

A digital world without cookies

 By [Ryan McFadyen](#)

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The third-party cookie is on the verge of obsolescence. Driven by the EU's GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), similar regulations globally and consumers pushing for greater transparency, companies like Apple and Google are phasing out third-party cookies. As a result, marketers and companies having to navigate new ways to own the customer relationship and legally acquire data.



If that leaves you in a slight panic, you're not alone. A recent study conducted by Warc showed that 75% of marketers believed that they were insufficiently prepared for the digital advertising world post the cookie.

So how to adapt?

Some marketers, particularly those who throughout the pandemic turned to e-commerce or direct to consumer selling, have placed an emphasis on the collection of first-party data. Combining CRM strategies and owned channels, they've looked to create a value exchange for which consumers are willing to pay with access to their data.

Some brands are stepping away from cookies completely, creating entirely new ways to own the relationship with their consumers. They call this 'zero cookie marketing'. An example of this is American fashion designer Telfar Clemens.

According to [Vogue Business](#), Clemens is "taking back ownership of how consumers interact with his brand. His new marketing tool is Telfar TV, a public access channel that serves as a springboard for storytelling and commerce.

Consumers who want to buy a Telfar bag need to watch for a broadcast QR code on the channel that takes them directly to a web link to make the purchase.”

The article sums it up neatly: ‘drip is replacing drop’.

“The idea, according to Telfar, is to slowly drip product to fans who are truly invested in the label, rather than drop lots of merchandise through e-commerce, where bots have been known to buy hundreds of Telfar totes at a time,” it writes.



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Prioritising local

Brands like Nike, Uniqlo and Bottega Veneta are prioritising localised stores, personalised experiences and community engagement to create direct relationships with their consumers. These same brands are also looking to develop content within their social channels to build powerful direct-to-consumer media.

Nike, for example, has the 16th largest social presence on Instagram with 146 million followers. Broadcasting with a consistent brand voice that looks to inspire and motivate the everyday athlete, the brand focuses on content that builds an emotional connection between its consumers and the brand.

Nike CFO Matthew Friend explains the strategy: “A core aspect of Nike’s recent marketing strategy has been creating fewer but significantly more impactful brand campaigns. The results of these efforts have boosted return from the brand’s performance marketing, both in terms of consumer engagement and demand. A central element of the strategy involves a heightened emphasis on customer retention and building brand affinity.”

Those brands which do not have strong direct-to-consumer channels are looking to build an audience through influencers. Tapping into influencers’ audiences, they’re employing traditional digital influencer marketing tactics, offline influencer marketing, and live stream sales. Some have even developed their own influencers in the form of virtual influencers.



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Contextual advertising

Finally, a more traditional approach to digital advertising, but no less interesting, is contextual advertising. This is – in case we’ve all forgotten – matching advertising (either the brand, the product, the message or all three) to the content on the web page that is being viewed

Marketers at leading corporations are developing advanced contextual targeting capabilities to reach audiences more effectively online in situations where personally identifiable information cannot be used.

For example, YouTube recently launched Selects, enabling brands to align themselves more closely with content genres and styles to suit the audiences they are trying to reach.

And, one of my favourite examples is UK home improvement retailer B&Q which wanted to raise awareness of paint brand Valspar’s colour match service. To reach potential customers, they used artificial intelligence across a sexton of premium

publishers.

If you looked at a picture of an interior for a 1.5-second or longer period of time, an advert would pop up. This asked if you liked the paint colour. If the answer was yes, using their colour match service, they identified it and provided you with a direct link to purchase or the ability to save the colour to then purchase in-store. Depending on the colours in the image, the colour recommended to you would change.

[B&Q Valspar Colour Matching Campaign - MEC and GumGum](#) from [GumGum](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The campaign grew purchase intent by 15.1%, drove a 35.2% increase in online ad awareness, and had an engagement rate of 7.68%, three times the industry benchmark.

With so many options to speak to consumers, the death of the third-party cookie allows marketers to expand their arsenal and embrace new techniques.

Yes, it is a push away from the familiar, but for those marketers who embrace it and experiment the rewards and creative stimulation that awaits are extremely exciting.

ABOUT RYAN MCFADYEN

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