



skai®

PAID SEARCH HOLIDAY PLAYBOOK

Prepare for the holiday season with tips
and best practices using Skai

Paid Search Market Insights

What to expect this holiday season

Every holiday season tells a different story

Consumer spending patterns continue to shift year to year, and 2025 is no exception. Budgets look uneven across generations—some shoppers are scaling back, others planning to spend more.

For marketers, that means the “average shopper” doesn’t exist. Success hinges on adapting campaigns to the realities of the moment: who’s spending, where demand is softening, and which audiences present the best opportunities.

Holiday search strategy in 2025 is less about predicting a single trend and more about staying agile as the season unfolds.

Holiday Budgets Shrink Nearly 23% for Gen Z in 2025, Largely Erasing Last Year’s Gains

average expected holiday spending among US consumers, by generation, July 2025

	2022	2023	2024	2025	% change (2024-2025)
Gen Z (17-27)	\$1,104	\$1,275	\$1,752	\$1,357	-22.5%
Millennials (28-43)	\$1,823	\$1,918	\$2,222	\$2,190	-1.4%
Gen X (44-59)	\$1,594	\$1,782	\$1,454	\$1,483	2.0%
Baby boomers (60-78)	\$1,199	\$1,148	\$1,126	\$1,180	4.8%

*Note: n=1,000 for each generation; holiday spending respondents plan to spend on themselves and others, including gifts, travel, and entertainment
Source: PwC, "Holiday Outlook 2025: A Seasonal Remix—Value, Meaning and Generational Shifts," Sep 3, 2025*

353844

EM | EMARKETER

Paid Search by the numbers

Search continues to anchor digital ad budgets in 2025.

\$138.24B

Total US Forecasted Paid Search spend in 2025

7.7%

Expected Paid Search growth from 2025-2026

\$70.39B

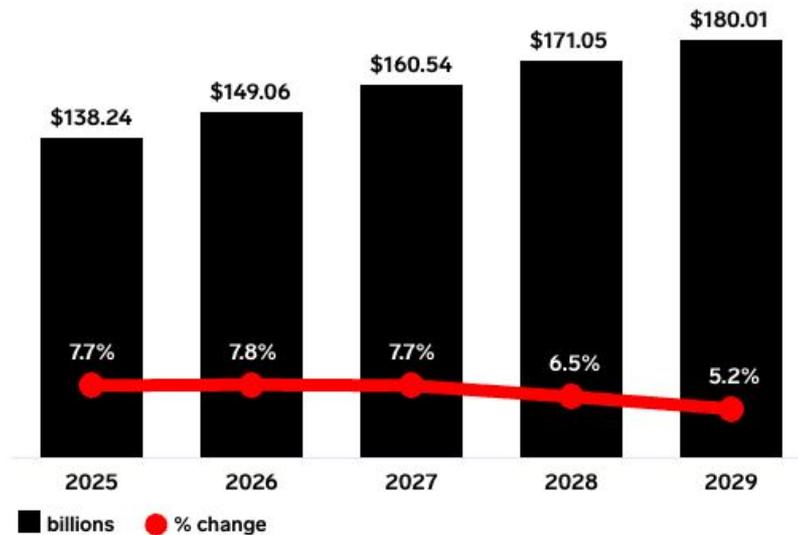
Google's share of U.S. Search ad revenue in 2025

\$31.2B

Amazon's U.S. Search ad revenue in 2025

Search Ad Spending

US, 2025-2029



Source: EMARKETER Forecast, July 2025 (see below for notes and methodologies).

EMARKETER



INTRODUCTION

As you prepare for the 2025 holiday rush, the Skai team has pulled together a playbook to help you capture every opportunity during the busiest shopping weeks of the year.

Beyond the season, Skai is here year-round to power your omnichannel marketing with a platform built to maximize performance across retail media, display, CTV, paid search and paid social at scale.

Inside, you'll find timely strategies, practical tactics, and expert recommendations to guide your holiday campaigns.



* YOUR FULL FUNNEL HOLIDAY TIMELINE

Phase 1



LEAD IN

Lay the foundation for peak season

Set up campaigns across channels, build monitoring and alerts, and lock in automation so you're ready before demand spikes.

Phase 2



GO TIME

Move fast as demand surges

Launch, monitor, and optimize in real time—adjust bidding, creative, and budgets to capture conversions as they happen.

Phase 3



LEAD OUT

Turn results into next year's advantage

Carry momentum forward by remarketing to undecided shoppers and using holiday insights to shape 2026 strategy.



PHASE 1: LEAD IN

Lay the foundation for peak season

Kick off planning with Celeste

Save valuable time by using AI prompts to guide your Q4 setup

- Ask Celeste to review last year's holiday performance and surface top-performing campaigns, keywords, and products worth prioritizing this season
- Use Celeste to forecast spend scenarios and recommend budget splits across Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Walmart before the rush begins

Example Celeste prompts for holiday planning

- *"Analyze my top-performing keywords from last year's Cyber 5 and suggest which to prioritize this season."*
- *"Identify underperforming campaigns and recommend budget reallocation before Black Friday."*
- *"Which product categories are trending upward, and how should I adjust bids?"*

SCENARIO: You want to streamline early-season planning. Instead of building manual forecasts, you prompt Celeste to analyze past performance and generate an optimal media mix for Q4. Celeste highlights high-ROI campaigns, flags budget risks, and outputs a ready-to-use plan you can refine further.



Streamline now, before the holiday chaos kicks in

- Bundle campaigns into [Skai Portfolios](#) so they stay organized and optimized—like wrapping gifts in matching paper
- Use [Bulk Edit](#) to sweep away outdated elements and cut down on clutter before the shopping rush
- Run [Audits](#) to double-check landing pages and offers, making sure no surprises derail performance when traffic peaks



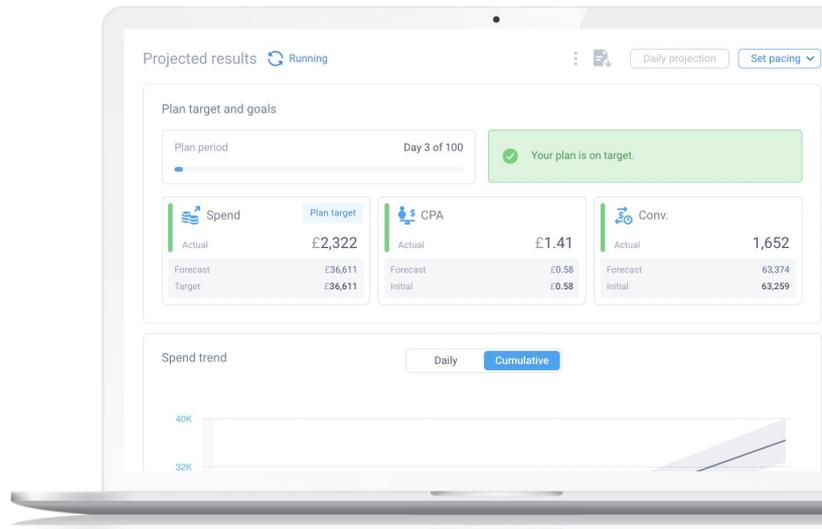
TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Show campaigns with similar CPA/ROAS targets and compare them to the segmentation of Portfolio Name column in the campaigns grid.



HOLIDAY
PRO TIP

Group campaigns with the same KPI into portfolios—then let Skai do the heavy lifting while you focus on the fun stuff (like watching the conversions roll in)



Stay ahead of demand before the holiday carts start filling

- Use **Smart Tags** in the **Products Grid** to surface fast-moving trends and make sure your campaigns are supporting them
- Lean on **Trending Products** to flag SKUs/ASINs gaining momentum so you can prioritize them at scale
- Adjust budgets quickly with **Smart Tag Panel data** to give rising stars more fuel and pull back on items losing steam

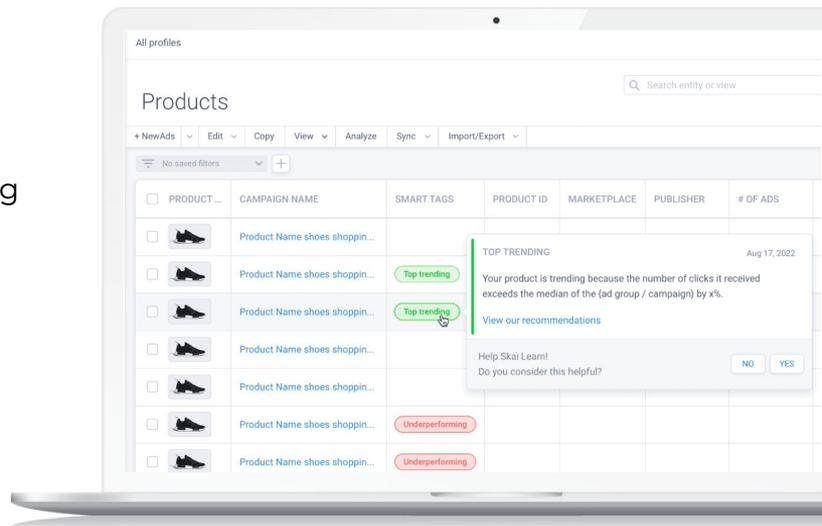


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Which products in my holiday campaigns show the fastest growth in clicks and conversions over the past 30 days?



SCENARIO: A certain style of headphones starts surging in popularity. With **Trending Products**, highlight the spike early, so you can shift spend, promote those SKUs, and cash in while the trend is hot.



The screenshot shows a 'Products' grid with columns for Product, Campaign Name, Smart Tags, Product ID, Marketplace, Publisher, and # of Ads. A tooltip is displayed over a 'Top trending' tag, providing details about the product's performance and offering recommendations.

PRODUCT ...	CAMPAIGN NAME	SMART TAGS	PRODUCT ID	MARKETPLACE	PUBLISHER	# OF ADS
	Product Name shoes shoppin...					
	Product Name shoes shoppin...	Top trending				
	Product Name shoes shoppin...	Top trending				
	Product Name shoes shoppin...					
	Product Name shoes shoppin...					
	Product Name shoes shoppin...	Underperforming				
	Product Name shoes shoppin...	Underperforming				

TOP TRENDING Aug 17, 2022

Your product is trending because the number of clicks it received exceeds the median of the (ad group / campaign) by x%.

[View our recommendations](#)

Help Skai Learn!
Do you consider this helpful?

Cut wasted spend by trimming weak keywords before the season kicks off

- Use [Search Term Analysis](#) to spot duds and redirect spend toward your proven winners
- Apply [Intent Driven Messaging](#) to align copy with what shoppers are really searching for—boosting both ad strength and click-throughs
- Lean on [Destination Optimization](#) to funnel traffic to the landing pages most likely to convert when holiday shoppers are ready to buy

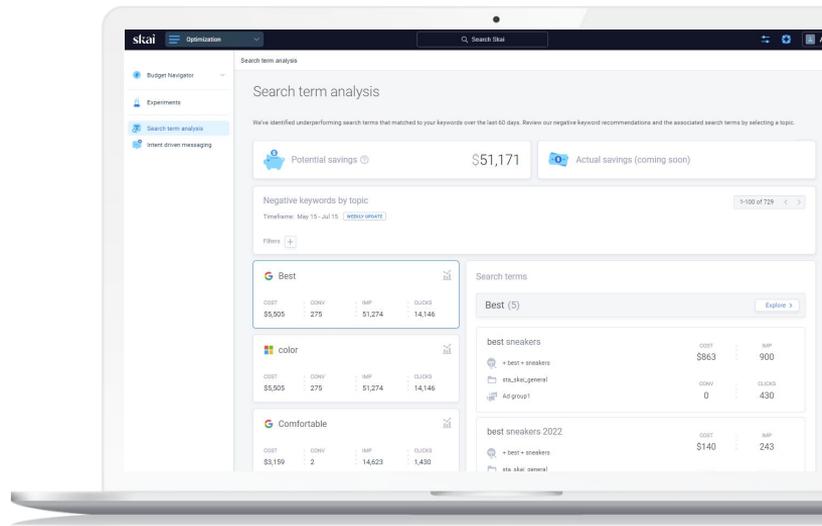


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Show me the search terms with high CTR but low conversion rate in Q4, 2024. Provide a strategy on how to better optimize low CVR keywords.



SCENARIO: Instead of letting low-intent keywords eat up your budget like fruitcake no one asked for, you scan your list with **Search Term Analysis**. The tool flags the duds, surfaces trending holiday phrases, and pairs the best terms with landing pages built to convert.



Group campaigns now so you're not sorting stockings later

- Keep campaigns tidy for faster analysis and optimization when the season gets busy
- Use [Custom Dimensions](#) and [Categories](#) to bundle ads, ad groups, and campaigns by theme—whether that's Black Friday promos, top categories, or gift-worthy products
- Unlock quick [bulk actions](#) and smarter reporting by keeping everything neatly packaged before the holiday chaos hits



TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Show me all campaigns with their current CPA and ROAS performance over the past 30 days, grouped by similar target ranges, so I can organize Custom Dimensions for better management.



Think of campaigns like holiday decorations—store them in the right bins (by promo, category, or brand) so you can find what you need fast when it's time to shine.

GROUP	CTR	CONV.	COST	COST/CONV.	CONV. RATE	REV.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ecommerce <input type="checkbox"/> Amazon <input type="checkbox"/> AmazonDSP <input type="checkbox"/> CitrusAd <input type="checkbox"/> Onite <input type="checkbox"/> GoPuff <input type="checkbox"/> Instacart <input type="checkbox"/> Kroger <input type="checkbox"/> Lowes <input type="checkbox"/> Macy's <input type="checkbox"/> Netstar360	17.41%	148,662.99	\$1,977,608.27	\$13.30	8.29%	\$10,519,495.53
	0.44%	1,101.99	\$2,675.63	\$2.43	35.62%	\$30,574.88
	0.43%	1.68	\$73.14	\$43.54	5.09%	\$719.52
	43.41%	11,004.36	\$62,236.11	\$5.66	34.01%	\$246,133.37
	5.46%	28,737.92	\$456,723.43	\$15.20	7.91%	\$1,933,454.90
	18.47%	6,533.20	\$5,185.45	\$0.79	500.63%	\$3,024.66
	0.46%	1,180.80	\$2,766.20	\$2.34	74.55%	\$4,991.67
	86.33%	48,959.44	\$1,135,350.28	\$23.19	4.13%	\$6,804,279.82
	6.62%	7,587.04	\$4,200.80	\$0.55	1,151.30%	\$568.09
	56.92%	19,563.68	\$200,021.12	\$10.22	14.16%	\$966,540.44
	---	---	---	---	---	---
TOTAL	1.43%	157,098.63	\$5,328,646.94	\$33.92	2.31%	\$11,841,491.10

Test early so you're not guessing on Black Friday

- Use [Experiments](#) to run A/B tests on bidding strategies, ad copy, targeting, and landing pages before the holiday frenzy hits
- Test & learn! Quickly see what's resonating and double down on winners while there's still time to scale

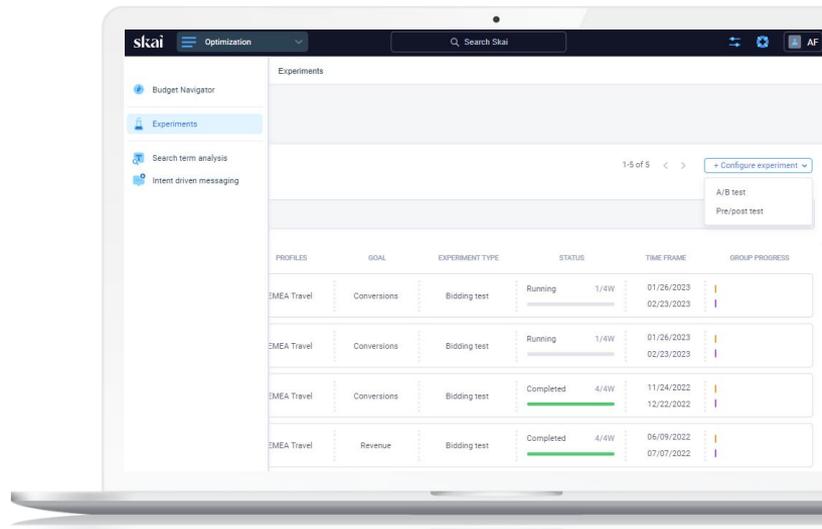


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Summarize results from my Experiments on bidding strategies to see which performed best.



Think of **Experiments** like holiday taste tests—sample a few recipes now, so you know exactly what to serve when the guests (aka shoppers) arrive in droves.



Mirror your audiences so you're not double-stuffing stockings

- Expand reach by using [Campaign Mirroring](#) to carry Google campaigns into Microsoft with ease
- Tap into your own first-party data and customer match lists to engage shoppers who already show intent for your products
- Find look-alike segments of your best customers to keep holiday messaging landing with the right crowd

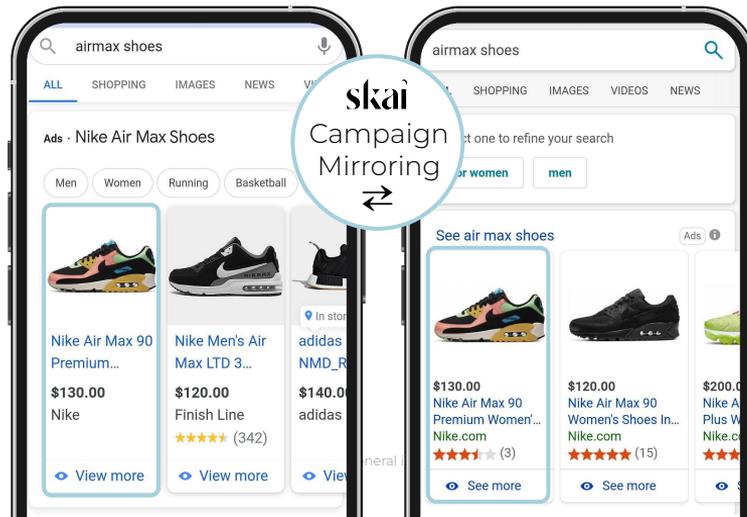


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Analyze mirrored campaigns showing the largest ROAS performance gaps compared to their source campaigns. Rank by highest variance and identify root causes for the differences



Use **Campaign Mirroring** like gift tags—set it once and everything stays organized, so your campaigns land in the right place without extra wrapping.



Automate now so you can sip cocoa later

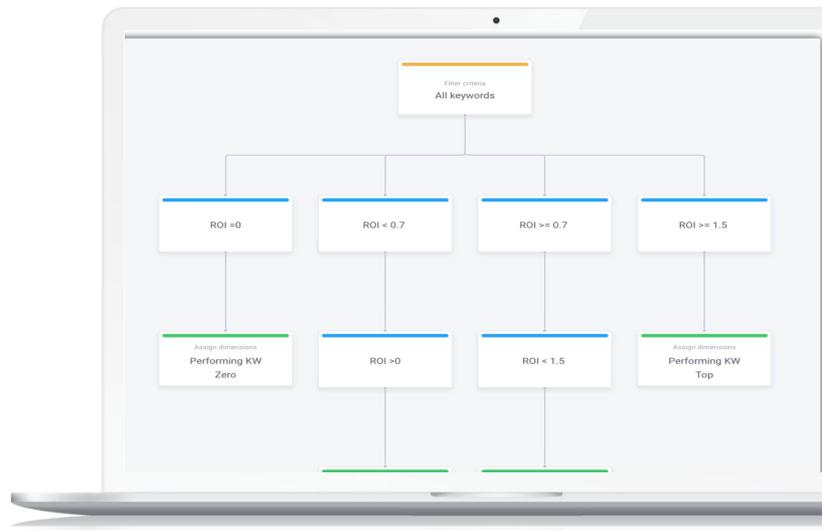
- Set up [Advanced Automated Actions](#) ahead of time to handle scheduling, budget, and KPI adjustments automatically
- Build and automate core reporting with [Scheduled Reports](#) and [Pacing Monitor](#) so you can track progress without babysitting dashboards

[Check out these sample Automated Actions you can use!](#)

SCENARIO: During the holiday rush, promos often run for just a few hours—like flash sales on stockings or last-minute shipping deals. Instead of manually pausing and restarting ads, you set up **Advanced Automated Actions** to switch campaigns automatically. General ads turn off, promo ads switch on, and you save yourself from playing whack-a-mole with campaign toggles.



Promotions pop up fast during the season—use **Advanced Automated Actions** like an extra set of holiday elves, pausing general ads and flipping on promo campaigns right when they're needed.



Build a plan of action for every scenario

- Use [Budget Navigator](#) to forecast daily spend and keep campaigns on pace—even when the holiday calendar throws in curveballs like early shipping cutoffs or surprise promos
- Set flexible allocations so you can give extra fuel to peak days (like Black Friday) and ease back when shoppers are just browsing

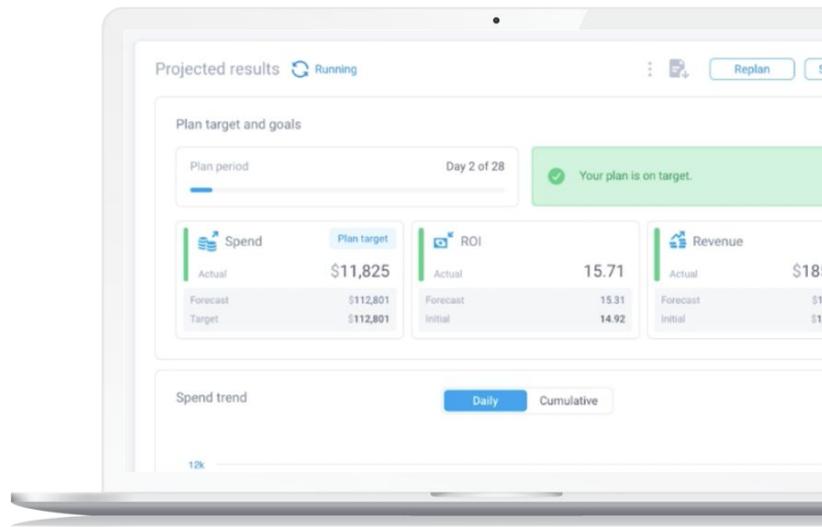


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

I have \$200k to allocate across campaigns in Q4 2025. Analyze current performance to recommend which campaigns to increase or decrease spend on to achieve an average 3.0 ROAS target.



You've got three big promotions running in December, but each needs a different pacing strategy. Instead of manually tweaking budgets every morning, you set up **Budget Navigator** to automatically boost spend on promo days, ease off on slow periods, and keep KPIs on track across the month.





PHASE 2: GO TIME

Move fast as demand surges

Expand and optimize before shoppers clear the shelves

- Use [Scheduled Reports](#) to get automatic updates in your inbox so you can stay on top of trends without logging in every hour
- Review [Advanced Automated Actions](#) and [Audits](#) to catch issues early and act on recommended fixes
- Check your [Skai portfolio](#) health and use [Budget Navigator](#) to confirm spend is pacing correctly—and adjust fast when traffic surges

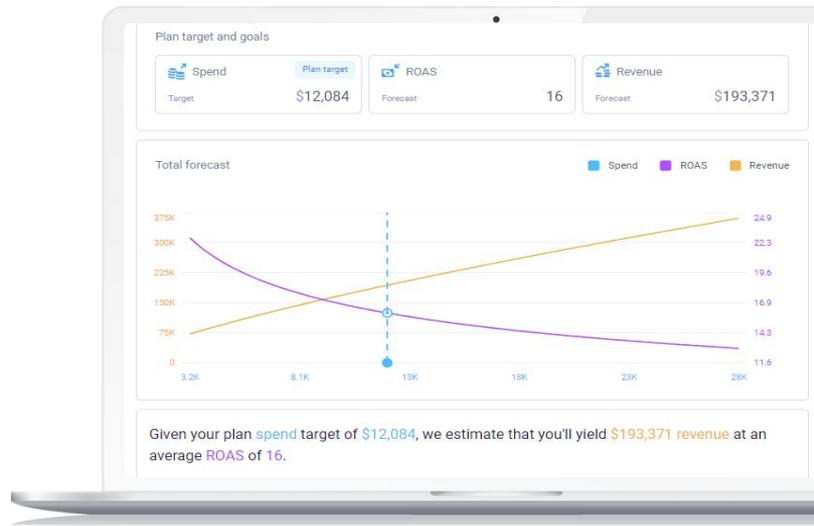


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Analyze my campaigns from Q4 2024 to establish monitoring thresholds. What daily percentage changes in impressions, cost, and clicks should trigger alerts for unusual spikes or drops?



Think of **Budget Navigator** as your holiday GPS—if your spend veers off track, alerts pop up so you can course-correct before you blow the budget.



Unwrap what's really inside your opaque campaigns

- Use [RSA asset performance](#) to dig into which assets are actually driving results and scale the winners
- Identify the [PMax assets](#) delivering the most impact so you can make smarter strategy calls instead of guessing
- View and report on [PMax search term categories](#) in the grid to confirm you're reaching the right shoppers at the right time



TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Which RSA assets in my dimension “Holiday Campaigns” are driving the highest CTR and conversion rates?

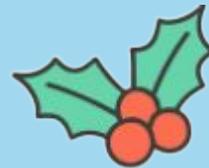


Think of RSA and PMax like mystery gift boxes—you don't know what's working until you peek inside. With RSA asset performance, you can see which assets are gems and which ones are just stocking stuffers

GROUP	# OF CAMPAI...	CAMPAIGN S...	CAMPAIGN ID	REV./CONV.	PROFIT		
Text	4						
<input type="radio"/> _G_UK_Internal_Travel			2231	\$0.00	205,996	2.7%	\$2,873.3
<input type="radio"/> *Paper TowelRSA (B)			kemshoo-apt-1...	5,294	205,996	2.7%	\$2,873.3
<input type="radio"/> Toys_STA_SP_Toys			kemshoo-apt-1...	5,294	205,996	2.7%	\$2,873.3
<input type="radio"/> _I_Brand_L5SA_Travel			kemshoo-apt-1...	5,294	205,996	2.7%	\$2,873.3
> Video	22						
> Display	5						
> Image	16						
> Shopping	83						
> Unassign	127						
TOTAL				\$77.05	\$194,777,824		

Fix campaigns faster than you can wrap a present

- Use [Performance Grids](#) to analyze performance across campaigns, ad groups, ads, and keywords all in one place
- Apply [Bulk Actions](#) to make updates at scale—tweaking copy, budgets, bids, match types, or keyword text without slowing down.
- Optimize:
 - Copy
 - Status
 - Budget
 - Bids
 - Match types
 - Keyword text



Think of **Bulk Actions** as your holiday assembly line—make one change and watch it roll out across thousands of ads, saving you time for the next big task.

The screenshot shows the 'Ad Groups' table in the Skai Performance Grids interface. The table has columns for Ad Group Name, Ad Group ID, Ad Group Status, Pending Lift, Profile Name, Campaign Name, Search Bid, and Ad Group Type. The data is filtered for 'Yesterday' and shows 11 rows of ad groups.

Ad Group Name	Ad Group ID	Ad Group Status	Pending Lift	Profile Name	Campaign Name	Search Bid	Ad Group Type	MPR
msar_adgroup	39661	On		US Retail	msar_hmk_1	\$0.05		
msar_adgroup_2	39660	On		US Retail	msar_hmk_2	\$0.05		
Slingback Shoes - Exact	39628	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Slingback Shoes - Phrase	39637	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Slingback Heels - Exact	39626	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Slingback Heels - Phrase	39635	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Slingback Shoes - exact	39634	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Slingback Shoes - Broad	39633	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Siletto Heels - Phrase	39632	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Siletto Heels - Exact	39631	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Womens Siletto Sandals - Exact	39630	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Womens Siletto Sandals - Phra...	39629	On		US Retail	GG00_Mem...	\$1.00		
Siletto Shoes - Phrase	39628	On		US Retail	GG00 Mem...	\$1.00		
TOTAL								



PHASE 3: LEAD OUT

Turn results into next year's advantage

Wrap up results so you can start the new year strong

- Use [dashboard reports](#) to slice and dice performance, analyze trends, and package insights to share with stakeholders
- Review results from [Experiments](#) you ran during the season and fold those learnings into next year's strategy
- Set up [Scheduled Reports](#) to automatically export data into FTP or cloud storage for seamless integration with your other reporting tools

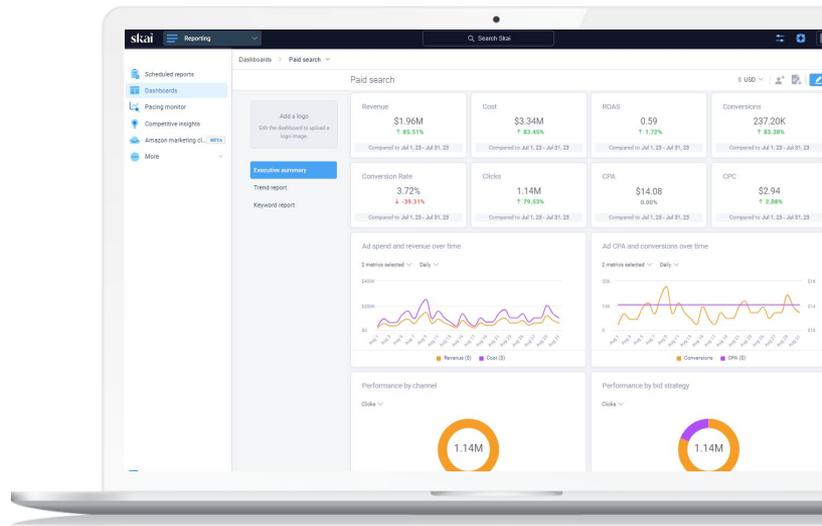


TRY THIS CELESTE PROMPT:

Pull a comparison of performance between Black Friday week and the two weeks after. Create a performance summary and optimization steps for the next 30 days.



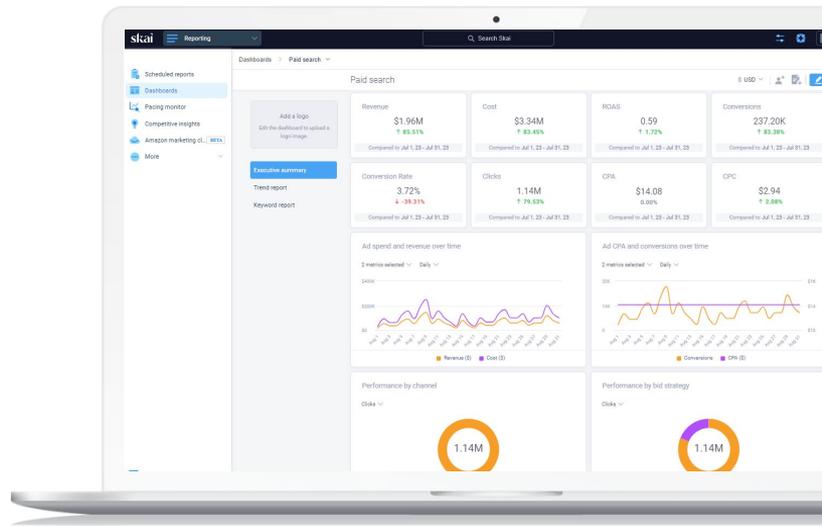
Think of dashboards like a holiday recap album—use them to capture the biggest wins, identify misses, and set yourself up to hit the ground running in 2026.



Turn holiday results into next year's game plan

- Use [Dashboards](#) to combine cross-publisher data into one clear view of your holiday performance
- Spot core trends, audience preferences, and untapped opportunities you can carry into your 2026 strategy

SCENARIO: After the Cyber Five, your manager wants a recap of how paid search performed. Instead of scrambling with spreadsheets, you open [Dashboards](#), pull up a ready-made Paid Search template across Google and Microsoft, and customize it to show the KPIs that matter most. With one click, you share the deck so your manager gets the holiday recap before their cocoa even cools.





skai®

THANK YOU

HOLIDAY PREP
BEST PRACTICES

Reach out to the Skai Team with questions. skai.io