

# A diet guide to user insights in a cookieless world

A minute on the clicks, a lifetime on the hips: If hips are in fact a tracking nightmare and that constant feeling of surveillance online, whether, from big techs, advertisers, or social media king-pins, the cookies crumble into all the nooks and crannies

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If ever there was a diet that was too long coming, it would be the cookie, and thankfully, we can all sit back and ponder this with a homecooked marvel, or one served up from your favourite Pret or Greggs. *Other outlets for chocolate-coated goodness are available.*

Back to marketing 'tech' and the not-so-humble cookie!

Cookies have been unfit for targeting and user tracking for too long, thankfully with peoples' drive for privacy on the up, driven in part by GDPR, and a cultural change brought home thanks to Cambridge Analytica, and likely a subconscious fear stoked by the news, foreign political interference and the feeding of damaging information to false-news, people have changed.

True change is not a fad, it is cultural, and it becomes ingrained in how people think, act, and react – change becomes part of who you are, and when it happens on a societal scale, marketing teams have to listen or get left in its wake.

Much like an esteemed former prime minister's 'work' schedule, a third party was always going to be the wrong choice in the end. Browsers and measurement software are cutting them and consumers have started to pause their cursors and read the fine print, though they know there is another way, it's still a faff to opt-out in too many cases, but the winds of change are a-blowing.

In adtech, the largest 'well-kept secret' people have known, but few have acted upon, is that the cookie's time is up. So just what can marketers do to engage and build trust as a brand?

## "Be transparent, my friend:" (not quite Bruce Lee).

Without using long-form T&C's, one must be always very clear and transparent about why tracking data is used or required and what will happen to data and information. You are asking users, viewers, readers, shoppers, and guests to hand over their deets, the least you can do is be upfront in telling them what the plan is and how you will use it. What will they receive? How often? Will you do anything else?

Go against this, and they will opt-out. Don't be that person or company, make the opt-out option easy... If you have ever tried to quit a pushy subscription service, be it email list, smart-tv providers, VOD (video on demand) services, or an internet service provider, you know the scars of a poor off-boarding experience will not only linger, you'll likely have gone as far as making sure others don't sign up in the first place.

In much the same way that they can opt-out, you are offering a trusted chance to opt-in. For us, with our passive mobile Automatic Content Recognition (ACR) software and panels, we employ a double-opt-in for instance, but this isn't about *Beatgrid*. Allowing consumers the choice to opt-in is the first step in bringing balance, trust, and health to advertising and marketing. There's a lot of vitriol around cookies and third-party data, and for good reason but opting for transparency can help create a set of consumer-centric guidelines. This would benefit both the exposed viewer, consumer, or user, and the brand advertisers that want their efforts to be maximised, by collecting accurate content and ad exposure data.

# What if it was me?

It's a simple test, but ask yourself what you would think were things flipped around? Would you feel comfortable sharing your PII with companies with unclear privacy guidelines? That often? If someone gives you permission, they may have an idea in their head of what that entails. How often does that particular information need drumming home? What is the tone of voice of the message? If you have to question whether it would bother you.... It could well be the case for them.

## Good content makes them so content. □

Don't send them the first thing that comes to mind. Simple.

If you are consistent in providing high-quality content, recipients will appreciate it. Consider tiers of content, if they sign up, they deserve another level - something exclusive for those that came in from the cold.

There is something almost romantic in a way about this new dawn, in the way that those of us with hipster tendencies lean towards vinyl or dare I say it, mini-disk over mp3, marketers might fall back in love with marketing, proper, thought-provoking, and entertaining marketing. By avoiding ambiguous third-party cookie-reliant measurement tactics, you can re-evaluate and reassess your advertising performance, and optimise your media investments.

This twist can be a turn to existing marketing plans, not only understanding users and audiences, but also more focusing on how brand engagement, on-domain action, and digital conversions can affect them; this overhaul brings people back to what message a user reacted to, be it a click or an audio queue they responded to.

This is not a removal of measurement of content, just a re-positioning of what is deemed right for measurement. You can learn from the content, measuring how content performs and allowing for adjustments to make them more meaningful for consumers and more effective for your campaigns.

The multi-touch attribution model has been important for marketers for years, but how does one switch it up now? Pretty simple, use this opportunity to maximise cross-media campaign effectiveness. Whether it is sales, shop visits, app downloads, or podcasts subscribed to, real-world data can still be measured and actions followed up on, *sans les cookies*.

*Isn't that sort of the aim in the first place? Had we forgotten this?*

## Incentivise

Last but certainly not least, is the value of user acquisition, many famous film characters have stated that everyone has a price... And we are not talking about threats here. Incentivising people when asking them to engage in specific media research studies can make them feel special, and they are special if they are in your funnel. Whether you help someone get a little healthier, send them a gift card for their favourite retailer, give them peace of mind that you are topping up their wallet, even just by a little bit, or that by signing up they are contributing to a better future, a little nod of gratitude with a gift can go a long way.

## Closing sentiment

Common sense prevails here, do unto others as you would want to be done unto you, show respect and treat your audience as intelligent people not numbers in a funnel or hashed IDs, and you will go far in the new age. We are very much in a conscious transition in technology, whilst we might have machines becoming sentient, your audience is becoming self-aware in new ways. It cares, it wants purpose and it is not ashamed to deny you the right to contact them and approach them, to that note, it will be an active, loyal user group if you treat people with a modicum of respect and integrity.

*Here endeth the lesson*

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