

MARKETING

## Apple's crucial IDFA change: 3 tips for strengthening brands with first-party data

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By [Bernardo de Albergaria](#)

Apple's recent change to the ID for Advertisers (IDFA) represented a tectonic shift for the brand marketing ecosystem, which now must be laser-focused on first-party data.

IDFA is an identifier that allows marketers to track iOS users' activity across apps to better target and measure digital ad campaigns. It is an incredibly powerful identifier, as it is the same across every app on every device a user has, enabling advertisers to devise retargeting and precision lookalike campaigns based on the totality of a user's mobile app footprint.

Up until April 26, users had the option to opt out of being tracked but only by changing their phone settings.

Thanks to the release of Apple's latest operating system, [iOS14.5](#), apps will have to ask users to opt in for tracking. While it is early, one analysis found that only about [4 percent](#) or [5 percent of Apple users](#) are opting in so far.

The ramifications go well beyond Apple.

In recent months, Apple's privacy-minded moves have [influenced Google's stances](#) around data issues and probably will again. And [Facebook has reacted](#) by attempting to get users to opt in to app tracking transparency (ATT) so it can continue supplying a rich flow of data to advertisers.

It is important to note that this critical IDFA change is a huge win for consumer privacy.

Combined with Apple's recently added [privacy nutrition labels](#) for iOS apps, consumers now have clearer choices to make about how their data is used without wading through pages of mind-numbing policies or levels-deep privacy settings.

For marketers, third-party data is getting scarcer, which in turn increases the importance of first-party data. With that in mind, here are three tips marketers can use to strengthen their brands.

Constantly test to establish meaningful connections

First of all, brands need to remember that when they put in a first-party data "ask" whether it is for an app download, social login to a Web site, permission to send push notifications, a loyalty member registration, or an email or text sign-up they are not asking for a one-off transaction that is akin to an impulse buy. To the contrary, they are asking

for a committed relationship, which requires a thoughtful approach.

Therefore, brands need to offer what their customers find most valuable to establish a meaningful connection as quickly as possible.

Marketers can best accomplish this idea by continually optimizing customer journeys, app tours, opt-in prompts and messages themselves, finely tuning executions with ongoing A/B or multivariate testing.

But that is just one aspect for how constant testing can help brands' customer experience (CX), as they can also use the practice to retain their earned audience and further drive business outcomes.

In one example, Latin America-based food delivery platform iFood used multivariate testing to achieve the goal of getting more customers to pay for their orders online rather than upon delivery, improving key performance indicators (KPI) **by 14 percent**.

This outcome enhanced the overall customer experience, saving them time while improving iFood's ability to efficiently complete more transactions.

Perhaps most importantly, all of that has given the brand an edge over its competitors during the pandemic as **most consumers generally preferred** contactless commerce over other payment methods.

Respect customer preferences

When onboarding customers to apps, Web sites and opt-in channels, a brand should provide them with the chance to choose product or service preferences to help produce the best CX.

These explicit preferences can and should be granular without taking up too much of customers' time or becoming invasive, and marketers should reach beyond preference centers to include these options in onboarding flows and account setup screens.

For example, marketers for a large sports equipment company might use app screens on initial open to establish the gender identities for which the user is shopping, the sports and activities of interest, and favorite sports personalities, to learn how to better serve individuals in a few easy taps.

Brands should also ask for channel and frequency preferences. How often do customers want to hear from a company, and for what reasons to have the type of relationship they want.

If customers provide explicit preference data, brands must both use and honor it to fill their part of this privacy-value exchange.

Even more so, marketers must also predict customers' implicit preferences to truly provide the best CX to each and every customer.

Customers' Web site and app behaviors, their progress or stopping points in key journeys, and their messaging interactions from button taps to live chat provide a wealth of continually enriched insight to better serve them as individuals.

For example, a news publisher might see users visiting "entertainment" content at a much higher rate than average, and use that in future targeting and personalization.

Even better, they could turn this signal from an implicit to an explicit preference with a simple Yes/No notification: "Would you like to receive more entertainment news?"

All such information can help evolve the customer relationship to a one-to-one level, and, ultimately, grow customer value as recipients get what they expect.

Plus, by asking them about what they prefer, a brand is showing a level of customer care that will outshine competitors.

Get the whole org aligned and ready

Now that a brand has first-party data, its marketers will want to leverage it automatically in order to increase sales, decrease churn and achieve other critical business outcomes. And there is only one way to accomplish such goals: The chief marketing officer and marketing department need to be strategically aligned with the chief information officer and his or her team.

The depth of this alignment, and how well marketing, sales, services and the back-office hum in unison, will be the

modern brand's measure of successful customer experiences.

More generally, Apple's iOS 14.5 update should make it abundantly clear to marketers that "eyeballs" are people and people have rights and choices.

Brands must earn the right to collect and leverage customer data, and maintaining that right will increasingly depend on the value provided through direct interactions across digital properties and messaging channels.

OWNING THE CUSTOMER relationship, respecting that relationship, and serving and empathizing with them is more important than ever before.

Brands that cherish and responsibly leverage their first-party data will build durable and valuable customer relationships.

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