

# An Introduction to Attribution

Kochava Guides for Marketers

# Table of Contents

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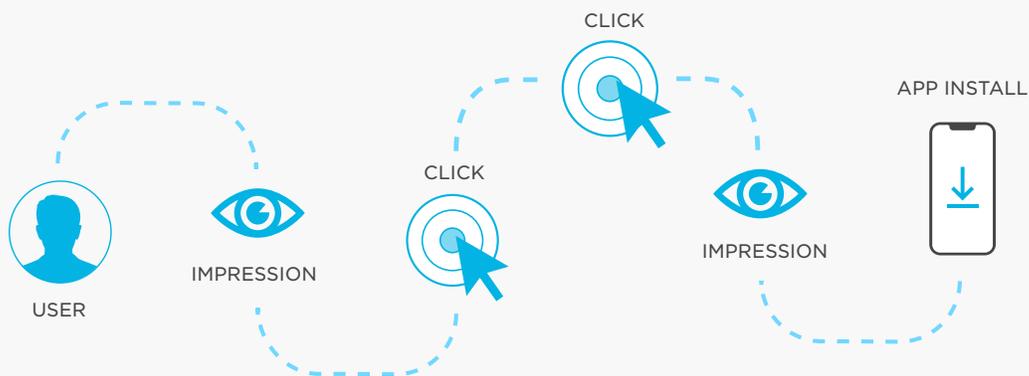
<b>Attribution Basics</b> .....	4
<b>Holistic Data is Key</b> .....	7
Impression and Click Data .....	8
User Engagement Data .....	8
<b>Making the Match</b> .....	10
Attribution Waterfall .....	11
<b>Summary</b> .....	14

# Attribution Basics

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The end goal of most marketing campaigns is to generate revenue and create user interest in the marketer's brand. To measure success of a campaign, marketers have to see how much user activity was impacted by their marketing and advertising efforts. It sounds simple, but as most marketers know, in this ever-changing ecosystem, measuring success can become somewhat complex. In this guide, we will try to keep things as simple as possible. The marketing landscape is tough as it is, no need to add more confusion.

The fluid process of evaluating a campaign as successful or unsuccessful involves pinpointing where users came from, how many saw or interacted with a particular creative, then based on that exposure, how many purchased or performed a desired action. This process is called [attribution](#).

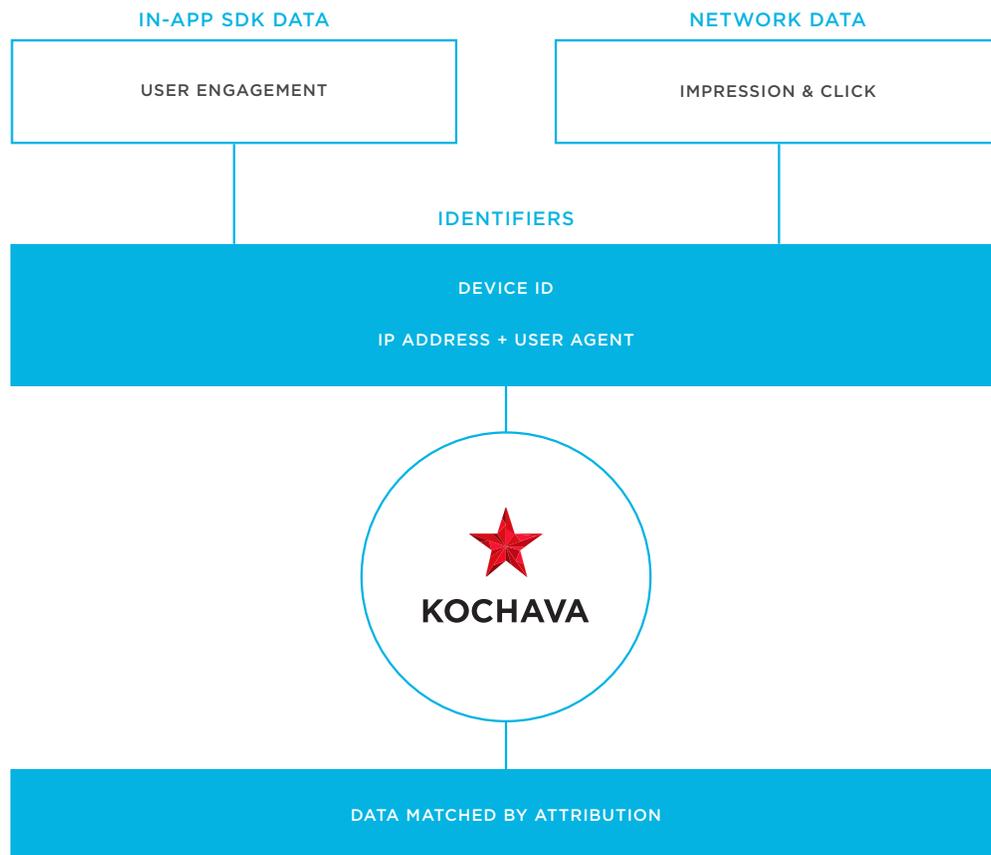


In other words, the attribution process connects impressions and clicks to subsequent user activity. The process of performing attribution is a bit more technical. To perform true attribution, reconciliation needs to occur. This involves determining whether a particular impression or click was responsible for directly causing a user to perform a subsequent engagement. Users that are not attributed to a campaign are referred to as organic or unattributed.

# Key Issues

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The primary hurdle for attribution is that campaign impressions and clicks are an entirely different data source than in-app user engagements (actually using an app, for example). There is a disconnect that must be bridged to positively identify a user who clicks on an advertisement as being the same user who performs an action later on. Providers like Kochava bring together these two data sources to perform attribution.

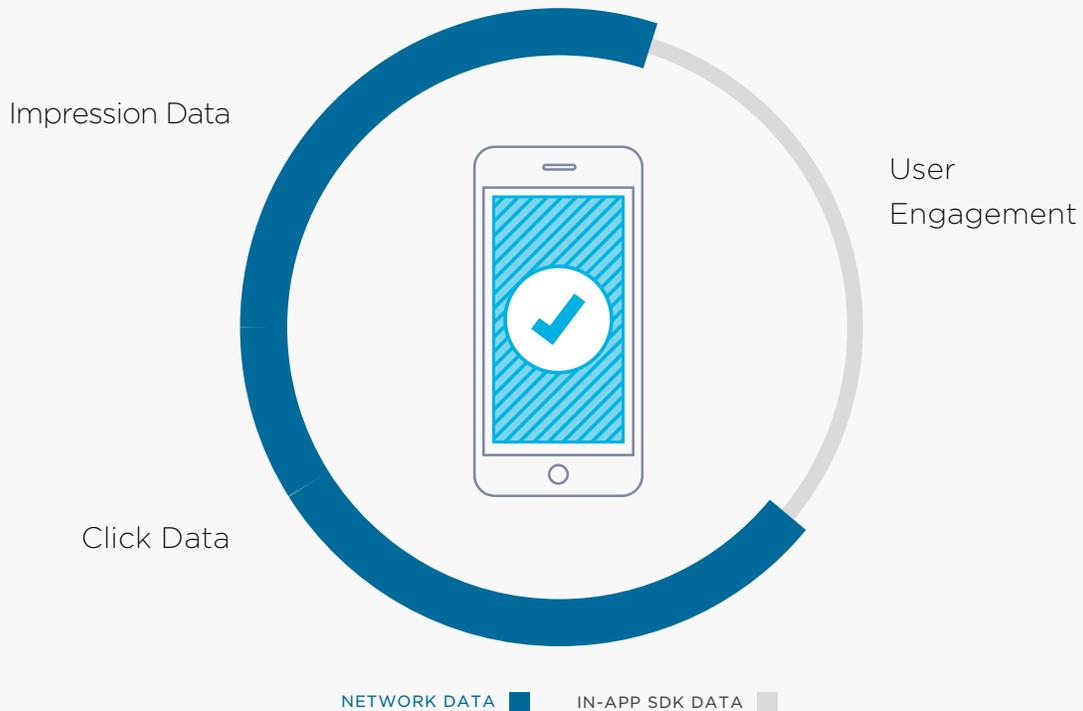


# Holistic Data is Key

# Holistic Data is Key

An attribution system must have a **full record of impressions and clicks from all campaigns** a marketer is running for both paid and owned media types. This provides a record of user interactions that might attribute to a subsequent in-app engagement or lower funnel action with content or products. The system must also have a **full record of the actual user engagements** that have occurred in-app or with the advertised product.

Using these two data sets, the attribution engine must decide which impression and/or click led to which subsequent activity.



# Identifiers

## IMPRESSION AND CLICK DATA

Impressions and clicks contain a variety of data with details of the specific campaign, network, creative, and publisher that served the ad. They also contain data regarding the user's device, which is broadly categorized as unique or non-unique device characteristics.

Unique device characteristics are identifiers which are completely unique to an individual device. These identifiers are called **device IDs**. There are many different types of device IDs, with each operating system having their own version. Because device IDs are unique, matches using them are 100% certain. These are referred to as **deterministic matches**.

Non-unique device characteristics are either descriptions about the user's device, called the device's **user agent**, or information regarding the virtual location of the device, referred to as the **IP address**. Neither user agent nor IP address is unique to the device; however, in tandem they are a reasonably good way of identifying a specific device. Identifying a device based on these characteristics is not 100% certain, and attribution matches made using these identifiers are called **probabilistic matches**.

### PROBABALISTIC

Device user agent (OS, Device Type)  
IP Address (Public wifi, household wifi)

### DETERMINISTIC

Unique IDs (IDFA, ADID, OAID)

## USER ENGAGEMENT DATA

Impression and click identifiers are dependent on the context in which the inventory is served. User engagement data from the brand's mobile app is not under these restrictions. This means that device characteristics and device IDs are collected and sent through to the attribution platform. There are some exceptions to this, most notably, iOS devices have an option for the user to elect Limit Ad Tracking to block the collection of their device identifier. However, in the majority of situations, the attribution system has full access to all of a device's characteristics and identifiers from it.

# Making the Match

# Making the Match

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Once the attribution system is receiving impressions, clicks and user engagements, it can start making connections between them.

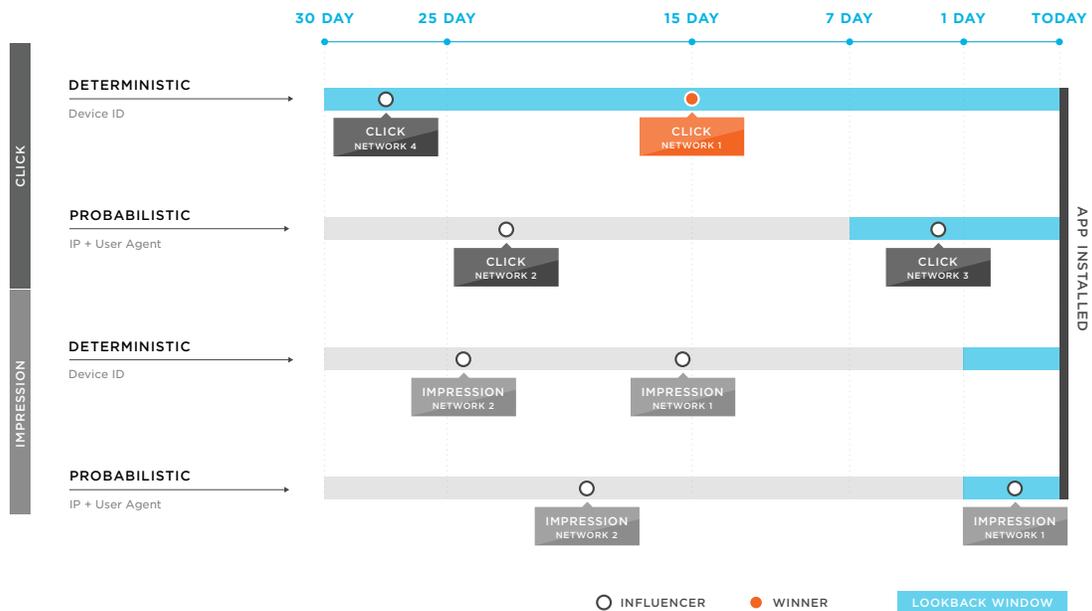
**Note:** Attribution systems are designed to treat creatives as a means of driving user intent toward a subsequent activity. Therefore, only impressions and clicks that happen before the engagement are considered for attribution.

## ATTRIBUTION WATERFALL

When a user engagement is received (eg, mobile app install), the attribution system begins the reconciliation process. First, it isolates all of the impressions and clicks that are relevant to that event based on its rulesets and configurations. Second, it examines all impressions and clicks and determines which impressions and clicks is “most eligible” based on the configurations and rulesets in the attribution system. In Kochava’s attribution waterfall clicks place higher in the match priority over impressions based on the user intent. A potential customer interacting with an ad shows a higher intent of following through to an install than simply viewing an ad.

# Attribution Waterfall

In the example below, various impressions and clicks are considered for attribution to an app install. Notice the different lookback windows in blue highlighting various time frames which can be altered; the reason for this will be covered in a separate guide on configurable attribution.



At the top, there is a click from Network 1 at day 15. A deterministic match can be made from the included device ID.

Underneath, a click from Network 3 at day 2 is closer, but is only a probabilistic match.

The click from Network 1 at day 15 wins the install attribution. It is within the lookback window, offers a deterministic match on device ID, and shows higher user intent than the impression at less than one day.

# Making the Match

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Once the most eligible impression or click is determined, it is awarded attribution, or said otherwise, it receives credit for the [conversion](#). The conversion is then tagged with all of the information from that particular impression or click, such as the campaign ID, network and publisher details, creative information, and any other data passed to the attribution system. Subsequently, all activity that happens from that same user is tied back to that original attribution event. This allows a marketer to see a trail, from impression, to click, to install, to subsequent post-install engagements, giving a clear picture of a user's original acquisition source over their lifetime of using or interacting with the marketer's application.

Attribution is highly dependent on the specific configurations and rules in place to govern it, which dictate the results and winners. Without a thorough understanding of these specific rulesets, using attribution and relying on the results is an exercise in blind faith. To use an attribution system to its greatest potential, a solid understanding of configurable attribution is required. Keep on the lookout for upcoming guides dedicated to this topic.

# Summary

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Attribution is a complex and multifaceted process that is inextricably tied to digital marketing. Without attribution, marketers cannot gauge the success of their campaigns and cannot accurately make efficient optimizations or find quality inventory sources.

You don't have to unravel this web yourself. Utilize a partner like Kochava or others to help provide accurate attribution across all your campaign types. With the right rules in place, attribution is an essential tool that works for the marketer, allowing for efficient media spend.

Stay tuned for the next guide on configurable attribution, where we'll take a look at how lookback windows and how they play an important role in the attribution process.

JUMP BACK TO ANY SECTION OF THIS GUIDE

## ATTRIBUTION BASICS

[Impression and Click Data](#)

[User Engagement Data](#)

## HOLISTIC DATA IS KEY

[Attribution Waterfall](#)

## MAKING THE MATCH

Still have questions?

Learn more at [Kochava.com](https://Kochava.com)

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