GOOGLE ADS CASE STUDY:

REDUCING CPA BY 59%

SINGLE KEYWORD ADGROUPS

I CUT ACQUISITION COSTS BY 59% AND INCREASED CONVERSION VALUE BY 39%.

Springer Nature is one of the world's foremost academic publishers, best known for high-impact journals such as Nature Communications. Its Author Services division supports researchers with editing and proofreading, and this Google Ads campaign operated as one component of a broader paid media program exceeding $300,000 per month across multiple brands and initiatives.

Cedric Chambers, MBA

Cedric has spent the past decade working across both B2B and B2C environments. He brings certifications in analytics, search engine marketing, and UX design, along with a strong track record of applying data-driven thinking to real business challenges.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

→ **I cut acquisition costs by 59%...** Page 3

→ **How Did I Reduce CPA?** Page 4

→ **Identify Long-Tail Converting Search Terms** Page 5

→ **Restructuring The Campaigns Into SKAGs** Page 6

→ **SKAGs Don't Compete With Automated Campaigns** Page 7

→ **Summary of Results** Page 8

I cut acquisition costs by 59% and increased conversion value by 39%.

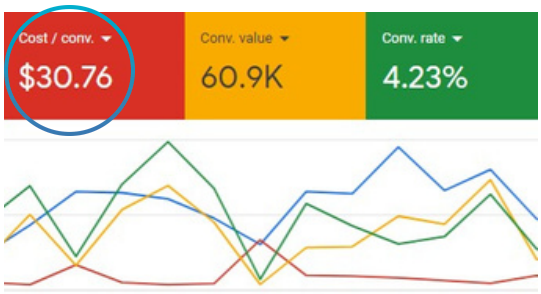
Automated Bidding Was Inflating Costs

This created three core problems:

- Excessive bids triggered by irrelevant user signals.
- Over-coverage of non-branded terms that didn't convert.
- Under-coverage of the long-tail queries that actually produced sales.

Before

After



This case study focuses on a single Google Ads campaign within a multi-brand paid media portfolio exceeding $300,000 per month in total spend. Results reflect structural improvements applied to one targeted segment, not a full-account overhaul.

How Did I Reduce CPA?

I looked at the last ten years of advertisements, keywords, and search terms to determine which keywords were converting and which ones weren't.

I were surprised to find that most of the sales in this account resulted from specific long-tail search terms, even though most of the campaigns targeted broad-match keywords.

Keywords should be thought of as categories. Keywords represent concepts and intents; in Google's eyes, **"paper editing " is a synonym for "Springer Nature Author Services."**

"research paper format example"	Phrase match	Springer Nature Generic Services	Formatting
"editing proofreading"	Phrase match	Springer Nature Generic Services	Home Page

Non-branded keywords were acting like branded triggers.

Search term	Match type	Added/Excluded	Campaign	Ad group
Total: Search ter...				
springer nature author services	Exact match	✓ Added	SNAS	Springer Nature Author Services - Exact Match
nature editing service	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature editing service
springer nature language editing	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
springer proofreading service	Exact match (close variant)	None	Scientific Editing	Scientific Editing Service
springer nature	Broad match	None	NRES_V2	Nature editing service

Problem: Branded keywords are known to us; there are practically no reasons you'd want to use an automated bid strategy for a long tail keyword that results in sales.

Identify Long-Tail Converting Search Terms

Ad group status: All | Add filter | Search | Segment | Columns | Reports | Download | Expand | More

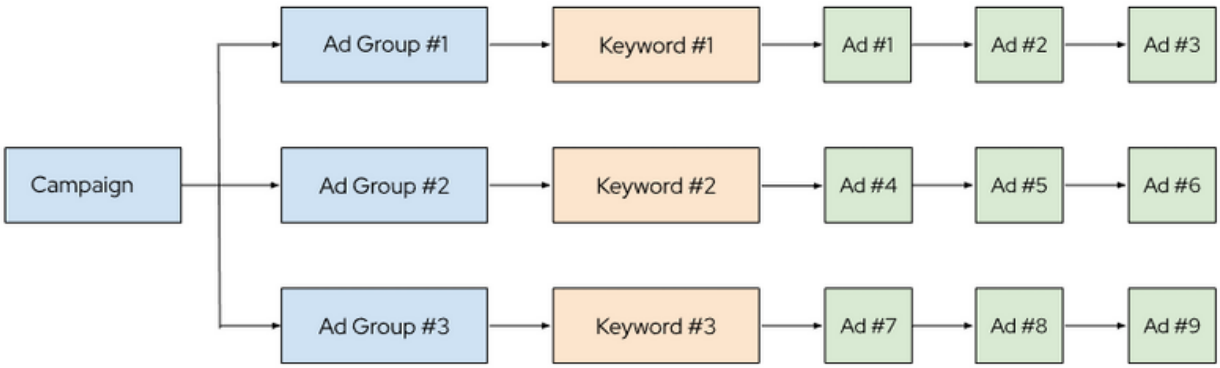
Ad group	Default max. CPC	Cost	Clicks	Impr.	Avg. CPC	Conversions	Cost / conv.	Conv. rate	Conv. value	Conv. value / cost	All conv.	Search impr. share
nature language editing	$0.50 (enhanced	$50.31	18	24	$2.80	4.00	$12.58	22.22%	1,848.00	36.73	7.00	100.00%
springer nature language editing	$0.50 (enhanced	$39.64	15	21	$2.64	2.00	$19.82	13.33%	924.00	23.31	3.00	100.00%
author services springer nature	$0.50 (enhanced	$16.49	11	16	$1.50	0.58	$28.27	5.30%	268.33	16.27	0.58	100.00%
authorservices springernature com	$0.50 (enhanced	$7.50	2	4	$3.75	0.00	$0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.50	100.00%

I took the high-performing search terms from the keyword report above, then created Adgroups for each search term. Most of these terms were long-tail keywords.

- I used data to pick the best-performing search terms, not keywords.
- I used data to help select

☐	nature editing service	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature editing service
☐	springer nature language editing	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	springer proofreading service	Exact match (close variant)	None	Scientific Editing	Scientific Editing Service
☐	springer nature	Broad match	None	NRES_V2	Nature editing service
☐	nature research editing service	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature editing service
☐	nature language editing	Exact match	✓ Added	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	nature springer	Broad match	None	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	nature publishing group	Exact match	✓ Added	[July 13] SN Korea - Lead	Lead - EN
☐	springer nature proofreading	Broad match	None	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	springer language editing	Exact match (close variant)	None	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	springer english editing service	Broad match	None	NRES_V2	Nature language editing
☐	author services springer nature	Exact match (close variant)	None	SNAS	Springer Nature Author Services - Exact Match

Restructuring The Campaigns Into SKAGs



Using the data I collected about which keywords were performing, I restructured the ad groups into single-keyword ad groups or SKAGs. The benefit of SKAGs is that they enable us to create hyper-targeted ads that match the advertised keyword. This, in theory, raises the quality score and Ad Rank, reducing costs.

Why SKAGs reduce costs

- Higher relevance lifts Quality Score, Google's proxy for user satisfaction.
- Higher Quality Score improves Ad Rank without requiring higher bids.
- Better Ad Rank lowers cost per click, because you pay less for the same position.
- Fewer irrelevant impressions mean fewer wasted clicks, like sealing leaks in a pipeline.

The practical outcome

- Each ad group contains one core keyword, often with close variants, so intent is unmistakable.
- Ads are written specifically for that keyword, not a theme or category, creating message lock-in.
- Landing pages align tightly with the same term, reinforcing relevance across the entire click path.
- Performance is measured at the keyword level, making winners and losers immediately visible.

SKAGs Don't Compete With Automated Campaigns

For good measure, we did not completely disable the automated campaigns. One added benefit of creating a SKAG is that since its quality score is higher, **the SKAG will take priority over the automated campaigns for whatever keywords you put into your SKAG**. In a way, you're forcing the automated campaign to do what they're supposed to do, bid for keyword coverage.

Your account will only show one ad for one keyword per domain at any given time. You can have 30 accounts advertising the same domain, but only one ad will show.

Which ad will show is determined by the quality of the advertisement. Recall that SKAGs generally have higher quality scores and Ad Ranks than their automated counterparts because you can use targeted ad text and landing pages on a per-keyword basis.

Total: Campaigns in your current workspace			$3,978.54 (-44.87%)	$0.65 (+24.60%)	$34.44 (-54.64%)	115.53 (+21.55%)	53,607.47 (+22.55%)
SNAS_Branded_SKAG_Global_EN	$120.00/d...	Paused	$882.82 (+191.44%)	$2.61 (+39.68%)	$17.76 (-92.97%)	49.72 (+4,043.12%	23,068.90 (+4,079.15%
Purchase			–	–	–	49.72 (+4,043.12%	23,068.90 (+4,079.15%
Transactions (SN-NPGLE - Default/Main)			–	–	–	0.00 (0.00%)	0.00 (0.00%)
User Registration			–	–	–	0.00 (0.00%)	0.00 (0.00%)
NRES_V2	$66.00/day	Paused	$1,089.28 (-70.95%)	$0.98 (-33.55%)	$30.38 (-49.77%)	35.86 (-42.16%)	16,638.82 (-41.68%)
Purchase			–	–	–	35.86 (-42.16%)	16,638.82 (-41.68%)
Transactions (SN-NPGLE - Default/Main)			–	–	–	0.00 (0.00%)	0.00 (0.00%)
User Registration			–	–	–	0.00 (0.00%)	0.00 (0.00%)

Summary of Results

Metric	Before	After Restructure	Change
Cost Per Acquisition (CPA)	Within target	Significantly lower	−59%
Conversion Value	Baseline	Higher	39%
Keyword Efficiency	Broad match dominating	Long-tail precision	Improved
Automated Spend	Excessive	Reduced by ~70%	More efficient

Key Problems Addressed

The transformation came from aligning ad structure with user behavior.

High-intent searchers now saw perfectly matched ads, and lower CPCs followed as Quality Scores rose.
The account became more predictable, more stable, and more profitable.