

Helping Marketers Understand and Navigate a Cookieless Ecosystem

With the full deprecation of third-party cookies on the horizon, advertisers and publishers are navigating a challenging and quickly evolving landscape. This article is intended to help you understand the cookie ecosystem, recent announcements, upcoming milestones, how marketers have historically leveraged 3rd party cookies to drive outcomes, and how Zeta is prepared to help marketers drive even better results in a cookieless future.

The Different Types of Cookies

Cookies are text files that contain a user ID that enables marketing platforms and content servers to serve the right content to each individual website visitor. There are two types of cookies that perform the same functionality within the same domain (website):



First-Party Cookie

The first-party cookie is created and stored by the domain a user is currently visiting and enables website owners to collect analytics data, remember language settings and provide personalized settings that create a better user experience.

Third-Party Cookie

The third-party cookie is created by domains other than the one a user is currently visiting. Placed on a website through a script or tag, third-party cookies are used for retargeting, frequency capping, and multi-touch attribution, in addition to helping smaller publishers who do not build their own technology for personalization.

The Major Players Involved in Cookie Implementation



Tech Companies

Google is the largest provider of online ads, followed by Meta and Amazon. When Google initiates changes such as deprecating cookies, regulators around the world scrutinize Google's actions around potential "privacy fixing" i.e. how these actions will impact the company's already dominant position in online advertising. Other major players include Apple/Safari/iOS and Mozilla/Firefox.

Data Protection Authorities/Legislation

Regulations like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the American Data Privacy Protection Act (ADPPA), and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) have forced websites to be more transparent about their data collection practices and give users more control over their personal information. Other states like Colorado, Connecticut, Utah and Virginia also have similar legislation in place.



Zeta's Industry Response to Third-Party Cookie Deprecation

What is Zeta doing in the industry to ensure the best interests of marketers, publishers and consumers?

Zeta is a staunch supporter of people's important privacy rights and is actively supporting our customers' right to choose the vendors they work with through our policy advocacy with international privacy and competition regulators. Zeta has been a key contributor to the technical standards for responsible addressable media within the leading digital marketing trade bodies to ensure better scale, accuracy and auditability of the use of digital identifiers in planning, measuring and optimizing media.

What is Zeta's position toward regulatory agencies?

Zeta supports the mission of data protection authorities around the world to ensure that consumer privacy rights are honored. We are confident that regulators around the globe will prevent continued "privacy fixing" activities of internet gatekeepers who are attempting to use their dominant control of operating systems, app stores, and browsers to assert control over the open web.

The Current State of Cookie Deprecation

Here are some of the actions various browsers, operating systems, and device makers have taken in the last few years:



Mozilla/Firefox

- Firefox first began blocking tracking in 2015 with the release of Tracking Protection, a feature people could turn on by going into Private Browsing mode.
- In 2018, they expanded Tracking Protection and enabled it by default for all Firefox users in 2019, reflecting their commitment to actively protect their users.
- Since then, Firefox has continued to make progress towards blocking trackers and ending cross-site tracking by introducing protections against fingerprinting and supercookies.



Apple/iOS/iPhone/Safari

- In March of 2020, Apple added Intelligent Tracking Prevention enhancements to iOS and iPadOS 13.4 and Safari 13.1 which blocked the use of all third-party cookies.
- With the iOS 14.5 update in April 2021, apps were forced to ask permission to track users. If users opted out, Apple wouldn't share their IDFA (identifier for advertisers).
- Apple continued to expand privacy protections with the iOS 15 update, which enabled iCloud+ users to opt-in to Private Relay, an always-on VPN-like service which hides IP and location data.
- The upcoming iOS 17 will come with Advanced Tracking and Fingerprinting Protection which strips "tracking parameters" from URLs in an effort to further eliminate tracking loopholes.



Google/Android/Chrome

- Since 2020 Google has been hinting at a plan for Chrome to block the third-party cookies.
- As of July 2023, Google reported that it will gradually begin enabling the Privacy Sandbox toolkit for Chrome developers, which will replace third-party tracking cookies with privacy-preserving API alternatives.
- Beginning in early 2024, Google plans to migrate 1% of Chrome users to the Privacy Sandbox and disable all third-party cookies, with the goal of completely removing cookies for all users by Q3 2024.

The Effect of Cookie Depreciation on Marketers

Third-party cookies fuel the majority of programmatic and digital advertising and cookie depreciation will impact most of the tactics marketers rely on for effective campaigns.



Reach: About 80% of advertisers depend on third-party cookies. Without them, those advertisers will need to search for other ways to reach their customers and prospects online.



Behavioral advertising: Without data obtained from third-party cookies, marketers will no longer be able to create the detailed profiles they use for targeted campaigns.



Retargeting: Third-party cookies allow ads to follow users from site to site and retarget users based on the actions they take. Cookie depreciation may diminish the effectiveness of retargeting campaigns and limit the ability to redirect traffic to a preferred site.



Audience extension: Without third-party cookie-based audience extension, and look-a-like audience creation will no longer be possible.



Frequency capping: Advertisers use third-party cookies to limit the number of times an ad is shown to a particular user, which will reduce media efficiency.



Attribution: Perhaps worst of all, no more third-party cookies means no more view-through attribution, which enables marketers to track ad exposure across channels to gauge the performance of their marketing mix. This will make it more challenging to unify fragmented customer journeys across channels.

Why Zeta for Cookieless

Zeta is prepared to help brands move forward into a future without third-party cookies



Zeta is committed to building the best possible solution

“Going cookieless” isn’t a one-time project, it’s a continuous process. Zeta is committed to doing the work to create the most performant, full-featured solution in the market—regardless of which identifiers are used. Zeta’s team of industry experts are available to help you evaluate, plan, and test alternative identifiers.



Zeta Identity Graphs is identifier agnostic and ready for a cookieless future

The Zeta Identity Graph is an identifier agnostic solution that is purpose-built to handle any identity space—with or without third-party cookies. Zeta’s Identity Graph is also compatible with leading cookie alternatives, allowing for a seamless transition between identity spaces.



Transitioning third-party cookies to first-party cookies

To enhance addressability, Zeta is transitioning to a new Zeta Global Tag, built on a first-party foundation. By shifting our tagging strategy to first-party cookies, Zeta can increase signal quality and enable consistent user tracking.



Providing robust cookieless tracking for unauthenticated visitors

Zeta is assembling a diverse array of cookieless tracking techniques that are privacy-compliant and are developed to safeguard against future changes in browser and public policy. This allows us to accurately track and identify unauthenticated users, optimize campaign performance, and reliably capture attribution events.



Maximizing authenticated site traffic

Capitalizing on authenticated site traffic is still the gold standard for targeting accuracy. Regardless of cookie availability, investing in your authenticated traffic pipeline still represents the best use of resources. By passing this data through Zeta’s java script tags or files, we can leverage our extensive dataset to transition these users into multiple identity spaces, giving you the best chance to reach your highest value prospects.

Zeta is Uniquely Positioned to Empower Marketers to Exceed Goals in a Cookieless Environment

For the past 12 years, Zeta has invested in building a leading Identity Resolution solution (IDR) for effective messaging and measurement across devices and channels. Our identity graph is built on the strength and scale of people-based identifiers underpinned by permission-based data and insights derived from 235M+ U.S. individuals. As third-party cookies are phased out, Zeta is well-positioned to help marketers achieve, and exceed, their goals.



Identity

A core of 235M+ US-based profiles consolidated from more than 1.9B email addresses creates one of the largest non-third-party cookie-based deterministic data sets in the industry. This deterministic foundation enables marketers to reach audiences at scale and personalize 1:1 messaging at the record level.



Intelligence

Zeta's AI combines and interprets a wide range of proprietary signals on each person in our ID graph in near real time to build behavioral profiles to accurately predict actions, intent and brand propensity that is not dependent on third-party cookies. Zeta's AI automatically optimizes campaigns for performance against KPIs, including frequency capping, look-a-like modeling and retargeting.



Activation

Powered by our identity graph, Zeta breaks down channel and device silos to help marketers seamlessly connect with their audiences. Utilizing a transparent media mix, Zeta reaches real people, not third-party cookies, on 1:1 basis with a unified look at campaign performance across channels.

Purpose Built for Today's Marketer.

At Zeta, our vision is to make sophisticated marketing simple by unifying identity, intelligence, and omnichannel activation into a single platform, powered by one of the industry's largest proprietary databases and advanced AI. Recognize your top customers and prospects across channels and devices, measure their intent, and engage them with individualized experiences they'll love, while driving maximum results for your business.

Talk to your Zeta Sales or Account Representative to get started.

Contact us at info@zetaglobal.com

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