About

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Today we're going to start at the very beginning and answer the question of "what is a cookie?"

Many of you probably know this by now but just for the sake of getting us all on the same page, a cookie is a piece of data stored on your computer by the web browser. So what does it do? Cookies track your behavior online. For me, that means companies like TaylorMade Golf and Hyperlite know me very well :) It also means as a hotelier you know who exactly to show your weekend leisure ads to, and not your midweek business travel ads. And companies that want to target people like me, that have similar products, have an audience they can tap into to reach new customers.
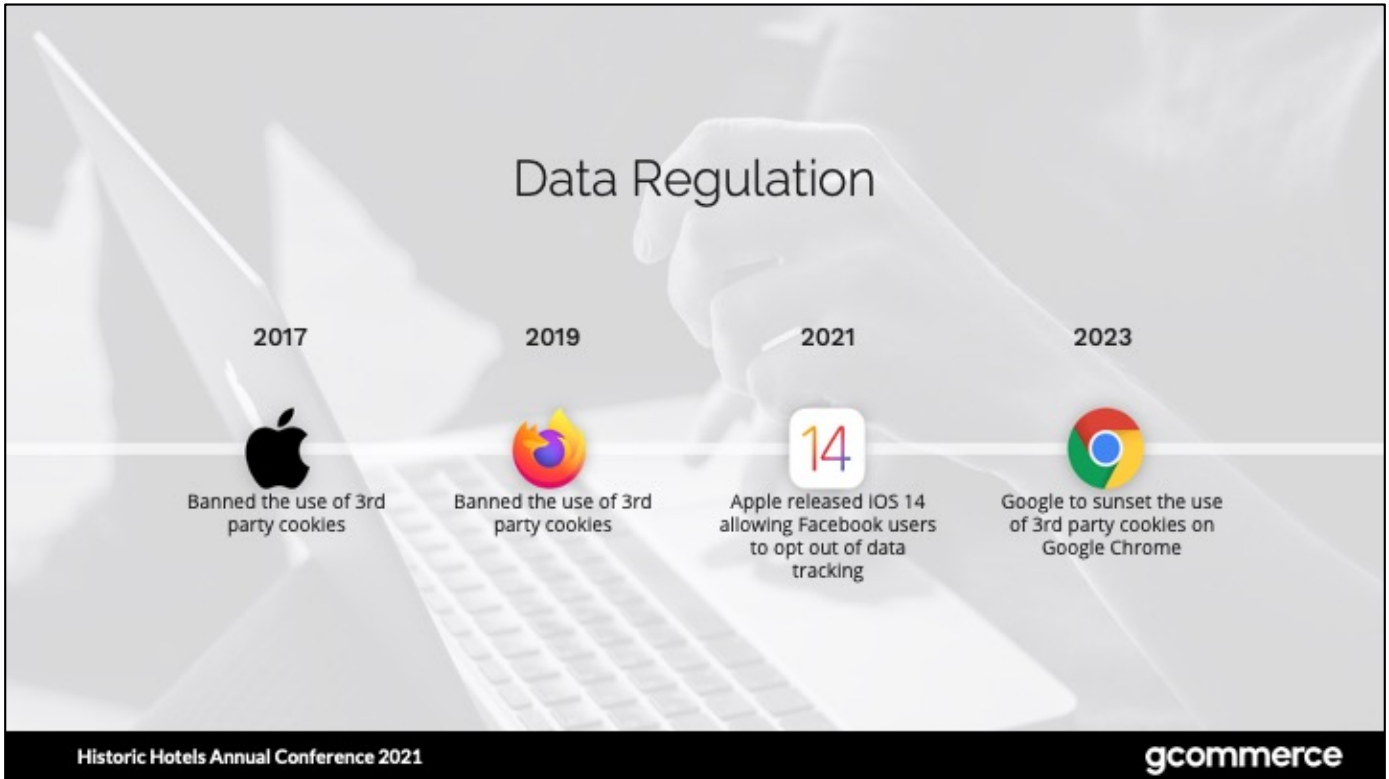
This is how 3rd party cookies have been working, but they are going away and the process has already begun. In fact, Apple was the first to do so back in 2017 and Firefox followed in 2019. Google Chrome is the final and largest browser that has announced no longer supporting cookies as of 2023. Not only does this impact how we reach audiences, but it has a dramatic impact on how we can measure our own performance. Who here is used to seeing the number of conversions directly generated by their Facebook/Instagram ads? We will still be able to do this, but it is going to change.

So let's dig into some of the big changes you can expect as we march closer toward a Cookieless world. I'm going to walk through a few widely-used techniques or KPIs that will be changing.

Retargeting lists - It's safe to say that all of us are running retargeting ads based on 3rd party cookies at this very moment and as of 2023 the ability to do so will be gone and as you saw on the previous slide, the browsers using cookies is already diminished quite a bit, reducing potential audience targeting.

Number two -
Conversion tracking - With the emphasis on privacy and data regulation, the ability for a user to opt out of cookie tracking has been around for several years now. Most recently, with FB's iOS update, users are being prompted to opt in or out of being tracked. This leads to what we call modeled or estimated conversions. Without the use of a cookie tracking the individual all the way from ad engagement to booking due to privacy settings, we are left with estimated conversions. All of the major ad platforms have rolled this out and marketers and hoteliers need to dig into this to be sure we don't lose the ability to see what's working and what isn't.

Number three-

3rd party data - Using the crutch of 3rd party cookies rather than investing in your own 1st party data. We've been using 3rd party cookies as a crutch for years! How long have we been talking about ways to collect email addresses from OTA guests? And yet it's still such a challenge. Hint: If you haven't set up a WiFi landing page where you can collect the email address of each guest, you need to do so now. But the point is we no longer have a choice. Growing your email database is essential.

At the end of the day when all these changes are in full effect, you will have a much more limited manner to target your ads and measure your online marketing efforts if you don't start planning now.

The art of storytelling
makes a comeback

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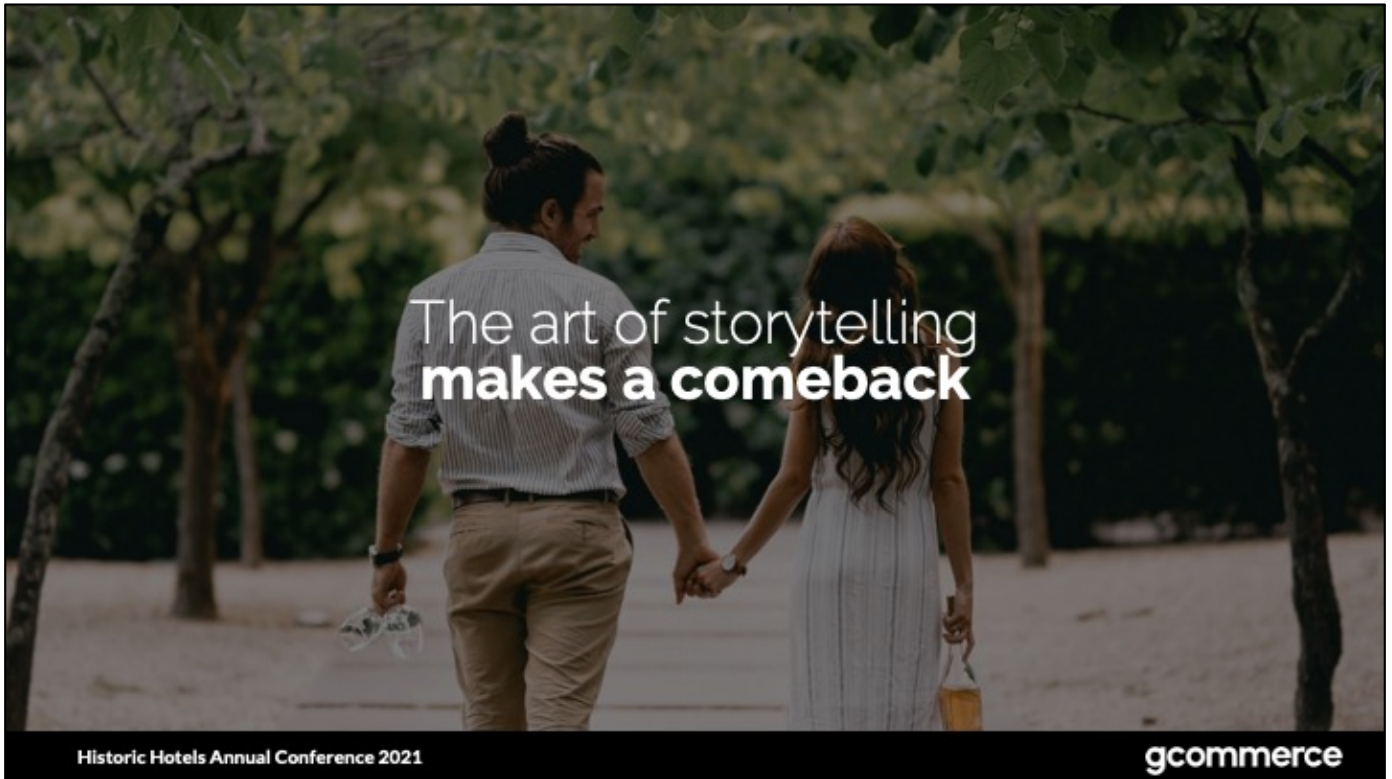
As the data you've relied on is changing or going away all together, there's a lot you need to consider.

But what we want to spend our time on today is how Google Analytics 4 (GA4) is going to be a critical, foundational tool in a cookieless world.

Illustration of scale, Frequency and Targeting versus Story & Brand Message with the first more weighted

As marketers, the ability to tell a story has always been a critical part of our job, but over time, we've grown accustomed to having tools and techniques that focus on targeting and frequency, which have predominantly been made possible through the use of 3rd party cookies and other tech. And while targeting and frequency aren't going away, the dynamic is shifting. The Cookieless world is bringing back the age of true storytelling and brand messaging.

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Illustration of scale, Frequency and Targeting versus Story & Brand Message with the second more weighted

GA4 is built to help us understand what is resonating and what isn't and while it may be a little uncomfortable at first, it is going to be an exciting journey and it will bring out the creativity in all of us.

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Before we get back to how the cookieless world helps us tell stories, I would like to implore all of you to be proactive with your analytics. Whether you're using Adobe Analytics, GA 360, or just GA out of the box. DO NOT BE PASSIVE. Keep your data clean and your marketing on point.

Google Analytics 4 is not just another analytics package to be installed on your website or booking engine. I don't consider it a new version, or version upgrade, but rather a new tool altogether.

This new tool may feel a little familiar on the surface, but don't be fooled. It's got new metrics. New interface. New tools. New insights. It doesn't want anything to do with your old analytics package. It's complicated
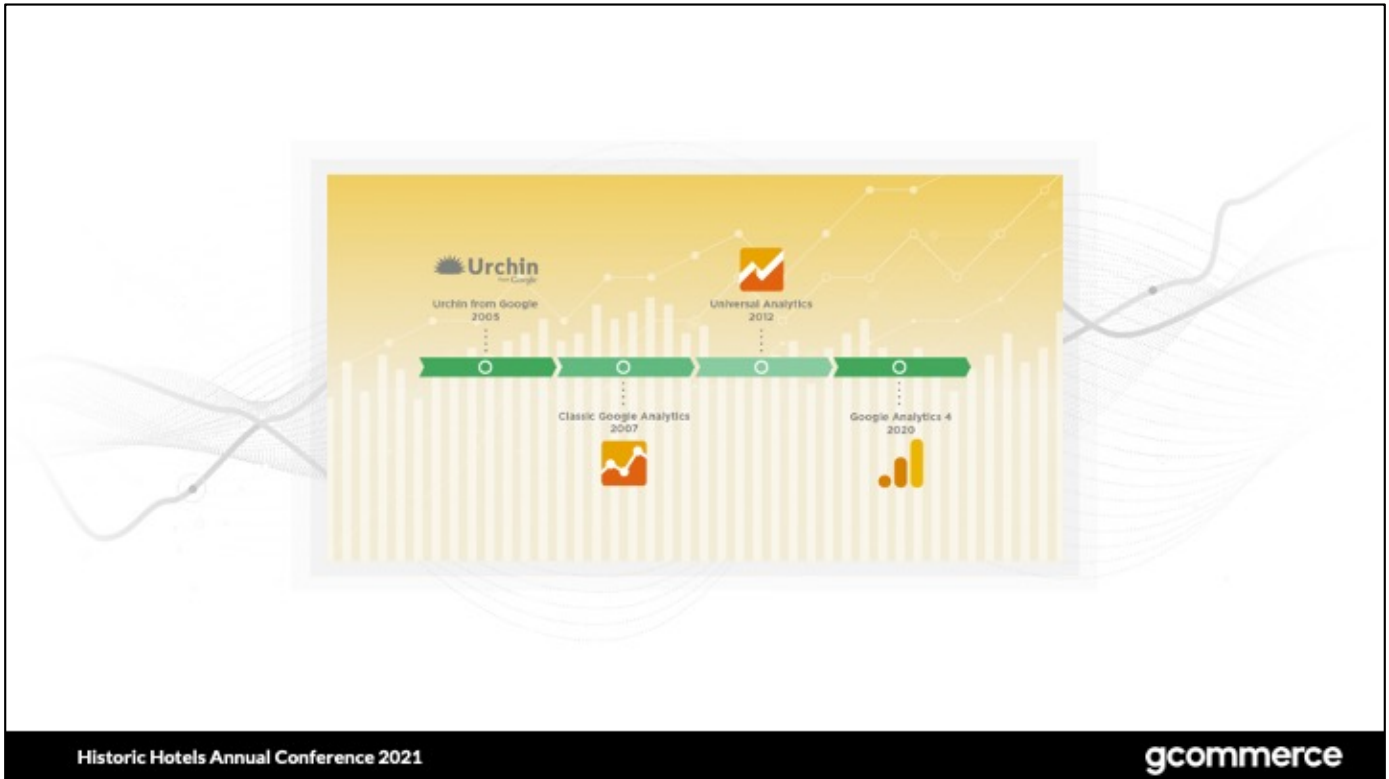
So we'll start this journey with a quick history lesson.
It all started with Urchin- a little known web tracking software founded during the early days of the web.

- In 2005 Google purchased Urchin and rebranded the product to Google Analytics later that year.
- Google's goal was to democratize advanced web analytics, and not require millions of dollars or more on analytics products. Up until that time, web analytics platforms were costly.
- Once purchased by Google, GA became one of the most popular tools for website traffic analysis due to it's website side tracking code and it is FREE. Website traffic analysis was typically a server-side deployment and complicated for small companies to execute.

The INTRODUCTION OF Google Analytics Classic
- In 2007 Google introduced a newer version of Analytics, called "Classic".
- Analytics Classic introduced a new page tag (ga.js) that increased the accuracy of website KPI's and allowed for ecommerce transactions within GA.
- Helped move analytics from the "back room into the boardroom". Online and ecommerce businesses started to rely upon transactional data for business decisions
- Later in 2009, Classic was upgraded to the new Asynchronous Tag allowing for web pages to load faster and increase metric performance in the addition

to include "website goals".

Fun fact- Google Analytics is used by roughly 50% of all websites and it continues to grow every year.

In 2012 Google introduced a newer version of Analytics, called "Universal".
- The new gold standard in website analytics, creating more functionality surrounding user events and engagement. Who here is tagging EVENTS on your website?
- It also coincided with the Introduction of Google Analytics Premium or GA 360.
- Significant advancements were made in tag management which helped align Universal Analytics with the additional on-page events

In the 4th quarter of 2020 Google released their beta version of Google Analytics 4, which I will show you in just a moment is a fundamental change in how we are going to look at website analytics from what we have all been used to seeing.

Storytelling & Your
Analytics Data

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So we've briefly covered a little history of Google Analytics.
Let's talk about Google Analytics 4 and some of the key advantages of using this new analytics package.
In context with storytelling, Google is highly focused on website engagement. So much so, they've started to suppress some metrics and introduce new ones.

Hello Engagement

Session source/medium ▼	+	Users	Sessions	Engaged sessions	Average engagement time per session	Engaged sessions per user	Events per session	Engagement rate	Event count All events ▼	Conversions All events ▼	Total revenue
Totals		29,422 100% of total	39,202 100% of total	12,481 100% of total	1m 07s Avg 0%	0.42 Avg 0%	7.42 Avg 0%	31.84% Avg 0%	291,001 100% of total	8,299 100% of total	$219,068.25 100% of total
1 google / organic		5,047	6,195	3,790	0m 30s	0.75	3.73	61.18%	23,134	14	$0.00
2 (direct) / (none)		5,328	6,289	2,547	0m 15s	0.48	3.47	40.5%	21,808	15	$0.00
3 local / organic		2,906	3,570	2,362	0m 24s	0.81	3.70	66.16%	13,200	15	$1,620.00
4 google / cpc		2,290	2,838	1,751	0m 24s	0.76	3.63	62.36%	10,196	11	$0.00
5 tripadvisor.com / referral		335	359	240	0m 20s	0.72	4.35	66.85%	1,561	1	$0.00
6 TripAdvisor / HotelWebsite		274	301	236	0m 31s	0.86	3.95	78.41%	1,188	3	$0.00
7 bing / organic		258	301	218	0m 45s	0.84	4.02	72.43%	1,210	3	$0.00
8 facebook / social		459	489	184	0m 14s	0.40	3.44	37.63%	1,681	1	$0.00

For instance, you won't find bounce rate any longer. It's just not available.
Instead you'll find a bevy of new metrics on "engagement".
Google is now very interested in how your users are engaging with your content.
Engagement metrics are now standard when looking at either source, medium, geo
and other parameters.
Some of the new engagement metrics like "engaged sessions" focus on your website
content. Is your content sticky? Is your audience consuming your content? Are there
strong calls to action? Does the content assist conversions?
It's these types of questions that Google wants to you consider in GA4. AND NOT
JUST ELEMENTARY WEBSITE STATS like number of visitors, bounce rate, average
number of pages viewed, etc.

Key Advantage
Conversion Events

Conversion name ↑	Count	% change	Value	% change	Mark as conversion ⑦
add_to_cart	0	0%	0	0%	⬤
contact_us	0	↓ 100.0%	-		⬤
guest_option_submit	165	↑ 5.8%	-		⬤
look_to_book	0	0%	0	0%	⬤
meetings_rfp	8	↑ 100.0%	-		⬤
member_login	190	↓ 5.5%	-		⬤
member_option_submit	25	↑ 66.7%	-		⬤
newsletter_signup	4	↑ 33.3%	-		⬤
purchase	58	↑ 16.0%	$18,729.89	↑ 9.2%	○
weddings_rfp	0	0%	0	0%	⬤

Who is using events within your Google Analytics profile.
I'm guessing some of you have events labeled BUT I wanted to review a new feature found in GA4. "Conversion events".

We've been accustomed to tags within Google Analytics for years. It's those "onclick" or engagement events you can prescribe in your site to quantify certain actions.
With GA4, we can take that technology one step further, by labeling events as conversions within the admin panel.

Most of us will consider a transaction a conversion. But in GA4, a conversion can be considered more.
Let's assume your property takes online reservations. But let's also assume that your property has an F&B outlet. Maybe some meeting space, and possibly a venue for weddings.
If your audience and viewers are engaged with your content, (and I hope they are), they may want more information on your meeting space or want to reserve a table at your restaurant.

GA4 now gives you the tools to label conversion events within your analytics.
What should your conversion events be you ask? The quick answer is to think of your business objectives. More RFP's? More restaurant reservations? Look to book ratio? GA4 can handle them all.

Key Advantage
Web+App

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How many of you have an app for your property that is the same framework as your website?
If your answer is yes, GA4 has a brand new feature.

- Google Analytics 4 now allows for the SAME script to be deployed to both HTML and App based technologies
    - For years, if you wanted to measure app usage, you would need a separate profile.
- NOW - Website and mobile app data is housed within the same profile
- There's a tremendous opportunity for complex properties with multiple revenue outlets .
   - This also gives developers the ability to track app events.
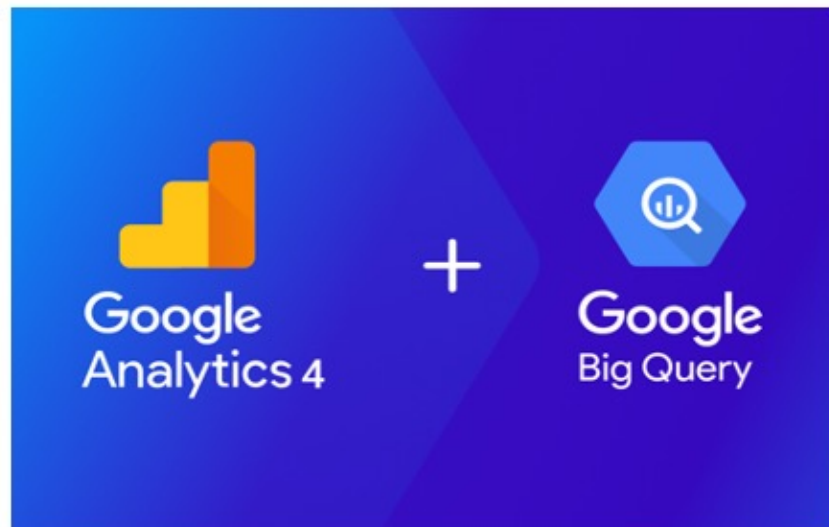
For the first time, Google Analytics is directly connected to BigQuery
For those that work in database management, this is big news.
For others, you may be asking "so what?"

Couple quick points about why this should matter to you and your marketing team

1. Google's focus on privacy continues to evolve. Using 3rd party technology to extract marketing data out of GA may have limitations, meaning Google may not want to share that data freely. So if you want ALL your GA data in free form, look into BigQuery or talk to your marketing team about data limitations.

2. I'm sure many of you consume your analytics data within Google's UI. You log into analytics and use what's given to you or you export the data into a visualizer. But what if you have more than one property? What if you're looking at several properties? Having your data in a warehouse SCALES your analytics reporting. And think about what you could do if you effortlessly COMPARE your analytics data across properties? Or maybe across markets???

3. Lastly, and something I think we'll see in the next year or two is the blending of CRM data with analytics data. Some of the new features in GA4 give us a glimpse into what Google's thinking long term. One

metric I'm interested in seeing is lifetime value of a customer.
All of these advances can be brought to life by using a database like BigQuery.
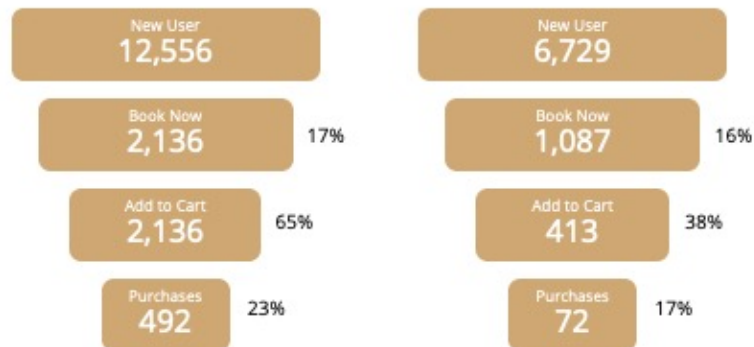
When configured correctly (good data), your analytics data should tell you enough of a story to make some conclusions.
Google Analytics 4 gives you some customization options to create some conclusions.
Understanding Engagement through your website to the transaction is critical to impact your website conversion rate through understanding your website conversion funnels to know what is working and what is not. On screen here is an elementary example, but if you tag all your conversion events from content engagement like videos or pages viewed and integrate into your funnel visualizations it can provide you with deeper insight.

Numbers and data need to be put into context for us to understand it. Stories are how we can help numbers make sense, not only to ourselves but to others.
On the left and right, you see a typical booking funnel. GA4 allows us to tag the steps in the funnel, thereby giving us a data point to create a story.
In this example, the booking funnel starts with a user viewing the site.
Some percentage of users click the CTA or book now button.
Some percentage of those users added a room product to their cart.
And then finally some percentage of users purchased a room.

THESE NUMBERS ARE TELLING YOU A STORY. THE DATA IS TELLING YOU A STORY. THE FIRST STEP IS TO CREATE THE EVENTS IN GA4

WITHOUT CONVERSION EVENTS WHICH ARE BEING USED AS ENGAGEMENT METRICS, WE WOULDN'T KNOW WHERE IN THE BOOKING FUNNEL USERS WERE FALLING OUT.
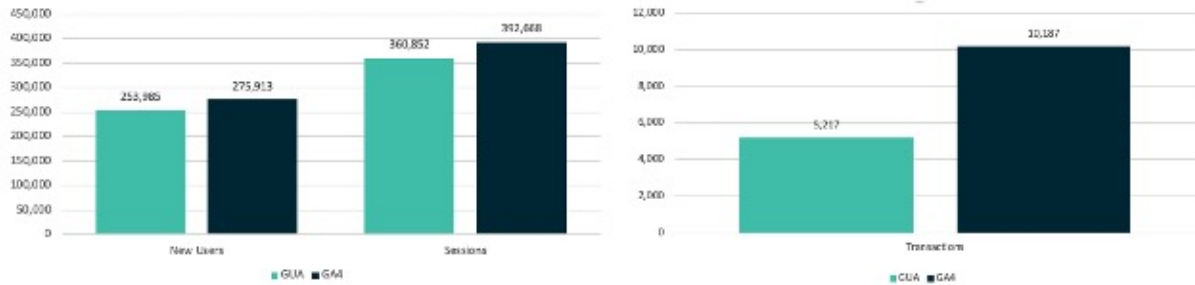
So we spoke on a little history of Google Analytics. We talked about some of the new key features and how the platform is evolving.
Now I hope to CONVINCE you what you should jump on GA4 right away.

We took a sample of clients and ran Universal Analytics and GA4 SIDE BY SIDE. The date range of this data is July, August, September.
GA4 saw slight increases in users and sessions.
Transactions is a different story. We saw a significant jump in Transactions.
So which is correct?
Well anyone that's worked with google analytics for hotels will tell you that GA is never 100% correct. That's why we take our final point of truth from the CRS.
After cross referencing the CRS data, GA4 was aligned closer to the CRS.
When configured correctly (good data), your analytics data should tell you enough of a story to make some conclusions.
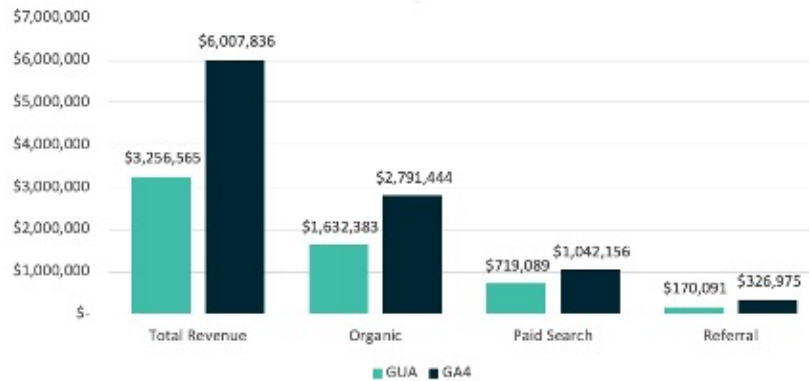
SO HERE'S THE CONCLUSION
If you're running universal analytics, you're missing some significant data.
AND IF YOU'RE MISSING THE MOST IMPORTANT DATA, HOW COULD YOU
MAKE DECISIONS ON KEY CHANNELS?

POINT OUT THE VARIANCE ON REFERRAL REVENUE – YOU COULD MAKE A
MISTAKE AND TURN OFF A PAID LISTING ON A REFERRAL SITE IF YOU DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND THE FULL VALUE THAT REFERRAL SITE BROUGHT YOU.
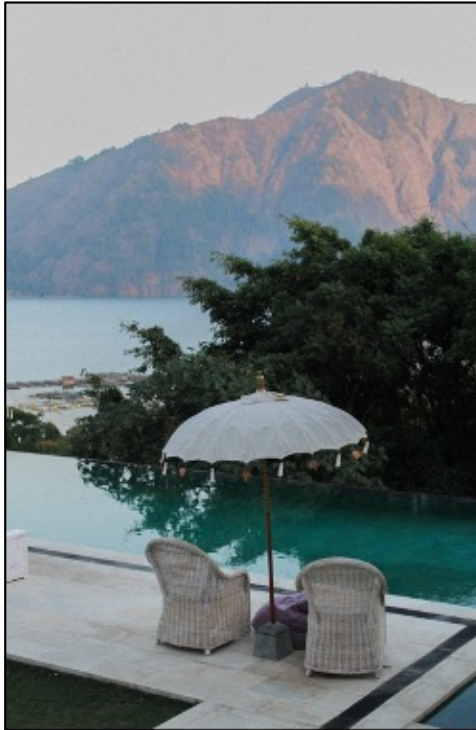
Key Takeaways

- Don't wait

- Start to think about the most important engagement points for your business

- Do you know what you are asking your users to do on your website?

- Do you understand who your audience is currently? If not, what can you do to generate that insight through website measurement?

- Once you have engagement data, how are you executing upon what it is telling you? Start to map out how you will leverage your website performance data to instruct your marketing strategies.

- Collect first party data

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If you take nothing else from MY content today, I want you to to take these 6 thoughts home with you:

Don't wait - every day that passes by is another day of missed opportunity to start building historical data now. GA4 will not carry forward your GA Universal data so we encourage you to get started today.

Start to think about your most important engagement points for your business and your website

Do you understand who your audience is? If not, what can you do to generate that insight through website measurement? GA4 is going to give you a plethora of data on this. It is going to tell you a story about your website and your audiences.

Once you have engagement data, what are you going to do about it? Map out how you will leverage your data to instruct your marketing strategies.

And finally, collect 1st party data. This will be the most critical aspect of the cookieless world and ensuring you have a winning strategy in the days and months to come.

Don't be left with an incomplete data story that may lead you to the wrong decisions.

Thank you

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