

**Exploring Synergy: Strategic Benefits and Considerations of Combining Radio and Digital
Assets as a Modern Enhanced Campaign Impact Solution**

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Abstract

This study explores the dual challenge and opportunity presented by integrating radio and digital advertising assets, focusing on the role of the broadcast radio industry's salespeople in embracing and further educating their advertising prospects and clients. These professionals serve as critical change agents tasked with educating their prospects and clients about the strategic advantages of combining radio and digital that they may still need to adopt. This report examines the social system of radio sellers, positioning the adoption of integrated media solutions as a pivotal innovation. This solution leverages radio's trust and community connection alongside digital platforms' precision and scalability to create persuasive, high-impact campaigns. The role of advertising sales consultants is highlighted as both educators and facilitators in driving this innovation. The analysis explores how radio sales professionals can navigate their innovation-decision process while using empathetic messaging and evidence-based persuasion to communicate the solution's value. By engaging with inherently available opinion leaders, sales professionals can demonstrate how this integration builds credibility, expands audience reach, and deepens emotional connections. The observations discussed present a strategy for enabling sales teams to become both adopters and advocates of this innovation. Ultimately, the report underscores the transformative potential of radio and digital synergy—not only in reshaping sales professionals' practices but also in elevating the effectiveness of their client's campaigns within a rapidly evolving advertising landscape employing synergy where the sum is greater than the parts.

Keywords: Radio and digital advertising integration, salespeople, integrated media solutions, trust and community connection, evidence-based persuasion, advertising transformation

The Problem

The hurdle is that there is a twin responsibility facing the opportunity to present the integration of radio and digital advertising assets to advertisers as a single solution. The problem is that radio salespeople tend to favor one side or the other of the innovative solution. According to Jacobs (2022)

(This)...sales challenge has only become more daunting as the digital tool kit has grown. Now, sellers have to master the art of not only marketing “air” but also explaining how digital platforms can enhance a campaign. (Para. 5)

The innovative solution combines two sources that gained prominence nearly a hundred years apart. (Spotify Advertising, 2023) “The first radio ad aired on August 22, 1922, ... (on) New York City radio station, WEAJ”. Radio has remained a popular consumer choice today where (Nielsen, 2023). “AM/FM radio reaches 91% of all 18+ Americans monthly.” Concurrently (Austin, 2024) “Social (digital) media has become an inextricable part of modern life. The average person spends nearly 2.5 hours per day on social networks and messaging apps”. The dilemma the broadcast industry’s changemakers face is at once adopting the innovative approach of combining the two mediums and educating the advertising prospect or client sitting in front of them. The measurable success in this case is radio salespeople providing evidence that they are confidently adopting, defining, and describing the value of the innovative solution. The subsequent diffusion of the innovation follows that as a valuable modern solution to the advertising community. Step one is radio sales management communicating interpersonally with their staff from the perspective of an early adopter. The personality of early adopters (Rogers, 2003) “Seek information about innovations more actively than later adopters”. They ask and discuss the right questions (Ale, 2019)

The ability to ask the question “*How can it be done?*” rather than “*Can it be done?*” ...They (early adopters) see problems as opportunities to grow rather than a painful experience. (Sect.3)

Radio personnel demonstrating they have embraced an embracing attitude to diffuse this innovation to others is step one in solving the problem. As the adoption rate goes, so goes the radio station revenue. Step two is the measurability of revenue in the form of more balanced sales of both radio spot and digital inventory. The adoption and diffusion among internal stakeholders of radio station management and salespeople themselves and the resulting increase in revenue as the innovation is adopted and implemented externally by the advertising community, e.g., clients and prospects, are the metrics demonstrating overall success that the innovation is solving the problem.

The Social System

According to (Rogers, 2003) “A social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal.” (p.23) The organization or social system in which the innovative idea of a radio-digital solution is diffused or shared is two-fold. Internally, it is the radio station, radio cluster, or group of owned stations or networks owned by a particular entity. Those are the internal stakeholders who need to adopt the innovative attitude first. Externally, the social system consists of external stakeholders, such as business owners, advertising agencies, and marketing directors, who comprise the advertising community. These prospects or clients may or may not yet see the radio-digital tool as a unified solution. Although the society in the United States tends to be individualistic, the dual social system of radio stations and advertising clients tend to be collectivistic unto themselves as they all have a shared interest in serving the public and putting relevant content in front of the

consumers they seek to serve. This alignment of these sociocultural values, goals, and social norms identifies the social system as homophilous or like-minded individuals.

The internal and external stakeholders across the social system of radio stations and advertisers comprise change agents and opinion leaders. Candid, authentic communication is key amongst the internal stakeholders of managers, executive officers, sales, and support staff. Internal stakeholders at radio stations also include opinion leaders, community-facing personnel, and air talent. As mentioned, external change agents and opinion leaders include business owners, advertising agencies, and marketing directors. It has been said (Rogers, 2003), “When a social system’s norms favor change, opinion leaders are more innovative.” Being open to new ideas for the common goals of happy clients and a happy station reduces the fear of considering new innovations within the system. Opinion leaders can be potent internal change agents championing change internally, such as early adopting sales staff, management, or on-air staff, as much as the salespeople are change agents to potential clients externally. According to (Chapman, 2024) “Change is the key piece that makes innovation and creativity work...a strong change agent is key to success when...trying to better an organization or system”. Day-to-day discussions within the internal stakeholder network as well as the external stakeholder community to demonstrate the value of the radio-digital innovation up as an important and valuable tool will lead to further adoption. The diffusion amongst each other eventually shows an increased and balanced radio and digital sales goal met. This communication between internal stakeholders and external stakeholders occurs in person, via Zoom, email, and the dropping of printed collateral to external stakeholders. The needs of both sides of the social system are unified in that they both seek to increase revenue growth for their respective organizations. They can only do that by determining what the consumer needs and how to put the answer in front of

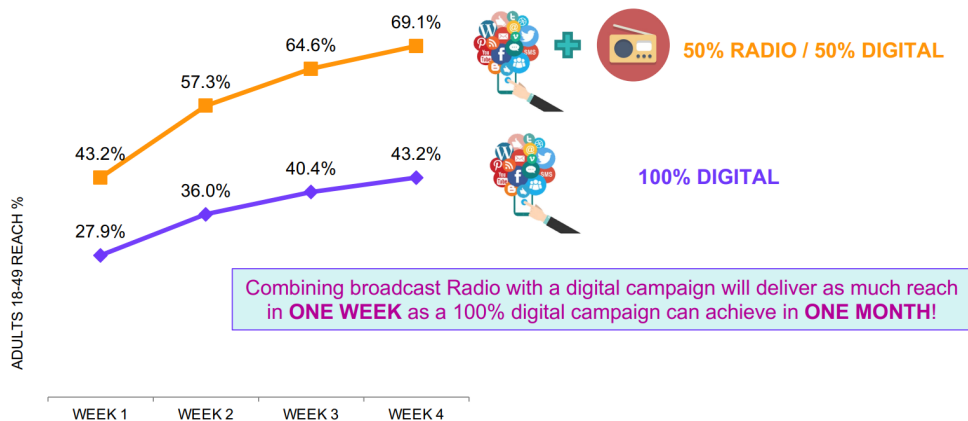
the buying public. Since the total social system ultimately serves society at large, it is in the best interest of each side of the social system of radio stations and advertisers to be receptive to the relative advantage of innovation. This is directly related to its adoption rate. (Rogers, 2003)

The social system's members are interconnected through personal and professional networks. These connections span a wide array of affiliations, including participation in social media platforms like LinkedIn, membership in organizations such as Kiwanis or Rotary clubs, involvement in chambers of commerce, and engagement with industry-specific associations, such as broadcaster alliances like the SCBA or Southern California Broadcasters Association.

The Innovative Solution

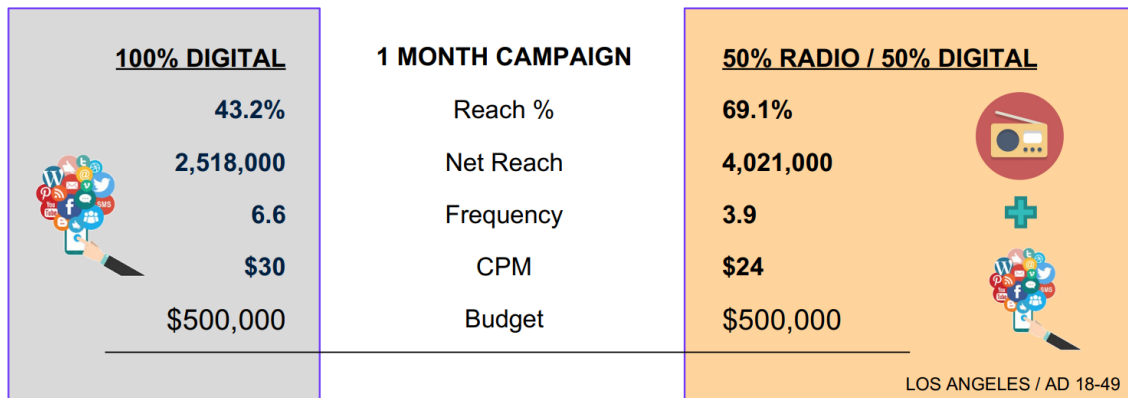
Integrating radio and digital advertising strategies allows brands to leverage the emotional relationship of radio with the personalized experiences of digital platforms, creating a holistic innovation for empathetic community engagement and response to advertising messages. According to Nielsen research by Miles Sexton, President of the Southern California Broadcasters Association, “Creating a mix of radio and digital is like strapping a booster engine on your cross-platform campaign” (Sexton, 2022, slides 13, 15).

IMMEDIATE IMPACT WHEN RADIO + DIGITAL ARE USED TOGETHER



Source: Nielsen Local Media Impact, All Social Media Sites & AM/FM Radio outlets in Los Angeles, Adults 18-49

Sexton (2022) goes on to describe that radio plus digital delivers sixty percent more reach at no additional cost.



Source: Nielsen Local Media Impact, All Social Media Sites & AM/FM Radio outlets in Los Angeles, Adults 18-49



Interpreting the innovation for this study “Refers to new ways of developing useful products...by using creative or novel ideas...to make economic gains while responding to society’s needs” (Arias, Morales, 2022.) In this case, integrating radio’s trust and community connection, accompanied by targeted digital interactions, creates greater reach and engagement. (Gao, et al., 2021)

Different media produce synergy through different perceptual modes. The greater the number of different sensory modalities, the better the communication and learning effects...thus resulting in higher advertising memory...media with different sensory modalities (sight and sound) provide more coding channels and form multi-tiered cognitive structures. (Para. 10)

Employing this innovative strategy will find better audience targeting, combining radio's established credibility with digital's precision. Combining (Jayson et al., 2018) "Paid (traditional) and owned digital media" such as a client's social media with mirrored messages within the radio's trusted environment enhances the perceived authenticity of the client's digital ads. Both work better together than alone for more consumer market share. According to (Scrip.org, Scientific Research an Academic Publisher, 2017) "1+1=3 or Non-Diophantine Arithmetic... (known as) synergy (or arithmetic in economics) emerges when the cooperation of two systems gives a result greater than the sum of their individual components". The sum of amalgamating radio broadcasting and digital media is greater than the parts.

Figure 1

Comparison of synergistic and non-synergistic stimulation

Variable	Media exposure		t	Significance
	Non-synergy (B-B and I-I)	Synergy (B-I and I-B)		
Purchase Intention	1.400	2.270	8.659	0.004

Note: From Purchase intention analysis [Table1], by Gao et al., 2023, Frontiersin.org (<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.781743/full#T1>)

Even online broadcast media and digital interactive media have a synergistic effect on purchase intention, as revealed in Figure 1. The large t-value supports the conclusion that the effect is meaningful. The results show that synergistic ads (mean = 2.270) significantly outperform non-synergistic ads (mean = 1.400) in driving purchase intention. A high t-value (8.659) indicates a meaningful difference, and a low p-value (0.004) confirms that the result is statistically significant, proving that synergy between ads enhances consumer response. In short, synergistic advertising works better: The higher M (average) for the synergy group shows stronger purchase intention, and the low p-value confirms that this result is statistically reliable. (Gao, et al., 2021)

Integrating radio—whether online or terrestrial—with digital assets results in a synergistic effect enhances favorable consumer behavior.

The innovation presented is both disruptive and incremental. (Herbert, 2023) “Disruptive innovation requires risk-taking and investment but brings revolutionary changes that challenge established norms. Incremental innovation focuses on continuous improvement, making gradual advancements that keep the products involved ahead of the curve.” (Sect. 5) Depending on how both the internal and external opinion leaders and change agents present the innovation as a solution to be considered, the relative advantage, the degree to which the innovation is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes, the idea of utilizing one of the media sources instead of both can be perceived as strong or weak. The incremental approach can be powerful if the change agent proceeds with empathy. Power derives from a combination of the organization’s needs for innovation, which we most likely introduced within the organization, such as the need to scale revenue by selling products or services, tied with the easily digestible complexity, trialability, and observability of both the tools of radio and digital. This means both instruments within the innovation can be easily understood in their use, experimented on or tried out easily, and are clearly observed and communicated to other people. (Rogers, 2003) It requires little effort to articulate the widely recognized sociocultural values and beliefs and the benefits of these ubiquitous resources as a unified, collaborative instrument.

Adopter Categories

Scholars have noted (Rogers, 2003) “When a social system’s norms favor change, opinion leaders are more innovative.” Again, opinion leaders are credible influencer stakeholders, internal and external to the radio station. This would explain when the organization embraces the innovation and adopts the innovative concept more quickly. The five adopter

categories in the social system or organization are presented as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, as illustrated below according to Rogers (as cited in Henderson, 2017)

Figure 2

Rogers Diffusion Curve



Note: From Adopter types [graph], by B. Henderson, 2017, Legalrevolution.org,

(<https://www.legalrevolution.org/2017/05/units-analysis-adopter-types-007/>)

Derived from applied knowledge in the field, the adopter categories most often occurring amongst both internal and external stakeholders would be a combination of the early majority who (Henderson, 2017) “Adopts innovations faster than the average member of the social system” and the late majority “Skeptical and cautious. They generally will not adopt an innovation until most others in the system have done so.” In some cases, laggards also tend to be in the decision-making positions. Decisions are made internally to roll out and support the innovation, with external decision makers being the prospect, brand owner, marketing director, or agency affiliates. (Henderson, 2017) “Laggards are traditionalists who tend to make sense of the world by reference to the past...tend to be suspicious of innovations and change agents.

Thus, made aware of a new idea...their time period for adoption is significantly longer than others.” Generally, the relative advantage of this innovation is positively or negatively related to its adoption rate depending on who is considering it and what their adoption rate or stage may be.

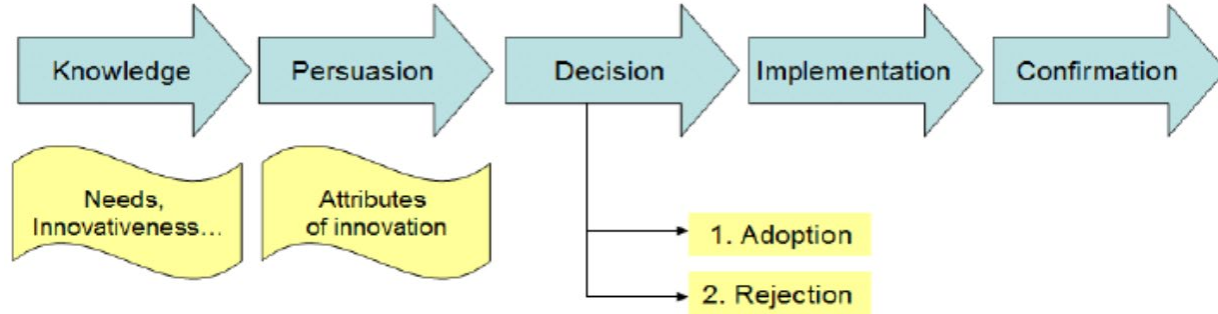
The Innovation-Decision Process

“The innovation process in organizations identifies the main sequence of decisions, actions, and events in this process...(via) five stages (Rogers, 2003). Considering this process's first three steps or stages, the author describes “Knowledge, persuasion, and decision.” The client’s process, from first hearing about the innovation to common acceptance, takes a relatively short time. “Diffusion research considers time as a variable to a much greater degree than do other fields of communication study...the mental process through which an individual passes from first knowledge of a new idea to adoption and confirmation of the innovation” (Rogers, 2003, pp. 199, 417) The identity of the innovation-decision tends to be authority for internal stakeholders and optional for external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders comprising salespeople and their directors will likely have separate budget line items for radio and digital inventory. This authoritative directive is a strong example of extrinsic motivation for the change agents and their opinion leaders to strongly consider the innovation discussed herein. Alternatively, the external stakeholders, comprising prospective buyers of the resources, are driven by a more optional innovation decision, as they are faced with choices they would like to make that are more than they need to make in most cases.

The diffusion process consists of five steps: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation, which include reinforcement or discontinuation.

Figure 3.

Stages in the Innovative Decision Process



Note: A model of stages in the Innovation-Decision Process, [flow chart], Rogers 2003 via Resarchgate.net, n.d., (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-model-of-stages-in-the-Innovation-Decision-Process-Rogers-2003-p-163_fig1_257620618)

Knowledge or awareness, including how-to and principles, are put forth by change agents and opinion leaders as described above. The rate of awareness-knowledge for an innovation is more rapid than its adoption rate (Rogers, 2003). This rate varies with each radio station's change agents and their motivation to create awareness-knowledge for the external stakeholders. This knowledge stage is most often diffused via interpersonal channels of email, phone, and Zoom calls, as well as in-person communication. If the radio station change agents themselves have fully adopted the innovation, the likelihood of persuasion is strongly positive. Earlier adopters have a shorter innovation-decision period than later adopters, and as such, the persuasion and decision stages will be shorter or longer. Drawing on professional experience, generally, salespeople will adopt a positive opinion of innovation the more familiar it is in day-to-day discussions with fellow change-makers and opinion leaders. When rejection occurs by the rank-and-file seller, it can be either passive or active. Nevertheless, critical mass acceptance can be achieved by assigning greater importance to the innovation by tying it with sales budget goals. On the other hand, motivations for persuasion, decision-making, subsequent implementation, and

time frames vary significantly from one prospect or client to another. Each business has different goals and objectives. If the radio station change agent using their skills to educate their prospect or client can illustrate the value of cosmopolite examples at the knowledge stage, then uncover the relationship between the client and the local channels the change agent is representing at the persuasion stage in the innovation-decision process, they will find a greater likelihood of implementation. This will lead to the timing when the innovation will be put to use based on the prospect or client's needs. During this phase, when the change agent is listening with empathy, leading with curiosity, and asking more questions than making statements, a higher degree of re-invention will occur or input and modifications and customization to the innovation by the client and prospect. This leads to a faster rate of adoption of innovation. In this case, the concept of fusing radio and digital for the singular benefit of the client or prospect. When a higher degree of re-invention occurs, this leads to a higher degree of sustainability of the innovation. (Rogers, 2003) This has been informed by practical experience that when the client or prospective client is involved in the innovation-decision process, they tend to have a vested interest and are actively engaged in the solution process. That collaboration makes the client or prospect hold a personal stake, confirming reinforcement and reducing the chance of discontinuing the innovation with a feeling of disenchantment.

What is the anticipated duration of the entire process, and which variables influence its timeline? The same perceptions of the internal stakeholders are present in the external stakeholders. The innovation's relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability must be presented in a light that makes the process easy and turn-key. Even though that may occur, and the adoption rate is relatively fast, the client or prospect has their business timelines for bringing on innovations. There are a variety of variables that may impact the length

of the implementation process. Budget planning phases and execution windows, personnel changes, and the number of decision-makers in the process may all accelerate or prolong the process.

The Communication Campaign

As described earlier in this study, this report explores the dual challenge and opportunity presented by the integration of radio and digital advertising assets, focusing on the role of the broadcast radio industry's salespeople to embrace and further educate their advertising prospects and clients. This is an ongoing campaign utilizing the innovation-decision process.

Communication between internal and external stakeholders occurs in person, via Zoom, email, and the dropping of printed collateral to external. Each of these interpersonal channels varies by the desired accessibility of each participant in the social system. Formative research for the internal stakeholders comes in the form of one-on-one meetings determining the current adoption of the seller being asked to determine then the adoption of the innovation of their prospects and clients—interpersonal communication leading with curious empathy. The goals are to increase acceptance and reduce rejection of the innovation. The audience is segmented into adopters—early, late, and laggards. Uncover the reason for the adoption, acceptance, or lack thereof, and seek buy-in. The need for this acceptance is growing stronger in a report by BIA Advisory Services (as cited in Radioink, 2024)

The synergy between radio advertising and CTV/OTT spending will grow in 2025, with businesses that invest heavily in radio also allocating significant ad budgets to CTV/OTT. In 2024, 71% of respondents reported heightened client demand for integrated campaigns spanning digital, social media, and connected TV. (Para. 8)

Incentives are both internal and external. The craft of the seller is to determine what those incentives are in their client or prospect. What is the connection between the innovation and their business and clientele? It is important to connect emotionally with both internal and external stakeholders. Emotionally connected customers are more engaged and loyal, will buy again, tend to say good things when referring to the partnership, and are less sensitive to price changes, according to the Harvard Business Review article (2015)—making a stronger connection to be the “good brand” in their mind. Incentives can internally be authoritative. As in selling, innovation is required. Alternatively, it can be optional as described earlier for the client with perhaps a perceived discount or additional inventory offered.

Opinion Leaders and Change Agents

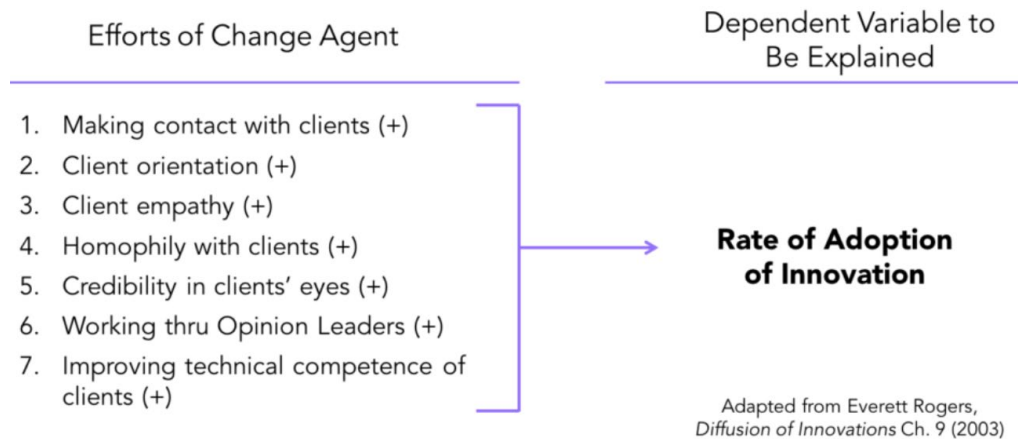
There are opinion leaders within the two-sided social system of the radio station and the advertising client or prospect. (Rogers, 2003) Opinion leaders have higher socio-economic status, are more cosmopolite, have more significant contact with (more) change agents than the followers and have greater social participation than their followers. This description fits most of the roles of radio station management and advertising agencies. They do not necessarily need to be innovators at the forefront of a strategy or resolution. They do need to be early adopters. Early adopters generally have a favorable attitude toward change, have a more remarkable ability to deal with abstractions, cope better with uncertainty, and have higher aspirations than later adopters (Rogers, 2003). As described, the relationship between opinion leaders and change agents is essential. In that the change agent is most often the pivot point in helping the external stakeholders, the advertising community sees the importance of developing a need for change—the change of adopting the radio-digital innovation as a viable advertising message delivery tool. The change agent establishes the relationship between the radio station and the client or prospect

by determining who can be helped by the innovation and seeking to connect with the prospect interpersonally to engage in a thoughtful discussion that uncovers their intentions, needs, and targeted community. This communicative process uncovers problems and potential solutions. When the change agent, as an early adopter representing the innovative solution, reveals what the innovation can do in communicating with the targeted community because that is important to the client or prospect, making the innovation real and relatable helps translate the intent into action. This may be demonstrated via a produced sample radio commercial and accompanying digital asset. This will serve as an experimental, trialability moment, bringing to life the innovation from the outside stakeholders' point of view. The purposeful intention, the objective of those who have adopted the innovation already, be they, internal stakeholders or external stakeholders, is to achieve adoption of those following them, stabilize the adoption, and prevent discontinuation by ongoing, interpersonal communication, support of the decision to adopt the innovation on an ongoing basis in order to achieve a terminal relationship. Though the change agent may be heterophilous and perhaps be less relatable regarding culture, age, gender, or social status, the unifying approach to connecting with the targeted community of consumers that both internal and external stakeholders ultimately collaborate to connect with does create a homophilous relationship through continuous education. A common alliance creates an association with a common goal. This fellowship brings together change agents and opinion leaders in creative unison, seeking an understanding of the innovation of combining radio and digital methods. Additional collaborators or aids may include consultants, experts, or agency members. The adoption path unveils collaborators that are not readily seen at the onset of discussions centered around adopting an innovation. Nevertheless, the ongoing contact on the subject of innovation, the education on the innovation of radio and digital synergy, and seeking

homophily or relatability with those who are to be educated on the innovation bring a faster adoption rate.

Figure 4

Efforts to innovation adoption



Note: From Adopter types [graph], by B. Henderson, 2017, Legalrevolution.org,

(<https://www.legalevolution.org/2017/08/change-agents-opinion-leaders-020/>)

Concluding Observations

This paper explores the integration of radio and digital advertising as both a challenge and an opportunity, highlighting the transformative potential of combining these mediums.

Radio, known for its trust and community connection, and digital platforms, valued for precision and scalability, create a powerful synergy that enhances campaign effectiveness. The key lies in embracing these tools as a unified solution rather than separate assets.

Radio sales professionals are at the heart of this innovation, tasked with adopting an integrated approach themselves while educating their clients about its benefits. Though often late adopters, these professionals are change agents, fostering understanding and trust in this innovation. Their empathetic engagement and evidence-based communication are critical to bridging the gap

between traditional and modern advertising methods. The innovation's success depends on the collaboration between internal stakeholders, such as radio station teams, and external stakeholders, including advertisers and agencies. Opinion leaders and early adopters within these social systems play a vital role in influencing acceptance, demonstrating how the integration drives revenue growth, expands audience reach, and strengthens emotional connections. Adoption is most effective when clients are involved in customizing the solution, fostering a sense of ownership, and ensuring long-term sustainability. Empathy, curiosity, and collaboration are essential in demonstrating the value of this innovation.

Ultimately, the integration of radio and digital assets empowers both groups to be educated in learning and understanding this innovative synergy. Radio station personnel and advertisers can create impactful campaigns while reshaping professional practices. By embracing innovation with a shared vision, the industry can better serve the communities, proving that the sum is greater than its parts. Albert Einstein once said, "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change." By embracing the transformative synergy of radio and digital, the radio community and advertising industry not only adapts to change but thrives, creating campaigns that resonate deeply with audiences and redefine the future of communication.

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