

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

A. 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 utilizing digital tools, but a comprehensive transformation that requires integration of technology into business processes from promotion and transactions to customer service and employee communication (Astuti & Rosita, 2024). For this transformation to be sustainable, it must be accompanied by organizational readiness, especially in human resources. Studies have shown that digital strategies often fail not because of technological limitations, but due to inadequate employee involvement, low digital literacy, and resistance to changes in work culture (Amali *et al.*, 2025).

A crucial factor in enabling successful digital transformation is behavioral change within the workforce. Technological innovations will not yield significant results without corresponding shifts in employee mindset, work habits, and organizational values. Behavioral transformation core to human resource management involves fostering adaptive thinking, encouraging openness to change, and aligning individual behavior with the organization's digital vision. For MSMEs, this means cultivating a digital mindset, empowering employees through upskilling, and

creating a culture that embraces learning and innovation.

To address these challenges, organizations must adopt strategic change management approaches that place people at the center of transformation. Change management is a structured method to help organizations and their employees transition effectively, minimize resistance, and internalize new practices. One of the most relevant and widely used frameworks is Kurt Lewin's Change Model, which comprises three stages: unfreezing (building awareness and readiness), changing (implementing and supporting new behaviors), and refreezing (institutionalizing new norms into organizational culture).

This study examines the case of Batik Pringmas, a traditional MSME located in Papringan Village, Banyumas Regency, as a real-world example of how change management can be applied to support digital transformation. Despite its strong product potential and cultural heritage, Batik Pringmas continues to rely on conventional marketing methods and faces internal challenges such as digital illiteracy, centralized decision-making, and limited HR capabilities. These constraints hinder the enterprise from fully engaging with modern markets, particularly digital-native consumers.

By applying Lewin's Change Model, this study aims to develop a human-centered change management strategy that supports both technological and behavioral transformation at Batik Pringmas. This

approach is expected to assist the organization in building awareness for change, fostering digital competencies, reshaping internal work systems, and embedding a sustainable digital culture. Ultimately, the strategy seeks to demonstrate that effective human resource management plays a vital role in enabling MSMEs to thrive in the digital era through both technical adaptation and behavioral evolution.

Literature Review

Change Management

Change management is a systematic approach designed to assist individuals, teams, and organizations in transitioning from a current state to a desired future state to improve organizational effectiveness (Tan, 2006). In the context of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), managing change becomes critical due to resource constraints, informal structures, and a strong dependence on traditional work practices (By, 2005). Change efforts not only require structural or technical adjustments but also necessitate behavioral shifts, learning support, and human capital alignment.

One of the most widely recognized frameworks in change management is Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model, which comprises the stages of unfreezing (developing awareness and readiness), changing (implementing new behaviors), and refreezing (embedding changes into organizational culture) (Price et al., 1951). While the model has been

critiqued for its linearity and oversimplification of complex change dynamics (Burnes, 2004), it remains relevant and practical for MSMEs undergoing gradual digital transformation.

Scholars emphasize that the success of change management depends not only on formal strategies and systems but also significantly on human factors such as leadership quality, effective communication, and employee engagement (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Evans, 2014). Within the MSME context, resistance to change often stems from low digital literacy, fear of uncertainty, and perceived threats to established routines (Rao & Klein, 2013). Therefore, a people-centered and learning-based change process is essential to foster commitment, adaptability, and sustained behavioral transformation (Cawsey et al., 2016).

In digital transformation initiatives, change management serves as a bridge between technological readiness and behavioral readiness. As Vial, (2019) argues, digitalization is not solely about adopting new tools it also demands shifts in mindset, communication patterns, and collaborative culture. This is reinforced by Cameron & Green, (2015), who stress that successful organizational change requires cultivating a learning-oriented environment, flexibility, and psychological safety to foster innovation and experimentation.

Thus, a strategic approach to change management can enable MSMEs such as Batik Pringmas to

overcome resistance, promote active employee participation, and reinforce new behaviors aligned with digital transformation goals. When implemented through participatory engagement and continuous learning, Lewin's model remains a relevant roadmap for navigating human-centered digital change.

Behavioral Transformation in Organizations

Behavioral transformation within organizations refers to the deliberate process of altering employee mindsets, work habits, and collective values to support broader organizational change. This process is particularly vital during digital transformation initiatives, where new technologies alone are insufficient without corresponding changes in how people think, behave, and collaborate Burnes, (2020). Organizations that fail to align human behavior with technological innovation often encounter resistance, implementation gaps, and unsustainable outcomes.

Lewin, (1951) Three-Step Change Model offers a practical framework to guide behavioral transformation through its stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In the unfreezing phase, organizations raise awareness about the need for change and dismantle entrenched habits. The changing phase involves the introduction of new behaviors through interventions such as training, role adjustment, and cultural realignment. The final stage, refreezing, focuses on reinforcing these changes by embedding them

into everyday practices, routines, and organizational norms (Thomson, 1992).

Effective behavioral transformation is strongly influenced by leadership behaviors and the psychological climate of change. Oreg & Berson, (2019) found that leaders who model openness to change and engage employees meaningfully can enhance acceptance and participation. Similarly, Kirrane et al., (2017) emphasize the role of psychological empowerment and involvement as predictors of behavioral commitment to change initiatives. Fernandez & Rainey, (2006) argue that employee buy-in is more likely when the change process is participatory, transparent, and supported by consistent organizational communication.

In the context of MSMEs, behavioral transformation requires tailored interventions that address both cultural and capability-related barriers. For traditional businesses like Batik Pringmas, developing a digital mindset among artisans and staff is a critical first step. This includes building an appreciation for data-driven decision-making, encouraging openness to innovation, and fostering collaboration across generational divides. Organizational support mechanisms such as coaching, informal dialogue, and peer mentoring can play a vital role in enabling behavioral change and minimizing resistance (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012; Wijaya & Giawa, 2025).

Thus, behavioral transformation is not an isolated event

but an ongoing, human-centered effort that must be actively nurtured. It lies at the intersection of change management, leadership, and human resource development, and is foundational to sustaining any digital or strategic transition.

Digital Marketing in MSMEs

Digital transformation presents significant opportunities for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to expand market reach, improve marketing efficiency, and strengthen competitiveness in the digital economy. Digital marketing enables MSMEs such as Batik Pringmas to reach consumers beyond their local areas through platforms like social media, e-commerce, and other online channels. Moreover, digital approaches provide access to customer data, which can be leveraged for market segmentation and the development of more targeted promotional strategies (Ben Slimane et al., 2022).

Despite these opportunities, many MSMEs face major obstacles in implementing digital strategies, including low digital literacy, limited human resources, and insufficient training or assistance in using technology-based marketing tools (Ratnaningtyas & Wicaksono, 2025). Research shows that mastering digital marketing techniques can significantly increase revenue and expand market networks for MSMEs (Andika et al., 2021). However, the successful adoption of these strategies heavily depends on the organization's structural, procedural, and behavioral readiness.

Implementing digital marketing is not merely about acquiring tools or using digital platforms; it also involves cultivating a new mindset a digital mindset. MSMEs must move away from traditional working methods that are less responsive to market dynamics and begin developing a work culture that is open to data, innovation, and the use of technology in decision-making (Dave & Fiona, 2022). Therefore, the success of digital marketing efforts depends significantly on effective change management, adequate training, and the active involvement of all organizational members in the digital transformation process.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of real phenomena at Batik Pringmas, particularly regarding the challenges and opportunities in adopting digital marketing. According to Creswell & Creswell, (2018), qualitative research is suitable for exploring meaning, perceptions, and subjective experiences in specific social contexts. Meanwhile, the case study method enables researchers to holistically understand the dynamics of organizations within their specific environments (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted on-site at Batik Pringmas in Papringan Village, Banyumas Regency. Subjects were selected purposively, consisting of the business owner, several

employees from the production and marketing departments, and (if possible) customers who interacted directly with the products. Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor daily operations and marketing activities. Interviews aimed to gather insights regarding change readiness, perceptions of digital tools, and barriers faced. Documentation involved analyzing sales data, previously used promotional materials, and digital platforms such as social media and customer communication tools.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles & Huberman, (1994), consisting of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting and summarizing relevant information. Data display was presented narratively and, when necessary, in tables or diagrams. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and verified continuously throughout the research process.

To ensure the validity of the data, both source triangulation and method triangulation were employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing insights from different informants, while method triangulation compared findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis. These techniques support the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings as emphasized by Lincoln & Guba, (1988).

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 (Burnes, 2004; Lewin et al., 1951). 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 (Rao & Klein, 2013). 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 (Cameron & Green, 2012). 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 (Oreg & Berson, 2019). 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 (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

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 (Evans, 2014). 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 (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

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 (Vial, 2019).

Fifth, human resource development focused on increasing digital competencies. Older artisans received contextual and step-by-step guidance supported by interns and local volunteers. This approach aligns with findings by Kirrane et al., (2017), which emphasize the importance of psychologically safe environments for change learning.

Sixth, a significant change occurred in leadership style. The owner shifted from an authoritarian to a participative approach, encouraging team involvement in content creation and digital outreach. "Digital champions" were appointed to act as internal role models and facilitators. This transformation resonates with transformational leadership theories, where leaders inspire, empower, and support followers through change.

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 (Burnes, 2004; Lewin, 1951). 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 goal of these procedures was to create behavioral consistency and institutional memory, which are essential in the refreezing process (Cameron & Green, 2012).

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 evaluation cycle supported a learning organization model, where knowledge is continually refined through reflection and feedback. These routines also fostered a sense of ownership and accountability among team members (Kotter, 2012).

Another crucial aspect of the refreezing stage was the internalization of digital values into employees' mindsets and daily

behaviors. The staff began to view technology not as a separate tool, but as an essential part of their workflow. This aligns with Schein, (2010) organizational culture theory, which argues that for change to stick, it must become embedded in the shared assumptions and norms of the group. The spirit of self-learning and pride in promoting local culture via digital channels demonstrated a cognitive and emotional shift among staff key indicators of successful cultural integration (Hiatt, 2006).

To strengthen this transformation, Batik Pringmas appointed several “digital champions” team members who acted as change agents, guiding others and ensuring continuity in innovation efforts. This practice reflects the role of internal influencers in supporting change adoption and motivation across informal networks (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Through this refreezing strategy, Batik Pringmas not only succeeded in transforming its operations, but also emerged as a model for how traditional small enterprises can integrate digital innovation while preserving cultural authenticity.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the digital transformation process at Batik Pringmas, guided by Lewin’s Three-Step Change Model (unfreezing, changing, refreezing), involves not only the adoption of digital tools but also significant behavioral, cultural, and organizational shifts. The awareness to change was driven by

external pressures and changing consumer behavior, although internal resistance and low digital literacy posed challenges. The change phase involved gradual implementation of digital strategies, organizational restructuring, upskilling of human resources, and collaborative leadership. In the refreezing stage, early signs of a digital work culture began to emerge, although stronger systems and continuous evaluation are still needed. These findings highlight that the success of MSME digitalization depends heavily on a structured, participatory, and sustainable approach to change management.

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