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## Digital Transformation Strategy in Islamic Microfinance Cooperatives: A Case Study of Bmt Ugt Nusantara's Innovation

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**Abstract:** This study examines the implementation of digital transformation strategy at KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara, which operates 298 service offices across Indonesia. The research aims to analyze the development and implementation process of digital transformation strategy in improving operational efficiency while maintaining Shariah compliance. Employing a qualitative approach with a single case study method, this research integrates Digital Transformation Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, and Institutional Theory as its analytical framework. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 key informants, direct observations, and document analysis during September-December 2024. The findings reveal that successful digital transformation in BMT requires a holistic approach integrating technological aspects, Shariah compliance, and social empowerment. The implementation of digital transformation has resulted in a 45% increase in operational efficiency, 78% growth in digital financing portfolio, and expanded service coverage to underserved areas. This research contributes to the development of a digital transformation model that integrates Islamic values and provides practical recommendations for implementing digital technology in Islamic microfinance institutions.

**Keyword:** Digital Transformation, Islamic Cooperative, Bmt, Financial Technology, Shariah Compliance.

### INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of Islamic microfinance has undergone a comprehensive transformation, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. Studies indicate that 78% of global Islamic microfinance institutions experienced increased urgency in digital transformation during 2020-2023 (Darsimon & Syahril, 2024). The adoption of fintech solutions, including mobile banking and digital wallets, has enhanced transaction efficiency and security (Veera Vakkapatla, 2024), while blockchain technology, artificial intelligence, and smart contracts have significantly transformed transaction processes. Although digital transformation offers

numerous benefits, challenges such as regulatory adaptation and technological access disparities between urban and rural areas must be addressed to ensure equitable benefits (Saputra & Sugiarti, 2024).

BMT UGT Nusantara, a key player in Indonesia's Islamic microfinance industry, has initiated strategic digital transformation to enhance its competitiveness and service quality. Ranked among the top five Islamic microfinance institutions with the highest technology adoption rates in Indonesia (Ahmad Khoiri & Sulistyowati, 2023), BMT UGT Nusantara's digital initiatives have resulted in a 45% increase in operational efficiency and a 60% expansion in service coverage. The introduction of digital services, such as the UGT Mobile application, has enabled members to access financial and non-financial services more efficiently. This transformation aligns with the global trend toward more efficient and technology-based financial services in the Industry 4.0 era (Hasibuan, 1996).

Digital technology adoption by Islamic microfinance institutions has demonstrated 45% growth over the past three years. However, research reveals that only 23% of institutions have successfully achieved their digital transformation targets (Sudarmanto et al., 2024). The significant gap between digital aspirations and implementation capabilities remains a primary challenge, particularly in aligning technology with Shariah principles and organizational readiness (Trimulyana, 2024). Digital transformation can enhance operational efficiency and financial inclusion through innovations such as fintech and blockchain (Atikah et al., 2023). Nevertheless, regulatory challenges and market acceptance must be addressed to optimize the benefits of digital transformation in Islamic finance (AB. Aziz, 2022).

Digital transformation in Islamic microfinance institutions such as KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara presents unique challenges despite promising enhanced efficiency and service coverage. Five primary challenges identified in Islamic microfinance institutions like KSPPS BMT include Shariah compliance, infrastructure readiness, members' digital literacy, data security, and change management. Ensuring digital solutions align with Shariah principles is crucial, involving complex financial product development that requires specialized expertise (Saif Alali Abbas Zghair & Dr. Sinda Ben Sedrine Doghri, 2024). Inadequate technological infrastructure in many Islamic microfinance operational areas frequently impedes digital solution implementation (Seker & Aydin, 2024), while cooperative members' limited digital literacy and data security concerns remain primary issues requiring a holistic approach (Bencsik, 2024).

The research gap identified through literature review indicates a lack of comprehensive understanding of how Islamic microfinance institutions like KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara can implement digital technology transformation while maintaining Islamic values and principles. The absence of a framework integrating digital technology implementation with Shariah compliance presents a significant barrier (Ichsan et al., 2024), while the complexity of integrating smart contract technology with Shariah principles necessitates collaboration between technologists and Islamic scholars (Zulkepli et al., 2024). Limited empirical studies on digital transformation's impact on maqasid al-shariah (Kumala, 2024), alongside regulatory and cultural challenges in Islamic economics (Mashudi, 2024), further emphasize the urgency of developing a comprehensive framework in this research.

Recent studies have identified two significant gaps in Islamic finance digital transformation literature. The absence of a framework integrating technological aspects with Shariah compliance (AlMelaih AlFzari et al., 2024) has driven research on integrating Shariah compliance in fintech applications, emphasizing stakeholder collaboration. Meanwhile, the scarcity of empirical studies examining digital transformation's impact on maqasid al-shariah (Kumala, 2024) has generated research exploring how digital economic models can align technological advancement with Islamic principles (Achmad Bashori et al., 2024).

This research's novelty lies in developing an integrative digital transformation model that aligns technological aspects, Shariah compliance, and social impact within the Islamic microfinance institution context. A systematic literature review of 127 studies related to Islamic finance digitalization reveals that such an integrative approach has not been previously explored (Liu & Qi, 2024). The developed model adopts a multi-dimensional perspective by integrating Digital Transformation Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, and Institutional Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital transformation process (Noreen, 2024). This multi-theoretical approach is essential for understanding the complexity of digital transformation in the Islamic context (Kafou, 2024).

Digital transformation has demonstrated significant impact in enhancing financial resilience and sustainability of Islamic financial institutions. The implementation of digital technology not only improves corporate governance and reduces operational risks (Aldaarmi, 2024), but also ensures Shariah compliance and ethical soundness of financial services (Mulyadi, 2024). Studies indicate that Shariah-based screening in digital transformation successfully reduces equity risks, making Islamic stock indices more attractive to risk-averse investors. Furthermore, technology integration in Islamic financial services significantly influences customer satisfaction and sustainable performance (Aldaarmi, 2024).

This research is expected to make substantial contributions to developing an effective digital transformation model embedded with Islamic values for Islamic microfinance institutions in Indonesia. The urgency of empirical research to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the digital transformation of Islamic microfinance institutions has been highlighted, while the importance of an in-depth case study of KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara needs to be emphasized. Documentation of best practices in digital transformation of Islamic microfinance institutions becomes crucial for developing effective strategies.

In-depth analysis of KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara's experience yields valuable insights for Indonesia's Islamic microfinance industry. Strategic lessons from digital transformation pioneers like KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara contribute to developing a more effective roadmap for similar institutions. The digital transformation of Islamic microfinance institutions not only supports financial inclusion but also aligns with sustainable development goals (Noreen, 2024). Organizational culture and knowledge sharing emerge as key factors in enhancing adaptive capacity towards digital change (Iqbal et al., 2024).

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative approach with a single case study method to explore digital transformation at KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara, which operates 294 service offices across Indonesia. The study was conducted at BMT UGT Nusantara's headquarters in Sidogiri, Pasuruan, East Java during October-December 2024, as the center for policy-making and digital transformation strategy implementation. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with 20 key informants (board members, managers, division heads, and branch managers), observations of digital technology implementation, and analysis of internal policy documents and strategic reports. Data analysis utilized a qualitative descriptive approach through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with source and method triangulation for findings validation. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of digital transformation complexities, including aspects of Shariah compliance, implementation challenges, and development strategies.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **A. Interview Results and Analysis**

#### **1. Shariah Supervisory Board Perspective**

Interviews with two SSB members revealed: "Digital transformation must align with maqasid al-shariah. We have developed a specific framework for technology screening from a Shariah perspective." (KH. Sholeh Abd Haq, SSB-1) "Every digital feature must comply with Shariah contract principles. For instance, payment notification systems must consider gharar and riba aspects." (KH. Abd Ghofur, SSB-2). These findings align with Institutional Theory, where Shariah legitimacy serves as a primary transformation pillar (Karbhari et al., 2020).

## 2. Senior Management Perspective

The Board Chairman emphasized strategic aspects: "We adopt a phased approach: internal digitalization, member interface development, and ecosystem integration." (H. Abd Majid, Board Chairman). The Treasurer, overseeing financial operations, elaborated on IT system implementation in financial operations: "The greatest challenge is balancing innovation speed with Shariah compliance in every financial transaction, ensuring convenience, speed, and transparency. We cannot be as aggressive as conventional fintech." (Nur Kholis Majid, Treasurer). This analysis supports Digital Transformation Theory regarding the importance of balance between innovation and organizational values (Fahmi, 2024).

## 3. IT and Digital Team Perspective

Mr. Afif Permana, CEO of PT. USID, the digital technology and information system management vendor for KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara, detailed the IT infrastructure: "We've built a modular system adaptable to each service office's needs. There are 294 points integrated with our BMT system. Everything is centralized at headquarters." (Afif Permana, USID CEO). The Financial Manager added: "User experience is our top priority. Our UGT mobile application is designed considering BMT members' characteristics and transaction needs." (Abdussalam, Financial Manager). These findings align with TAM, particularly the perceived ease of use aspect (Silvia Irawati & Asnita Frida B. R. Sebayang, 2024).

## B. Analysis Based on Three Main Theories

### 1. Digital Transformation Theory Application

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation demonstrates alignment with Westerman's three main pillars:

#### a) Customer Experience

- Development of Shariah-compliant mobile apps with UI/UX.
- Member preference-based notification system.
- Offline-online service integration.

"We design interfaces familiar to BMT members, including features for sadaqah, waqf, and zakat reminders, and qibla direction." (H. A. Saifulloh Muhyiddin, Supervisory Board Chairman)

#### b) Operational Processes

- Financing contract digitalization
- Profit-sharing calculation automation
- Integrated Shariah monitoring system

#### c) Business Model

- Islamic digital ecosystem development
- Islamic fintech collaboration
- Hybrid service model

## 2. Implementasi Technology Acceptance Model

Analysis of technology adoption by members reveals: a) Perceived Usefulness: "85% of members experience direct benefits from service digitalization, particularly in installment payment convenience." (Miftahul Bahri, Member Savings Division Head) b) Perceived Ease of Use: "We simplified processes while maintaining the essence of Shariah contracts." (M. Muhlas, Risk Manager) c) Behavioral Intention: "Mobile UGT adoption and activation rates increased by 60% following the digital literacy education program." (H. Sholeh Wafi, Business Manager).

### 3. Institutional Theory Analysis

Regulatory Pillar: "We ensure that every digital innovation complies with cooperative regulations, SOPs, internal rules, and DSN-MUI Shariah standards." (Achmad Budi, Internal Control Division Head).

Normative Pillar: "Islamic digital banking certification programs are mandatory for all staff." (H. Aunurrohman, HR Manager).

Cultural-Cognitive Pillar: "Our digital transformation is based on Islamic boarding school values that form BMT UGT Nusantara's DNA." (M. Imron Husnan, Cooperative Secretary).

### C. Synthesis and Integrated Model

Based on the analysis of the three theories and interview results, this research proposes an "Integrated Shariah Digital Transformation Model" with the following characteristics:

#### a) Shariah Foundation

- Maqasid-based technology screening
- Digital compliance framework
- Islamic boarding school values

#### b) Digital Capabilities

- Modular infrastructure
- Human resource competencies
- Integrated systems

#### c) User Adoption

- Digital education
- Member assistance
- Feedback loop

### D. Model Implementation and Transformation Impact

#### 1. Model Implementation Across Service Regions

The digital transformation implementation at KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara demonstrates significant variations based on regional characteristics. In urban areas such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and other major cities, digital technology adoption shows high success rates. The Jakarta Branch Head revealed that over 90% of members in his region have adopted BMT's digital services. "Members in urban areas are not only technologically ready but demand more advanced services. They compare our services with fintech and digital banks," he explained. These findings align with research identifying a positive correlation between urbanization and Islamic financial technology adoption rates (Isaack, 2015).

In semi-urban areas, BMT UGT Nusantara developed a unique hybrid approach. Saifu Anwar, Surabaya Branch Head, explained that this approach combines digital technology convenience with the personal values characteristic of BMT. "We maintain personal interaction through direct assistance while gradually introducing digital services. This approach has proven effective in building trust and sustainable technology adoption." (Saiful Anwar,

Surabaya Branch Head). This strategy confirms (Said & Muhammadun, 2024) theory regarding the importance of cultural approaches in Islamic financial institutions' digital transformation.

The most significant challenges were encountered in rural areas, where technological infrastructure and digital literacy remain limited. However, BMT UGT Nusantara developed innovative solutions to address these constraints. The "WA Chatbot Service" program was launched as an initiative to enhance digital literacy among rural communities more familiar with WhatsApp usage. "We train our Account Officers in remote areas who understand local community characteristics. They become bridges between digital technology and the community," explained Ipnu Kholdun, Kangean Sumenep Branch Head.

## **2. Operational Process Transformation and Performance Impact**

Digital transformation has resulted in fundamental changes in BMT UGT Nusantara's operational processes. The new digital financing system integrates automated Shariah-based screening with digital financing analysis, reducing financing processing time from an average of 7 days to just 2 days. H. Sholeh Wafi, as Business Manager, explained that this efficiency was achieved without compromising prudential principles and Shariah compliance. "We developed algorithms that integrate Shariah parameters at every evaluation stage. This system is even more stringent in Shariah compliance screening compared to manual processes," he explained.

## **3. Financial, Social-Economic Impact and Community Empowerment**

The financial impact of digital transformation is reflected in significant improvements across various performance metrics. Digital transaction volume increased by 156% year-on-year, while the digital financing portfolio grew by 78%. More importantly, the operational efficiency ratio improved from 85% to 65%, indicating substantial productivity enhancement. The Financial Manager added that this improved efficiency enables BMT UGT Nusantara to offer more competitive pricing to members while maintaining profitability.

## **4. Social-Economic Impact and Community Empowerment**

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation has generated social-economic impacts beyond operational efficiency. The digital MSME empowerment program, integrated with the Sharia Micro Business Partners marketplace platform, has facilitated the transformation of over 15,000 traditional micro-businesses of cooperative members into digital enterprises. Aminullah, Development Division Head, explained that this initiative not only enhances access to Islamic financing but also opens new market opportunities for MSMEs.

## **5. Digital Empowerment Program and MSME Transformation**

The MSME digital empowerment program implemented by BMT UGT Nusantara demonstrates significant results in transforming traditional micro-enterprises. Based on program monitoring data during October-December 2024, MSMEs adopting the UGT Mobile digital platform recorded an average revenue increase of 45%. The First Vice Chairman of KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara's Board, Mr. Tantowi AS, explained that this success is supported by a holistic approach integrating three main elements: Islamic financing, business digitalization, and continuous mentoring.

"We don't merely provide access to financing or technology, but build an ecosystem that supports sustainable MSME growth," he explained. The program encompasses digital marketing training, Islamic financial management, and access to a digital marketplace built specifically for BMT UGT members. This approach aligns with Oktavia's findings emphasizing the importance of integrated digital ecosystems in Shariah-based MSME empowerment (Oktavia, 2024).

## **5. Digital Service Innovation and Member Response**

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation focuses not only on operational efficiency but also on developing innovative services addressing specific member needs. The Islamic mobile banking platform launched in early 2024 has integrated unique features such as zakat calculator, prayer time reminders, and financing fund usage tracking according to contracts. The Digital Banking Division Head explained that these features were designed based on extensive research on BMT members' needs and preferences.

A user satisfaction survey conducted in November 2024 showed an 87% satisfaction rate with UGT Mobile digital services. "Interestingly, members appreciate not only transaction convenience but also features that help them manage finances according to Shariah, such as zakat and waqf capabilities and other socio-religious programs," added the Business Manager. These findings reinforce Muhammad Mahfudz's argument about the importance of integrating Islamic values in digital innovation.

## **6. Change Management and Capacity Development**

Digital transformation implementation presents significant challenges in change management aspects, particularly regarding human resource capacity development. KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara developed a comprehensive "Digital Talent Development" program, encompassing technical skills training, understanding of Shariah principles in the digital context, and soft skills for adaptation to change. "We realize that digital transformation isn't merely about technology, but more about mindset and work method transformation," explained Fauzie Dhofir, HR Division Head.

The program has trained over 1,600 employees across 294 service offices, with Islamic digital banking certification achievement rates reaching 92%. Aixia Chen et al., in their research, confirm that investment in digital capacity development is a critical success factor in Islamic financial institutions' digital transformation (Chen et al., 2024).

## **7. Strategic Lessons and Best Practices**

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation experience yields valuable strategic lessons for the Islamic microfinance industry. First, a phased approach considering local characteristics proves more effective than simultaneous implementation. Second, integrating Islamic values from the system design stage ensures transformation sustainability. Third, building an inclusive digital ecosystem enables balanced achievement of social and economic objectives.

## **8. Strategic Implications for Islamic Microfinance Industry**

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation provides significant strategic implications for Indonesia's Islamic microfinance industry development. Implementation experience across 294 service offices demonstrates that digital transformation is not merely technology adoption but fundamentally redefines the Islamic microfinance business model. The Business Director explained, "We view digital transformation as an enabler to realize a more inclusive and sustainable vision of Islamic microfinance."

Impact analysis reveals paradigm shifts in three main aspects. First, digitalization has transformed member interaction from branch-based transactions to integrated omnichannel services. Second, Shariah-based automation has enhanced operational scalability without compromising Shariah compliance. Third, digital platforms have opened new collaboration opportunities with various stakeholders in the Islamic financial ecosystem.

## 9. Islamic Digital Ecosystem Development

BMT UGT Nusantara has initiated an integrated Islamic digital ecosystem development. The Ecosystem Development Center, established in October 2024, focuses on developing strategic partnerships with various parties, including Islamic fintech, marketplaces, and educational institutions. "We recognize that the future of Islamic microfinance lies in the ability to build and manage an inclusive digital ecosystem," explained M. Imron Husnan, ICT Coordinator.

This program has produced several significant breakthroughs. Collaboration with five leading e-commerce platforms has opened digital market access for BMT's MSME members. Partnership with the Nahdlatul Ulama University of Pasuruan in science and technology has resulted in internship programs and Islamic digital talent development. This initiative aligns with Saputra's findings on the importance of an ecosystem approach in Islamic financial institutions' digital transformation (Saputra & Sugiarti, 2024).

## 10. Contribution to National Islamic Economic Development

BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation contributes significantly to the national Islamic economic development agenda. Data shows increased Islamic financial penetration in previously underserved areas. "Through digital technology, we have successfully reached over ±80,000 cooperative members across Indonesia in the past year," revealed the Business Manager.

Beyond coverage expansion, digital transformation has driven improvements in Islamic financial literacy. BMT UGT Nusantara's digital education platform has reached over 700,000 user members, with understanding of Islamic financial concepts increasing by an average of 65% after completing the digital learning program.

## 11. Sustainable Development Recommendations

Based on comprehensive analysis of digital transformation implementation, several strategic recommendations are formulated for sustainable development:

First, development of a more robust Islamic digital governance framework. BMT UGT Nusantara needs to strengthen integration between Shariah supervision and digital risk management. This includes developing more comprehensive standards and procedures for screening digital products from a Shariah perspective.

Second, strengthening technological infrastructure to support expansion. Investment in Shariah-compliant cloud technology and artificial intelligence should be prioritized to enhance analytical capabilities and service personalization. "We are developing Shariah-compliant AI that can assist in financing screening and compliance monitoring," explained Afif Permana, President Director of PT. USID as BMT UGT's IT vendor.

Third, acceleration of digital empowerment programs in rural areas. A more structured approach is needed to address the digital divide, including infrastructure development and digital literacy programs tailored to local characteristics.

## 12. Future Projections and Vision

KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara's digital transformation paves the way for an ambitious vision of Islamic microfinance's future in Indonesia. With strong technological foundations and a validated operating model, BMT is preparing for its next expansion phase. "Our target is to become a global reference model for digital transformation of Islamic microfinance institutions," stated H. Abd Majid Umar, Board Chairman. The five-year strategic plan includes developing an Islamic blockchain platform, regional expansion, and establishing an Islamic



digital banking research center. These initiatives align with the vision of building a more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable Islamic microfinance ecosystem.

## CONCLUSIONS

The digital transformation of KSPPS BMT UGT Nusantara demonstrates that successful implementation in Islamic microfinance institutions requires integrating technology, Shariah compliance, and social empowerment. The implementation across 294 service offices shows significant improvements, including a 45% increase in operational efficiency and 78% growth in digital financing portfolio while maintaining Shariah compliance. The application of Digital Transformation Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, and Institutional Theory has produced an effective transformation model that harmoniously integrates Shariah principles with digital innovation, resulting in enhanced operational efficiency, expanded service reach to underserved areas, and increased Islamic financial inclusion.

Several strategic recommendations emerge for both institutional and industry development. For BMT UGT Nusantara, priorities include strengthening technological infrastructure, developing sustainable Islamic digital talent programs, and enhancing collaboration within the Islamic fintech ecosystem. Industry-wide recommendations focus on adopting integrated digital transformation frameworks, building common standards for technology implementation in the Shariah context, and developing collaborative platforms for knowledge sharing. For regulators, key recommendations include developing supportive regulations, establishing security and Shariah compliance standards, and facilitating regulatory sandboxes for Islamic fintech innovation.

The research acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The focus on a single institution may limit the generalizability of results, while the relatively short observation period of three months constrains the analysis of long-term impacts. Additionally, the variations in implementation across different regions suggest the need for further comprehensive studies. These limitations point to opportunities for future research, including comparative studies across multiple BMTs, longitudinal analysis of transformation impacts, and development of specialized evaluation frameworks for measuring digital transformation success in Islamic microfinance institutions.

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