

# Brands and the exciting opportunity to prioritise first-party data

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While the Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA) came into force at the beginning of July to much fanfare, it is just another step in the long journey towards consumer privacy and should be welcomed.



Source: [www.unsplash.com](http://www.unsplash.com)

The brands that make strategic moves now will enjoy increased conversions and consumer loyalty in the long term.

Many of us would have received notifications on WhatsApp groups and email lists towards the end of June and early July asking us to approve being on those lists – with some of us questioning how we got onto these lists in the first place.

Advertisers are under no illusions that the industry needs to relook its approach and define meaningful and compelling value-adds to entice consumers to want to receive content and opt-in.



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While PoPIA is an important milestone in the global move towards privacy, the disappearance of cookies - which is earmarked for 2023 - will have a far greater impact on advertising. With retargeting being taken out of the equation, brands need to redouble efforts to prioritise first-party data.

For some time, first-party data has been paramount and informs so much of these well-known brands' success. This puts them in pole position for when cookies – which track personal online usage – disappear.

Before this happens, Facebook and Google already place the responsibility on advertisers to ensure that whichever campaigns have been created, permission has been received from the consumers to use their data on those platforms.

A clear first-party data strategy is a long-term win because it enables more independence from the global media giants while resulting in happier customers who actually receive the communication that they want.



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This is good news for consumers. We may be advertisers, but we are also consumers, and we are also tired of being spammed. This means everyone must up their game and find compelling reasons to incentivise their consumers to opt-in, and this must be well-planned as the days of collecting data and then deciding what to send after the fact are gone – you need to tell consumers what they will receive before they opt-in.

It is pertinent for advertisers and brands to clearly plot how they intend to add value. What we are seeing in overseas markets where the EU equivalent of PoPIA, GDPR, has been around for a few years, is a lot of fast-moving consumer brands that are traditionally sold through big retailers are building direct-to-consumer strategies, with their own sites and own apps, and then incentivising consumers to use them.

We've seen this with Heinz in the UK, and then across retail with the likes Nike and Adidas. We expect more South African brands to replicate this first-party data strategy to try to stay ahead of the curve.

As e-commerce continues to grow exponentially, brands need to understand which channels are pushing consumers into the funnel because this is how they attribute and plan their marketing spend.



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The big drive now needs to be on making sure you have the most relevant message to the most relevant consumer at the most relevant time. You need to have a robust opt-in strategy because when cookies disappear, you don't want to be flying blind.

There are many opportunities for brands who are ready to lead and develop innovative loyalty programmes that recognise consumer privacy while connecting with consumers and giving them the content that they want and need.

It is an exciting time for advertisers because PoPIA and the threat of cookies disappearing mean we are going to see far more responsible data collection with inventive and pioneering value-adds for consumers. Essentially, brands will be nurturing long-term relationships with their consumers and as privacy becomes the new normal, these relationships will be more valuable than ever before.

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