

STRATEGIC CHANGE MANAGEMENT FOR BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION AT BATIK PRINGMAS USING LEWIN'S MODEL IN DIGITAL MARKETING ADOPTION

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Abstract

Digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in adapting their organizational behavior and marketing practices. Batik Pringmas, a traditional batik MSME located in Banyumas Regency, is currently facing difficulties in transitioning to digital marketing due to low digital literacy, limited human resources, and a reliance on conventional methods. This study aims to develop a strategic change management framework to support behavioral transformation within the organization, using Kurt Lewin's three-stage model: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. A qualitative research method was employed, incorporating observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The findings show that the unfreezing phase involves raising awareness about the urgency of digital adoption; the changing phase includes training on digital tools, utilizing social media platforms, and integrating marketplaces; and the refreezing phase involves reinforcing digital habits in daily operations. The proposed strategy not only facilitates behavioral change but also ensures that the organization can sustain digital practices in the long term.

Keywords: Change Management, Behavioral Transformation, Batik Pringmas, Lewin's Model, Digital Marketing

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has become a major driving force in transforming the way people live, work, and interact. This era is marked by the widespread use of the internet, smart devices, and digital platforms, triggering disruption across various sectors, both formal and informal. Digital transformation does not only impact large-scale industries but also reaches small business actors such as Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which are now required to adapt to the digital ecosystem in order to remain competitive in an increasingly globalized economy.

In Indonesia, MSMEs play a crucial role as the backbone of the national economy. They contribute more than 60% to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorb the majority of the workforce. However, despite their critical role, not all MSME actors are ready to face digital transformation. Limitations in human resources, access to technology, and a lack of understanding of digital marketing strategies remain major challenges in the digitization process (Farhani & Chaniago, 2021).

Digitization for MSMEs is not merely about using digital devices, but a comprehensive process that involves technology-based business management from promotion, transaction, and distribution to customer service (Astuti & Rosita, 2024). This transformation can help MSMEs expand market reach, improve operational efficiency, and enhance competitiveness in today's highly dynamic digital era. However, many studies indicate that the digitization process does not

always run smoothly. Various challenges continue to hinder MSMEs from optimally implementing digital strategies, including low digital literacy, limited technology budgets, and resistance to changes in work culture (Amali et al., 2025).

One critical aspect of successful digital transformation is behavioral transformation within the organization. Technological changes that are not accompanied by changes in mindset and work culture often lead to failure. Behavioral transformation involves the process of adjusting attitudes, work habits, and values at both individual and group levels to align with the goals and new systems being adopted. In the context of MSMEs, this includes the ability to think adaptively, embrace updates, and integrate technology into daily work routines. Without fundamental behavioral change, digitization efforts will only be technical in nature and unsustainable.

To overcome these challenges, change management becomes an essential approach that cannot be overlooked. Change management is a systematic method aimed at helping organizations undergo transitions effectively and with minimal resistance. One of the most relevant and widely used approaches is Kurt Lewin's Change Model, which consists of three main stages: unfreezing (creating awareness of the need for change), changing (implementing change), and refreezing (institutionalizing the change as part of organizational culture). This model provides a practical framework to guide organizations including MSMEs through transformation, from building awareness and changing habits to embedding new systems into the organization.

This study takes Batik Pringmas, a batik-based MSME located in Papringan Village, Banyumas, as a concrete case for applying change management strategies. Despite its strong potential in terms of product quality, cultural value, and market appeal, Batik Pringmas still relies on conventional marketing methods such as direct showroom sales and word-of-mouth promotion. The use of digital platforms such as marketplaces and social media has not been optimal due to limited digital literacy and a lack of digital marketing training. This condition hinders the business from reaching broader markets, especially among digital-native consumers who are accustomed to shopping online.

This study aims to analyze and design a change management strategy that can be applied by Batik Pringmas in responding to digitalization challenges, specifically through the application of Lewin's Change Model. This approach is expected to help Batik Pringmas identify the need for change, implement it effectively, and institutionalize it as part of the organizational culture. Lewin's model is selected for its ability to comprehensively prepare individuals and organizations for technological change while shaping new, adaptive, and sustainable work patterns. The strategies developed in this research are not only intended to support the technical aspects of digital marketing but also to encourage organizational behavioral transformation so that Batik Pringmas can build a more modern business ecosystem, open to innovation, and competitive in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Change management is a systematic approach used to help individuals, teams, and organizations transition from a current state to a desired future state in order to improve organizational effectiveness (Hayes, 2018). In the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), managing change is particularly critical due to resource limitations and reliance on traditional work patterns (Todnem, 2005).

One of the most influential frameworks in change management is Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Lewin, 1951). This model highlights the importance of disrupting existing mindsets and behaviors, implementing the new changes, and stabilizing them as part of the organization's culture. Lewin's model is widely utilized because of its simplicity and its applicability across different change contexts, including digital adoption (Burnes, 2004).

Previous studies have shown that the success of change management is not solely dependent on structural strategies, but also on human factors such as leadership, effective communication, and employee engagement (Kotter, 2012; Armenakis & Harris, 2009). In SMEs, resistance to change is often caused by low levels of digital literacy, uncertainty about outcomes, and concerns over disrupted routines (Rao & Klein, 2013). Therefore, a people-oriented and learning-based change process is necessary to foster adaptation and involvement.

In digital transformation efforts, change management plays a strategic role as the bridge between technological readiness and behavioral readiness. Digitalization is not merely about adopting new tools or systems it also requires shifts in mindset, communication structures, and collaboration patterns (Vial, 2019). Cameron and Green (2015) emphasize that successful digital change requires organizations to build a culture of learning, flexibility, and psychological safety to allow experimentation and innovation.

Thus, a strategic approach to change management can support SMEs like Batik Pringmas in overcoming resistance, enhancing employee participation, and embedding new behaviors that align with digital transformation goals. When implemented with participatory engagement and continuous learning, Lewin's Change Model provides a practical and relevant roadmap for organizations navigating digital change.

BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Behavioral transformation in organizations refers to the process of changing mindsets, work habits, and organizational culture to support broader changes. In the context of digital transformation, behavioral change is crucial, as new technology will not deliver optimal impact unless accompanied by adjustments in individual and collective behaviors. This transformation demands improved capabilities in learning, adapting, and internalizing new ways of working (Burnes, 2020).

Lewin's (1951) change management model provides an effective framework to guide behavioral transformation. The first stage, unfreezing, aims to raise awareness about the need for change and build motivation to transform. The changing stage involves implementing changes such as digital marketing training, the introduction of technology-based work systems, and role adjustments. Finally, the refreezing stage focuses on forming new habits and integrating them into the organizational culture to ensure long-term sustainability (Burnes, 2020).

A study by Oreg and Berson (2019) highlights the importance of leadership in supporting behavioral transformation, especially in small organizations with informal structures and close interpersonal relationships. Kirrane et al. (2017) also found that leadership behaviors oriented toward change and employees' psychological engagement in change are key to successful behavioral transformation. Meanwhile, Fernandez and Rainey (2017) argue that the success of behavioral change largely depends on the extent to which employees are involved in the process and the level of organizational support provided throughout the transition.

In the context of MSMEs such as Batik Pringmas, behavioral transformation can begin with efforts to instill a digital mindset among batik artisans, marketing staff, and leadership, while also creating a work environment conducive to innovation and cross-functional collaboration (Wijaya & Giawa, 2025).

DIGITAL MARKETING IN MSMEs

Digital transformation presents a significant opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to expand market reach, improve marketing efficiency, and strengthen competitiveness in the digital economy. Digital marketing enables MSME actors such as Batik Pringmas to reach consumers beyond their local areas through social media, e-commerce, and other digital platforms. Moreover, digital approaches provide access to customer data that can be utilized for market segmentation and the development of more targeted promotional strategies.

However, many MSMEs face significant barriers in implementing digital strategies, including low digital literacy, limited human resources, and a lack of training or assistance in using technology-based marketing tools (Ratnaningtyas & Wicaksono, 2025). Research by Nguyen et al. (2020) demonstrates that mastery of digital marketing techniques can significantly increase revenue and expand market networks for MSMEs. Unfortunately, the success of adopting these strategies heavily depends on the organization's overall readiness to change—structurally, procedurally, and behaviorally (Andika, Jennifer, & Je, 2021).

Implementing digital marketing is not solely about acquiring new tools but also about adopting a new mindset—a digital mindset. MSMEs must move away from traditional work methods that are less responsive to market changes and begin to adopt a work culture that is open to data, innovation, and the use of technology. Therefore, the successful implementation of digital marketing depends heavily on effective change management, adequate training, and active involvement from all members of the organization in the digitalization process (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020).

PROFILE OF BATIK PRINGMAS GALLERY

The Batik Pringmas Gallery represents the local wisdom of the Papringan Village community, Banyumas District. Established in 2014 under the Joint Business Group (KUB) Pringmas, the name "Pringmas" comes from the Banyumasan language, where "Pring" means bamboo and "Mas" refers to the Banyumas community. The bamboo symbolizes strength and resilience, reflecting hopes for a prosperous and happy life. Batik Pringmas upholds Javanese cultural values expressed in the philosophy "Memayu Hayuning Bawana, Ambrasta Dur Hangkara," which means living life by prioritizing safety, happiness, and prosperity while avoiding destructive traits.

Batik craftsmanship is passed down through generations, making it not only an economic activity but also a part of local cultural identity. The gallery is known for its superior hand-drawn batik featuring distinctive Banyumasan motifs, marked by unique patterns, meticulous production processes, and local cultural touches. Support from Bank Indonesia and the Papringan Village Government has helped establish a permanent gallery building as a center for collection, production, and marketing. The Batik Pringmas Gallery functions as a symbol of cultural preservation, women's empowerment, and community-based economic strengthening. The group remains committed to enhancing members' competencies, strengthening digital marketing systems, and positioning Batik Pringmas as a highly competitive cultural and creative economy icon nationally and internationally.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the real conditions at Batik Pringmas, particularly in relation to the challenges and opportunities in implementing digital marketing. The case study method allowed the researcher to explore the context comprehensively, considering that Batik Pringmas is one of the MSMEs in Banyumas Regency that has not yet optimized digital marketing due to limitations in human resources and low technological literacy.

The research was conducted directly at the Batik Pringmas business location. The research subjects included the business owner, several employees from the production and marketing departments, and, if possible, customers who had direct interaction with Batik Pringmas products. Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor operational activities and ongoing marketing processes. Semi-structured interviews aimed to gather insights from the owner and employees regarding digital marketing, their readiness for change, and the challenges they faced. Documentation involved reviewing sales records, promotional materials previously used, as well as social media accounts and other communication platforms supporting marketing activities.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out to filter and summarize relevant information. The reduced data were then presented narratively and, when necessary, in tables or diagrams. Conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously verified throughout the research process. To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were applied, including both source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various informants, while method triangulation combined the results of observation, interviews, and document analysis. Through this approach, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the actual condition of Batik Pringmas in the context of digital transformation through digital marketing adoption.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the process of digital transformation at Batik Pringmas using Lewin's Change Model, which breaks down organizational change into three phases: Unfreeze, Change, and Refreeze. This model is particularly appropriate for explaining changes that are not only technical in nature but also involve cultural values, social structures, and individual psychological readiness for innovation. The analysis draws upon in-depth interviews, field observations, and internal documents provided by Batik Pringmas.

Phase 1: Unfreezing

The first stage in Kurt Lewin's Change Model is known as unfreezing, which refers to the process of disrupting established habits or stable patterns so that individuals and organizations become aware of the need for change. At Batik Pringmas, this phase began with growing internal concerns regarding the stagnating performance of the business. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of in-person visitors to the physical gallery dropped significantly, while competition in the digital landscape continued to rise. Although Batik Pringmas is widely known for its strong commitment to preserving local cultural heritage through batik, the organization gradually realized that without adapting to digital trends, their long-term survival would be at risk. This awareness developed over time, as they observed shifts in consumer behavior, especially the growing tendency to search for information and make purchases through digital platforms.

However, the path to this realization was not without obstacles. Various forms of internal resistance began to emerge, particularly among artisans and operational staff, who feared that the integration of technology would undermine the sacred, culturally embedded batik-making process. They felt that the art of batik—rich with philosophical meaning—should not be interfered with by what they perceived as cold, instant, and impersonal digital systems. In addition, a lack of digital literacy further hindered the transition, as most of the staff had little to no experience with digital marketing tools such as social media, e-commerce, or digital bookkeeping. The organizational structure, which remained highly centralized under the sole authority of the owner, also slowed down the decision-making process and made it difficult for team members to contribute ideas or initiatives. As a result, innovation from within the organization was stifled.

To begin "unfreezing" these entrenched patterns, a series of reflective and educational strategies were gradually introduced. The business owner, along with a few digitally literate younger staff members, began reframing the narrative around digitalization—not as a threat to cultural values, but as a tool to protect and promote batik heritage to a wider audience. Social media, for instance, was introduced not only as a marketing platform but also as a medium to tell stories about the philosophy and symbolism of Papringan's batik motifs. Informal gatherings and internal discussion forums were organized regularly to explore both the challenges faced by the business and the opportunities that digital tools could offer. These small meetings served as safe spaces for dialogue and collective reflection, gradually building the confidence of team members

to take part in the digital transformation process. By fostering a shared understanding that change was not only necessary but also urgent and beneficial, Batik Pringmas successfully initiated the first critical step toward transformation.

Phase 2: Changing

After successfully fostering collective awareness about the need for transformation during the unfreezing stage, Batik Pringmas proceeded to the second phase in Lewin's model namely the change phase. This stage involved the active and strategic implementation of various organizational transformations. These changes were not imposed abruptly but were introduced gradually to ensure continuity and acceptance across all levels of the organization. The transformation encompassed six key dimensions: digital strategy, organizational structure, work systems, shared values, human resource competencies, and leadership style.

First, in terms of digital strategy, the transformation was implemented in three structured phases to ensure it aligned with the organization's capabilities and readiness. The initial phase focused on building internal digital literacy. All organizational members, regardless of their prior exposure to technology, were introduced to basic digital tools and their benefits through training and sharing sessions. This training not only covered technical skills but also emphasized the role of digitalization in expanding market access and strengthening cultural identity. The second phase involved activating digital channels, including launching marketplace accounts (Shopee, Tokopedia), creating a Google Business Profile, and managing social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook. These platforms were managed with a consistent content strategy. The third phase emphasized digital branding, where storytelling became central. Narratives such as the philosophy behind batik motifs, artisan profiles, and traditional processes were integrated into content to create emotional bonds with customers.

Second, regarding organizational structure, Batik Pringmas moved away from a highly centralized model dominated by the business owner toward a more functional and distributed structure. The new structure introduced three clearly defined divisions: production, finance-operations, and digital marketing. Each division had specific responsibilities to improve coordination and accelerate decision-making. The digital marketing division was staffed by younger employees and interns with strong technological backgrounds, while the production division remained under the leadership of senior artisans to ensure that the quality and authenticity of the batik-making process were preserved. This restructuring improved communication flows, encouraged cross-functional collaboration, and allowed for more agile responses to market changes.

Third, in the area of work systems, manual processes gradually transitioned to digitally supported tools. For instance, financial documentation that was previously recorded in notebooks was migrated to the BukuWarung app, which allowed for real-time tracking of income and expenses. Customer orders and data were organized using shared spreadsheets accessible to team members. Promotional activities were managed through Meta Business Suite, which enabled automatic scheduling and performance tracking of social media content. These system upgrades were introduced gradually, with careful consideration for staff members who were unfamiliar with digital tools. Hands-on training and guidance were provided to ensure that all changes were smoothly adopted.

Fourth, there was a redefinition and reinforcement of the organization's shared values. While the core value of cultural preservation remained central, it was now complemented by a new value: technological adaptability. This new value was introduced through a narrative that positioned digitalization as a means to broaden access to batik culture rather than as a threat to its authenticity. These values were reflected in strategic decisions, content creation, and training programs. By aligning digital efforts with cultural narratives, the organization succeeded in harmonizing tradition and innovation, helping the team move forward with a shared sense of purpose.

Fifth, Batik Pringmas placed a strong emphasis on developing human resource competencies, particularly in digital areas. Many staff members, especially older artisans and operational workers, had little to no prior experience with digital platforms. Therefore, learning was structured progressively and contextually. Employees were guided step-by-step through tasks such as managing social media, communicating with customers via WhatsApp Business, and handling online store operations, including product uploads and inventory updates. This mentorship was supported by tech-savvy interns and volunteers from the community. The process not only increased technical skills but also boosted the staff's confidence and willingness to embrace change.

Sixth, there was a significant shift in leadership style from an authoritarian model to a more participative and collaborative one. The business owner, who previously managed all decisions unilaterally, began to encourage employee involvement in ideation and execution, especially in areas such as content creation and digital outreach. Staff members who showed enthusiasm and capability were designated as "digital champions" internal role models tasked with driving micro-level digital transformation within their teams. This leadership evolution created a more dynamic work culture, nurtured innovation, and accelerated the organization's digital transition.

Phase 3: Refreezing

The third phase in Lewin's Change Model aims to stabilize the implemented changes and embed them permanently into the organization's working culture. At Batik Pringmas, this stage was carried out systematically by ensuring that all digital innovations were not only adopted technically but also embraced culturally by all team members. The first step in this process was the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and internal work guides for every ongoing digital activity. These SOPs covered tasks such as managing social media accounts, providing online customer service, as well as packaging and delivery workflows. The purpose was to ensure that every staff member whether existing or new could perform digital tasks with a consistent standard, maintaining efficiency and operational coherence despite any staff turnover.

The next step was the implementation of weekly evaluations to review the effectiveness of the digital strategies. These evaluations included performance analysis of digital content, customer engagement on social media, and online sales achievements. This routine became a platform for continuous learning, where the team could identify what worked and what needed improvement. Additionally, the evaluations served as an opportunity to brainstorm new ideas, enhance content creativity, and foster a shared sense of responsibility for digital success. As a result, a data-driven and reflective work culture began to take shape, encouraging everyone not just to work hard, but to work smart and remain agile in the face of rapid change.

Another crucial aspect of the refreezing stage was the internalization of digital values into the employees' mindset and daily behavior. The staff began to view technology not as a separate tool, but as an essential part of their workflow. A spirit of self-learning emerged, along with growing confidence in using digital tools and a sense of pride in promoting cultural values through online channels. To strengthen this cultural shift, Batik Pringmas officially designated several individuals as "digital champions"—key figures tasked with leading, inspiring, and acting as a bridge between the owner and the younger generation. These champions played a vital role in sustaining digital transformation, maintaining momentum, and ensuring that innovation became an integral part of the organization. Through this refreezing strategy, Batik Pringmas not only succeeded in transforming its operations but also became a model of how traditional small enterprises can integrate digital innovation while preserving cultural authenticity.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the process of adopting digital marketing at Batik Pringmas as part of the digital transformation of MSMEs requires a structured change management approach

focused on behavioral transformation. Through Kurt Lewin's framework, which consists of three stages unfreezing, changing, and refreezing it can be understood that change is not only about implementing new technologies, but also involves fundamental aspects within the organization, such as mindset, work culture, and human resource readiness.

In the unfreezing stage, it was found that the awareness of the need for transformation emerged as a response to external pressures and changing market behavior. However, resistance remained a challenge due to low digital literacy and limited internal capacity. The changing stage was marked by initiatives to implement digital marketing strategies, although they were still limited and inconsistent. On the other hand, leadership and intergenerational collaboration played important supportive roles. Meanwhile, in the refreezing stage, initial indicators of a digital culture began to emerge, but further strengthening of systems and internal policies is still needed to ensure the sustainability of these changes.

Overall, the findings of this research show that behavioral change in the context of MSME digitalization requires managerial support, continuous training, and the integration of new values into organizational systems and structures. Lewin's Change Model proves to be relevant in helping MSMEs like Batik Pringmas understand and manage change dynamics in a gradual and systematic manner. By adopting a planned and inclusive change approach, MSMEs can enhance their readiness for digital transformation and strengthen their competitiveness in the technology-driven economy.

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