Analytics & Measurement in the

COOKIE-LESS WORLD

Background to Google Tag Manger
Server-Side Tagging

INTRODUCTION

Brands and marketers have benefited from third-party cookies for years. What is the future of tracking and measurement now that the third-party cookies will be killed entirely?

By 2023, marketers will not be able to use third-party cookies to track customers. Mozilla and Apple have already blocked the use of third-party cookies long back (Firefox blocked third-party cookies as of September 3, 2019, and Safari on March 24, 2020). Google, however, allowed them to stay, but have committed to killing them entirely by 2023. Since Chrome accounts for around 63% of the web browser market share, not only are the third-party cookies disappearing but a huge source of consumer data and insights.

However, there is no need to panic, personalisation and finer customer experiences will still be possible, via a different route. There are other added advantages by following this route that can impact the user experience on your brand's website and the conversion rates.

Growth leaders are also rethinking first-party data strategies and other alternative routes like Google Topics (Google Topics replaced Google's Federated Learning of Cohorts as of January 25, 2022).

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cookie-less world: background to google analytics server-side tagging

Digital Consumer's Problems:

Digital consumers have long-suffered invasive digital marketing behaviour from brands. Brands that understood such consumer frustrations created refined customer experiences at moments that matter, non-intrusively. But the digital consumers were still left out with a majority of brands that do not respect consumer data and privacy.

While consumers may appreciate brands offering relevant ads, they are concerned about how their personal data, purchase preferences, and browsing habits are being used.

Data Protection Legislation:

The growing awareness of consumer data and privacy has paved way for legislation like GDPR and CCPA. These provided consumers be in charge of their data. Now consumers have insights into and the control over their own data- how their data is used, rather than brands having complete control of it.

The Killing Of Third Party Cookies:

Major technology companies that operate web browsers like Google and Apple have taken up the battle for consumer data privacy, and have implemented cookie restrictions on their web-browsers.

Apple Safari is the first mainstream web browser to fully block third-party cookies by default. Google Chrome will officially stop supporting third-party cookies by the end of 2023.
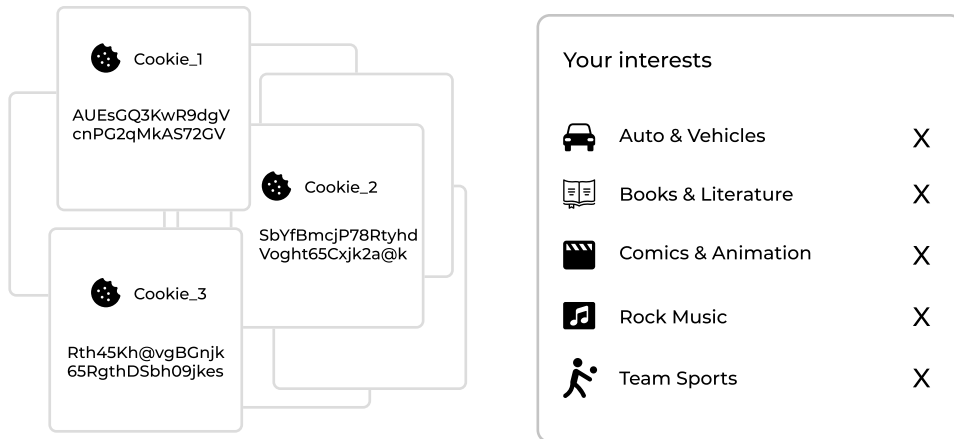

62.78% **19.3%**
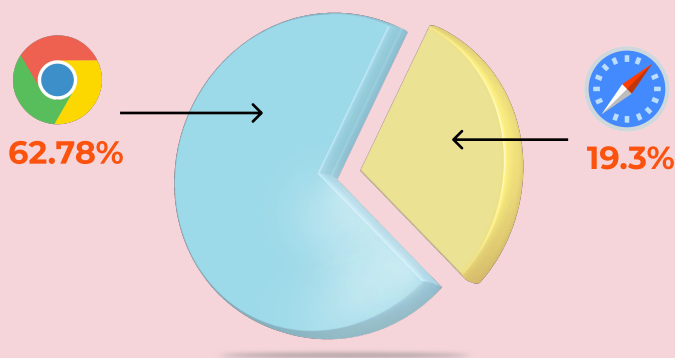
While Chrome and Safari hold a worldwide market share of 62.78% and 19.3% respectively (Statcounter: Feb 2021 - Feb 2022)

Let us see what the browser cookie restrictions mean for brands and marketers.

However, there is no need to panic, personalisation and finer customer experiences will still be possible, via a different route. There are other added advantages by following this route that can impact the user experience on your brand's website and the conversion rates.

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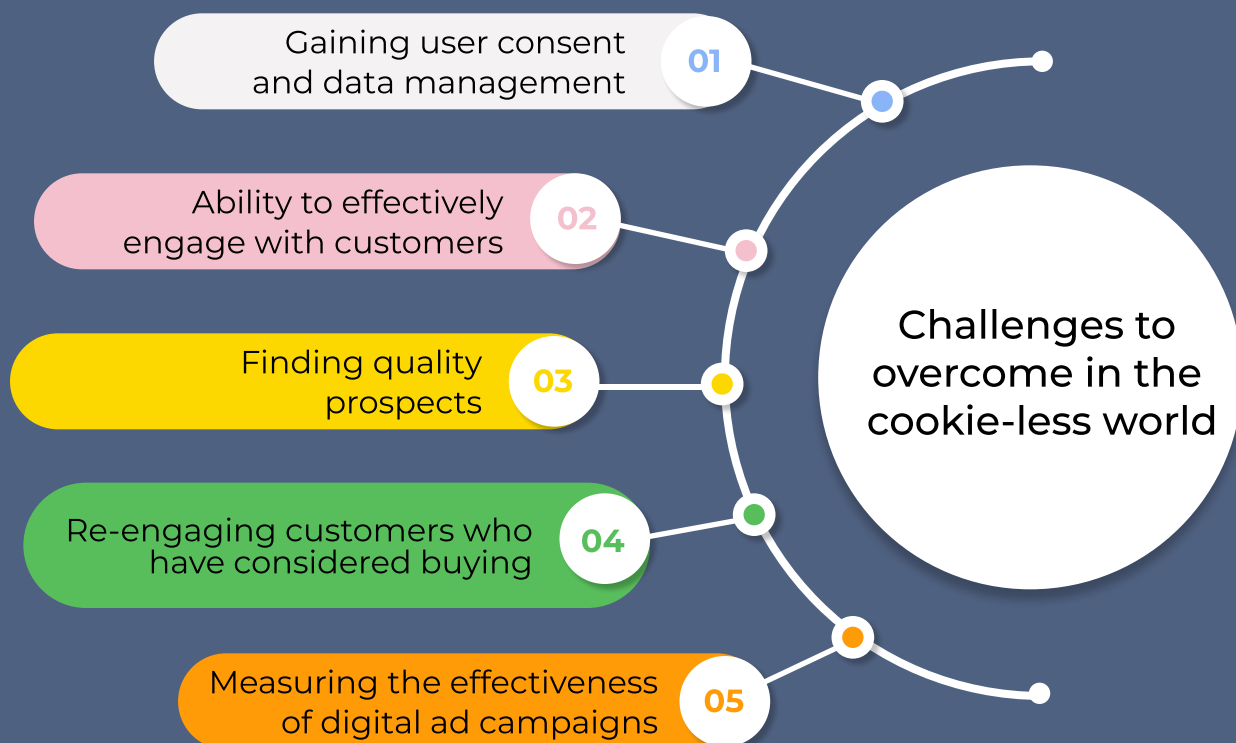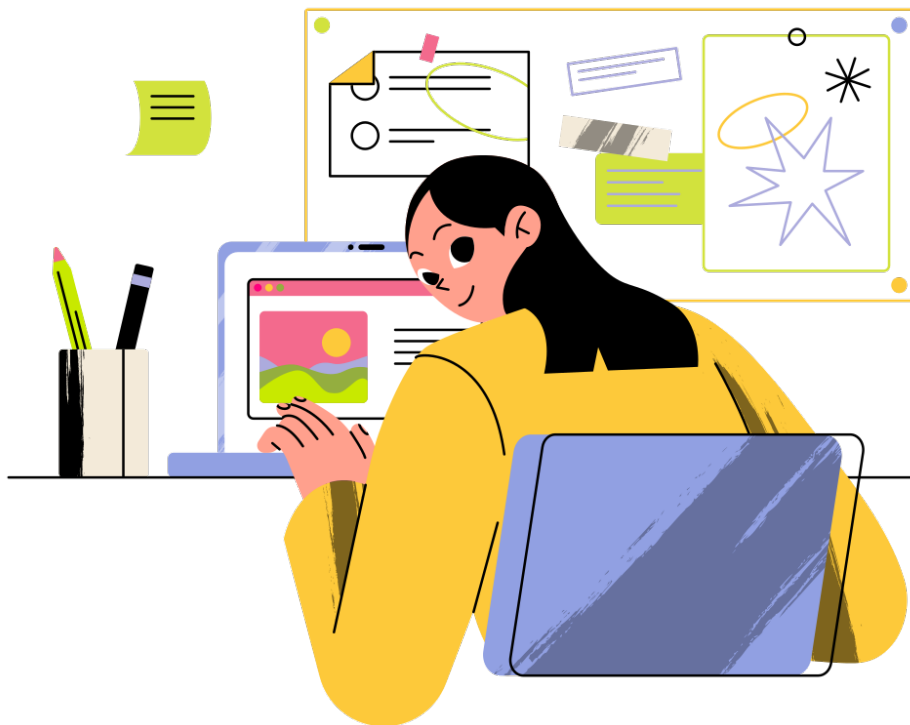
Cookie_1

AUEsGQ3KwR9dgV
cnPG2qMkAS72GV

Cookie_2

SbYfBmcjP78Rtyhd
Voght65Cxjk2a@k

Cookie_3

Rth45Kh@vgBGnjk
65RgthDSbh09jkes

Your interests

🚗	Auto & Vehicles	X
📖	Books & Literature	X
🎬	Comics & Animation	X
🎵	Rock Music	X
🏃	Team Sports	X

Cookies getting replaced with Google Topics

what is a cookie-less world like?

Digital advertising currently relies extensively on third-party cookies for data personalisation. To meet customers in a cookie-less world, brands need to prepare and adapt to changes in personalisation solutions.

The beginning of the end of third-party cookies and the advent of other types of tracking prevention bring brands a bouquet of challenges.

Gaining user consent and data management **01**

Ability to effectively engage with customers **02**

Finding quality prospects **03**

Re-engaging customers who have considered buying **04**

Measuring the effectiveness of digital ad campaigns **05**

Challenges to overcome in the cookie-less world

But, what is a cookie?

Cookies are small pieces of text that are sent to your web browser when you visit a website. They are stored in your web browser for a predetermined period of time and contain at least two pieces of information- the site name and unique user ID. But they may also capture other details such as website configuration (e.g. language preferences), login details, or products added to the basket.

Difference between first-party and third-party cookies?

	First-party cookies	Third-party cookies
Who creates	The first-party- the website you are visiting	By a 'third-party.' Example: Ad servers, social media sites, live-chat pop-ups, etc
Where tracked	Tracks user behaviour on the website you are visiting, and in rare instances, other websites	Tracks user behaviour across many domains
What is the Purpose	• Smoother site access (remembers logins, saves settings, preferences, language, shopping cart items, etc) • Improves user experience • Optimises website for each individual user • Enables web applications like online shops Basically harmless in terms of data usage	• Enable advertising • Enable ad server to create unique user profiles • Enables different methods of digital marketing (tracking, retargeting, etc) to prospective customers as they move from website to website Controversial in terms of data usage/ abuse "Tracking Cookie", "Targeting Cookie"
Tracked behaviour on a website	• Accepting/ Disallowing cookie usage • Settings/Prefrences • Language settings • Visited web pages • Period of use • Personal data: Age gender, location	• Accepting/ Disallowing cookie usage • Settings/ Prefrences • Language settings • Visited web pages • Period of use • Personal data: Age gender, location
Accesability for domains	Cookies are only available for the website owner	Cookies are available for all websites, which can load 3rd-party cookie code
Browser Blocking	First-party cookies aren't blocked by default	Blocked by sereral web browsers by default: Firefox Safari

As you can see, the intent of the cookies is to help the website remember information about your visit, which can make your next visit to the website seamless and more experiential. But their abuse from unwanted advertising to the monitoring, stalking, or harassment of users, we have reached where we are now, to move away from third-party cookies.
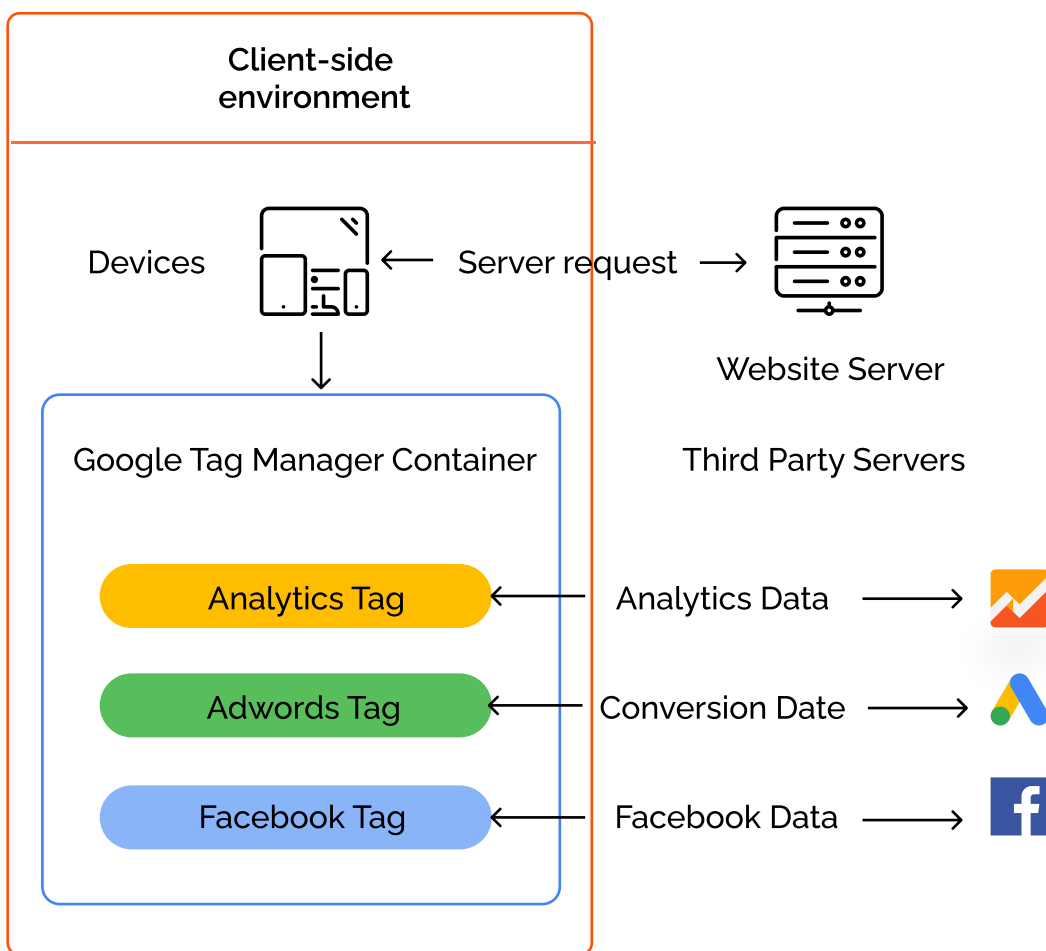
how can we measure going forward?

Brands will need to use Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging, combining CDP and GA4, and the use of first-party and zero-party data are alternatives. Let us dive a little deeper.
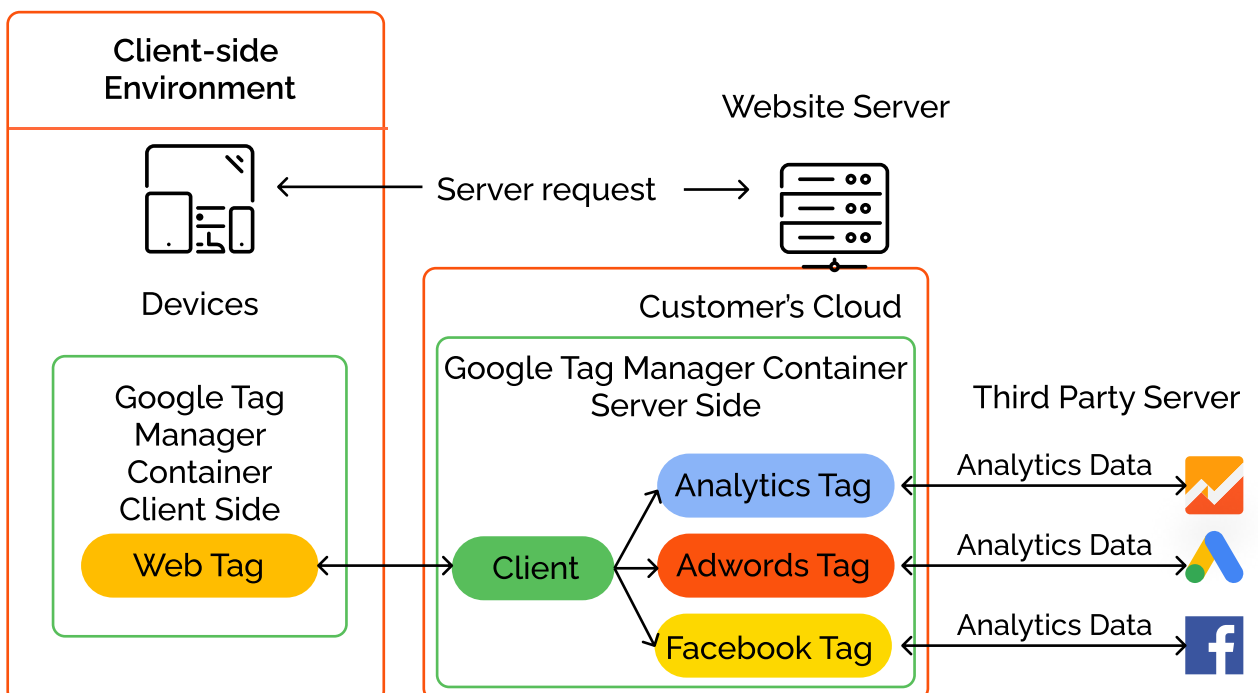
Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging

For tracking, websites and apps historically use a client-side tracking solution. In this method, a tag is set up that collects the data from the user's browser (client) and directly sends this to individual tacking service providers like Google Analytics, Google Ads, Facebook, etc.

Client-Side Tracking In Action

Client-side environment

Devices ← Server request → Website Server

Google Tag Manager Container   Third Party Servers

Analytics Tag ← Analytics Data →

Adwords Tag ← Conversion Date →

Facebook Tag ← Facebook Data →

Server-Side Tracking In Action

Client-side Environment

Website Server

Devices ← Server request →

Customer's Cloud

Google Tag Manager Container Client Side

Google Tag Manager Container Server Side

Third Party Server

Web Tag → Client → Analytics Tag ← Analytics Data
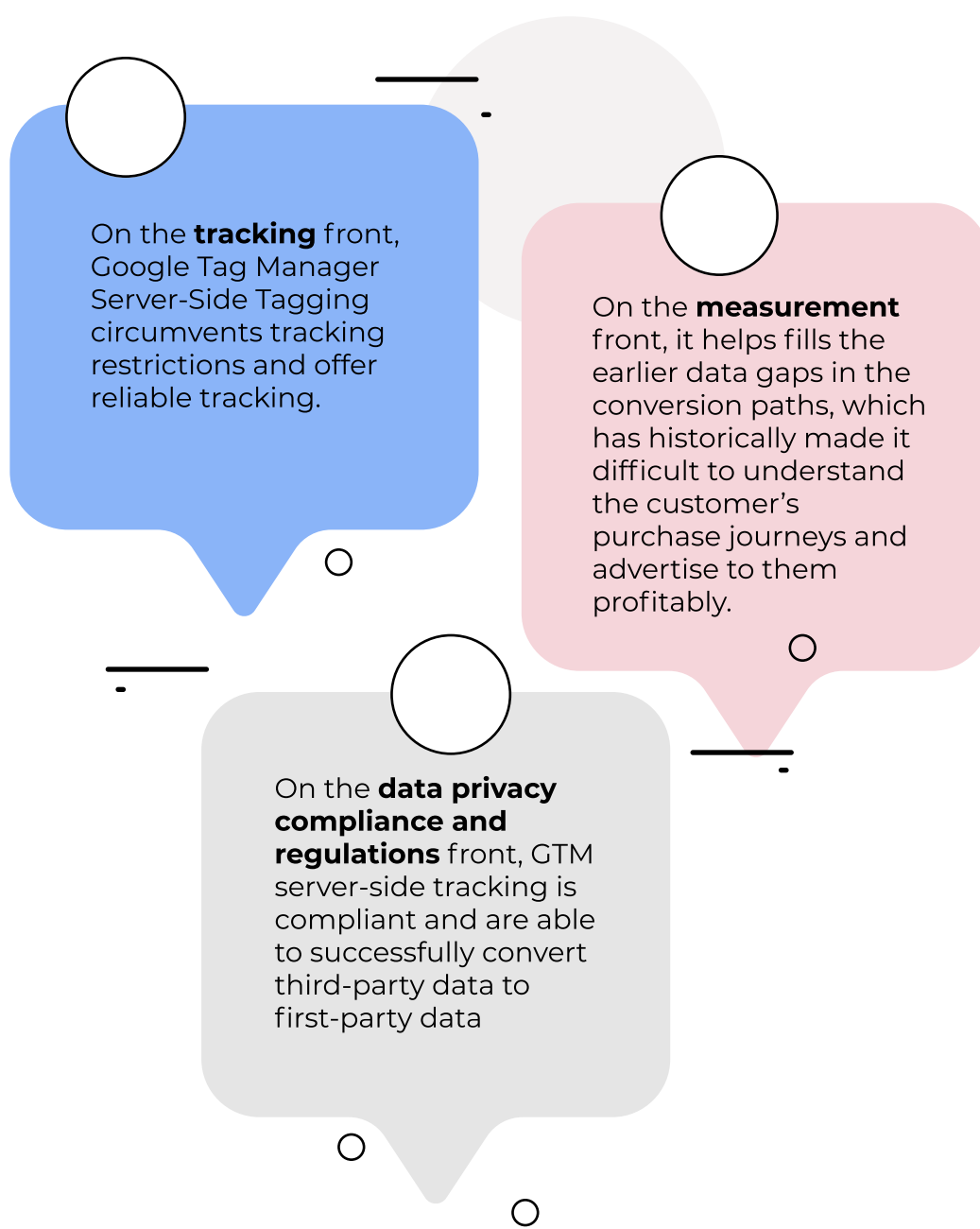
Adwords Tag ← Analytics Data

Facebook Tag ← Analytics Data

Let us also understand the key differences between client-side tracking and server-side tracking:
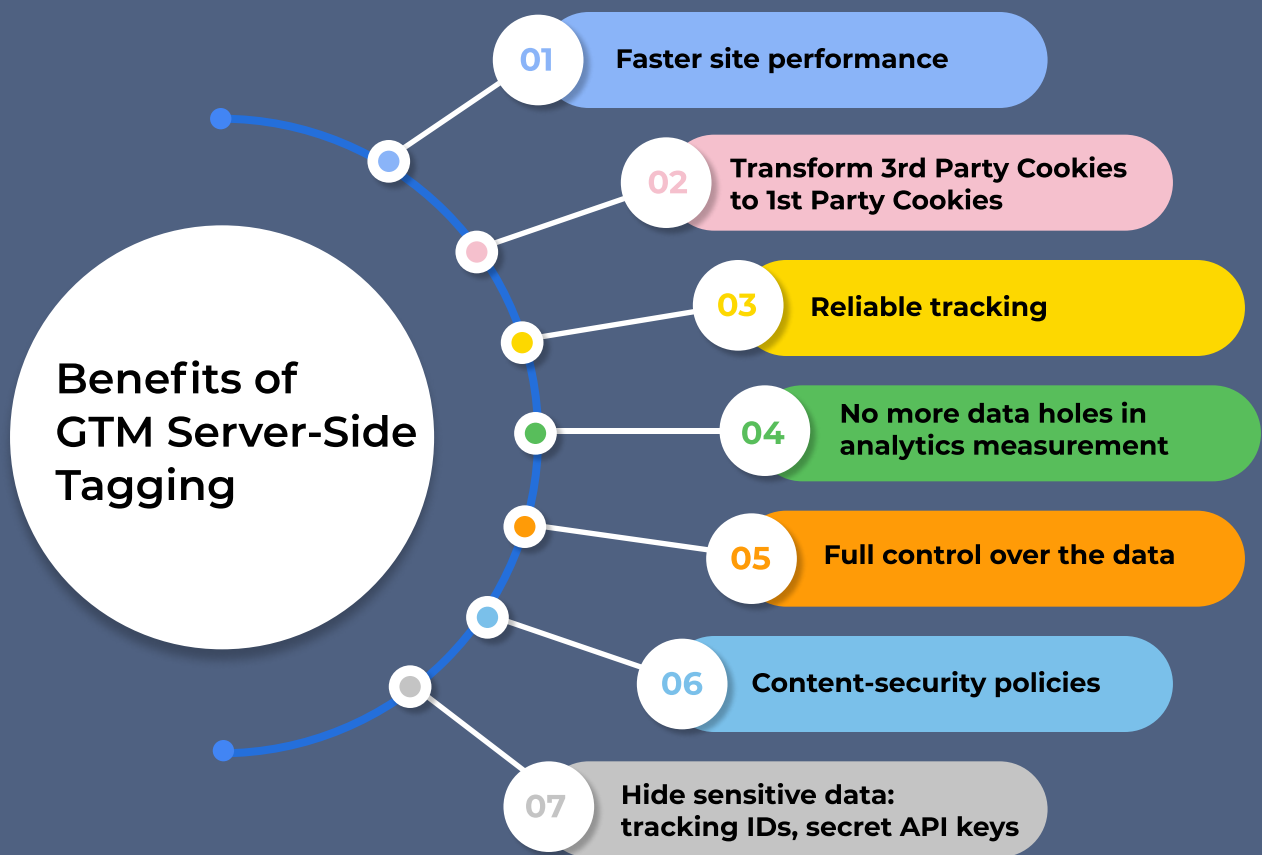
Client-side Tracking	Server-side Tracking
Browser-based tracking	Website's cloud server-based tracking
Is set up via client-side tagging. For example, Google Tag Manager	Is set up via server-side tagging. For example, Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging
Third-party javascript code is added to the website to track users	No third-party javascript code is added
• It comes under the purview of thirty-party cookies • Adblockers, Browsers like Safari can block third-party cookies by default	• Do not come under the purview of third-party cookies • It comes clean as first-party data, as the tags are hosted and run in the website owner's cloud server before them being sent to the analytics/ tracking service providers like Google Analytics, Google Ads, Facebook, etc.
Unreliable tracking option as a good part of third-party cookies get blocked	Reliable tracking and measurement option
Not compliant with privacy regulations	Compliant with privacy regulations

As you can see, the server-side tracking is the future.

To switch from client-side tracking to server-side tracking, brands need to move all the tracking pixels to Google Tag Manager Server-Side. This includes all your current tags Google Analytics, GA4, Google Ads or Facebook.

In the case of server-side tracking, the brand will be able to run all the tracking scripts directly on the brand's cloud server instead of running them in the user's browser. This is how the brand can make third-party cookies, first-party.

On the **tracking** front, Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging circumvents tracking restrictions and offer reliable tracking.

On the **measurement** front, it helps fills the earlier data gaps in the conversion paths, which has historically made it difficult to understand the customer's purchase journeys and advertise to them profitably.

On the **data privacy compliance and regulations** front, GTM server-side tracking is compliant and are able to successfully convert third-party data to first-party data

Benefits of GTM Server-Side Tagging

01 Faster site performance

02 Transform 3rd Party Cookies to 1st Party Cookies

03 Reliable tracking

04 No more data holes in analytics measurement

05 Full control over the data

06 Content-security policies

07 Hide sensitive data: tracking IDs, secret API keys

challenges to implementing GTM server-side tagging

Lack of Technical Resource: Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging is new, and unlike the Google Tag Manager implementation, most organizations do not have the needed technical talent, experience, or expertise to implement Google Tag Manager Server-Side Tagging.

Lack of Time: By 2023, the support for 3rd party cookies will stop entirely. Instead of waiting till the last hour, it is advisable to complete the GTM Server-Side Tagging and start collecting data.

cost structure for GTM server-side tagging

	Bronze for Startups	Silver for Midsize	Platinum for Enterprise	Custom
Tags Upto	30	80	180	180+
Minimum days	10	15	30	-
Total Cost	$3,800	$6,480	$12,600	-

Combining CDP & GA4

What is CDP

A CDP (Customer Data Platform) is a software that combines data from multiple tools to create a centralized customer database that contains data from all touch-points and interactions with your brand's product or service. The CDP database can then be segmented in an endless number of ways to create more personalized marketing campaigns.

Google Analytics 4

Google Analytics 4(GA4) is a disruptive enhancement and not an incremental enhancement from Universal Analytics. GA4 is a more user-centric measurement model and equips brands, and e-commerce managers with capabilities to dig deep into user behaviour, made possible with access to granular user-level tracking.

With the Google Analytics 4 (GA4), Google has moved away from the Urchin developed analytics, which is more than a decade old. GA4 is a fundamental reinvention of the platform core: the GA4 property and the event-based measurement model.

Google describes Google Analytics 4 as a next-generation approach to privacy-first tracking, x-channel measurement, and AI-based predictive data all at once.

The unification of data across web and app properties is at the core of GA4 and makes use of the proprietary Google Signals to provide a single view of user data across devices and properties.

Google Signals

Google Signals is a Google product that provides cross-device tracking and reporting. Integrated with Google Analytics, Signals helps brands understand how users interact with the website across multiple devices and sessions.

Benefits of using GA4 as the preferred CDP platform

Brands can use Google Analytics 4 as the preferred CDP and personalization engine. Here, GA4 serves not only as an analytics and measurement platform, but also comes with the ability of a powerful segmentation engine. Instead of relying on third-party partners for CDP, you can create your own customised CDP.

Now, Customer Data Platforms (CDP) offers a single-point-of truth for the customer data including transactional, demographic, and behavioural data. They are a:

1. Single-point for customer data across web and app properties
2. Break data silos
3. Segment and activate data from multiple marketing channels
4. Central hub to personalise consumer engagement campaigns

Using GA4 for as a preferred CDP brings additional benefits.

1. Unification of customer data across web and app properties
2. Access to granular event-level user logs free of cost
3. Eliminate third-party tools, custom tag on the website, SDKs in apps
4. Complete ownership of user data
5. Integrate BigQuery data warehouse to any activation partner
6. Access to a powerful machine learning, modelling ecosystem

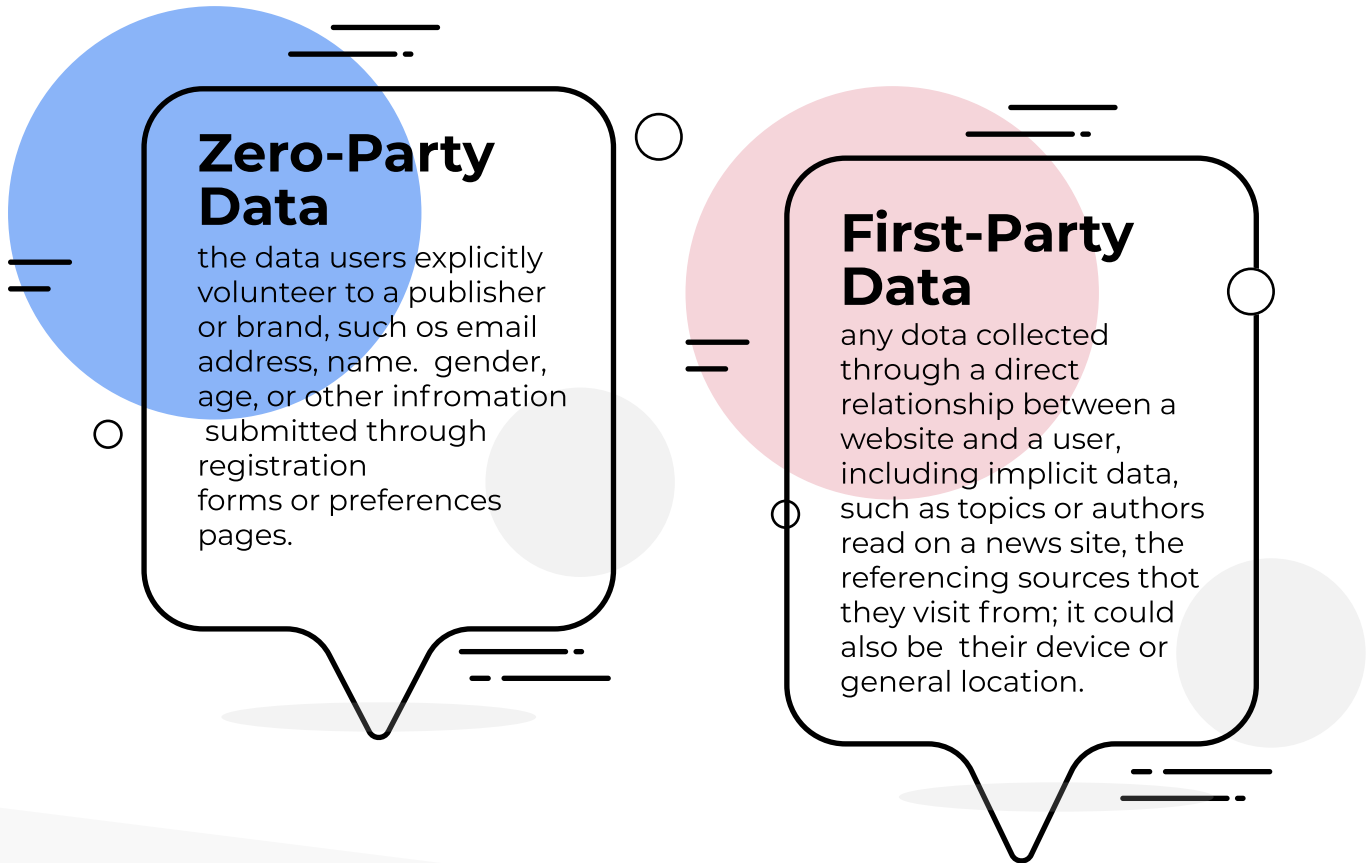## Key Benefits of Combining GA4 and Big Query

BigQuery integration historically was only available to Google Analytics premium accounts. With GA4, BigQuery comes free of cost till 10GB of monthly storage. For most website and apps, this 10GB storage will roughly translate to 5 Million event records a month.
With the integration, it is possible to have event-level user logs that provide access to the lowest level of customer behavioral data which can be used to segment users and create further machine learning models to create ultra-personalized brand experiences.
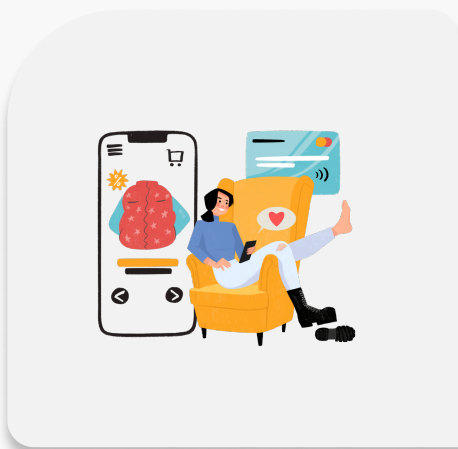
- No more data sampling like in case of UA
- Understanding of complex queries
- Access to all event parameters
- Custom channel grouping (like UA) and use it for analysis
- Visualize data tools like: Data Studio, tableau, Power BI, etc
- Data warehouse integration
- Apply ML algorithms to your dataset
- Data storage locations of shoice (US, EU or country specific locations)
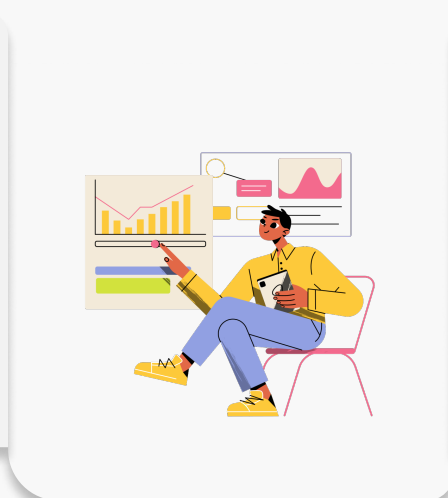
Zero-Party and First-Party Data

Move more towards zero-party and first-party data.

Zero-Party Data

the data users explicitly volunteer to a publisher or brand, such os email address, name. gender, age, or other infromation submitted through registration forms or preferences pages.

First-Party Data

any dota collected through a direct relationship between a website and a user, including implicit data, such as topics or authors read on a news site, the referencing sources thot they visit from; it could also be their device or general location.
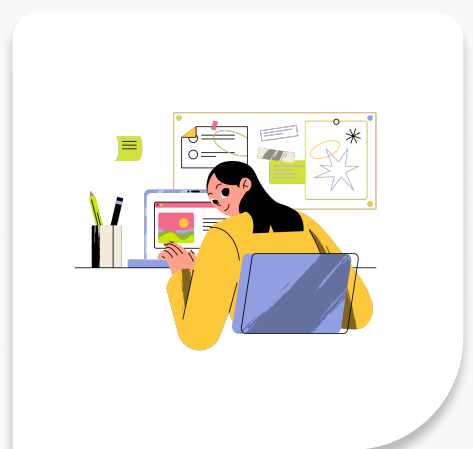
our service and offering

Google tag manager server-side tagging for **e-commerce**

Google tag manager server-side tagging for **manufacturing**

Google tag manager server-side tagging for **b2b**

you are in good hands

We have helped startups to Fortune 500s for their analytics, measurement and digital transformation journey.

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end to end google tag manager server-side implementation, migration & maintenance

The Analytics Team at Ayruz is experienced in
end-to-end GTM server-side tagging implementation, migration, and maintenance.

The process starts with an audit of the existing tags and the existing implementation, migrating GTM tags and/or traditional analytics and/ or other tag management system to the GTM server-side tagging. The brand objectives, along with the existing tag audit by our Analytics Team should facilitate a smooth migration. Every GTM server-side tag will be tested against client objectives and audit documents. The finally be verified before it goes live.

Our team interacts closely with the client to ensure that each of the brand's measurement objectives is implemented within the GTM server-side system. If you need a free consultation on GTM server-side tagging, feel free to book a meeting now.

enter cookie-less world boldly
and stay compliant to GDPR and CCPA

Talk to us for a free consultation
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