



BALTIC GOOGLE SHOPPING · PLAYBOOK 2026

Google Shopping launch in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia

A practical guide for eCommerce stores: **from site preparation to your first sale.**

5 steps

1 → 5

Edition 1.0

EN

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Why this document

In autumn 2026, Google officially launches Shopping in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. For every online store in the Baltics, this is the first time in the region's history that local products with local prices and delivery will appear on Europe's main search shelf. Until now Shopping in the Baltics worked only through cross-border channels (PL, DE, FI); now local eCom finally has its own in-country shelf channel.

This playbook is a practical guide. No trend essays. No filler lines like "marketing is getting harder." Five concrete steps: what to fix on your site, how to set up Merchant Center, how to connect it to Google Ads, how to clean up your catalog and how to launch your first campaign. Each chapter ends with a checklist, the mistakes we see most often in Baltic accounts, and before / after examples.

Who this is for

- Owner or founder of a store with 100+ SKUs who wants Shopping as a new channel.
- eCommerce manager or Head of Marketing already running Google Ads, but never launched Shopping in the Baltics (because it didn't exist).
- Performance marketer or PPC specialist running a Baltic store who wants a ready-made launch plan with every pothole flagged.
- Agency setting up Shopping for clients – usable as internal training material.

What you'll get by reading to the end

1. A clear view of what's actually changing in the Baltic market and which of your categories win first.
2. A technical checklist: which languages, pages and data your site must have before launch.
3. A comparison of three feed export methods (manual, API, 3rd-party) with an honest read on cost and risk for different store sizes.
4. A title and description framework you can use to rewrite your first 50 SKUs in a day.
5. A step-by-step plan for your first Shopping campaign: Standard Shopping vs Performance Max, how to set the budget, what to do in the first 14 days.
6. A map of the 15 typical mistakes nearly every Baltic store repeats.

How to read this

30 minutes? Read the intro and the final checklist – enough to understand the scope and rally a team. 2 hours? Go chapter by chapter, flagging items that clearly apply to your store. Launching in 2–3 months? Walk through the whole playbook with your developer, content lead and the person who'll run Google Ads.



THE CORE IDEA

Google Shopping in the Baltics rewires search marketing in the region. Stores that prep before the launch will see disproportionately high ROAS in the first 60 days because the auction will be thin. Anyone who shows up six months late will be competing against accounts that already have history.

What Google Shopping is, in one page

Google Shopping is a search ads format where text ads are replaced by product cards — photo, price, store name and rating. Those cards appear in the main Google results, the dedicated Shopping tab, Google Images, YouTube, Discover and Gmail. All of them pull from one source: your product feed in Google Merchant Center (GMC).

For an advertiser this means three big things. One: the unit you promote is a product, not a keyword — most of the keyword-research overhead disappears. Two: serve quality depends on feed quality, not on how cleverly you write ad copy. Three: the user sees price and image before clicking, so clicks cost more but purchase conversion is higher.

What will happen in the Baltics at launch

Based on Shopping launches in other markets (Poland 2018, Finland 2017, Czechia 2016), the expected dynamic looks like this. In the first 4 weeks after the auction opens, CPC sits well below the European average because there are too few advertisers. Stores that prepped feed and site in advance accumulate conversion history and enter the algorithm's training sample. By the end of month two, larger regional retailers join, the auction tightens and CPC rises roughly 30–50%. By month six, average bids reach Polish levels.

~8

weeks of cheap impressions
after launch

+30–50%

CPC rise by end of month two

~6

months until bids match PL
levels

In practical terms: the cheap-impression window lasts about 8 weeks. Those 8 weeks are the most ROI-positive period of the entire first year of the Shopping channel. The whole playbook is built around one goal: be live on day 1 with a clean catalog and a working first campaign, not on day 60.

A note on numbers and tools

Every number in this document (CPC, ROAS, conversions) is based on 94n's aggregated data from Baltic and Polish eCom accounts in 2022–2025 plus public Google Ads case studies. They're a reference point, not a promise. Real-world results depend on vertical, average order value, margin, competition and feed quality. Setup steps follow current Google documentation (Merchant Center Help, Google Ads Help) and can change. If you see something different in the interface, trust the interface.

The five-step map

The full path to a working Shopping channel breaks into five stages, each with its own chapter. They run strictly in this order — you can't skip or reorder. Mistakes made early surface later as disapproved products and campaigns with zero impressions.

Step	What we do	Time	Owner
01. Site and languages	Localize content for target markets, add the required pages and trust signals.	1–3 weeks	Developer + content
02. Site → GMC	Create Merchant Center, export the feed via one of 3 methods, pass initial validation.	3–7 days	Developer / PPC
03. GMC → Ads	Create Ads account, link with GMC, set up Google Tag and conversion tracking.	1–2 days	PPC + analyst
04. Catalog	Fix titles, descriptions, images, categories, custom labels. Biggest time sink.	2–4 weeks	Content + PPC
05. Launch	Choose campaign type, set budget and bidding strategy, monitor for the first 14 days.	1 day + 14-day watch	PPC

Site and languages

Localization for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Merchant Center's technical requirements. The trust signals without which your feed gets rejected.

Google Shopping won't show your products in a country whose language your site isn't fully localized into. This is a technical requirement, not a marketing nice-to-have. Merchant Center checks: is there a Latvian version of the product page (for LV targeting), Lithuanian (for LT) or Estonian (for EE), and is it available at a valid URL? If not, the feed gets rejected on a per-country basis.

This first step feels boring next to the word "Shopping," but it decides which countries you can even bid in. A store with only Russian and English won't show in Lithuania. A store with Latvian and English gets LV access but not LT or EE.

1.1 Minimum language requirements by country

Country	Required language	Allowed additional	What Google checks
Latvia (LV)	Latvian	Russian, English	Product cards, return policy, contacts, prices
Lithuania (LT)	Lithuanian	Russian, English	Same set of pages in LT
Estonia (EE)	Estonian	Russian, English, Finnish	Same set of pages in EE

Additional languages help conversion, especially Russian in Latvia and Estonia where the Russian-speaking audience is substantial. But Merchant Center only needs one correct locale per target country. If your budget allows only one full translation right now, start with the language of the country where you already have sales and inventory.

1.2 What to translate (not just products)

A common mistake: stores translate only product names and descriptions and forget the supporting pages. Merchant Center rejects stores whose product page is in Estonian but whose shipping terms are English-only or lead to a 404.

The full list of what must be localized:

- **Product cards:** title, description, variants, price, availability.
- **Categories and navigation:** menu, breadcrumbs, filters, listing headers.
- **Cart and checkout:** including payment and shipping method names, address fields, error messages.
- **Shipping page:** times, rates, regions, pick-up options. Must be specific, not "we ship worldwide."
- **Returns and exchanges:** 14-day window per EU law, the process, who pays return shipping.
- **Contacts:** real address, phone, email. Without them Merchant Center flags scam.
- **Privacy / Cookies / Terms:** GDPR-relevant documents in the country language.

- **FAQ and support:** at least a basic section in the country language.

LOCALIZATION TIP

Baltic specifics: in Latvia and Estonia the Russian-speaking audience makes a meaningful share of eCom purchases (per TNS Latvia 2024 data, roughly 35% of online shoppers in LV). If budget allows, add Russian after Latvian. It lifts on-site conversion without affecting GMC approval.

1.3 hreflang and technical SEO markup

If your site has multiple language versions, Google needs to know which page belongs to which country. That's what hreflang tags in the head of every page are for. Without them, Google might serve a Lithuanian visitor the Latvian version, hurting campaign Quality Score.

Minimal example for a product page:

```
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="lv-LV" href="https://shop.lv/product/abc" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="lt-LT" href="https://shop.lt/product/abc" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="et-EE" href="https://shop.ee/product/abc" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="x-default" href="https://shop.lv/product/abc" />
```

Baltic URL structures usually take one of three forms: separate domains (.lv / .lt / .ee), subdomains (lv.shop.com, lt.shop.com), or subdirectories (shop.com/lv/, shop.com/lt/, shop.com/ee/). For Google Shopping all three work the same. For SEO and maintenance cost, subdirectories are often the best fit for a mid-sized store.

1.4 The trust signals you can't skip

Merchant Center has tightened its trust-signal checks over the past few years. In 2024–2025, Baltic stores got hit en masse with "Misrepresentation" disapprovals for exactly these issues. Run your site against the checklist before you upload the feed:

- **Contact page** with a physical address (not a PO Box), phone and email. Email must be on your corporate domain, not gmail.com.
- **SSL certificate** valid on the main domain and all language versions. Mixed content (HTTP images on an HTTPS site) breaks trust.
- **Payment methods** live and visible at checkout. Minimum: card (Stripe / Adyen / SwedbankGW). Ideally: Apple Pay, Klarna, bank transfer for the Baltics.
- **Legal identity:** company details (name, registration number, legal address) in the footer or on a dedicated page.
- **Return policy:** 14 days by default. The terms must match EU law and what you'll later declare in GMC.

SITE-READINESS CHECKLIST (CLOSE EVERY ITEM BEFORE MOVING TO STEP 2)

- ☐ Site fully localized for target countries (LV/LT/EE), every core page
- ☐ Hreflang tags set on all product and category pages
- ☐ SSL valid, no mixed content
- ☐ Contact page has address, phone, corporate email
- ☐ Company details visible (footer or dedicated page)
- ☐ Return policy matches the EU 14-day window
- ☐ Shipping described with specific times and rates by region
- ☐ Checkout supports at least card + one local method (bank transfer for LT/LV)
- ☐ Privacy policy / cookie banner are GDPR-compliant

Connecting the site to Merchant Center

Setting up GMC, feed export in three platform-specific ways, initial validation, and handling disapprovals.

Google Merchant Center is the free account where you upload your product catalog. From there Google builds Shopping ads, free product listings and other product formats. You can't launch Shopping campaigns in Google Ads without it — Ads pulls products straight from GMC.

This step has three tasks: create the GMC account, prove to Google you own the site (verify + claim), and upload the feed via one of three methods. Three days to a week, depending on the export method and how your site data is organized.

2.1 Creating the Merchant Center account

1. Go to merchants.google.com under the Google account that'll be the GMC owner. Use a corporate email, not a personal gmail. Owner accounts are painful to change later.
2. Fill in business info: legal name (exactly as in your site footer), country of registration (LV/LT/EE depending on where the company is registered), currency (EUR), time zone (Europe/Riga, Europe/Vilnius or Europe/Tallinn).
3. Verify the site URL one of four ways: via Google Tag Manager, via Search Console (if already verified there), via an HTML file on the server, or via a meta tag in the head. The easiest is Search Console if you already have it.
4. Claim the domain. Verify proves you can see the pages; claim proves only you can show products from that domain in Shopping. One URL can be claimed by only one GMC account at a time.

COMMON PITFALL

If the domain is already claimed (e.g. by an agency that worked with you before), you'll see an error. Fix: contact the previous account owner and ask them to release the URL, or open a Google Merchant Center support ticket with proof of domain ownership.

2.2 Three ways to export the feed

Feed export is the technical core of Shopping. Feed quality and update frequency drive everything: product approval, time to impression, accuracy of prices and availability. There are three ways, and the choice depends on your platform, catalog size and dev resources.

Method	When it fits	Pros	Cons
Manual XML / CSV / TSV	Catalog under 200 SKUs, prices change rarely, no dev resource.	Full control, zero plugin dependency, easy to eyeball.	Every price or stock change needs a manual re-export. High risk of drift from the live site.
Direct API (Content API)	1000+ SKUs, in-house dev, frequent real-time updates needed.	Real-time price and stock updates, regional support, sale_price, promotions.	Needs a dev plus ongoing maintenance. Bugs break the whole feed at once.
3rd-party tool / app	Stores on Shopify, WooCommerce, Magento, PrestaShop. Catalog 100–10,000+ SKUs.	Ready integration in a couple of hours. Auto-sync with the site. Multiple feeds supported.	Monthly fee (€20–€500). Quality depends on the vendor. Custom fields not always supported.

Method 1. Manual XML / CSV / TSV

The simplest and most fragile method. You export the catalog from your admin into a file (e.g. products.xml), upload it to GMC via the UI or expose it at a URL for GMC to fetch once a day. Fine if you have 50 products and prices don't move for weeks. On a 500+ SKU catalog it quickly becomes hell: every change needs a re-export, and the risk of showing an out-of-stock product in Shopping is high.

If you go this route, the minimum: schedule daily file generation on the server and configure the feed URL in GMC so Google fetches it itself. Don't upload manually – you'll forget.

Method 2. Direct API (Content API for Shopping)

The technically correct path for large stores. On every product change (price moves, last unit sold, variant added) your backend pushes an update to GMC via the Content API. The feed stays current with seconds of lag.

Cost: one to two weeks of senior dev time for the base integration plus ongoing maintenance. Worth it when: 1000+ SKUs, dynamic pricing, countdown promotions, multi-warehouse. Not worth it: a Shopify store with 300 products – the native Shopify connector does the same job in an hour.

Method 3. Ready-made connector / app

The most practical route for 80% of Baltic stores. Install the official app or integration, authorize it, pick catalog and country, hit Sync. The feed builds automatically and refreshes on a schedule (usually hourly or daily).

By platform:

Site platform	Recommended path	Cost / month
Shopify	Google & YouTube channel (official Shopify connector)	Free (channel)
WooCommerce	Product Feed PRO by AdTribes or CTX Feed	€0–€129
Magento (Adobe Commerce)	Channable, GoDataFeed or the Adobe-native module	€39–€500
PrestaShop	Google Shopping module from PrestaShop Addons or Channable	€80 one-off or subscription
Custom CMS	Channable or Feedonomics + custom mapping rules	€200–€800
BigCommerce	Google Shopping by Sales & Orders or Feedonomics	€39–€300

RISK MANAGEMENT

Every 3rd-party tool is a middleman between your site and GMC. When it breaks, the feed breaks. Before launch check: does the vendor have an SLA, how many incidents in the last 12 months, is support available in your working language. For critical launches at 94n we usually run Channable as the main connector and keep a backup manual feed ready.

2.3 Minimum feed structure

Whatever the export method, GMC requires a specific set of mandatory attributes per product. Without them the product won't pass initial validation.

Required attributes

- **id** – unique product identifier (SKU). Must not change over time.
- **title** – product title, up to 150 characters. Optimization details in chapter 4.
- **description** – up to 5000 characters. Realistically 300–800.
- **link** – canonical URL of the product page on the right language version.
- **image_link** – main image, minimum 100×100 px, recommended 800×800 on a white background.
- **availability** – in_stock, out_of_stock, preorder or backorder.
- **price** – price with currency: 49.99 EUR.
- **brand** – manufacturer. For private labels, your own brand name.
- **gtin** – EAN/UPC/ISBN. Required for branded products. For no-name items, replaced by mpn + identifier_exists: false.
- **condition** – new, refurbished or used.
- **shipping** – cost and time per country. Set at feed level or in GMC settings, but one of the two is required.

Useful optional attributes

- **additional_image_link** – up to 10 extra photos. Big impact on CTR.
- **color, size, material, gender, age_group** – for apparel and footwear some of these are mandatory, check the Google category requirements.
- **sale_price + sale_price_effective_date** – for time-limited price drops.
- **custom_label_0...4** – five free fields for campaign segmentation.
- **product_highlight** – up to 4 short bullet points with product benefits. Shown on mobile Shopping cards.
- **shipping_weight** – exact weight for shipping calculation.

2.4 Initial validation and what usually gets rejected

After the first feed upload, GMC runs an automatic check. 95% of new accounts see some products flagged. That's normal and fixable. The top 5 disapproval reasons we see in Baltic accounts at launch:

1. Mismatched price – feed price doesn't match the live site price (after tax, after coupons, currency).
2. Image too small – main photo under 100×100 px or in an unsupported format.
3. Missing required attribute (GTIN) – no EAN on a branded product.
4. Invalid product_type or google_product_category – category given as text Google doesn't recognize.
5. Landing page not crawlable – robots.txt blocks Googlebot or the page 404s.

Each of these takes minutes to fix. The point is: don't ignore the first-week warnings and don't launch campaigns with mass disapprovals – the algorithm only shows what's approved, and campaign quality suffers.

94N PRACTICE

Let the feed "settle" for 48–72 hours after the first upload. GMC runs multiple validation passes and some disapprovals clear themselves on re-crawl. If you're still seeing many disapprovals after 72 hours, work the list starting with the categories that drive the most revenue.

Connecting GMC to Google Ads



Creating the Ads account, linking, GA4-based conversion tracking, Enhanced Conversions, audiences and Customer Match.

Once the feed is approved and most products are live, link Merchant Center to Google Ads. Without this link there's no Shopping campaign – Google Ads pulls product cards directly from the linked GMC.

In parallel, set up conversion tracking. Without correct conversion tracking, every smart bidding strategy (Maximize Conversions, Target ROAS, Performance Max) won't work or will work blind. Do both tasks together: one day of work and you don't come back to them.

3.1 Creating the Google Ads account

1. Sign in at ads.google.com with the same Google account as Merchant Center, or one that has access to GMC.
2. Create a new Google Ads account: country where the company is registered, currency EUR, regional time zone.
3. In the setup wizard, skip creating a first campaign. The wizard nudges you into simplified Smart mode that's harder to reconfigure later. Switch to expert mode straight away.
4. If you already have an MCC (Manager Account, formerly "My Client Center"), create a sub-account under it – easier management, access handover and reporting.

3.2 Linking GMC ↔ Google Ads

Linking can be done from either side, usually easier from Merchant Center.

1. In GMC, open Settings → Linked accounts → Google Ads.
2. Find your Google Ads account by customer ID (format XXX-XXX-XXXX) and click Link.
3. Switch to Google Ads → Tools → Setup → Linked accounts → Google Merchant Center → Confirm.
4. After confirmation the link shows "Linked" status. If you run an MCC, you can link at MCC level – every sub-account then gets feed access automatically.

TECHNICAL NOTE

One GMC account can link to multiple Google Ads accounts – relevant for franchises, multi-brand setups or agency management. One Google Ads account links to exactly one GMC, so choose the primary GMC with a year-ahead view.

3.3 Conversion tracking: what to set up and how

For eCom the conversion is purchase. Additionally worth tracking: add to cart, begin checkout, account signup, newsletter subscribe. Without these signals the Google Ads ML only sees final purchases and optimizes too coarsely.

The base stack for eCom in 2026

- Google Tag (gtag.js) or Google Tag Manager on every page. One or the other, mandatory.

- GA4 as the main analytics counter. Links to Google Ads, lets you import audiences and events.
- Conversion goals in Google Ads: Purchase (primary), Begin checkout, Add to cart (secondary).
- Enhanced Conversions – mandatory. Passes buyer email/phone as a hash, raising attribution accuracy by 10–20%.
- Server-side tagging – strongly recommended. iOS tracking and cookie banners eat a meaningful chunk of conversions when measured via client-side pixel.

Minimum setup plan

1. Deploy GA4 on the site via GTM. Wire up enhanced ecommerce events: view_item, add_to_cart, begin_checkout, purchase.
2. In Google Ads create the "Purchase" conversion by importing from GA4 (Tools → Conversions → New → Import → GA4). Source of truth: GA4, not a separate Google Ads pixel.
3. Enable Enhanced Conversions: on the Purchase conversion → Settings → Enhanced conversions → On (via GTM with user-provided data).
4. Set Purchase as Primary, everything else as Secondary. The algorithm optimizes on Primary and uses Secondary to understand the path.
5. Verify firing via Google Tag Assistant and Google Ads → Conversions → Diagnostics. Should show "Recording conversions."

FROM THE FIELD

Common mistake in Baltic stores: 4 different conversions set up (separate Google Ads pixel, separate GA, Facebook, Hotjar) and every one reports a different number. Fix: one Purchase conversion, imported from GA4, as Primary. Everything else is for reports, not for optimization.

If you launch without server-side tagging, ship it within 60 days after Shopping goes live at the latest. The next iOS release can push data loss up by another 15–25%.

3.4 Setting shipping and tax in GMC

Before launching campaigns, check that shipping and tax are correctly configured in GMC. If the feed shows inaccurate shipping cost (e.g. "free shipping" while the site charges 4.99 €), products get disapproved for "data mismatch."

1. GMC → Settings → Shipping and returns → Add shipping service. Create a separate shipping service per country (LV/LT/EE) with real rates and times.
2. If you offer free shipping above a threshold, set up "conditional free shipping" in shipping settings, not in the feed. That puts the "Free shipping" badge on the card only for qualifying carts.
3. Tax: in EU countries VAT is usually already in the retail price. Check that GMC is set to "VAT included in price." Otherwise Google will assume VAT is added on top and recalculate the price.

3.5 Audiences and Customer Match

Conversions are the "what happened." Audiences are the "who." For Performance Max and retargeting campaigns, audiences are critical.

- Customer Match: upload your existing buyer list (email + phone, auto-hashed on Google's side). Used as audience signal in PMax and as an exclusion in acquisition campaigns.
- Site visitors via GA4: cart abandoners 7-day, page viewers 30-day, purchasers 60-day. Auto-imported from GA4 once linked.
- Lookalike (Similar Audiences): built automatically from Customer Match. Refreshes daily once the first conversions come in.



Catalog optimization

The longest stage. Title formula, descriptions, images, categories, custom labels, Reviews, Promotions, the top 10 disapprovals.

This is the biggest chapter for a reason. In Shopping your "ad" is the product card: title, description, image, price, brand, reviews. The ad copy you used to spend hours on in a regular search campaign isn't edited directly here — Google builds it from your feed automatically. So everything a copywriter does in a regular search campaign is done here by the feed optimizer.

Catalog optimization isn't a one-off task. It's a process: title formula, image checks, disapproval cleanup, title A/B tests. Stores that refresh the feed regularly run CTR 30–60% higher than those that uploaded the catalog once and never came back.

4.1 Title — the most important feed attribute

Title is the first (and often the only) thing a buyer sees. Google uses it for two things: matching against the query (where the buyer encounters your ad) and understanding which product this actually is (correct category, reviews, relevant filters). A good title lifts impressions and CTR at the same time. A bad one kills both.

The Shopping title formula

Brand + Product type + Key spec 1 + Key spec 2 + Size / color / pack

Title length — up to 150 characters, but the first 70 matter most: on mobile Shopping cards that's all you see. Put the most important info up front.

Before / after examples

Category	Before (doesn't work)	After (works)
Apparel	Black sweater	Tommy Hilfiger men's pullover sweater, wool, black, size L
Electronics	Wireless headphones	Sony WH-1000XM5 wireless noise-cancelling headphones, Bluetooth 5.2, black
Beauty	Moisturizing face cream	CeraVe Moisturizing Cream for dry face and body skin, 340 ml
Home & garden	Coffee machine	De'Longhi Magnifica S ECAM22.110 automatic espresso machine, silver

5 rules that lift CTR by 20–40%

1. Brand first. If the product has a recognized brand, leading with it boosts trust and clickability.
2. Size / volume / count as a number, not a word. "340 ml" outperforms "large pack."
3. Always state the color. Even when it seems obvious. Especially for apparel, footwear, furniture.

4. No marketing slogans in the title. "Best cream 2026!" kills the ad – Google demotes or disapproves these.
5. No ALL CAPS, no !!! . Auto-disapproval for promotional language.

94N USE CASE

AdPeak (our in-house tool at 94n) auto-generates titles from this formula across the whole catalog using brand, category, product attributes and regional search trends. We run it before and after optimization for audits to show clients the delta. If you don't have a tool like that, the formula above can be applied manually in Google Sheets for the top 200 SKUs in a day or two.

4.2 Description

Description matters less for matching but affects display quality and is used by PMax campaigns to generate assets. Up to 5000 characters, realistically 300–800.

Best practices

- The first 160 characters are key – they show in previews and are indexed for Shopping search.
- Structure: what it is → key specs → size / pack → compatibility / for whom → composition / material.
- No HTML tags. Plain text only. <p>,
, trigger validation errors.
- Don't restate the title verbatim. Description adds, doesn't duplicate.
- No keyword stuffing. Google detects it and drops the card's quality score.

4.3 Images

The image is the strongest CTR driver in Shopping after price. Baltic stores often lose to Swedish and Polish retailers precisely on imagery: photos with overlaid text, watermarks, low resolution, colored backgrounds.

Google technical requirements

- Minimum 100×100 px (apparel/footwear 250×250). Recommended 800×800 or larger.
- JPG or PNG. WebP isn't supported directly in the feed (fine on the site itself).
- File size up to 16 MB.
- No watermarks, no logos on top of the product, no promotional text, no frames, no "Sale", "New", "-30%" labels.
- No collages: one product per image.

What lifts CTR

- Clean white background for the main image. The standard across every successful eCom (Amazon, Zalando).
- Additional images (additional_image_link) from different angles, in use, in packaging.
- Lifestyle photos for apparel and furniture: product on a person / in a room. Not as the main image though – the main stays white-background.
- Lighting: the product is evenly lit, no harsh shadows.
- Consistent scale: within a category every product fills the frame at the same size. Creates a unified gallery look.

REAL NUMBERS

In 94n eCom audits we've seen stores with 40% of products disapproved for "promotional overlays on images." Fix: reshoot the top 20 SKUs and run automatic crop on the rest via ImageMagick / remove.bg. Reshoot cost in the Baltics: 5–15 €/SKU at 100+ units.

4.4 Google Product Category

Google Product Taxonomy is a hierarchy of roughly 6000 categories into which Google requires every product to fit. The exact category matters: it determines which queries the product shows up for, which Shopping feed it lands in (e.g. "Apparel & Footwear" has its own field requirements), and which reviews and featured formats are available.

How to set it right

- **By code:** every category has a numeric ID. Example: 1604 = Apparel & Accessories > Clothing > Tops. The most reliable way.
- **By full path:** as text, separated by >. Example: "Apparel & Accessories > Clothing > Tops". Must match the official taxonomy word for word.
- **Don't use free text:** Google won't recognize "apparel" or "outerwear".

Where to get the list

Download the full CSV from Google's official page: support.google.com/merchants/answer/6324436. The file is updated regularly. Use the version for your region / language.

4.5 Custom labels – the secret weapon

custom_label_0...4 – five free fields where you can put anything. Google doesn't use them for matching, but you can segment campaigns on them. Massive freedom for budget and bid management.

The typical eCom scheme

- **custom_label_0 = margin_tier** – low / mid / high. Used to split budget: high-margin products in an aggressive campaign, low-margin in a defensive one.
- **custom_label_1 = price_band** – under 30 € / 30–100 € / 100+ €. Separates low-priced from premium and stops the budget bleeding on cheap clicks in the low-conversion bucket.
- **custom_label_2 = lifecycle** – new_arrival / bestseller / clearance. Different strategies for different product lifecycle stages.
- **custom_label_3 = season** – ss26 / aw26 / all_year. Useful for seasonal apparel and gifting.
- **custom_label_4 = stock_level** – high / medium / low. Don't push a product with one unit left on shelf with an aggressive bid.

HEADS-UP

Custom labels don't help if you don't use them in the campaign. After labeling the feed, create separate ad groups (Standard Shopping) or asset groups (PMax) in Google Ads with inventory filters on those labels. Only then do they actually do something.

4.6 GTIN, Brand, MPN

GTIN (EAN/UPC/ISBN) is the global unique product identifier. Brand is the manufacturer. MPN is the Manufacturer Part Number.

- If the product is branded (Sony, Nike, Apple), GTIN is mandatory. Without it visibility is sharply reduced – or the product is disapproved outright.
- If it's your own production (private label, handmade), GTIN isn't needed – set `identifier_exists: false` and provide brand + mpn.
- If it's unique handmade (jewelry, paintings), `identifier_exists: false` without mpn is acceptable.

Where to find GTIN if it's missing

- Ask the supplier – the right way. A serious manufacturer ships GTINs with the price list.
- Check the packaging – the barcode with digits underneath is the EAN.
- Look it up via GS1 (gs1.org) – the official registry.
- Don't invent GTINs. Google validates them against a database, and invalid codes lead to account suspension.

4.7 Price and availability

These two attributes need real-time sync. Price mismatch between feed and site is the most common disapproval cause after images.

Rules that save pain

- Feed price is the final price – including VAT and all mandatory fees. No coupons, no "card discount" pricing.
- `sale_price` – for temporary drops. Set `sale_price_effective_date` with explicit start and end dates. After expiry the base price returns automatically.
- `availability` refreshes at least once an hour. Stores with real stock counts should use API or a connector with auto-sync.
- Don't set "in_stock" for made-to-order items. Use `preorder` with `availability_date`.

4.8 Reviews and Product Ratings

Stars next to a product card lift Shopping CTR by 25–35% on average. They don't appear automatically: to show ratings you connect one of Google's official Reviews partners or certify your own review system.

Two paths for Baltic stores

- Through a third-party provider: Trustpilot, Yotpo, Reviews.io, Bazaarvoice, Trusted Shops. The fastest path – two or three days to integrate. From €30/month.
- Through your own review system: Shopify/WooCommerce stores can connect native reviews directly to Google Customer Reviews (free). Requires at least 100 orders per month to activate.

Once you collect 50+ reviews on a single product (or 100+ on a brand), stars start showing in Shopping ads. One of the cheapest ways to lift CTR without rewriting the feed.

4.9 Merchant Center Promotions

Promotions are special badges on the Shopping card: "-10% promo", "Free shipping over €50", "Buy 2 get 1". They appear under the regular price and substantially boost CTR during sales. Many Baltic stores don't use them and miss the chance to stand out on Black Friday and seasonal campaigns.

How to set it up

1. GMC → Marketing → Promotions → New promotion.
2. Set the type (% off, fixed amount off, free gift, free shipping), conditions (minimum cart, specific products via product_ids), start and end dates.
3. The promo goes through review within 24–48 hours. Submit ahead, at least 3 days before the campaign starts.
4. You can upload in bulk via a separate promotions feed for scale (dozens of concurrent promos).

WHAT WORKS IN THE REGION

The most common use case in the Baltics: free shipping over €30. Switching on this single promo typically lifts Shopping conversion by 8–15%, especially in categories with high shipping cost (beauty, small electronics, accessories).

4.10 The top 10 disapprovals and how to fix them

Disapproval reason	What it means	How to fix
Mismatched value (price)	Feed price doesn't match the live site	Check with VAT included, no coupons, same currency
Mismatched value (availability)	Feed availability doesn't match the site	Switch on real-time sync, check structured data
Image too small / poor quality	Image < 100×100 or watermarked	Upload hi-res with no overlay, 800×800 minimum
Missing GTIN	Branded product without EAN	Request from supplier, add to feed
Misrepresentation	Site doesn't inspire trust	Run chapter 1 checklist: contacts, policies, legal details
Promotional overlay on image	"Sale" text on the image	Reshoot or replace with a clean photo
Restricted product	Product fell into a restricted category	Check alcohol/health/healthcare/firearms
Invalid product_type	Category given as free text	Set the ID or full path from official taxonomy
Landing page not crawlable	Robots.txt blocks or page 404s	Open up to Googlebot, fix the URL
Inappropriate content	Adult / inappropriate content	Edit the text, remove harsh phrasing

Launching Shopping campaigns

Standard Shopping vs Performance Max. Account structure, bids, budget. The first 14 days. Free Listings. Black Friday in the Baltics. Scaling.

Everything until now was prep. Now it's the go-live moment. You have a ready site, a populated feed, linked accounts and working conversion tracking. All that's left is to build the first campaign right and not break it in the first two weeks.

The main fork in the road: Standard Shopping or Performance Max. Two completely different approaches with different costs of being wrong. Most online guides say "start with PMax, it's smart." In reality, for most Baltic stores at launch, the better choice is Standard Shopping. Here's why.

5.1 Standard Shopping vs Performance Max

Criterion	Standard Shopping	Performance Max
Where it shows	Shopping only (Search + Shopping tab + Images)	Everywhere: Search, YouTube, Display, Gmail, Discover, Maps
Control	High: bids, search terms, negatives	Low: black-box ML with asset signals
Transparency	Every query, every product, every bid is visible	Aggregated insights only
ML data needs	Launches at any conversion volume	Minimum 30–50 conversions per 30 days
Suitable for launch	Yes, ideal	Only with history

If you're launching Shopping for the first time, you don't have 30 conversions in the last 30 days. Performance Max in that situation "learns" from foreign signals and often delivers a poor result for the first two months because the algorithm has nothing to optimize on. Standard Shopping during the same window behaves predictably: you see the queries, adjust the bids, cut off irrelevant traffic.

Recommended Baltic launch strategy: weeks 1–8 — Standard Shopping only. Once you cross 50+ conversions, open a parallel PMax with a smaller budget and watch for 30 days. If PMax delivers better ROAS, shift budget across and keep Standard as a defensive channel. If worse, keep Standard as the main one.

COUNTER-INTUITIVE ADVICE

Performance Max is a powerful tool in experienced hands. But for a first launch it's a car with no dashboard. When something goes wrong, you only see the outcome: budget spent, conversions thin. Standard Shopping shows the why. That's the difference between an experiment and learning.

5.2 Account structure for launch

The baseline structure for a 500–5000 SKU store:

1. Campaign 1: Shopping — Top sellers (custom_label_2 = bestseller). High priority, target ROAS 400%. Bid high enough to win the auction on your hero products.

2. Campaign 2: Shopping — Catalog (everything else). Medium priority, Maximize Conversion Value. Starting budget at least €30/day for statistical significance.
3. Campaign 3: Shopping — Brand defense (if you have an own brand). Low priority (on brand queries the higher-priority campaign wins — not this one). Narrow product set.

Shopping priorities (Low / Medium / High) are how Google decides which of your own campaigns wins the internal auction when the same product overlaps. High always beats Medium, Medium always beats Low. Lets you push certain products forward regardless of bid.

5.3 Bidding strategy

What to pick for the first 14 days

- Maximize Conversions — at launch, before value data exists. The algorithm optimizes on number of purchases, not order value.
- Maximize Conversion Value — once transaction values (revenue per purchase) are firing correctly. The right move because one €200 sale is worth more than two €30 sales.
- Target ROAS — only when you have stable history (minimum 30 conversions per 30 days) and a realistic ROAS target. Set too high and it strangles the campaign — the algorithm stops serving.
- Manual CPC — rare, but sometimes. For very narrow campaigns with clean semantics.

How to set the starting budget

The minimum budget for statistical significance is around 30–50 €/day per campaign. Under 20 €/day a campaign can't learn because there are too few clicks per day. With 30 €/day, one strong campaign beats three weak ones at €10 each.

For the starting budget calculation we use a simple formula:



94N FORMULA

Daily budget = (target CPA × desired daily conversions) × 1.3

Example: target CPA = €25, want 4 purchases/day = €100 × 1.3 = €130/day starting budget. The 1.3 multiplier is the "learning tax" — the first weeks the algorithm spends part of the budget on tests.

5.4 Geo-targeting in the Baltics

Launching in one country (Latvia, say) is straightforward: set LV in location settings and go. The complexity shows up when you target LV+LT+EE at once.

Two approaches

- One campaign across all three countries — easier to manage but loses per-country analytics and country-specific bidding strategies.
- Three campaigns, one per country — more work but each country gets its own budget, ROAS and lets you respond differently.

For Baltic launches in 2026 we recommend the second option. Buying behavior across LV/LT/EE differs enough (different top categories, different peak hours, different basket structure) that mixing them in one campaign means losing some control.

5.5 First 14 days: what to do and what not to do

What we do

- Day 1: launch the campaign, confirm impressions land in 2–4 hours. No impressions after 24 hours = bid, budget or disapproval problem.
- Days 2–7: review search terms daily (Standard Shopping only), add negative keywords for irrelevant queries.
- Days 7–10: first adjustment via custom labels — pull from rotation any products burning budget without conversions.
- Days 10–14: first report. Cross-check Google Ads numbers against GA4 (10–15% drift is normal, more = tracking problem).

What we don't do

- Don't change bidding strategy more than once a week. Every change restarts the learning phase for 7 days.
- Don't panic if no conversions in the first 3–5 days. The algorithm is learning. Conversions usually start landing on days 4–7.
- Don't pause the campaign overnight unless you're strictly B2B. Baltic eCom conversions often arrive 21:00–23:00.
- Don't add 50 negative keywords in one day. Kills reach. Clean queries gradually.
- Don't try to launch Standard, PMax and Search at the same time. One channel → stabilize → next one.



BOTTOM LINE

The most expensive mistake in month one of Shopping is impatience. The store launches a campaign, sees "spent €200, 0 conversions" on day 3, panics, kills it. The algorithm didn't have time to gather signals. Set yourself a rule: first 14 days are observation, not optimization. Adjustments only for obvious breakage.

5.6 Free Product Listings — the free channel most stores miss

Once GMC approves your products, they're automatically eligible for Free product listings: free impressions in the Google Shopping tab, Google Images and Google Lens. Nothing to configure — if the feed is approved, listings are already live.

Free listings don't match Shopping Ads on traffic volume, but they add 5–15% to total impressions and conversions for free. To squeeze more out, optimize titles and categories as carefully as for paid — the ranking algorithm for free listings and paid Shopping shares the same signals.

5.7 Seasonal campaigns and Black Friday in the Baltics

Q4 is the peak season for Baltic eCom. Black Friday in LV/LT/EE became a real event in 2019: in 2024 those days outsold an average weekday by 4–6×. If your Shopping channel launches in autumn 2026, BFCM lands in the first 60 days. Prep is mandatory.

4 weeks out from Black Friday

- 4 weeks out: create a dedicated "BFCM" campaign with inventory filter on custom_label_2 = bfc_m_promo. Drop in every product that's definitely going on sale.
- 3 weeks out: prep promotions in GMC. Submit at least a week before kickoff – they go through review.
- 2 weeks out: raise the daily budget of the main campaign by 50%. The algorithm needs to "settle" at the new level before the peak.
- 1 week out: load-test the site. A 4-hour outage on Black Friday = €5,000–€50,000 lost.
- On BFCM day: budget ×2.5–3 of normal. ROAS those days typically runs 30–50% above average.
- After BFCM: return to normal budget over 3–5 days (not instantly, to avoid spooking the algorithm).

5.8 When and how to scale

If on day 14 the campaign is profitable (ROAS above target), the natural impulse is to double the budget. Don't. A sharp budget increase (>20% at once) triggers a new learning phase and often breaks a campaign that was running smoothly.

The 20% rule

- Raise the budget by at most 20% of current weekly.
- After each raise, watch for 3–4 days. ROAS holds = continue. ROAS drops = roll back.
- When you hit "budget isn't the ceiling" (impression share lost due to budget < 5%) – stop scaling via budget. From there scale through catalog expansion and new campaigns.

What to add next

1. Performance Max on part of the catalog – usually after 50+ conversions. Test 30 days, compare ROAS to Standard.
2. Brand Search campaign (defense against competitor hijack).
3. Generic Search on top 10 categories – supports Shopping via text ads.
4. YouTube + Demand Gen for top-funnel work if buyer LTV allows awareness investment.

Bonus: title templates for the top 10 categories

This table is a practical tool. Take it, swap variables for your data, and in 1–2 hours you can rewrite the first 200 SKUs without an analyst or copywriter. The templates have been tested across our client base and produce CTR 25–40% above "default" CMS titles.

Replace variables in curly braces with concrete values. If a field doesn't exist, drop the whole word – don't leave **{empty}**.

Category	Title template	Example
Apparel	{Brand} {Type} {Style/cut} {Material}, {Color}, size {Size}	Tommy Hilfiger men's shirt regular fit cotton, light blue, size L
Footwear	{Brand} {Type} {Use} {Material}, {Color}, size {EU}	New Balance 574 casual sneakers suede, grey, size 42
Electronics	{Brand} {Model} {Type} {Spec}, {Color / memory}	Apple iPhone 15 smartphone 128 GB, 6.1", blue titanium
Appliances	{Brand} {Model} {Type} {Function}, {Dimensions}, {Color}	Bosch SMS24AW01E dishwasher 60 cm, 12 settings, white
Beauty	{Brand} {Line} {Type} for {Skin/use}, {Volume}	CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser for dry facial skin, 236 ml
Fragrance	{Brand} {Name} {Concentration} {Type} {Volume}	Dior Sauvage Eau de Parfum men's fragrance 100 ml
Home	{Brand} {Type} {Style} {Material}, {Color}, {Size}	IKEA Hemnes dresser Scandinavian solid pine, white, 108×96×50 cm
Sports	{Brand} {Type} for {Sport} {Level}, {Color}, {Size}	Decathlon Quechua hiking tent 2-person, green, waterproof 3000 mm
Kids	{Brand} {Type} for {Age/gender}, {Material}, {Color}, {Size}	Reima winter overall for girls 4–6 yrs, membrane, pink, 110 cm
Food	{Brand} {Name} {Composition/type} {Feature}, {Weight/volume}	Bjorg oat milk unsweetened organic, 1 L

HOW TO MEASURE THE IMPACT

94n tip: after rewriting the first 50–100 titles, always measure 7-day baseline CTR in Standard Shopping. Then 7 days with the new titles. If the lift is below 15%, the template needs adaptation for your audience. Usually that's pulling color and size earlier – or, conversely, adding a more precise spec (model, year, version).

Pre-launch readiness checklist Google Shopping

Print this page and run through it before you click Enable on the first campaign. If even one item isn't closed, push the launch date. Saves budget and saves nerves.

SITE

- ☐ Full localization for target countries (LV / LT / EE), not just products
- ☐ Hreflang tags set and validating (verified via Search Console)
- ☐ SSL valid on every language version, no mixed content
- ☐ Contact page: address, phone, corporate email
- ☐ Company details on the site (footer or dedicated page)
- ☐ Return policy – 14 days, EU-compliant
- ☐ Shipping described with rates and times by region
- ☐ Payment methods working (minimum: card + bank transfer)
- ☐ Privacy / Cookie / Terms in each country's language

MERCHANT CENTER

- ☐ Account created, legal details match the site
- ☐ Domain verified and claimed
- ☐ Shipping services configured for every target country
- ☐ Tax correctly marked as "included"
- ☐ Feed uploaded and auto-refreshing
- ☐ Disapproval rate < 10% of catalog
- ☐ Top 100 SKUs all approved
- ☐ Add shipping, times and a link to the return policy in GMC

GOOGLE ADS

- ☐ Account created in expert mode
- ☐ GMC linked to Ads
- ☐ Billing set up (card or invoice)
- ☐ Conversion tracking: Purchase imported from GA4
- ☐ Enhanced Conversions on
- ☐ Audiences (Customer Match, site visitors) loaded
- ☐ Campaign structure planned and agreed

CATALOG

- ☐ Title optimized by the formula for the top 200 SKUs
- ☐ Descriptions on top 200 SKUs without HTML or keyword stuffing
- ☐ Main images on white background for top 200 SKUs
- ☐ Google Product Category set correctly for every product
- ☐ Custom labels applied: margin_tier, price_band, lifecycle
- ☐ GTIN present on every branded product
- ☐ Feed prices match the site on a random sample of 20 SKUs

Top 15 mistakes in Baltic eCom stores

This list was assembled from audits the 94n team ran for Baltic eCom stores in 2023–2025 ahead of Shopping launches in neighboring regions (PL, FI). Most mistakes show up audit after audit. Read the list ahead of time — half of them take an hour to fix when you know where to look.

1. Launching with a feed at >30% disapproval. Campaigns only run on approved products. With fewer than two-thirds of the catalog approved, budget burns on a skewed sample.
2. Title = "the name on the site." Site titles are written for humans, Shopping titles for the algorithm. Different rules, different results.
3. Watermarked images with "Sale" text. Auto-disapproval. Fixed only by reshoot or batch overlay removal.
4. One Performance Max across the whole catalog on day one. With no data the algorithm optimizes against random products — usually the cheap, low-margin ones.
5. One shipping setup across all countries. If actual shipping cost differs between LV, LT and EE, the feed keeps tripping over mismatched values.
6. Purchase conversion set up in Google Ads, not imported from GA4. Double-counting, drift vs real analytics, the algorithm learns on the wrong signal.
7. €5/day budget. The campaign can't collect enough data. Shopping minimum: €30/day per campaign.
8. Changing bidding strategy every 3 days. Every change kicks off a 7-day learning phase. The campaign never leaves training.
9. Launch without Customer Match. Existing buyers are the main signal for the algorithm. Without them PMax targeting goes random.
10. Ignoring custom labels. Without them you can't separate high-margin from low-margin products and the algorithm optimizes against your margin.
11. No server-side tagging. 15–25% conversion loss on iOS already at the start of 2026.
12. Every product in one price-band campaign. Cheap high-CTR items eat the budget; premium products don't show.
13. No brand defense in search. Competitors bid on your brand. Buyers who searched for you specifically end up at theirs.
14. Launching without a localized landing page. A Lithuanian clicks in Lithuania, lands on a Latvian page — zero conversion, 100% bounce.
15. No action plan for the first 14 days. Chaotic edits or, conversely, total silence. Both hurt.

Glossary

Most Google Shopping and Google Ads terms only exist in English. Short definitions here for quick reference.

Term	Definition
GMC (Google Merchant Center)	The free account where the product catalog lives. Data source for Shopping ads.
Feed	File (XML/CSV/TSV) or API stream of product data: SKU, price, images, availability.
Standard Shopping	Google Ads campaign type showing product cards based on the feed. Controlled, transparent.
Performance Max (PMax)	The "everything included" campaign type: serves Search, YouTube, Display, Gmail, Discover. ML-driven.
ROAS	Return on Ad Spend. Revenue divided by ad spend. 400% = €4 of revenue per €1 of spend.
CPA	Cost per Acquisition. Cost per conversion. Calculated as ad spend ÷ conversions.
CPC	Cost per Click. Price of one click. Ranges from €0.10 to €5+ depending on category.
CTR	Click-through Rate. Percentage of users who clicked the ad. Good Shopping CTR: 1–4%.
GTIN (EAN/UPC)	Global unique product identifier. The barcode Google uses to recognize a product.
MPN	Manufacturer Part Number. Used in place of GTIN or alongside it.
Custom Labels	Five free fields in the feed (custom_label_0...4) for your own tags and segmentation.
Disapproval	Google rejecting a product or account for a policy violation.
Free product listings	Free product impressions in Google results and the Shopping tab. Run on the same feed data.
Smart Bidding	Automated bidding strategies (Maximize Conversions, Target ROAS, Maximize Conversion Value).
Learning phase	Period (5–14 days) when the algorithm gathers data after a launch or significant campaign change.
Customer Match	Uploading an existing buyer list into Google Ads for retargeting and lookalike audiences.
Enhanced Conversions	Passing buyer email/phone as a hash. Improves attribution accuracy.
Asset Group (PMax)	A group of creative assets and signals inside a Performance Max campaign. The PMax equivalent of an ad group.
Inventory Filter	Rule for selecting products into a campaign based on feed fields (e.g. on custom_label).
Search Terms Report	Report of actual queries that triggered the ad. Available in Standard Shopping.

Performance marketing for **Baltic eCom.**

94n is a performance marketing agency headquartered in Riga with launch experience across dozens of eCom verticals. In 2025 our team won the **Global Search Award** and the **UK Search Award** for work with international eCom clients. One of the things that made that possible is our in-house tool **AdPeak**.

AdPeak is a tool for Shopping feed optimization and Performance Max management at scale. It automates what this playbook describes manually: rewrites titles by formula, flags disapprovals, tests segmentation via custom labels and suggests which products to pull from a campaign.

If a Baltic Shopping launch is on your Q3–Q4 2026 plan

This playbook covers 90% of the technical side. The remaining 10% is practice: real feeds, real auctions, real competitors, real first-14-days mistakes. We deliver that part for clients as ongoing work.

What we offer stores preparing for launch

Free pre-launch audit — a 30-minute call reviewing your current site, feed and launch plan. No commitment.

Shopping Launch Package — a fixed-price 6-week program: GMC setup, feed optimization, first-campaign launch, learning-phase support.

Monthly retainer — ongoing management of the Shopping channel and adjacent campaigns (Search, PMax, Demand Gen) with monthly reporting.

Contact

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The team is based in Riga, working with clients across LV, LT, EE, with deep Google Shopping experience across Europe and the US.

AFTERWORD

This playbook is free. Pass it on to colleagues and partners — an informed Baltic market is worth more than locked-up knowledge. If something's out of date or you spot a mistake, drop us a line at **nauris@94n.digital**. The next edition comes out in autumn 2026 — after the real Google Shopping launch in the Baltics. It'll include a chapter on "How it actually went."