

Keeping the Lines of Communication Open— How to Make Science Alluring

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Where have all the customers gone? The lines forming behind traditional media forms (e.g., TV and print) are growing shorter, while consumers are flocking in masses toward digital media sources for information. As a result, the ways in which content is created and marketed are shifting as well.

How will this shift change the face of science-based industries? As the numbers show, digital media is growing rapidly and cannot be ignored. In 2005, 5% of U.S. adults had at least one social media account, according to the Pew Research Center. Fast-forward 13 years, and the percentage has risen to 69% (Fig. 1).

Even when broken down by platform, the number of users is up across the board:

- **LinkedIn:** From 37 million users in January 2009 to 500 million users in April 2017 (source: LinkedIn).
- **Facebook:** From 197 million users in January 2009 to 2.196 billion users in June 2018 (source: Facebook).
- **Twitter:** From 30 million users in January 2010 to 336 million users in June 2018 (source: Twitter).
- **Instagram:** From 90 million in users in January 2013 to 1 billion users in June 2018 (source: Instagram).

Surveys indicate it is not only millennials who are tipping the scale toward social media. In 2017, Facebook reached more than 80% of U.S. adults in groups 18–29 and 30–59 years of age and 67% of those over 60 years of age (Fig. 2).

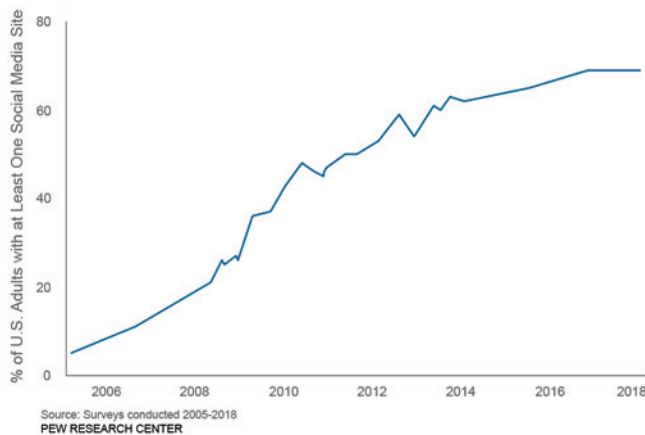


Fig. 1. Increase in number of U.S. adults who have at least one social media account (2005–2018).

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This cultural shift becomes even more significant when the amount of time spent on social media is taken into account. The “2016 Nielsen Social Media Report” revealed that adults spent 25 hours and 7 minutes on media, and 22% of that time was spent on social media—a 36% jump from quarter 3 of 2015 (8).

Digital Advertising

A growing digital audience means advertising opportunities are growing as well. Digital advertising sales have grown by 38% over the last two years (2016–2017), while traditional advertising (e.g., TV, radio, print, etc.) decreased by 7.1% (5). In 2017, for the first time, more money was spent on Internet advertising than on TV advertising (9).

If Everyone Is Running toward Digital Media, How Do You Get in Front?

Selling information in the information age takes a fresh approach. The floodgates are open, and sorting content is in the hands of the consumer. All the seller can do is package content in a way that stands out. As viewership on Netflix and other streaming services surpasses cable and broadcast TV viewership (1), consumers are increasingly accustomed to selecting and controlling the flow of information they receive. A few proven techniques for successfully grabbing the attention of consumers include keeping it short, keeping it visual, and keeping it real.

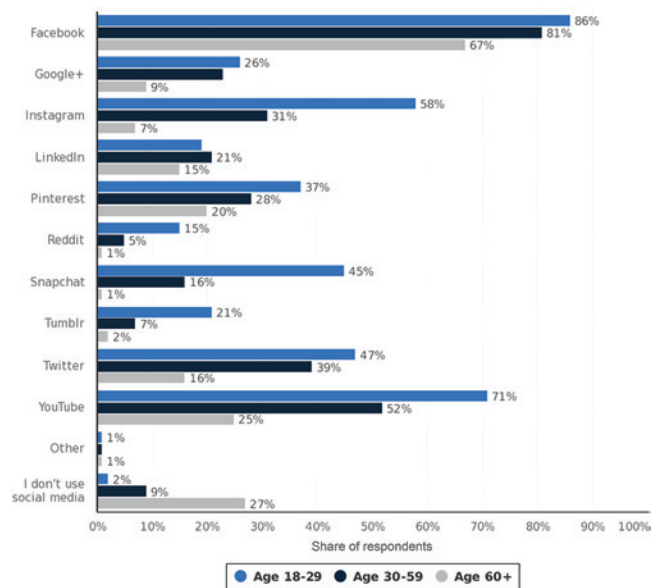


Fig. 2. Reach of selected social media networks in the United States as of February 2017 (by age group).

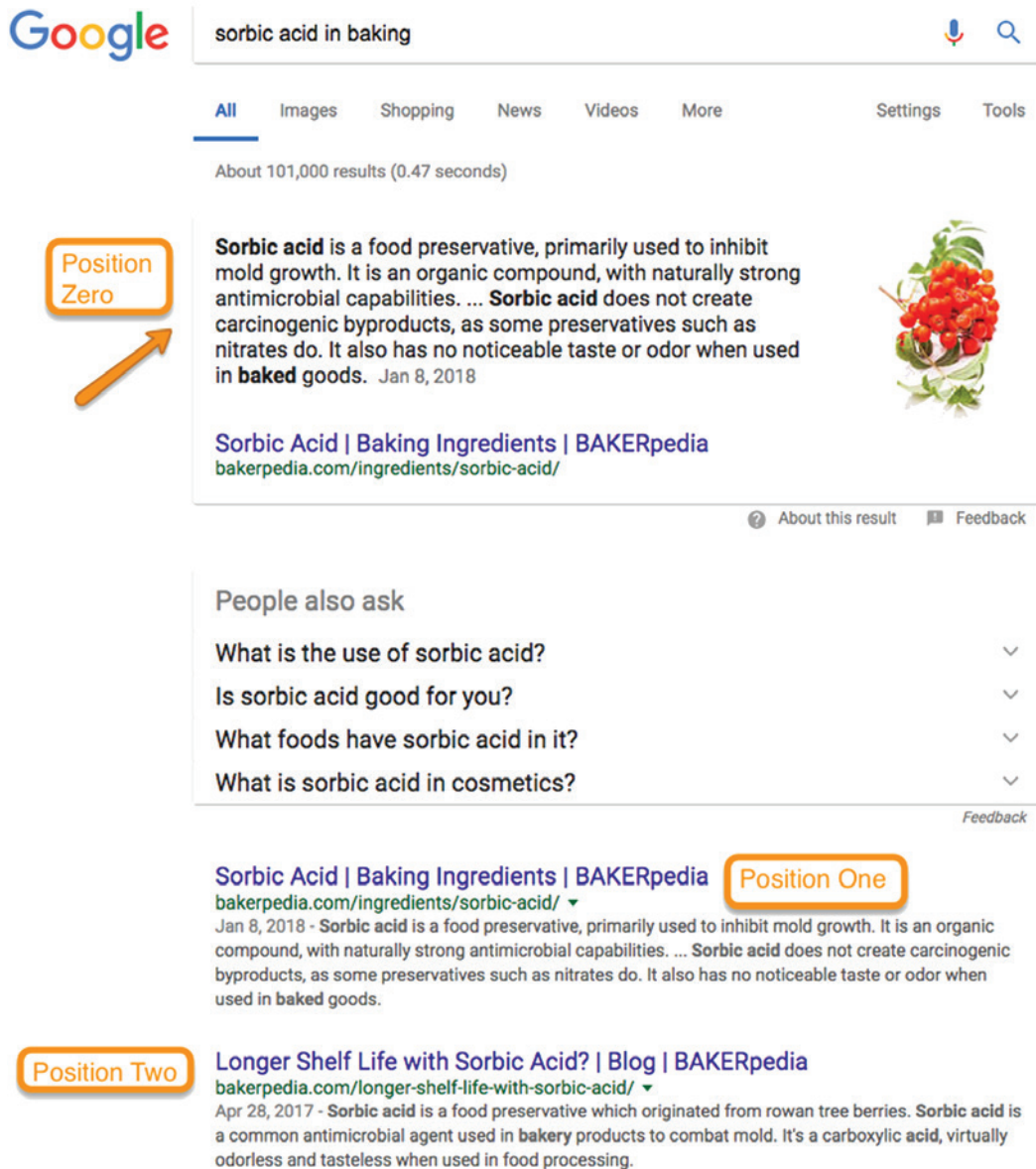


Fig. 3. Sample Google search engine result page (SERP) for “sorbic acid in baking” showing the impact of successful utilization of search engine optimization (SEO) techniques.

- **Keep It Short.** Even in the early stages of the migration toward digital media, research showed that less is more. One study revealed online readers scan web pages, reading only 20–28% of the words (7). Readers have more choices, so if they don’t instantly find what they are looking for, they keep searching until they find something better.
- **Keep It Visual.** What’s the best way to cover a lot of information with just a few words? Visual content. Images, infographics, and videos are eye-catching and convenient for sharing. In fact, visual content is shared on social media 40 times more often than all other content (6).
- **Keep It Real.** One survey found that 94% of consumers think they are likely to be loyal to a brand that offers complete transparency (3). This is also key for gaining a high search engine optimization (SEO) ranking. Google favors sites with quality content and backlinks that have a good reputation.

How Does Scientific and Industry-Specific Driven Content Fit into a Digital World?

Scientific content published online can usually be grouped into two main categories: 1) long-form scientific papers and journals with technically dense writing or 2) short, snappy articles that lack references and are sprinkled with pseudoscience and misinformation. This raises the question—is there space for a successful middle ground? Can scientific writing find a place in a digital world without sacrificing quality?

The BAKERpedia Approach

I had spent more than 10 years in the baking industry when I began to notice a gap in technical information sharing and in reliable, digestible baking information online. I decided to take a stab at filling that gap and launched BAKERpedia with the idea of creating an online technical resource that can spark ideas and innovation. From day one, I made sure our content is user-friendly, as well as scientifically sound. Four years, 700+ website pages, and 6,000+ social media followers later, there are a few tactics to which I attribute our success.

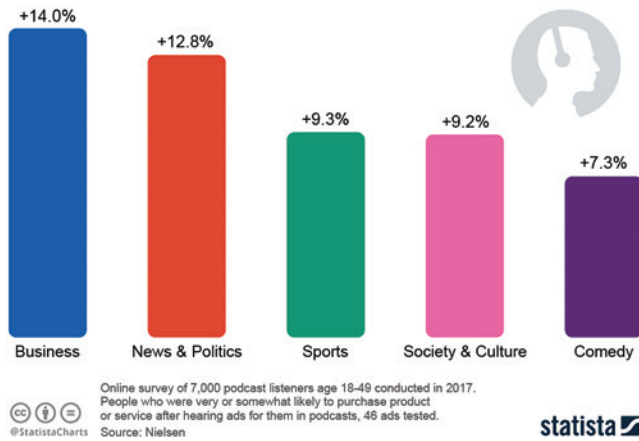


Fig. 4. Increases in consumer purchasing intent after listening to podcasts (by genre).

- Smart Scientific Writing.** If your job involves any kind of science or technology, you know how exciting it is! When you share it with your consumers, you want that excitement to come across. Keep it short but sweet, conversational but authoritative. Back up your claims but do not overload the reference section. On BAKERpedia pages, we cite only a few of the latest studies and nothing older than 10 years if possible.
- Own Search Engine Optimization.** SEO for Google is one of the most critical things you can do for your website. Research keywords, build a network of backlinks, and, most importantly, create quality, authoritative content. Many of BAKERpedia's pages are ranked first (at the top) of Google search engine result pages (SERPs) or are included in the featured snippet section. These are free spots and effective promotional vehicles. In Google searches, first position results have a 20.5% click-through rate (4). If you own your SEO techniques, you will own the top spots on SERPs. An example of a SERP for "sorbic acid in baking" is shown in Figure 3.
- Be Tech Savvy.** Create a strategy for e-mail campaigns, blogging, and social platforms (especially LinkedIn). Social media is more than a place to create a brand. It is also a place to build backlinks and push content; stay up-to-date with media trends; and identify where your audience is and where it is headed. One area BAKERpedia has been focusing on lately is podcasts and voice searches. Why? Because podcast listening and advertising are on

the rise (2), and we don't want to get left behind! Increases in the influence of podcasts on purchasing intent are shown in Figure 4.

A New Normal

Why am I sharing my company's playbook? Because I want these strategies to be the norm. I would love to see more of our industry's companies and websites picking up on these strategies. If you would like to partner and share some backlinks, send me an e-mail at support@bakerpedia.com and let's talk! There is so much potential to reach consumers, attract new minds, and efficiently share our groundbreaking innovations in this digital world. Don't get left behind—embrace digital!

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