

# How hoteliers should prepare for a cookieless world using first-party data

 By [Stewart Smith](#)

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In 2020, Google announced that its Chrome browser would no longer support third-party cookies, leaving many hotel marketers wondering how they'd reach their target audience. While Google has since pushed its cookieless deadline back to 2024, that date is fast approaching, which means hoteliers must have their cookieless strategy in place today.



Stewart Smith, Senior Director of Sales, Middle East and Africa at Sojern.

To stay competitive this year and beyond, hoteliers must find new ways to collect and activate data. When used together, the three pillars of data—hashed emails, first-party data, and historical booking data—create a solid foundation for hoteliers to target the right audiences with the right message at the right time to drive direct bookings. In a recent report, Sojern, for example, explored the impact of one of these pillars: first-party data. After surveying hoteliers from around the world, the results were clear: first-party data is having an enormous impact and enabling hotel marketers to prepare for success in a cookieless world.

## First-party data in a nutshell

First-party data isn't new, but as third-party cookies go away it's more important than ever. So what is it and what does a strategy look like? All first-party data is collected directly from consenting guests. This includes everything from their contact information, stay history, demographic information such as birth date, and any other information that comes from

their engagement with the hotel website and social media accounts, as well as interactions at the front desk or during their stay.

What's more, first-party data combines a guest's online and offline experience so hoteliers can understand their behaviour and better target those guests to deliver permission-based personalised experiences. For example, if a guest consistently asks for a newspaper during every stay, hotel staff can anticipate this and place one in the guest's room upon check-in.

A first-party data collection strategy is how hoteliers use and integrate the first-party data they collect. From predicting guest behaviour to targeting to deleting guest data, it's crucial to remember that any first-party data strategy must adhere to any privacy regulations in the country where the hotel guest resides.

## **How other hoteliers are using first-party data**

Hoteliers around the world are already using first-party data to create better, more tailored experiences for their guests. Our recent survey revealed just how important first-party data is to a successful marketing strategy: 59% of hoteliers surveyed have implemented a first-party data strategy. Of the 41% who haven't yet implemented a strategy, 75% want to. That's because hotel marketers believe that they can use first-party data to maximise campaign performance (73%), build stronger customer relationships (67%), maximise overall revenue growth (67%), and even increase brand value (64%).

The results are clear: 81% of hoteliers said they have seen a lift in revenue as a result of implementing a first-party data strategy. When a hotel knows and understands its travellers, it can use that information to deliver a memorable, seamless, and personalised experience from the moment the guest starts planning a trip. Not only does this increase the chance of a guest viewing a hotel brand in a positive light, but it can also increase pricing power and make franchising more appealing to hotel owners.

## **Getting started with first-party data**

What's the best way to implement a first-party data strategy? By using the three pillars of data. When used together, hashed emails, first-party cookies, and historical booking data can help hoteliers paint a complete picture of their guests so they can deliver what they want.

A hashed email comes from the email address that a guest uses when logging into the hotel website. The hotel collects the email and, for privacy reasons, the email is hashed into a string of unrecognisable characters, or encrypted and semi-anonymised. A hashed email becomes an identification tool that hoteliers can then use in lieu of third-party cookies to target travellers when they go to other websites.

Historical booking data is any information a hotel collects and stores in a CRM or other system, including past stay information, offline data, and any amenities booked. First-party cookies collect guest information, such as language settings, from the hotel website and are not anonymous. First-party cookies can be used to help hoteliers understand traveller behaviour, personalise their website experience, and create targeted campaigns. Every cookie creates a unique

traveller ID, which can be shared with partners to match with hashed emails and enable effective retargeting.

A cookieless world is coming, and hoteliers can get ahead by prioritising their first-party data. By collecting the right information and enabling the right strategy, hoteliers can not only increase direct bookings, but cultivate the brand loyalty that keeps travellers coming back again and again.

## ABOUT STEWART SMITH

Stewart Smith manages Sojern's Middle East headquarters located in Dubai.

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