

The cookie-pocalypse: Viewing the glass half full

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Almost every company use cookies in their digital marketing. But with third-party cookies set to crumble over the coming months - and Google now wanting to play in the Sandbox instead - a new digital economy is well and truly upon us.



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Cookies have been around since the advent of the internet in the early 1990s and form the foundation of the personalised browsing experience. Therefore, their demise represents a pivotal moment for the advertising ecosystem. It also signals a fundamental change in how marketers will interact with consumers.

Although this shift is certainly going to make waves in an industry already fraught with change thanks to the firm hand of GDPR and POPI regulations, the death of third-party cookies also represents a significant opportunity to rethink digital marketing. Marketers dependent on third-party cookies will now be pushed to find new ways to target and measure their digital efforts as well as exploit the use of their first-party cookies on their websites to their fullest potential.



Marketing in a world without third-party cookies

Colleen Rose 23 Feb 2021



If you're waiting for the replacement for the third-party cookie to land in your lap, you'll likely be waiting forever. The reality is, the path forward will not be a one-size-fits-all. There are multiple targeting levers that brands can pull. And to be successful, you'll need to use a blended approach.

Think of these strategies as the gluten-free, carb-free version of those chocolate chip cookies you're used to. They're just better for you on so many levels. Greater user and browser control over cookies and tracking means measurement and targeting will now be akin to predictive weather forecasts. The more accurate your tools and planning, the higher the likelihood of it not raining on your picnic.

There are a number of tactics one can implement to prevent loss of data and to prepare for a digital landscape without third-party cookies.

Preserve your old data - that data is as valuable as diamonds now

Keep your old custom setup of goals and events on your website and use that to inform your current marketing efforts. Make sure you're capturing every single existing measurement (Goals and events) to more effectively fill future gaps.

Enhance and capture your current data NOW

Audit your current goals and events and make sure there's not a single thing you don't know about your visitor. So that when "the proverbial lights go off" (As South African marketers we all know a thing or two about this), you'll have the most optimised data possible to reflect on.

Implement GA4

Set up a GA4 implementation alongside your current Google Universal Analytics implementation. Plus, don't immediately switch off your current Google Analytics. Running both in parallel will help you to identify and close the gaps in your audience data based on your first party cookie data.

Leverage new features & Solutions

Turn to your own data and insights to generate insights about customers. Start experimenting and testing new solutions ASAP.

Get in the sandbox A.K.A sandpit

Though still in its infancy, Google has found Sandbox technology for interest-based advertising (FLoC) can deliver results nearly as effective as cookie-based approaches. They are therefore expected to play a central role in powering Google's web products in a post-third-party cookie world.

The post-cookie world is coming fast, and so are other privacy measures. And while it presents so many unknowns, brands that will thrive will be those who view third party cookie demise as an opportunity to strengthen web advertising and tracking as well as deepen their relationships with customers.

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