannibalizing rather than adding.

### MINIMUM ATTRIBUTION SETUP

**Step 1:** UTM parameters on every paid link, every platform, every campaign. Consistent UTM structure across all platforms so GA4 can differentiate sources.

**Step 2:** GA4 as your source of truth for traffic and assisted conversions. Set up conversion events in GA4 that match your paid media optimization events.

**Step 3:** Meta CAPI and Google Merchant Center feed connected and verified. Accurate data in means accurate data out.

**Step 4:** Weekly MER tracking in a simple spreadsheet: total revenue, total spend by platform, MER. Trend it over time.

**Step 5:** Monthly channel review using GA4 assisted conversions, not platform-reported ROAS, to make budget reallocation decisions.

**Key Insight:** Do not cut a platform because its reported ROAS is low. Check GA4 assisted conversions first. Pinterest and YouTube in particular generate purchase assists that show up as Meta or Google conversions because the final click happens elsewhere.

## SECTION 10

## The 90-Day Paid Media Roadmap

Building a multi-platform paid media strategy from scratch or rebuilding a broken one follows the same three-phase progression: establish foundations, add platforms systematically, then optimize allocation based on real data.

1

**Days 1 to 30: Foundation**

Audit pixel and conversion event setup across all active platforms. Fix tracking before spending more budget on misattributed data. Launch or restructure your primary platform (usually Meta) with correct Andromeda structure. Set up GA4 with consistent UTM tracking. Establish your MER baseline. Connect Google Merchant Center if not already live.

2

**Days 31 to 60: Platform Expansion**

Launch your second platform based on the platform selection framework in Section 8. Keep the primary platform stable — do not make structural changes while testing a new channel. Run both for 30 days minimum before drawing conclusions. Track MER weekly: if it holds steady or improves, the new platform is additive.

3

**Days 61 to 90: Optimization and Allocation**

Review GA4 assisted conversions and MER by platform. Shift budget toward the platform delivering the lowest blended CAC against your target LTV. Pause creative with consistently low performance on each platform. Launch your third platform if budget supports it. Set quarterly budget allocation based on 90-day data.

## 90-DAY SUCCESS METRICS

Metric	What to Track	Frequency
MER	Total revenue / total ad spend across all platforms	Weekly
CAC by Platform	Total platform spend / new customers acquired	Monthly
GA4 Assisted Conversions	Platform contribution to purchase path	Monthly
Creative Performance	CTR and purchase rate by ad and platform	Weekly
Platform ROAS	Individual platform return (context only, not conversions)	Weekly

**Paid Media Strategy?**

AI Advantage Agency builds and manages multi-platform paid media platform selection and initial setup through creative testing and cross-strategy is over-reliant on one platform or you are ready to expand, we call at [aiadvantageagency.com](http://aiadvantageagency.com)

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