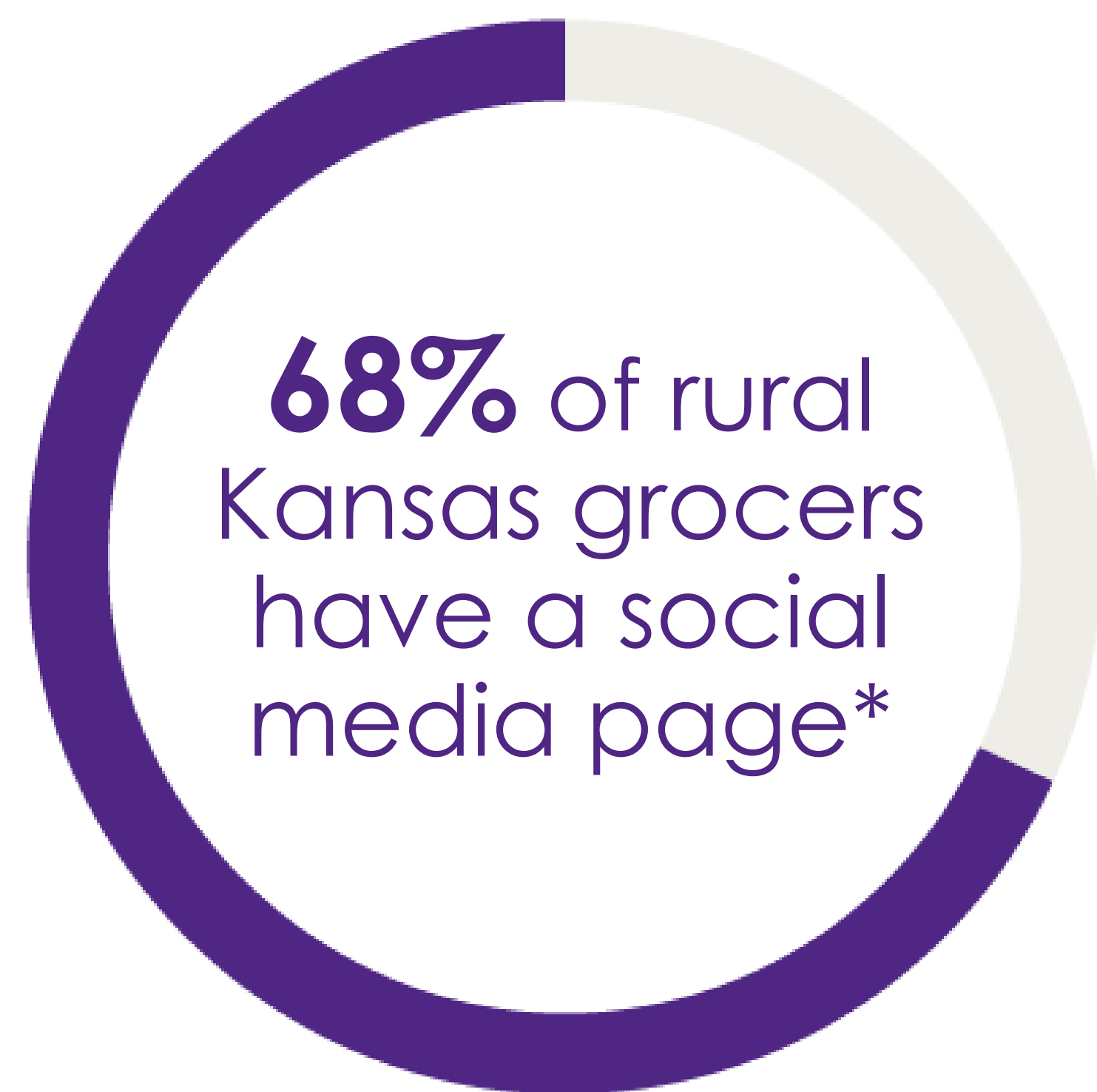


Social Media as a Business Strategy: Rural Grocery Stores as a Case Study

Amber Berg and Jessie Carr | Rural Grocery Initiative | Kansas State University

Why Social Media?

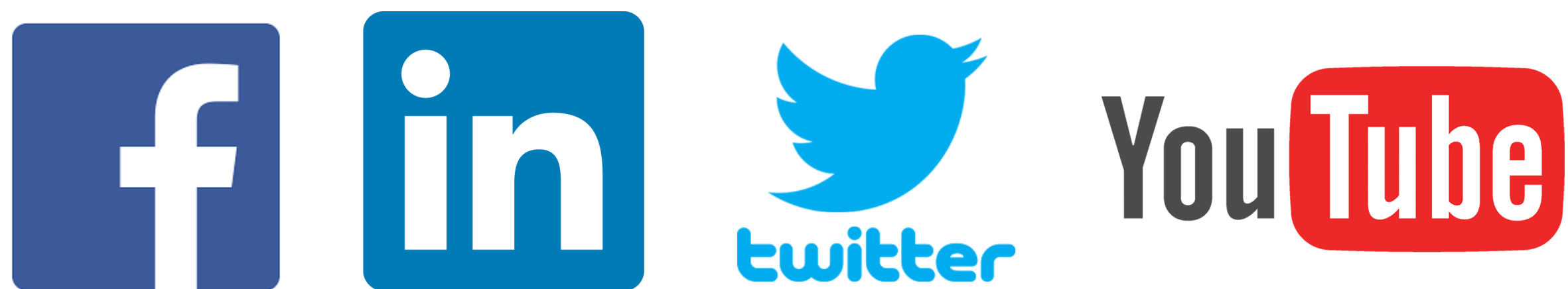


* Based on the RGI's database of grocers in communities with populations less than 2,400 people

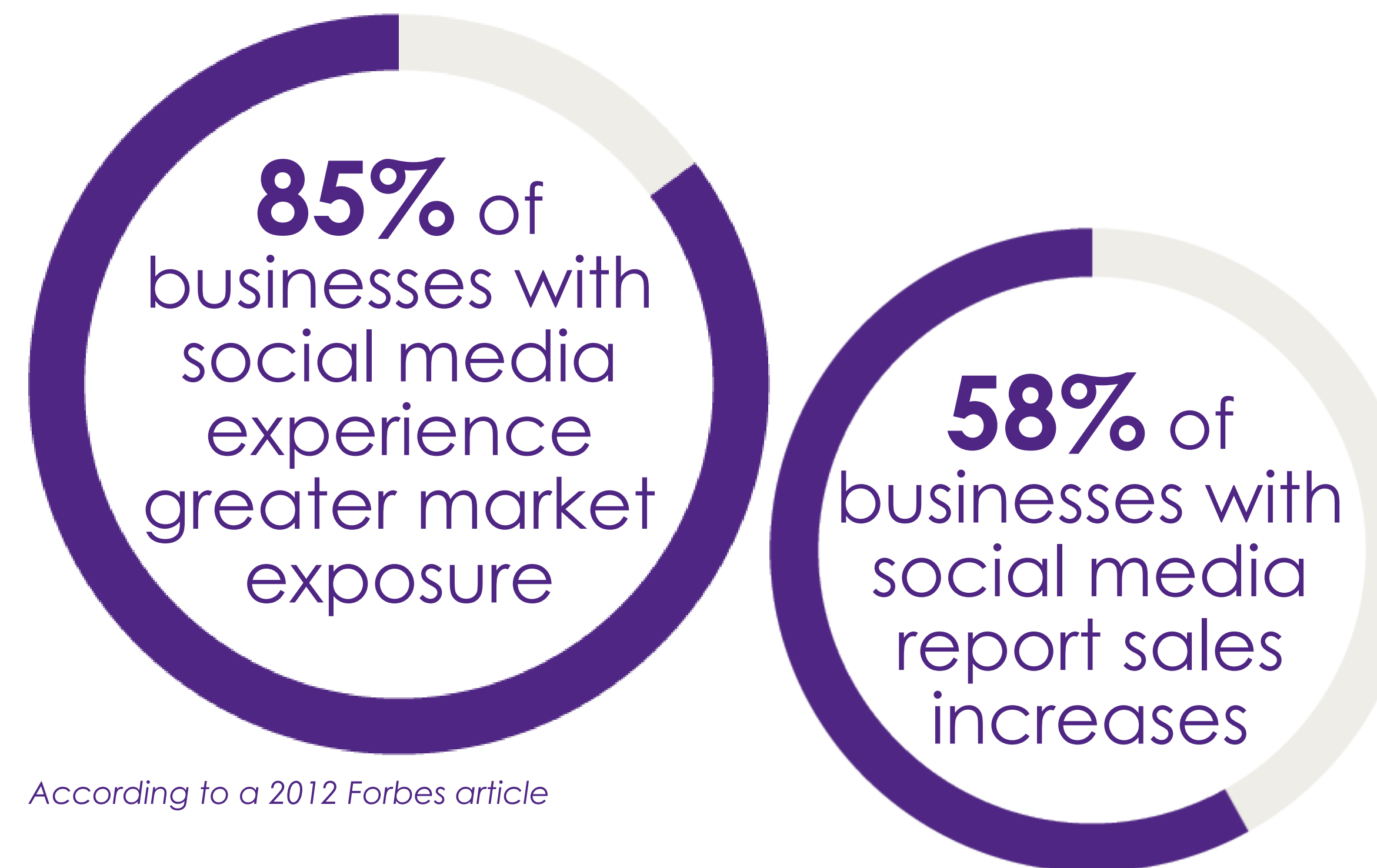
In the developed world, social media has become a part of everyday life and some business professionals consider it an integral part of any successful business. Today, the advent of the internet has made digital forms of communication both affordable and widely accessible.

Rural businesses often underutilize social media as a business tool. A majority of the grocers that RGI works with have a social media page, but still have plenty of opportunity to improve how they operate their business on these platforms.

Some common social media platforms for business use:



Strategies



According to a 2012 Forbes article

Identified business goals for social media use:

- Gain followers
- Share information
- Strengthen customer service
- Engage customers and communities
- Increase sales
- Gain new customers

Identified approaches to managing social media:

Broadcast Approach:

- Sharing news blasts or information-based posts to one's followers
- e.g. business updates, such as a change in store hours

Connection Approach:

- Engaging individuals through posts
- e.g. store giveaways through social media

Engagement

Businesses typically create social media pages to connect with their customer base. So, they should create posts with the customer in mind.

Research shows that businesses should provide value to their customers beyond making a sale by engaging them.

Suggested ways for engaging customers:

form a small business connection

respond to customers online
create personalized posts

acquire customer feedback

ask customers what they want to see
answer their questions

balance engagement with
advertisement

market store promotions & coupons
show what makes the store unique

Next Steps

The RGI will conduct a study of rural grocery social media pages, how effective social media can be for their business, and how they can connect to their communities through social media.