

From Unprofitable to Scalable: The **ROAS Turnaround** of a Tanning Lotion Brand

Industry: Retail

Channels: Google Ads



Client Goal: Transform an unprofitable Google Ads account into a scalable acquisition channel by pushing ROAS above 100% and establishing a foundation for long-term ecommerce growth.



AdMax Local (AML) partnered with an Australian **tanning lotion brand** entering the U.S. market through Google Ads to help them maximize online sales and achieve profitability. When AML inherited the account, the client had never recorded a positive ROAS. Their advertising spend consistently outpaced revenue returns, and there was no clear path to sustainable growth. Working exclusively within Search campaigns, AML set out to turn that around.



The Challenge

The client came to AML with an account that had never been profitable. ROAS was sitting in the 40% range, meaning the brand was **losing money on every advertising dollar spent**, and there was no established optimization framework in place.

The engagement also came with structural constraints. Although AML recommended Performance Max (PMax) as a path to scale, the client had not approved it due to the effort required to build and integrate a product catalog.

That meant all performance gains had to be driven purely through Search campaigns, with no access to Google's broader AI-driven inventory.

Adding to the complexity, the brand's product terminology was built around Australian consumer language. Terms like "sunless tanner" saw limited search volume in the U.S., where consumers predominantly searched for "self-tanner." Without addressing this mismatch, ad copy and keyword targeting were generating low-quality traffic with weak purchase intent.



Our Strategy

AML's strategy focused on maximizing ROAS through **highly targeted Search campaigns** that could efficiently drive sales without requiring heavy creative production from the client. The approach centered on three priorities: stabilizing a loss-making account, improving traffic quality, and aligning messaging with how U.S. consumers actually search.

1. Performance Stabilization

The immediate objective was to stop the bleeding. AML closely monitored ROAS, Revenue, and Cost per Conversion to ensure every optimization moved the account toward profitability. The initial internal benchmark was to push ROAS above 100%, the point at which advertising spend begins generating a positive return.

2. Keyword Strategy Refinement

A major breakthrough came from identifying the terminology gap between Australian and American search behavior. By shifting targeting toward "self-tanner" and related high-intent U.S. search terms (away from "sunless tanner") the campaigns began reaching shoppers who were actively ready to buy. Keyword strategy was reviewed and refined on a continuous monthly basis throughout the campaign.

3. Ad Copy Optimization and A/B Testing

Ad copy was rewritten to reflect U.S. consumer language and purchase intent signals. Ongoing A/B testing allowed AML to identify which messaging combinations drove the highest engagement and conversion rates, with learnings fed back into each monthly optimization cycle.

4. Audience Targeting

Campaigns were structured to prioritize females ages 25–64, the core high-intent demographic for the self-tanning category. Targeting parameters were continuously refined to concentrate spend on searchers most likely to convert into purchases.



Results

Between February 3, 2025 and August 31, 2025, the campaign delivered a substantial performance turnaround across every major ecommerce KPI. The most significant acceleration occurred between March and July, where **ROAS grew from 49.89% to a peak of 151.22%** while acquisition costs simultaneously declined, a combination that reflects both improved traffic quality and stronger conversion efficiency.

ROAS more than tripled from its starting point, representing a **growth improvement of over 203%** across the reporting period. CTR improved from 3.42% in February to **15.84% CTR** in August (a 363% increase), indicating dramatically stronger audience engagement and improved ad relevance. Cost per Conversion dropped from \$49.90 in April to **\$25.27 CPC** in July, reducing acquisition costs by nearly 49% while conversion quality and overall revenue efficiency continued to improve.

Critically, these gains were achieved despite reduced overall spend, proving that the campaign was not simply generating more traffic but attracting higher-intent shoppers more likely to purchase. The account moved from a loss-generating channel into a profitable, scalable acquisition engine during peak tanning and summer demand periods, the highest-stakes window of the year for the category.



Looking Ahead

The turnaround created a strong foundation for the next phase of growth. Future initiatives will focus on expanding high-performing non-brand ad groups centered around best-selling products, incorporating additional creative assets to better communicate product benefits, and developing repeat purchase and customer retention strategies to capitalize on the brand's growing U.S.

customer base. As campaign efficiency has improved, the brand is now positioned to scale advertising spend with greater confidence while continuing to grow online sales and overall profitability.



Key Takeaway

Strong search intent, disciplined monthly optimization, and alignment between ad messaging and localized consumer behavior can significantly improve ecommerce profitability — even in a competitive beauty category, and even without Performance Max or heavy creative production. By identifying a simple but critical terminology gap and building a rigorous keyword and copy testing framework around it, AML transformed a chronically unprofitable account into a scalable revenue driver in under seven months.