



Master's Degree Program in Strategic Management
Eng

Course of Organizing for Societal Impact

IKEA AND THE APPLICATION OF THE LEWIN MODEL FOR THE TRANSITION TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

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INTRODUCTION

The following thesis covers IKEA's transition towards a circular economy and its path towards transformation in terms of Lewin's model for change management. In a future when sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity, IKEA took it head-on with a transition towards recycled materials, long-lasting goods, and collection and reuse programs for used furniture. IKEA's circular economy is not a faddish concept but a systemic one in terms of reimagining companies' strategies towards designing, producing, and distributing goods.

In furniture, IKEA is a global leader, famous for its ability to merge accessible price with environmentally friendly innovation. What distinguishes it, though, isn't necessarily a case of simply minimizing waste, but a profound change in its impact at an entire value chain level. One such example is its efforts towards creating goods that can simply be repaired, a move towards minimizing its footprint that is a significant move in the correct direction.

The thesis begins with significant starting propositions: definitions for defining sustainability, a circular economy's key fundamentals, and Kurt Lewin's model for change and its application in relation to them. Lewin's model portrays a three-step progression: unfreezing (shedding off outdated routines), changing (accepting new routines and customs), and refreezing (entrenching them over a period of years). It's not a theoretical model but a pragmatic one, offering real-life advice for overcoming barriers and securing long-term use of new programs. A full review of IKEA's environmentally friendly programs is below, with a focus on such individual programs as increased use of renewable materials, producing long-lasting goods, and take-back programs for returning recycled items to its stores for reuse and resale. All these efforts represent IKEA's two-way commitment: minimizing its footprint and educating its shoppers to make environmentally responsible purchasing choices.

A significant section of this work is its experimental part, in which a survey of IKEA shoppers was taken. Consumer acceptance and acceptance of environmentally friendly goods, and acceptance of recycled goods in purchasing, both emerged through feedback in the survey. Consumer demand, in terms of a survey, is growing, but with a demand for effective information dissemination to maximize awareness regarding environmentally friendly goods.

In conclusion, success for IKEA in its move towards a circular economy will rely on its success in changing its organization. By employing Lewin's model in its use in a range of phases in such a transition, the organization has uncovered a useful model for new practice and overcoming its inner barriers. What can be learned through IKEA's practice can then serve as a useful lesson for companies

wanting to follow a similar path and contribute towards a more sustainable future for the overall industrial environment.

CHAPTER 1 -SUSTAINABLE TRANSITION: FROM CIRCULAR ECONOMY TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT

1. GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY: THE NEW PARADIGM FOR ECONOMIC EVOLUTION

In today's globalized economy, sustainability has evolved from being a mere environmental responsibility to becoming a fundamental pillar of public policy and business strategy. This shift is a response to the growing awareness of planetary ecological limits and the economic and social disparities stemming from decades of unchecked industrial expansion. Historically, concerns about the sustainability of economic growth were first brought into the mainstream by *The Limits to Growth* a seminal report by the Club of Rome that warned of the risks associated with an economic model premised on infinite expansion.

The discourse on sustainability was further refined by the Brundtland Report, which defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This conceptual breakthrough reshaped institutional and corporate thinking, prompting businesses and policymakers to integrate sustainability into their operational and strategic frameworks.

Sustainability is no longer a niche concept but a foundational aspect of business and governance. The integration of sustainability principles across industries is driven by various international agreements, corporate initiatives, and economic incentives that encourage responsible resource management, equitable labor practices, and reduced environmental impact. Companies that embrace sustainability find themselves in a stronger position to navigate global challenges, comply with regulations, and foster long-term financial resilience.

John Elkington (1994) introduced the concept of the triple bottom line which implies that instead of just economic measures of success, corporations should also include social and environmental consequences in measuring their success. The three forms of sustainability - environmental, social, and economic - depend on each other much considering long-term resilience against global challenges.

Environmental sustainability is responsible consumption and conservation of natural resources towards maintaining the natural ecological balance. It is now leading up to increased pressures exerted by climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. The planetary boundaries framework identified nine of these critical thresholds, beyond which irreversible damage might occur in Earth's systems. Climate change altered nitrogen and phosphorus cycles, and biodiversity loss are the most pressing risks among these.

Increasingly, governments and businesses have also been taking up the frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and European Green Deal in response to the above environmental challenges. The objective of the Paris Agreement is to restrict the increase in global temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and for countries to pursue efforts to limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C. Meanwhile, the European Green Deal gives substantial clues on how to achieve climate-neutrality by 2050 in all major sectors such as energy, transport, and agriculture.

The recent surge in new technologies and innovations further pushes the envelope in environmental sustainability. Corporations are looking into renewable sources of energy and carbon capture technologies. They have now advanced their eco-friendly manufacturing processes to reduce their environmental footprints. Real-time monitoring by new technologies in Artificial Intelligence and Big Data will now ensure compliance with regulations on environmental management and the goals of corporate sustainability.

Social sustainability means increasing human well-being and decreasing inequalities. The principles of social sustainability include respect for human rights, fair distribution of resources, and the accessibility of basic services such as education and healthcare. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN speaks to these principles via the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 13 (climate action).

CSR activities do promote social sustainability. The labor practices, inclusion, and community engagement of companies are evolving reflections of this trend. It has also been shown that strong CSR policies lead to higher employee satisfaction, consumer trust, and brand loyalty .

Fair trade practices, ethical sourcing, and transparency in the supply chain are also parts of social sustainability. Responsible consumption is now in vogue, and companies that implement a social conscience are often rewarded with loyalty from customers and enhanced reputations. Governments and NGOs have also been key actors in ensuring enforcement mechanisms for social sustainability, such as labor rights regulators and standards in industries.

Economic sustainability can be defined as the objective of achieving long-term economic growth without depleting natural resources or aggravating social inequality. Circular economic models emphasize resource efficiency, waste minimization, and regeneration of materials, as opposed to traditional production models that have linear economic processes “take-make-dispose”.

The advantages of adopting sustainable business models include operational efficiency improvements, access to concessional finance, and an excellent market positioning. The emergence of sustainable finance mechanisms includes the issuance of green bonds and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investments facilitating capital allocation towards environmentally and socially responsible projects.

Financial institutions now take a pivotal role in driving economic sustainability through the incorporation of ESG criteria in investment decisions. A return-on-investment scenario for both ethical and strong financial returns is favored by sustainable investments, or differently characterized potential attractiveness to institutional and retail investors. Tax incentives, as well as subsidies and other incentive financial instruments, are ways through which governments promote this transition.

The Role of International Policies and Business Strategies

International policies are critical determinants of the economic decision-making processes within which sustainability is instituted. In addition to the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, TCFD, the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, and CBAM, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, are also part of initiatives that directly affect how companies disclose and mitigate their environmental impact.

Sustainability in the business paradigm gradually recognizes that it is becoming a competitive advantage. There are benefits associated with integrating sustainability into core business strategies in a company, such as saving costs through energy efficiency, increased investor confidence, and

consumer loyalty. Transitioning into sustainability often comes with a high initial cost, resistance to change, and structural adjustments in business operations.

Overcoming Challenges through Change Management

Implementing sustainability in business models will require a good and strong change management framework. Lewin's change management model has three stages, Unfreezing, Change, and Refreezing; this model offers an organized approach to organizations which goes through the sustainable transformation process. In addition, Kotter's eight-step model for leading change in organizations provides a road map for overcoming internal resistance and inciting the change toward a sustainable culture within the organizations.

The education and engagement of stakeholders are paramount to overcoming most barriers that determine the adoption of sustainability. Firms can implement a company-wide sustainable change in practice, making sure that such initiatives do not remain simply policy-driven but are incorporated into corporate values and operating tactics, enabling continuous learning and improvement.

Conclusion

It is today more than ever the need for sustainability in global enterprises. The urgent environmental and social problems of the 21st century must be met through collaborative efforts, public-private partnerships, and the commitment to prolonged sustainable practices. Strategies of businesses must be directed to the principles of sustainability and introduced in an innovative way through new business models such as circular economy or sustainable finance to engender systemic change. A holistic view, integrating environmental and social dimensions along with economic ones, will more likely build resilient, equitable economies at the global level.

2. CIRCULAR ECONOMY AS MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

The circular economy is a new paradigm presented as a sustainable alternative to the traditional linear economic model of take-produce-use-dispose. The past few decades of this model witnessed industrial growth and mass consumption but have fallen short with serious caveats—the excessive intensification of natural resource use, pollution, and waste generation. The circular economy seeks to minimize waste and optimize resource usage through the strategies of reuse, remanufacturing, and recycling of materials. The other objective of this approach is, therefore, to create new economic opportunities and promote social sustainability along with environmental sustainability by offering a fair and efficient opportunity to utilize resources. Another argument to provide for an economic resilience is that a circular economy can lessen dependence on finite resources and make the production system more efficient and dynamic.

Very deep roots cultivate the concept of a circular economy. Historical records indicate as early as the 1970s. Walter Stahel and Geneviève Reday presented the performance economy emphasizing product design for durability and repairability rather than for selling disposable goods. Stahel (2010) gave further importance to a service-oriented economy whereby businesses can maximize the useful life span of products instead of stimulating fast and unsustainable consumption. According to Geissdoerfer et al. (2017), the circular economy represents a systemic transformation that rethinks the entire industrial model in a regenerative manner. A recent analysis of over one hundred academic definitions shows that the circular economy is often seen as a systemic change involving innovation, collaboration, and redefinition of consumption and production patterns (Kirchherr et al., 2017). Over the years, several innovative business models reducing resource consumption and maximizing the economic value of the materials used have embraced this vision.

The concept of a circular economy has, in recent decades, been integrated into many international policy strategies, thanks to advances in technologies and increased environmental pressures. This model has been integrated into the United Nations Agenda 2030 among the Sustainable Development Goals, and specifically the 12th Goal on Responsible Consumption and Production and the 13th Goal on Climate Action. At the European level, the circular economy sits at the heart of the European

Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan of the European Commission as a strategy for ecological transition and climate neutrality by 2050 European Commission 2020.

The need to improve the efficiency of production systems while increasing the reuse of materials aims for a more resilient economic system less dependent on the extraction of new raw materials. Thus, the circular economy is positioned as a crucial tool to mitigate climate change, reduce businesses' ecological footprints, and make national economies self-sufficient in resource management.

The global economic benefits are perceived from circular economy strategies. Forecasts indicate that the adoption of circular economies may mean annual savings of over 1.8 trillion euros a year until 2030, given reduced operating costs and better resource-use efficiency, every other new jobs in recycling repair and sustainable design sort sectors will emerge given circular economy. Such encouragement is being supported by Governments in the form of subsidies and tax policies for companies following circular production pattern.

Implementing the circular economy demands radical changes in production processes Six key strategies to develop more circular business models are identified by Bocken , modular and repairable design create products easily disassembled and repaired to prolong their useful life use of recycled and sustainable materials favor renewable raw materials or recovered from pre-existing prolonging product life promote repair and remanufacturing to reduce the need for new goods collaborative economy models incentivize renting and sharing rather than individual ownership collection and recycling systems create efficient infrastructure for material recovery and reuse energy efficiency in industrial processes reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions throughout the value chain.

The adoption of such strategies would readily generate a more sustainable and resilient economic system, boosting competitiveness for firms and decreasing their reliance on finite resources. Many firms have already successfully applied circular economy models; for instance, IKEA is setting up leasing and rental models on furniture to reduce raw material consumption and extend product life. The fashion sector is increasingly engaging in sustainable up and recycling with practices facilitated by brands like Patagonia and Stella McCartney. The automobile sector is also considering new business models on the lines of car sharing and use of recycled materials for car manufacturing. Electronics is yet another sector trying to combat planned obsolescence through the promotion of the repairability of tech products and component recovery for the manufacture of new products.

The circular economy stands out as one of the bright strategies for supporting the sustainable pathway. It can immensely change the way we produce and consume goods and services by bringing down

environmental impacts without compromising economic growth. Its dissemination capability, however, will depend on innovation, readiness to absorb new technologies, and creation of a conducive regulatory framework that fosters a transition into more sustainable production. The circular economy can thus become the norm through collaborative action by governments, businesses, and citizens, triggering pathways towards an equitable and prosperous future.

3. LEWIN'S MODEL: A TOOL FOR MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

All organizations must experience change in their life cycle, be it internal or external transformation. During the process, the change will come due to various factors such as internal technological innovations or corporate growth, restructurings, external sources including economic crises, globalization, new regulations, or consumers demonstrating different behavioral patterns. On the other hand, such change does not exclude companies in the sense that change management also requires for any competitive advantage for maintaining the current strong market position and adaptability to new scenarios. Nonetheless, it has been observed that managing organizational change is a challenging task since their psychological, cultural, and structural aspects can act in favor or against a transformation process. Ineffective change management would blow up negative effects like internal resistance, productivity losses, a hostile workplace climate, and also failure of the strategies constituted. Hence, theoretical models have been evolved in academic and managerial research that can throw light on change for organizations in understanding and implementing the same effectively. Among the several models that are today rife, one of the most widely used and influential of them is Lewin's Model on organizational change developed by the German psychologist Kurt Lewin, who is regarded as one of the forefathers of social psychology and analysis of group dynamics applied to organizations. The model focuses on making reform quite systematic, analytical, and straightforward to be understood with change, based on the assumption that this process cannot be sudden or chaotic; rather, it has to be managed through a sequence of interconnecting phases. According to his model, there are three important stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, which stand for the shifts through which an organization can proceed from the existing to the desired future state gradually and in a structured manner. This kind of vision of change subscribes to the concept of Field Theory, where human behavior is identified to be a result of dynamic balance existing between forces advocating

change and forces resisting it. The management task is thus supposed to alter that balance-such a way as to promote forward movement and renewal.

It caters to a comprehensive and organized direction regarding how such change should be introduced in progressive stages, diminishing associated internal resistance, and easing practice shift adoption. The unfreezing stage is very important as it prepares the organization for a significant transformation by raising awareness to implement that change. During this phase, it is needed to share the rationale behind such transformation very clearly and effectively with employees together with the employee's involvement in the decision-making process to feel as active participants in the transformation. Kotter emphasizes that one of the most critical elements at this stage is generating an urgent need for change which can be established by using market data evaluation, benchmarking against competitors, or forecasting future scenarios annoyingly alarmingly indicating risk acceptance for the status quo. Even without adequate preparation, change would probably cause extreme resistance, for people tend to prefer stability over uncertainty.

The second phase, changing, represents the moment in which the new practices and strategies go into action. It is characterized by a high level of uncertainty and instability because it entails letting go of existing habits and embracing new behaviors and models of operation. According to Burnes, the level of success achieved by this phase really depends on the organization in which the worker enjoys sufficient support to go through the transition such as training programs, coaching, and mentoring. Most of the time, acceptance of new practices would also call for a review of incentive systems and performance evaluation methods to make sure that an interested party was motivated to put new methodologies into daily work. In this regard, leadership can be asserted to be primary; without a doubt, consistent with declared strategies, actions taken became the guides and points of reference for the whole organization.

Another finalized phase of Lewin's model is refreezing, which is the final stage in ensuring that the change becomes permanent and is fully internalized into the culture and maturity of the organization. Failure to include consolidation risks employees reverting to old habits and denying newly established moderation effects. According to Lewin, it would be the case that when corporate policies, incentives, and monitoring systems reinforcing new practices complement each other change would be effective. Refreezing can include review of business procedures, institutionalization of new policies, and establishing recognition and reward systems for employees successfully adapting to the use of new operational methodology. KPI continues to help monitor progress change effectiveness and implementing needed improvements.

Lewin's model has also achieved great success in numerous sectors and organizational contexts about business restructuring processes, technological regimes shifting, mergers and acquisitions, and sustainability initiatives, among many others. For instance, companies from the manufacturing sector embarking on circular economy strategies have cited Lewin's model as an effective means in managing a gradual change approach regarding employees and stakeholders during the transition period from the linear production system to the circular one. In the unfreezing phase, workshops and awareness programs were organized to educate employees on the benefits of sustainability and waste reduction. In the changing phase, companies adopted new technologies and production processes based on reuse and recycling of materials. The practices adopted were then assimilated into company policies and performance evaluation systems during the refreezing phase, ensuring durability and a well-established change entailed over time.

The very same complexities and quick adaptations to changing market conditions, claim some scholars, simply cannot be accommodated by the linear sequence of phases of Lewin's model. In their study of this theory, Weick and Quinn (1999) have put forward a continuous change approach as an alternative, suggesting that organizations do not experience discrete phases of transformation but are in a state of ever-evolving change, gradually adapting to new situations. Burnes (2017, pp. 45-50), however, argues that Lewin's model is still a primary reference point in change management as it lays down a structured framework through which organizations can strategically and systematically plan and implement fairly complex transformations.

To summarize, Lewin's model, which offers a structured approach to change management, remains a relevant instrument for understanding and managing organizational change and to aid companies in jumping across the hurdles of transition with minimum internal resistance. This versatility applies to a plethora of scenarios-from digital transformation and sustainability strategies to business model innovations and corporate reorganization. The subsequent sections cover each of the phases from Lewin's model, focusing on the most effective ways to implement that change and anchor it within the organization.

4. IKEA: HISTORY, POSITIONING AND COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Today, IKEA is the world's leading furniture company, following a new and quite innovative business model: a combination of affordability and design, functionality, and the increasing commitment to sustainable solutions. It's hard to dissociate IKEA from Sweden and the more cultural and economic context of this country, known for having the quality of life and minimalist design in its emphasis. It was set up in 1943 by Ingvar Kamprad, who was then seventeen, with the intent of selling various household products through a mail order catalogue. At first, it dealt in odds and ends found around the house, but by 1951 Kamprad had decided to limit his entrepreneur's ambitions entirely to selling furniture, entertaining the idea that there would be growing demand for cheaper, practical solutions in the home. This would become crucially the turning point in this enterprise's destiny-the foundation for a form of market approach destined to revolutionize the entire furniture industry.

IKEA has effectively employed its business model to streamline production, logistics, and distribution in a manner that permits it to provide a very good design-quality-and-price cube of furniture at the lowest possible prices. Flat-pack philosophy, where the furniture is sold in volume packages that can be self-assembled, has brought down costs, both production and transportation, so that price tag on IKEA products is very low for consumers worldwide. This not only improved the efficiency of supply chains but also initiated a more interactive shopping experience, with customers being an active part in assembling their own furniture. The next stages in IKEA's expansion went through the 1960s and 1970s, with its first international stores being located outside Sweden, followed by very rapid growth in Western Europe. It was the introduction of enormous warehouse-style stores during the 1980s that gave IKEA a great boost, positioning it well within such an experience in which customers explore fully furnished showrooms of functional home solutions.

Today, over 60 countries are served by over 460 stores run by the organization, raking in an annual business of more than €40 billion. IKEA's positioning strategy has achieved remarkable momentum through the blend of low-cost prices, innovation, and sustainability to become a household name in the world. IKEA stores would be considered "experiential" retail spaces where customers walk through showrooms, test products, and engage in a live and functional shopping environment. Cost-efficient approaches to green manufacturing, innovative materials, and modular solutions are heavily incorporated into the company's ongoing research and development efforts.

IKEA's commitment to sustainable development has remained a core component of its business strategy as potential consumers become more price-hungry and governments more strident on regulating the nonenvironmental impact of products. The company thus created a clear sustainability vision to become fully circular and climate-positive by 2030. This translates into huge investments

channeled towards reducing CO₂ emissions using more sustainable materials and improving the efficiency of energy as used by its manufacturing plants and retail outlets .

IKEA has also defined one of its major sustainability programs to implement renewable and recycled materials in products. At present, about 60 percent of the offerings from IKEA use renewable materials, such as forests from certified sources under the seals of respect by Forest Stewardship Council, and an estimated 20 percent of such materials are recycled. The company has developed strategic partnerships with suppliers aligning with the company's idea for sustainability. Through these partnerships, the company supervises those raw materials are from responsibly managed forests, and their manufacturing process is waste minimizing.

In addition, IKEA is experimenting with new material technologies, such as plant-based bioplastics and compressed wood made from industrial waste, further reduction of virgin resources and the carbon footprint of its products.

Another significant initiative in pursuit of sustainability is the furniture buy-back and recycling program, initiated in several countries to support the circular economy. Under this program, consumers return old IKEA furniture to stores, where the old pieces are then checked and, if still reusable, sold at lower prices in the "Second Life" section. Products that cannot be sold are dismantled, and their materials are recovered and reused in new production cycles. Items included in the scheme occupy space that would otherwise be destined for landfills. Ultimately, the project promotes consumers to a more responsible circular model of consumption.

IKEA has made a promise to set carbon reduction goals, and under this ambition, the company invests so heavily in renewable energy to run its stores and distribution centers. Currently, IKEA has more than 500 wind turbines, in addition to over one million solar panels installed in its facilities, which contribute to a dramatic reduction in carbon footprint. It also encompasses the provision of sustainable transportation solutions, including electric vehicle fleets for home deliveries and optimized logistics systems to reduce transportation-related emissions.

But more importantly, IKEA is now deeply involved in such educational initiatives and collaboration with research institutions and environmental organizations to inspire sustainable consumer behavior. Examples include launching environmentally designed product ranges and measures to save energy and water in homes, as well as creating awareness against single-use plastics, encouraging people to save in the purchase of more durable, modular products.

Thus, IKEA is a model firm in which economic growth, innovation, and sustainability harmoniously merge into one strong business model. It stands for a more sustainable future in a comprehensive yet

far-reaching strategy that moves through the entire value chain from the design of the actual product down to logistics, from sourcing raw materials to the customer experience. Over the next few years, it will be important for IKEA to prove that the ambitious goals for circularity and climate-positive impact are achieved within if it is to retain its leading position in the field of sustainable furniture.

CHAPTER 2 - LEWIN'S MODEL AND IKEA'S STRATEGY

1. LEWIN'S MODEL DESCRIPTION: UNFREEZING, CHANGING, REFREEZING

Organizational change represents one of the most confounding problems that a company can face in its life cycle because it involves not just the adoption of new strategies and processes but also an evolution of corporate cultures and group dynamics. Any transformation mostly represents a balance between the forces that drive change and resistances that inhibit it, and it is precisely in that parameter where the model of Lewin finds itself to be one of the most frequently used methodological approaches in managing organizational transitions, providing a structured framework that considers human behavior and psychological dynamics which contribute to facilitated change. Kurt Lewin, one of the founding fathers of social psychology, built his change management theories on the premise that human behavior is a dynamic equilibrium between opposing forces and that creating change

means altering this balance only gradually and systematically, avoiding any form of haphazardness or drastic approaches that might engender resistance and thwart the change process.

The model developed by Lewin stresses field theory which says that organizational behavior is caused by constant concentration by internal and external factors onto the corporate system; this tension, in turn, determines the reactions of individuals and groups toward changes. This theory further states that changes cannot happen automatically; rather, changes must be driven through a defined process whereby people understand the need for transformation, acquire new skills, and cement new behavioral adjustments that will become an ingrained part of the corporate culture. On that note, Lewin formulated a model comprising three distinct yet interlinked phases of Unfreezing-Changing-Refreezing which represent the key steps needed for the organization to effectively and sustainably change their structures and processes if they wish.

Unfreezing is the first step toward change and is aimed at setting an environment conducive to transformation through creating employee awareness and reducing psychological and organizational resistance. The leadership must communicate a clear and compelling message of the necessity of change; this message must clearly outline perceived risks of retaining the status quo and perceived rewards that implementation of the change will bring to the firm. Kotter points to the creation of a sense of urgency as an important element of the Unfreezing process because without a genuine perception of the need to change, employees are likely to cling to old habits and resist all attempts at innovation. It is important during this initial phase to also identify barriers that might prevent the transition, such as fear of the unknown, lack of requisite skills, or concern over potential adverse impacts on job security. To overcome these obstacles, it is necessary to adopt active engagement strategies such as continuous training, individual support, and the creation of an organizational climate based on transparency and participation.

The Changing phase constitutes the heart of the change management process, coinciding with the actual implementation of new strategy structures or operating methodologies. During this phase there is a high degree of instability, for it requires employees to give up old habits and adopt a new system, generating anxiety and uncertainty. Burnes indicates that the success of change relates directly to the ability of the organization to equip workers with adequate tools to confront the transition, including training programs, practical workshops, and supportive mechanisms that facilitate the learning and experimental application of new procedures. Another key consideration is management's consistency, for leaders need to demonstrate through their behavior that they believe in and actively support change

to become role models for the rest of the organization. Feedback from employees should be continuously collected and any impediments to transformation rewarded as they arise during the Change phase, or other issues may bring the whole change about.

The goal of Refreezing is to cement change and to make it a fixture in the corporate culture so that new practices become ingrained into the daily routine and are not subsequently abandoned. Lewin stressed that, without a solidly built consolidation phase, a risk is posed that employees may slip back into their old habits with the perception that changes are not supported by truly motivating incentives or because of absence of near-term results. The organizations, therefore, should be able to view changes incorporated into the corporate policies, the performance evaluation systems, and recognition mechanisms rewarding the behavior that is consistent with the new strategy, stimulating the collective memory that changes have indeed been positive and beneficial. Cameron and Green suggest that perhaps one of the most effective strategies to cement changes is the introduction of an incentive system that pushes employees to maintain new behaviors and assist them in internalizing new habits the natural way. Added to this, regular monitoring through KPIs serves to assess the new strategy's efficacy as well as its improvement-to ensure genuine sustainability throughout the process.

While such was an extremely important reference in change management, some scholars have alluded to various limitations, citing that the rigidity of Lewin in establishing phases might not be compatible with the complexities of modern organizations, which have continuous and non-linear changes. Weick and Quinn propose an emergent change approach where organizations do not pass-through clear-cut phases of transformation but rather evolve all the time through small progressive adjustments. Still, according to Burnes, Lewin's model is very much praised as working in some organizations, particularly those that need a structured methodology to handle large change, and to do so need to handle internal resistance effectively.

The Lewin model therefore presents itself as a strong pragmatic theoretical platform upon which organizational change can be carried out and provides companies with a cogent guide through transitions with increased security and consciousness. The next chapters will examine each phase of the model in detail with emphasis being placed on the strategies and tools that will help implement change in a structured manner while ensuring the new practices are firmly rooted within the corporate culture.

2. PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF LEWIN'S MODEL IN BUSINESS CONTEXTS: CASES AND EXAMPLES

Lewin's model has proven to be most flexible as a theoretical and practical tool for business applications. The three stages-unfreezing the change, refreezing-are not merely linear steps, but rather describe deeply interlinked phases through which organizations can wind their way forward and create changes in a gradual and structured manner. The peculiarity of this model, though, is that it combines behavioral insight into and strategic vision at the same time, knocking walls built by psychological resistance, cultural inertia, structural challenges, and outside pressure. To truly appreciate the effectiveness of this model, one must disregard theory and instead consider real-life examples in which this model formed the methodological basis for examining change. The most emblematic involve transformations at IBM in the radical culture and digital reinvention of itself during the 1990s and Nike, which was in the process of globally restructuring its supply chain toward more ethical sustainable practices-and Microsoft, which started a profound internal cultural change by innovation, leadership, and strategic renewal.

The early 1990s crisis for IBM was, of course, more than a financial one. It was more intensely and profoundly cultural. The organization, being so rigid, vertically hierarchical, and technically driven, became an apparent dinosaur when everyone turned around and stated that the market required more flexibility, more digital services, and increased customer flexibility. The arrival of new CEO Lou

Gerstner in 1993 began the unfreezing by a very deep culture shock. Gerstner didn't see the paradigm of splitting up IBM into independent units but rather established an idea of customer centricity-emphasizing urgency about redefining identity. Town hall meetings, internal roadshows, informal conversations, and organized communication challenged long-held certainties. Straight-up changes were promised. The symbolic structural change was reinforced through modification of performance metrics, directly acting on both the rational and emotional spheres (Burnes, 2004, pp. 986-990).

During the changing phase, IBM transformed itself from being a purely traditional hardware giant to becoming a global service and consulting giant. A new operating model emerged that was nimbler and more oriented toward outsourcing, customer support, and digital solutions. New training programs, mentoring initiatives, alliances with startups and universities, and innovation hubs came into operation. The internal language of IBM even underwent a shift: it started being on impact and value creation rather than narrowly on technical excellence. A time-commitment realization, as it involved new KPIs, incentives tied to collaborative behaviors, more distributed leadership, and a firm stance at IBM as a global digital transformation partner. Lewin's model became the structural tool with which IBM not only made changes in organization but established a new cultural identity.

other equally complicated events, Nike had to bow down to a reputational crisis in the early 2000s that jeopardized not only the legitimacy of the brand but also the dimensions of global brand equity. Accusations of labor exploitation contrasted inability to supply chain transparency and thrust by NGOs toward the re-evaluation of the industrial strategy of the company. The unfreezing phase of the change process was influenced by the reputational shock from investigative journalism, protests, and stakeholder criticisms. The leadership techniques used in Nike aimed at converting what could have been a crisis into an opportunity for radical redesign rather than taking the defensive route. New internal narratives emerged where the mistakes of the previous years were appreciatively acknowledged, and management initiated an open dialogue with employees, partners, and consumers. The company increased awareness-campaigns, launched audits, and refocused on its founding values. Through this phase, a collective urgency and sharing of responsibility were created (Kotter, 1996, pp. 60-65).

The change phase is where Nike automated a part of its supply chain with sustainable procurement practices, bonding codes of conduct for suppliers, and new evaluation systems that remain on environmental and social compliance. The company initiated eco-innovation projects, promoted the use of recyclable and compostable materials, established low-impact product lines, and created digital tools for tracking the production process. Moreover, local empowerment programs have been

launched, which support education and health in supplier areas. The reframing phase will impose and institutionalize these practices, such as setting up a sustainability department, publishing environmental and social reports, and continued training of stakeholders. Integrated into this would be only one further consideration on which Nike strategically sought positioning and branding. In changing Nike's corporate responsibility from reactive to proactive, systemic approach, Lewin's model proved vital.

An equally significant case is Microsoft. The cultural and strategic transformation of the company under the stewardship of CEO Satya Nadella has become a benchmark in the literature about leadership and organizational change. When Nadella assumed the role in 2014, Microsoft was financially sound, but it was disunited in culture and reputation; rampant with internal rivalries and so lacking in a unified vision.

The unfreezing process began with a powerful symbolic act of great magnitude: the new definition of the company mission and the introduction of “empathy” as a core value. Nadella proceeded to engage in deep listening, conducting town halls around the world, holding sessions with employees, and communicating openly and candidly. He instituted a culture of “growth mindset” modeled after the research of Carol Dweck by selecting employees as change agents in the transformation, diminishing hierarchical boundaries, and promoting cross-functional collaboration (Cameron & Green, 2020, pp. 132–138).

The changing stage saw Azure growing, the shift to SaaS models, AI and cloud services acquisitions, and strategic outreach to earlier competitors such as Linux. Microsoft underwent internal adjustments to enhance collaboration further, establish 360° feedback systems, and change its incentives to reward teamwork and continuous learning. Technology began to be viewed, no longer, as an end but as a means to empowerment. The culture transitioned from a top-down form of leadership to a model of distributed leadership. Refreezing was further embedded through an advanced HR system, a constant learning agenda, and talent management techniques rooted in inclusion, empathy, and purpose. Microsoft's transformation, with evident success, has posited the Lewin model as a powerful and flexible reference outline for deep, integrated, and sustainable change, though it was designed in a bygone era.

These three cases show that Lewin's approach works in less-structured environments as well; the cultural dynamics at Microsoft and the other organizations are extremely dynamic, with the interplay

of multicultural and complex settings. Its power is derived from knitting together strategic vision and behavioral transformation, leading people through change with clarity, coherence, and psychological safety while providing a reproducible yet customizable method of building the meaningful and long-lasting transformation of organizations.

3. IKEA'S SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Today, where sustainability has become an imperative and not an option, companies are being forced to turn the spotlight on rethinking their production, distribution, and consumption models. Amongst these players, IKEA stands tall, probably as the most active and most cohesive company in currently remaking its operation to fit the sustainable, circular logic. Founded in 1943, Swedish company IKEA saw itself as a world leader in inexpensive home furnishings quite early on and was convinced from that time on that sustainability could not be left as an afterthought, nor could it be treated as a side initiative, but must rather be regarded as a central pillar within the overall business strategy; one which informs investment decision-making, innovation pathways, brand positioning choices, and customer relations. A line of IKEA sustainability strategy evolved on a clear continuum for the past three-and-a-half decades: it is an evolution based on Nordic values, a culture of efficiency, logistics strength, and environmental and social consciousness about the implications of corporate activity, according to Boons and Lüdeke -Freund (2013), the adoption of sustainable strategies requires a radical rethinking of traditional business models, with a strong focus on the interaction between economic and environmental value.. Since the early 2000s, this commitment to regenerative business modeling has been accompanied by increasingly bold and measurable targets. The strategic framework for this transformation is labeled "People & Planet Positive," which is a long-term program to achieve the goals of a climate-positive, fully circular IKEA by 2030, while making sure the products remain affordable (IKEA People & Planet Positive Strategy, 2021, pp. 10-17).

This ambition rests on an integrated approach to sustainability that includes, among others, the environmental, social, ethical, and generational aspects. In this regard, IKEA looks beyond environmental impact reduction by actively promoting employee welfare, supporting local communities, increasing transparency in the supply chain, and nurturing responsible consumer behavior. This type of view is closely tied to the idea of Creating Shared Value, as theorized by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Here, sustainability is not seen as some separate area of activity but rather a guiding principle thread across all business decisions. Sustainability at IKEA entails everything from sourcing raw materials, product development, logistics, and retail management to customer and supplier relations. What is unique about this approach is the company's commitment to making sustainability affordable-not some luxury or niche feature, but rather a standard offering for the many. The idea is to show that low prices, good design, and planet-friendly production can coexist, thus closing the gap between affordability and sustainability.

Component of this coherent strategy is organization-wide participation at all leadership levels and appropriate alignment across departments. IKEA has created complete environmental governance frameworks where environmental issues are represented in its global annual reports alongside other business indicators. There is also an extensive internal training operation, cross-functional, or eco-innovation teams, and numerous tools of control for the assessment and tracking of impact across the entire organization. Apart from these, strategic alliances have also been created with some key players in sustainability such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, WWF, the Forest Stewardship Council, and several research institutes in order to authenticate their options and ensure more transparency with stakeholders (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2022, pp. 45-52). These partnerships not only legitimize the sustainability initiatives in the company, but also promote continuous learning within and sharing best practices across the industry and the regions where IKEA operates.

Also, IKEA's commitment is evident in its industrial and operational models. It has begun some serious investments in clean production technologies as well as increased energy efficiencies in its factories and stores. It has cut back on the use of non-renewable resources and vastly reduced the role played by sustainable and renewable certified materials. Such notions as traceability, ethical supply chain management, local economic development, and public welfare workers have become core to the identity of IKEA as a brand that does not just sell furniture but in fact promotes a new way of living in the world. Not simply like comparing the market demand, but also actively searching to suggest and educate it. The company supports this effort through consistent communication,

comprehensive marketing, and educational content, available in stores and online, which makes every purchase a moment for learning and empowerment.

Another characteristic of this strategy is the ability to balance global consistency with local adaptation. While it runs over sixty countries with centralized logistics and unified brand images, IKEA makes a concerted effort to respect and respond to local environmental, economic, and social realities, striking a harmonious balance in between. It proves that the company understands the difference between standardization and localization as it offers better solutions in addressing the sustainability issues that require context-sensitive and differentiated responses. The local engagement deepens the roots of community ties and the capacity to mobilize public and private stakeholders into joint actions that drive initiatives built on mutual trust. Most importantly, this factor of the relational dimension of sustainability is a valuable attribute for generating legitimacy, social license to operate, and long-term consensus around strategic choices.

Since then, IKEA has received international recognition from ranking organizations and industry awards, confirming that deeply embedded strategies of sustainability create competitive advantages for them; yet, the challenges ahead are manifold. Managing a worldwide supply chain with respect for sustainability standards within regions; reducing carbon emissions, both in terms of transportation and industrial processes; and accurately measuring the long-term impacts of sustainability initiatives remain vexing tasks and ongoing works in progress. IKEA is aware of these challenges and has been engaged in pilot projects, high-level reporting, independent auditing, and continuous feedback mechanisms (IKEA Sustainability Report, 2023, pp. 14-19). By view of an approach like this, IKEA reflects an understanding of sustainability not as an objective reached but as a process continuously improved through innovation, learning, adaptability, and long-range foresight.

In effect, IKEA's sustainability strategy is a paradigmatic example of what it means for a business to integrate economic growth with environmental and social responsibility. Sustainability shows that profitable endeavors and ethical and environmental capabilities can coexist together, thereby turning sustainability into a fundamental source of innovation and competitive differentiation. The clear objectives, cross-functional implementation, coherence between values and practices, interaction and engagement with stakeholders, and continuous organizational learning capacity of a company define this model. IKEA does not simply react to global unwinding but also equally builds those changes to show that there exists another way of conducting business, and that such a way is desirable, viable, and scalable.

3.1 CIRCULAR DESIGN

IKEA's sustainability strategy hinges on the notion of circular design. It is not merely a technical aspect for IKEA; it is the essence of transformation towards regenerative and resilient production models. Transitioning from a linear paradigm - the "take-make-dispose" - to a circular paradigm will mean fundamentally rethinking the logic of design, production, and consumption. In this light, design no longer simply resolves functional or aesthetic requirements but becomes a tool, among other things, in the conscious management of resources, in reducing environmental impacts, and in creating new relationships between the company, its products, and users. IKEA identified that circular design was the key levers for driving such a change knowing very well that every decision made during product conception is crucial in determining its future environmental and social impacts. Thus, designing becomes intergenerational responsibility by being able to define longer life cycles, reuse pathways, disassembly, and recycling processes and answering to the challenges of an economy increasingly determined by ecological limits.

IKEA's principles of circular design have evolved over time. Whereas its early efforts mainly revolved around simplicity and easier access- but especially to cost and logistical efficiency- the company eventually came to realize that the biggest challenge would be a complete overhaul of existing models rather than improvement of existing models. This gave birth to the long-term strategy that every new product should be fully circular by 2030. The shift really changes the paradigm because the end goal is now designing for more than one use, whereas previously, a product was designed for just one use per lifetime. In practice, design teams must ensure that all materials they put into products are durable, disassemble-able, modular, repairable, and ultimately recyclable. (IKEA People & Planet Positive Strategy, 2021, pp. 18-22). The design phase is then going to include a systemic perspective in which every element is judged not just in terms of user experience but in terms of consequences in the long run.

A central tenet of circular design consists of appropriate material selection. Consequently, IKEA is working to phase out virgin material usage in favor of renewable, recycled, and recyclable materials, for instance post-consumer recycled plastic, sustainably harvested timber, recyclable paper and textiles, and novel materials such as bio composite, hemp, and plant-based polymers. Such materials lessen the environmental burden during their extraction while presenting new ways to create and function in a design perspective. However, the implementation of alternatives is not without challenges; it requires an extremely high standard of strength, usability, and safety-performance versus sustainability. To meet these challenges, IKEA set up internal innovation labs, collaborated with universities and start-ups, and put a robust testing regime in place to review the reliability of these new materials over time (Stahel , 2016, pp. 435-438).

Together with this is modularity, which stands as another pillar of circularity. By virtue of designing components that can be easily assembled, disassembled, have parts updated or replaced, such products would, in turn, enjoy an extended life cycle and accommodate the ever-changing needs of users. Modular products further promote reuse, repair, and recycling, thus improving transportation efficiency and simplifying logistics resolutions. The standardization of certain components also lends itself to the potential of developing customizable and interchangeable product families, which clearly assists in better sustainability and user experience. IKEA now has examples of this modular shelving systems, upgradable kitchen units, and chairs with replaceable components-form factors, which are designed to be adaptable or repairable over time, instead of replacing an entire item.

The term circularity encompasses a spectrum of post-sale services as well. Under the framework of circular design, IKEA has developed a set of initiatives to encourage repair, reuse, and recycling: selling spare parts; providing do-it-yourself guides; and giving technical support to assist in modifying or updating existing products, as well as store space for giving products a "second life." In certain markets, rent and leasing schemes have been initiated that allow for the return of furniture after a limited period, ensuring the continued cycle of use and regeneration. This pattern significantly reduces the content of waste, strains less resource extraction, and introduces a circular consumption approach.

IKEA has truly embraced the notion of circular design beyond material and operational strategies in a cultural transformation that has been clear and accessible through educational communication. This narrative has been spread by the company in its stores, catalogs, and digital channels on themes of durability and reuse, maintenance, and the value of everyday sustainability for consumers. Consumers

should be encouraged to look after and repair products as well as give them a second life-thus actively participating in reducing environmental impact. IKEA, therefore, sees itself not as prescribing virtuous behaviors, but as being an enabler of change, making sustainable actions simple, fun, and compatible with people's lifestyles. Thus, the strategic aspect of design becomes very educational and tool-like in building a more conscious and participative culture of consumption.

Last but perhaps not least, the symbolic message of circular design is a thing to consider. Through coherent design choices, it becomes apparent what the company's values are in a tangible and credible way. Design is then a language that the brand uses to communicate its characteristics regarding sustainability, building consumer trust, distinguishing itself from competitors, and solidifying its status in an increasingly environmentally responsible market. Circularity is no longer a bundle of technical practices; it is an underlying principle that guides how the company imagines its role within society.

Thus, circular design is one of the essential strategic levers IKEA employs-so the joining of forces in environmental, technological, logistical, and cultural terms. A circular economy is what the design will communicate in a spatial form in people's lives making the abstract reality perceptible, tangible, and meaningful. Scaling this logic across all products, measuring the impact accurately, and engaging designers, suppliers, and consumers in this systemic transformation process are challenges for the years to come. Sustainable design is not only possible; it has also been demonstrated at IKEA to be attractive and replicable by competition. The future of furniture, and thus of industrial design in general, must move in that direction.

3.2 SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND LOGISTICS

One of the most complex and strategic challenges facing a global company like IKEA in its sustainability approach is the transformation of the production and logistics processes. As the environmental impact of industrial activities and transportation of goods becomes ever more evident, it is vital to rethink production and distribution models with sustainability in mind. IKEA plans to pursue this transition in a more systemic manner addressing environmental sustainability along the entire value chain, from raw material sourcing through to final product delivery. The company defined clear and measurable goals in enhancing its practices around CO₂ emission reduction, energy efficiency, circular material usage, and logistical optimization. The challenge of reducing the environmental impact must be balanced by maintaining cheapness, speed, and service in a constantly changing global economy.

Key to this strategy is the use of renewable and other sustainable materials in manufacturing. The IKEA Sustainability Report 2023 states that over 60% of the materials used in IKEA's production come from renewable sources, and around 20% from recycled materials—with a target of 100% by 2030 (IKEA Sustainability Report, 2023, pp. 42–50). This constitutes a good demonstration of IKEA's strong commitment to responsible management of resources, especially with regard to wood, one of its most frequently used materials. The company works with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and has committed that all its wood will originate from responsibly managed forests. The trend is also to increase the usage of recycled plastics, certified paper, and low-impact fabrics. This change calls for a remodeling of relationships with suppliers, as these are selected and monitored based on ever more stringent environmental and social criteria through long-term partnerships and audit programs. IKEA introduced the IWAY code of conduct, stipulating mandatory standards for suppliers in areas such as workers' rights, waste management, energy use, and commercial transparency (IKEA People & Planet Positive Strategy, 2021, pp. 20–26).

Concurrently, IKEA also improves its production efficiency with new low-energy technologies, systems of waste management, and circular economy solutions in its factories. In many instances, production processes have been redesigned to reduce water usage and reuse waste materials as inputs in new cycles, while powering facilities with renewable energy. In many cases, it is possible to have whole production sites powered by solar or wind energy, allowing a considerable reduction in direct emissions. Very heavy investments were made on research, equipment, and employee training, but over time, these investments of IKEA have surely benefited the organization from the point of view of operational efficiency, costs saved, and improved corporate reputation (IKEA Climate Action Report, 2023, pp. 30-36).

Sustainability has been used in a refreshing approach to reimagining logistics. Freight transport is one of the major contributors of emissions for global companies; thus, IKEA started new initiatives to shorten distance travelled, optimize load capacity, digitize operations, and promote low-impact transportation methods. One example of this is the flat-pack philosophy of IKEA, which reduces the volume occupied by products when moving from one place to another and thus decreases the number of trips. In addition, flat-pack products not only cut costs for logistics but also significantly reduce CO2 emissions. For example, the company increased its regional warehouses to near distribution centers to stores, using electric vehicles for the last mile of delivery in many cities. Pilot programs are also helping to introduce alternative fuels into maritime and rail transport. Such closely knitted supply chains will provide more resilience and lessen their impacts. A prime example is IKEA's electric boat delivery initiative in the Netherlands, where goods are moved through city canals, thus drastically reducing road congestion and pollution in the cities.

Similarly, another major aspect of IKEA's sustainable logistics is the integration of advanced digital tools that will monitor supply chains and score optimal routes. Intelligent order management algorithms, demand forecasting, and dynamic stock control are being utilized to reduce inefficiencies, prevent waste, and enhance service levels. Another angle pursued by IKEA is to build complete product traceability systems through its supply chain to ensure full transparency and control across the production and distribution cycle. This view is supposed to support a more sustainable approach against environmental footprint and enable a prompt reaction from IKEA in adapting to market changes and evolving consumer expectations. Several locations successfully brought in real-time data collection and analyzing technologies to improve agility in inventory management and reduce overstocking and increase the responsiveness to local demand.

Thus, sustained production and logistics are not solely technical issues; they also demand a huge cultural shift, which is something IKEA has worked on, internally and throughout its supply chain. Training employees, adopting international standards, keeping up dialogue with suppliers, and introducing ethical principles into agreements are essential for attaining that alignment between strategic vision and operational practices.

These include specific reporting tools that allow the assessment of the environmental impacts of both production processes and their logistics, results of which are published annually and verified by external organizations, signifying the credibility of the company's commitment to the value of

transparency and accountability. Such systems also give evidence of positive social effects on local supply chains through the changes of uplifted labor standards, empowerment of empowered communities, and increased job creation directly associated with the economy of the green.

IKEA's commitment to sustainable production and logistics can be seen in a three-dimensional model, where technological innovation, operational efficiency, and environmental responsibility converge in a fully fused business model. Changes in energy sourcing, material selection, redesigning logistics, and digitalizing processes prove that sustainability is not an impediment to growth, but a strategic driver for creating long-term environmental, social, and economic value. IKEA, as an example, verified that with a sufficient budget, organizational culture, and good governance, systemic approaches can radically alter how we produce, distribute, and consume-leading to a very significant contribution to a global transition toward a low-carbon, circular and inclusive economy.

3.3 CIRCULARITY SERVICES

Services play a crucial role in facilitating the transition to circularity in the economy, contending with sustainability in the design of products as well as in their functionalizing, maintaining, transforming, and recycling stages within their lifecycle. Circularity, for IKEA, does not rest at product design or material specification but transcends into the creation of an entire ecosystem of services, which, in turn, consists of logistics, operations, and the relational aspects of consumption. Under this framework, the company is rapidly diversifying into a range of circular services, which provide avenues for responsible post-sale product management, waste reduction, life extension, and promoting sustainable consumer behavior, IKEA is often cited in the literature as one of the pioneers of circular retail due to its buy-back, recycling and modular design initiatives (Planing , 2015).

Probably the most renowned and illustrative service is the Buy Back & Resell program; active in dozens of countries and expanding. Customers can return furniture that was in good condition for store credit. The returned furniture is refurbished, assessed, and resold in the 'Second Life' areas of IKEA stores. It contributes to the reduction of waste, encourages reuse, and cuts raw material consumption, energy usage, and CO₂ emissions. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, this

is a telling example of how a retailer can both produce environmental and economic value by managing the second life of products.

Likewise, IKEA has opened its spare parts system such that customers can order replacements either online or through the traditional service channels. This means that people can repair rather than replace an item, further extending product life. From this, IKEA backs the initiative to provide clear instructions and tutorials to improve the skills of members of the public in repairing furniture to promote sustainable, practical activities by individuals. Availability of spare parts also acts as equalizer using sustainable practices accessible to those with limited budgets.

Yet another emerging service is the model of renting or leasing, which is still in pilot project stage in some countries. This allows customers to make use of furniture and temporarily return it afterwards. IKEA retains ownership to monitor the quality and to prolong the useful life of the product. Leasing caters to such segments as students or mobile workers; it is also waste reducing while creating new customer relationships through maintenance and modular upgrading of products. According to Stahel , this model reflects a 'performance economy', where value is drawn from utilization rather than ownership.

Further development can also be seen in digital circular services. For example, IKEA offers apps that test renewability and simulate redesign, in addition to having platforms for sharing reuse ideas. These enhance customer interaction and encourage responsible, creative consumption. They give the opportunity to utilize data to improve product design and create individualized services according to needs of consumers.

IKEA is investing in physical infrastructures aimed at ensuring circularity, including repair stations, second-hand sales areas, and creative reuse labs in its stores. In several cases, IKEA works together with local cooperative organizations and social enterprises in managing these services to further build jobs and stimulate development within communities. Thus, circular services can generate environmental, economic as well as social value.

These advancements also facilitate the customer experience and improve brand loyalty. An increase in customer satisfaction is developed through their ability to stretch, change, or return products, which reinforces IKEA's commitment to sustainability. Put another way, as circular offerings are integrated into the business model, customer trust is enhanced, and consumption is converted into a relationship-based experience.

In short, the services supporting circularity form the basis of IKEA's sustainability strategy. They redefine the customer relationship, increase resource efficiency, and deliver shared value along the product lifecycle. The synergies created using digital instruments combined with local networks, such as those by IKEA, exemplify how the principles of a circular economy can be scaled so that every benefit of a product is realized long after its initial use in a larger ecosystem.

3.4 CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT

The circular economy relies on active consumer engagement as one of the fundamental tenets to succeed in and ensure the longevity of sustainability strategies adopted by different companies. Since its birth, IKEA has firmly believed that sustainability cannot be pushed down from the top, but a collaborative effort with customers is required, recognizing their participation, awareness, and ability to make informed choices. Here, the consumer is no longer just treated as a passive recipient of sustainable offerings but instead acts as a co-creator of environmental and social value with the power to substantially change the dynamics of production and commercial systems. Consumer engagement implies cultural shifts that create enablement for new behaviors and joint action, thereby facilitating business and society's shared journey to tackle global environmental challenges.

The most powerful one in IKEA's case is transparent, educational, participative communications across many channels. The stores, catalogues, and digital platforms impart information about the materials used for products, production methods, environmental footprint, and potential for product life extension. In this way, customers are put in the position to make informed decisions based not only on price or design but on the sustainable attributes of each product as Ottman et al. (2006) point out, green marketing strategies must avoid the risk of ecological myopia by focusing on authentic and understandable messages. The IKEA simplification of environmental symbols is but one of the many examples illustrating how sustainability can be made readable and visible, even to those less experienced (IKEA People & Planet Positive Strategy 2021; 18-22). In conjunction with this,

awareness campaigns are run to explain, inspire, and motivate in a positive, creative, and engaging manner, avoiding echoes of guilt-related messages.

A commendable feature of IKEA's plan is what is known as nudge, utilizing what is often referred to as behavioral design to get people to act in a more sustainable manner. Concrete examples include exhibiting products made of recycled/renewable materials in a central location, suggesting a starting point for modular and repairable solutions, and providing "Second Life" locations within store routings to make reuse familiar and acceptable to customers. These measures may not only help in reinforcing certain behaviors within the consumption context but also sway consumer preferences more excessively towards virtuous options without defying individual choice (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, pp. 6–12). The same principles applied to IKEA highlight long-life products, offering information on taking collections away as well as fixing options while at the same time rewarding the interest of customers in sustainability through programs.

Another strategic pillar is sustainability education that is driven through digital tooling and on-the-ground senses by IKEA. Digital applications, video classes, upcycling guides, social media campaigns, and collaborations with environmental influencers are so designed to offer educational content and share new skills while stirring reflection. Just as these values are imparted in-store through events, family workshops, student sessions, and interactions with local artisans and designers, real sustainability is taught through common experience. Here, IKEA acknowledges that sustainability is not only about the environment; it is also a cultural thing or, put another way, that habituation is a symbolic and cultural practice on the emotional and identity dimensions of all acts of consumption. Sustainable choices are rarely perpetuated without broad social approvals; they must be aesthetically pleasing, culturally embedded in everyday living (Jackson, 2005, pp. 91-105).

Similarly, customer engagement is spurred by the in-store experience, where IKEA has instilled a view of retail spaces that educate consumers beyond being purely commercial destinations. IKEA stores encourage visitors no longer to leave with just furniture solutions but with shared admiration for sustainable living, feelings of empowerment by having tested green furniture, knowledge of responsible material sourcing for repairing and future software linking the Western world into the East. Consumers who experience sustainability directly build trust, workspace, and self-esteem the involvement of the consumer in corporate sustainability processes can foster the co-creation of value, turning the customer into an active partner in change (Lüdeke -Freund et al., 2019). Doing so, in turn, reinforces behavioral norms and values that are recyclable elsewhere. IKEA oozes attractiveness

with sustainable choices, thus offsetting pure needs, for the consumer, into a cocreation of satisfying environments, providing for aesthetic pleasure without compromising the environment (McDonough & Braungart, 2002, pp. 102–110).

All the more, in articulating an ongoing relationship between customer, products, and the company, after-sales services play a crucial role. Customers return used furniture, purchase second-hand items, order spare parts, enjoy rental services, seek repair assistance, and join online communities sharing ideas for reuse. All this is consistent with IKEA's philosophy of promoting a long-term model of circular consumption with no emphasis on continuous replacement but rather maximizing product value and use over time. IKEA's internal data confirms consumers' increasing interest in solutions offering long-term value rather than impulse buys, while the presence of after-sales services stands out as a key criterion during brand selection (IKEA Life at Home Report, 2023, pp. 14–21).

At last, it is about catapulting engagement through active consumer participation such as service co-creation, product testing, feedback gathering, and local initiatives with local associations and cooperatives. In several cities, IKEA has set up projects based on neighborhoods for urban regeneration, furniture collection, and the establishment of circular hubs open to communities. These initiatives engender inclusion, inspire a sense of belonging, and solidify brand trust, turning IKEA into both a social and economic actor. Thus, engagement becomes a lever for social innovation, translating environmental challenges into chances for civic and community empowerment.

In summary, consumer engagement is a long-term strategic investment for IKEA, one that strongly supports the actual and scalable transition to a circular economy. In weaving together transparent communications tools, education tools, immersive experiences, digital services, and participatory practices, the company hereby sets a new paradigm for consumer relations characterized by trust, co-responsibility, and shared action. IKEA demonstrates that just providing sustainable products is insufficient. An environment needs to be created in which people understand their products, want them, and use them in an informed manner. In this respect, the consumer is no longer "the problem we need to fix," but rather is part of the solution.

4 THE APPLICATION OF LEWIN'S MODEL IN THE IKEA CASE

Because organizations must transform deeply in order to cope with the new challenges of sustainability in a world beset by growing environmental pressures, social expectations, and economic change, one of the most powerful companies in the global furniture market - IKEA - has chosen to adopt the circular economy as a strategic axis of innovation and responsibility. This was not only introducing new processes and business models, but represented structural and cultural changes to the organization, which can be effectively analyzed through Kurt Lewin's three-phase change model. This model - Unfreezing, Changing and Refreezing - is thus a useful theoretical tool for understanding how organizations can address, structure and consolidate complex transformation processes. When this model can be applied to the IKEA case, the mechanisms through which a global company can embed sustainability within its corporate DNA, diffuse resistance, leverage human capital, and turn its vision into daily practice will be highlighted. This phase is the Unfreezing phase, which begins the change process and is that moment where the organization recognizes that it must abandon the old status quo.

For IKEA, this realization evolved over time as a result of a worldwide context increasingly critical of models of linear production and consumption. The company was able to read and interpret all these emerging signals—from the climate crisis and resource scarcity to regulatory pressure and shifting consumer moods as strategic levers to prompt reflection. Through environmental reports, reinforcement of corporate values, and the establishment of very clear goals, IKEA started an internal and external process of awareness challenge of the status quo and opening space for new possibilities. It included transparent communication, training sessions with the employees, as well as partnerships with the environmental organizations, and communication with the suppliers. Of course, the common cause was created with tension for the purpose of change because it is very important and inevitable to bring about a certain degree of cultural and organizational resistance that would confront the change transformation.

The Changing phase meant the actualization of changes and the materialization of intentions into actions. IU informed about new practice at prime time in the entire chain: from modular, durable, and repairable products to increased supply of recycled and renewable materials; from experimenting with circular business models such as furniture rental and buy-back programs to redefining logistics processes to reduce emissions and waste. Accordingly, the work organization would be adapted to encourage cross-functional collaboration, while new roles associated with sustainable innovations would be created. This required intensive coordination efforts, transformational leadership, and a continuous culture of feedback. IKEA trained teams while also based listening at local experiences

and testing adapted solutions for different contexts but within the same general remains aligned to the brand's world vision. Reward and recognition systems were also part of managing resistance during this phase because they could motivate participatory change and behavior in line with the sustainability strategy.

Finally, the Refreezing phase was intended to make new practices-formally integrated into the organization and meaningfully into the informal structure of the organization. IKEA continued to work on turning sustainability into a system instead of just a project: In this case, it would be penetrable into designs around decision-making processes, performance evaluation criterion, and control mechanisms. In turn, corporate culture-those strengthening symbols, rituals, and stories that make change visible and internalize it. The introduction of environmental metrics, material standards, standardized circular services, and periodic reporting would contribute toward tangible progress and consolidate IKEA's identity as a company committed to ecological transition.

Simultaneously, the implementation of the systems of continuous learning got introduced to have innovations live and evolving to external developments and newly emerging challenges. The combination of strategic coherence and operational flexibility is crucial for the success of the entire change process at IKEA. Overall, Lewin's model with respect to IKEA shows how a sound and structured theoretical approach can well navigate a complex transformation process. The model's strength is in its simplicity and how it can highlight critical phases of change for mindful management of the organizational, emotional, and strategic dynamics. From the IKEA case, change is not a technical or operational problem, but rather a systemic vision embraced by inclusive governance and strong investment in corporate culture. The relationship between circular economy principles and change management is perhaps one of the most promising frontiers through which organizations desire and seek to realize long-term value and contribute effectively to a sustainable future. In this regard, the model continues to be a good interpretative guide for directing organizations toward new paradigms based on resilience, responsibility, and innovation.

4.1 UNFREEZING: AWARENESS CREATION

In Kurt Lewin's change model for organizations, the unfreezing stage marks the beginning and, arguably, the most significant moment in all processes of transformation. It is during this stage when the organization becomes cognizant of the tendency to change; the organization perceives that the current status quo is not sustainable, either operationally or strategically. Of course, this recognition does not arise spontaneously; it takes time, information, leadership, and above all, courage to challenge long-held habits, entrenched practices, and deep-rooted beliefs. For IKEA, the unfreezing process was intentionally structured starting from 2012, when the company published its first integrated sustainability strategy, namely People & Planet Positive. The document was more than rhetoric; it was the product of an in-depth diagnosis of the limitations in its business model given the heightened unsustainability of linear production processes.

Environmental remediation actions were already underway by the early 2000s, aimed at raw materials sourcing, including wood responsibility and LED technology in stores; However, marks of culture coming in were noted with the 2012 strategy. This was the moment where environmental actions were interpreted in its narrowest sector-specific sense and expanded to the entire organization in a systemic view. IKEA admitted, loudly and unequivocally, that the logic of “take-make-dispose” could no longer be relied upon for its market leadership and that it was high time to actually rethink the relationship between production, consumption, and environmental responsibility. In this sense, unfreezing was a deep paradigm shift where sustainability not only became a moral obligation but a central strategic pillar for long-term competitiveness.

According to Kotter (1996, pp. 12–18), the generation of a shared feeling of urgency is necessary for giving birth to change; without it, organizations tend to remain in comfort zones, clinging to inner realities that are not servicing them well. IKEA was able to communicate this feeling of urgency from the top management to deal with all its internal and external community. Since 2013, the company has published a series of annual Sustainability Reports providing concrete data, measurable indicators, and scenario building towards the future to show the risks of remaining constant. Climate crises, resource scarcity, waste generation, and global inequality were all incorporated into the company's strategic narrative to show that change is not only ethically right, but economically necessary.

Communication formed the very heart of the extensive campaign this phase entailed. IKEA ran several internal and external campaigns to promote the new vision, share its journey, and engage stakeholders in the transformation. In-store materials underwent redesigning to educate customers on the product life cycle, raw material sourcing, and the environmental impact of purchasing decisions.

Catalogs and online platforms slowly became adorned with sustainability sections that social media would leverage to talk to a new generation of conscious consumers. Furthermore, initiatives like Live Lagom and Better Living were launched to catalyze more sustainable, circular, and conscious living.

Internally, the building of awareness was supported with heavy investments in training and ecological literacy. Employees took part in workshops, courses, and collective reflection moments to understand the importance of the changes and how it might affect their work. Therefore, Schein (1995, pp. 22–26) tells us unfreezing works only when it operates at cultural levels, dismantling the assumptions beneath organizational behavior, according to Schein (2010), any effective change requires an understanding and restructuring of cultural values deeply embedded in the organization. IKEA understood that this transformation could not be limited to operational or procedural dimensions but had to go to the very heart of its identity: the relationship between design and durability, consumption and value, growth and responsibility. This new approach was reflected in an altogether new rendering of the company's original mission — "to create a better everyday life for the many people" — with an ecological and social content.

Another key factor in this stage of unfreezing was the analysis by IKEA of competitive dynamics and market trends. Indeed, while observing that other heavyweights in retail and design, ie, H&M, Patagonia, Leroy Merlin, had already dug in to secure sustainability strategies, IKEA understood that soon the environmental positioning would emerge as a central competitive advantage. This reflection then translated into the sense of urgency and motivation inwardly generated by the organization. At the same time, it followed the hype about durable, repairable, uncomplicated products. In other words, the trend toward responsible consumption was no longer a niche strand; it had become a generally accepted market trend, especially among young people.

The entire unfreezing process was also intended to be interactive: it enhanced cultural and educational initiatives, encouraged communication, stimulated competitive benchmarking, and also included symbolic means of warfare within the organization. IKEA further articulated its self-image, placing, therefore, not just affordability and functionality but also responsibility and positive impact at the heart of the brand identity. A new set of symbols-especially sustainability labeling-set new rituals-Planet Days-and processes-internal green audits-to establish a harmonious ecosystem around the new vision. For Burnes (2017, pp. 45-50), change can only be engaged when it is made tangible and is lived by the people in the organization on an everyday basis.

Ever since, upon the announcement in public of its intention to become fully circular by 2030 in 2018, the unfreezing has received a further strong embedding and thus permanent cultural embedding. Unfreezing itself came to be considered in this ever-dynamic state of heightened awareness, where it is no longer just a one-off but an active realization of reflection, listening, and openness. In this sense, IKEA not only internally "unfroze" itself but also "unfroze" its external ecosystem-customers, suppliers, institutions-and spread a culture of sustainability. Its pioneering efforts are now globally recognized, how carefully sculptured awareness generation acts as a catalyst for systemic change.

4.2 CHANGING: IMPLEMENTATION OF CONCRETE CHANGES

Kurt Lewin's Change phase model is the essence and crux of the organizational change processes. The phase from awareness to action is when the organization converts the strategic intentions into operational practices and finds new ways of functioning in real-time. With the inertia in step one (Unfreezing) overcome, the organization enters an even more uncertain and unstable territory, where the disruption to the old equilibrium has set in, yet the new configurations have not yet been consolidated. This segment is very complex and is characterized by resistance, mistakes, adaptations, etc., and therefore gives a lot of room for learning and innovation companies often encounter structural obstacles in adopting sustainable practices, linked to high initial costs, operational rigidities and lack of clear incentives (Ritzén & Sandström , 2017). For IKEA, with the start of 2013, this important phase was gradually being put in place with the actions of the People & Planet Positive strategy, to a dramatic formulation from 2018 when the company announced to an extremely public perception its goal to be fully circular by the year 2030.

The change encompassed the entire value chain for IKEA: from product design to the management of suppliers; for logistics to retail; from supplier relations to consumer communications. One of the major areas along which transformation took place was design. This was understood not only as an artistic endeavor but more so as a technical and strategic lever enabling circularity. New products were to be developed that were modular, durable, disassemble, repairable, and easily recyclable-all

principles respected by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013, pp. 5-10). This would require a reinvention of the design brief itself, picking sustainable materials, and promoting cross-functional collaboration among designers, engineers, suppliers, and environmental specialists.

Then, IKEA gradually began replacing virgin raw materials with recycled and renewable alternatives. For example, in 2020, the company vowed to eliminate all virgin plastic in its own-brand products by 2030. By 2021, renewable materials accounted for 60% of input materials, while recycled materials amounted to about 17% (IKEA Sustainability Report 2023, pp. 28-36). The adjustments also involved scrutinizing and redesigning production chains and working on sourcing new suppliers, negotiating alternative quality standards, and infusing heavy investments into technological innovations. IKEA has also been able to make concrete applications of low-impact materials, such as using plant-based biopolymers and compressed wood made from industrial waste, proving that sustainability and scalability are mutually inclusive.

The intra-logistics field has reshaped the entire distribution network to reduce emissions and the general environmental footprint. The transport systems are optimized; electric vehicle fleets are used for urban delivery; and the introduction of local hubs has shortened shipments from warehouses to the end customers. The use of the flat-pack model increased load efficiency while reducing the volume shipped. Digital tools for route planning and demand forecasting were also developed, minimizing waste and inefficiency.

Investment into circular services was another key area of focus in the Changing phase. Buy-back and resale programs were introduced in several countries alongside collection of used furniture and repair service systems. The vision is to transition from a model predicated on ownership to one predicated on use, re-use, and sharing, thereby increasing the lifespan of products. Initiatives were matched with end-user education, post-purchase communication, and experimentation with different retail formats, such as Circular Hubs in several European stores. By nurturing these projects, one reduces the environmental burden and also fosters customer-brand ties by establishing a culture of shared responsibility.

Another key aspect of this phase was an impelling internal cultural and organizational transformation. IKEA instituted ongoing training, peer workshops, and co-design tools with which to invite employees into the innovation stream. New jobs became instituted: Circular Design Developers and Sustainability Business Partners - responsible for the objectives of embedding sustainability into

everyday decision-making. Top officials asked employees to get involved; incentives were created, deserving staff received public recognition, and best practices were exchanged across numerous units and regions to address resistance to change. According to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008, pp. 130-135), involving people in decisions is one of the most effective strategies to ensure success during implementation of change.

Leadership was critical in aligning words with action. Executives of IKEA have reinstated their commitment to circularity, even during the toughest situations, making it a criterion for all strategic choices. There was utmost transparency in decision-making with recognition of progress and discussion of areas needing improvement; this greatly contributed to the building of internal trust and external credibility, thus reducing the operational friction that transformation usually engenders. As Burnes (2004, pp. 986-990) argues, the Changing phase demands governance that is solid yet flexible and able to balance direction with autonomy, and control with experimentation.

Finally, in the case of IKEA, the Changing phase would show how a multinational company teaches its course in the transition to sustainability: with grit, design, and flexibility. The change project includes not only how the company produces its goods but also how it thinks, organizes itself, makes decisions, and communicates. Recent studies have re-evaluated the use of Lewin's model in transition processes towards sustainability, highlighting its flexibility and adaptability to contemporary contexts (Cameron & Green, 2015).

. It is a transformation affecting culture, process, technology, relationships, markets, and, above all, the corporate self. IKEA proves that sustainability is not an impediment to growth but a new driver for such growth. And, with vision, participation, and consistency behind it, such change can become a leverage for transformation that regenerates both the business and society.

4.3. REFREEZING: CONSOLIDATION OF NEW PRACTICES

Refreezing in Lewin's three-stage change model is the third phase of any organizational change which began with 'unfreezing' and changed to 'change'. The change becomes stabilized, normalized, and integrated into the structure and culture of the organization. It is the stage whereby the change

becomes permanent; from a temporary, transient process to a standard, embedded routine. Without deliberate consolidation, there is a risk that the organization will regress to old behaviors again, further undermining the progress achieved. Hence, Refreezing requires deliberate action toward strengthening the new structures and institutionalizing transformed practices, embedding them into the symbolic, normative, and operational dimensions of the company. For example, in the case of IKEA, consolidation of sustainable practices was very multifaceted and complicated, initiated right with the first People & Planet Positive strategy and dramatically amplified since 2018 when the company formally committed itself to making a full circularity by 2030.

Consolidation of change was mainly driven by the integration of sustainability into IKEA's planning and control systems. Besides traditional financial and economic indicators, environmental, social, and circular KPIs were also established within the plan and monitored regularly before being published in the company's annual Sustainability Reports. Examples of such indicators are percentage rates of recycled and renewable materials through which products are produced, amount of CO₂ avoided through more efficient logistics initiatives, or number of products repaired and resold through Circular Hubs. In essence, measurable metrics could strengthen internal accountability and the initiatives for accomplishing those goals by operational teams. A culture of measurement and continuous improvement would also be formed, thereby providing a solid foundation for sustaining change.

Beside measurement systems, among others, IKEA applied incentive and performance evaluation mechanisms as levers for entrenching sustainability at the everyday working level of employees. Performance appraisals now include criteria concerning both environmental impact and social outcomes and reward proactive behavior in areas such as waste reduction and the application of ecological solutions. Also, there is emphasis on involving customers in their sustainable practices. There are pathways within professional development focused on sustainability; this creates growth potential for specialization in eco-design, responsible sourcing, energy management, or environmental communication. As Cameron and Green (2020, pp. 78-85) assert, the success of consolidation also depends on aligning reward structures with the new values being institutionalized.

Corporate culture was another key area where IKEA focused its consolidation efforts. The company invested in the symbolic transformation of sustainability into a defining trait of the brand's identity through training, team workshops, and visible leadership involvement. Symbolic moments, such as Planet Days or sustainability performance celebrations, were created to add visibility and meaning to

the transformation. The company had an internal success story bank, global innovations, and a collection of testimonials from employees and customers engaging in circular economy projects. These stories promoted a sense of belonging and social legitimacy for the new practices, whereby they were entrenched in the organizational culture.

The integration of customer interaction is also considered vital by IKEA in the transition process. Circular Hubs were consistently introduced into physical spaces where second handset and repaired or slightly damaged furniture was sold for a second life. Further, certain digitalization's were developed with repair, assembling, and maintaining capabilities, along with printed guides and video tutorials. Sustainability campaigns were upheld and operated in specific rewards for customers in consideration of environmentally friendly solutions. All these processes contributed to establishing a new norm whereby practices once considered "alternative" have now been transformed into the mainstays of the customer experience: reuse, recycling, and modularity. The IKEA customer has opened an entirely new chapter in life; the customer is not merely a buyer but will also take an active stand in a sustainable lifestyle at home.

From an organization-wide perspective, consolidation includes standardizing sustainable practices across a revised policy, operations manual, and technical specification. New environmental requirements were introduced by IKEA to suppliers, the design guidelines were updated, and circularity criteria were embedded into decision-making for product development. With these changes, sustainability went from being a pilot project to the DNA of the organization, cementing conformity across markets and enhancing brand consistency worldwide. This was facilitated digitally, through platforms for data collection, environmental impact management, and ESG reporting.

Another cornerstone of the Refreezing phase is the creation of an organizational memory of change. Cross-country experiences were documented systematically by IKEA, thus creating shared multimedia archives of best practices, lessons learned, case studies, and measured outcomes. These resources were made available to local teams via collaborative platforms, interactive training, and internal communities, helping cement continuity of transformation and provide a solid base for building future learning. As Lewin noted, the greatest risk post-change is that unless there is reinforcement and structured memory, the organization may subconsciously drift back into its previous state.

The system of external alliances was also key to consolidation. IKEA established partnerships with certification bodies, European institutions, environmental NGOs, and tech startups for the co-creation of common standards and innovative tools for the circular economy. These collaborations allowed IKEA to further enhance its positioning as a sustainable business and to act as a key player in leading the broader industrial system toward new paradigms. From this viewpoint, consolidation was not simply an internal affair; it involved establishing institutional legitimacy for the new model.

In the end, IKEA's commitment to continuous improvement meant that consolidation would never turn into crystallization. Through constant monitoring of impact, regular updates of objectives, and openness to innovation, the company adopted an ever-evolving form of Refreezing capable of anchoring its guiding principles while remaining flexible and adaptive. The establishment of internal feedback loops, listening spaces, and strategy adjustments enabled IKEA to consolidate change and keep its agility intact.

In conclusion, the case of IKEA Refreezing was not just a return to stability; it was a new departure point for the organization that decided to integrate sustainability into its essence and operation. The consolidation of sustainable practices required capital, patience, leadership skills, and a deep strategic coherence; in return, it created more resilient, innovative, and forward-looking organizational culture. The mere fact that IKEA's experiences tell us that consolidation is not a passive process, but indeed an active, complex, and systemic endeavor—one that truly matters if transformation is to be permanent and not fleeting.

CHAPTER 3 - EXPERIMENTAL STUDY: THE IMPACT OF RECYCLED MATERIALS ON IKEA CONSUMER CHOICES

1. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The two most important dynamics, characterizing the evolution of market trends at present, are the growing attention towards environmental sustainability and the emergence of more responsible consumption behavioral practices. Retailers especially in the furnishings business are forced to reinvent their strategies from a circular and responsible perspective, offering solutions

beyond quality and convenience to ethical, environmental, and social values. This is the context of this experimental study aimed mainly at surveying IKEA's customer perception about furniture made from recycled materials, as well as investigating the impact of sustainability on their purchasing decisions. Simultaneously, the research intends to investigate how much awareness and personal involvement consumers have about environmental initiatives launched by the company, and whether and to what extent such actions produce cultural change in purchasing behavior. To support the interpretative analysis, the findings would be read through the lens of the organizational change model proposed by Kurt Lewin in order to establish if the three phases (unfreezing, changing, refreezing) were present in the relationship between consumers and IKEA.

For these objectives, we constructed a structured questionnaire and carried it on the Google Forms platform. Digital mode was chosen, not only for its suitability for wide accessibility but also for self-administration and anonymity of participants. Data collection was undertaken in April 2025, through which 200 valid responses were obtained as a reference sample for the analysis. The questionnaire was divided into four core sections, each addressing a particular dimension of the relationship about the customer, sustainability, and buying behavior. The questionnaire construction was modeled by frameworks validated in the academic literature, favoring closed, multiple-choice questions, and Likert scales to ensure standardizing answers and the ability to carry out reliable statistical analysis.

Socio-demographic and behavioral information collection constitutes the first section of the questionnaire, which is essential for creating a detailed profile of the respondents. The analysis depicted a general dominance of participants aged between 18 and 30 years old (46.2%), with over-50s being next (41.8%) and, to a lesser extent, the intermediate group (30-50 years old) (12.1%). The sample includes 62.6% of women, 36.2% of men, and 1.1% of persons to prefer not to specify their sex. Place of shopping frequency at IKEA has it that 53.8% stated that they shopped 'rarely'; 20.9% 'once a year'; 17.6% 'never'; and just 7.7% 'every 3-6 months'. This shows that sufficiency with the brand is massive; however, that does not mean that buying takes place regularly. Another interesting element includes the extent of self-perceived environmental sensitivity: When asked the question "How sensitive do you personally feel to environmental issues?", 43.9% gave the answer of highest value (5 out of 5), followed by 27.5% with value 3 and 26.4% with value 4. Only a very small 2.2% responded to indicate little interest in sustainability. It suggests enough standing value by the sample, a very important aspect in interpreting future responses.

The questionnaires addressed their second aspect toward understanding recycled furniture. The level of knowledge of product understanding, assessment of quality compared to conventional furniture, the weight of sustainability as a criterion of choice, and the amount of willingness to pay slightly higher prices in exchange for sustainable furniture have ultimately mixed priorities given different factors affecting decision making (price, design, durability, environmental impact, and brand). An objective for this section would be to gauge the perceived value of sustainability in relation to whether it is deemed critically important or, rather, a mere accessory in making consumer decisions regarding recycled furniture quality, if sustainability is recognized as a value, and whether the practices of circular economy would be known and appreciated.

The third section concentrated on IKEA's environmental initiatives, gauging the extent to which the sample was aware of and engaged with instruments like Circular Hubs, buy-back and recycling programs, and corporate communications regarding environmental commitment. The questions were meant to find out if customers are aware of IKEA's options for circling consumption and whether they have used them. Also valued was the perceived clarity of the company's environmental communication and overall opinion on whether IKEA is doing enough for the environment. The findings in this section would provide insight into how visibly and understandably sustainable initiatives are interpreted by the public as transforming traditional behavior.

The fourth and last section rated voices and attitudes based on statements administered on the Likert scale (1-5) for measuring the extent of consistency between values declared by participants and their purchases. Proposed statements regarding the levels of information about IKEA initiatives, preferences for sustainable products, the influence of sustainability on consumption choices, perceived quality of recycled furniture, the demand for a wider range of sustainable products, and personal involvements in changing towards a more responsible lifestyle were designed to give a more complete and articulated picture of the value orientation of the respondents and their willingness to even actively support a cultural change in the way they buy, live, and consume.

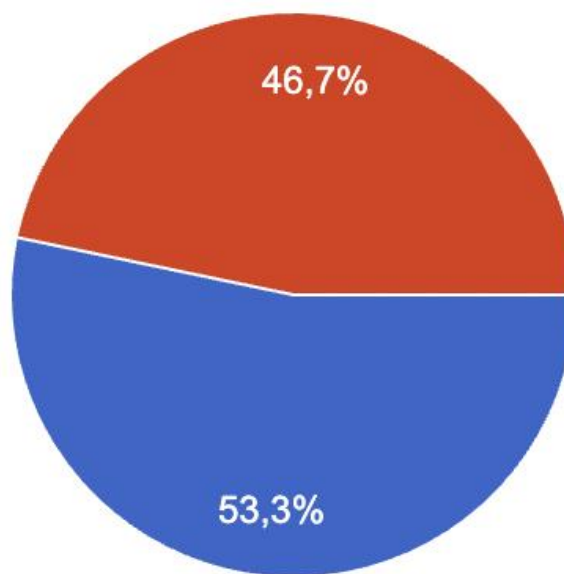
Overall , the adopted method proved fit for the purposes of the survey and made it possible to collect a heterogeneous bundle of data that can be interpreted in both descriptive and interpretative ways. The data collected would now be analyzed in Chapter 3.2 to discern the main emerging

trends and to assess to what extent the change in customer behavior and attitudes may have occurred. Subsequently, in Chapter 3.3, the results would be reinterpreted based on the Lewin model, to understand whether and to what extent IKEA's strategies have served as a lever for initiating a stable and lasting transformation process in the relationship between sustainability and consumption.

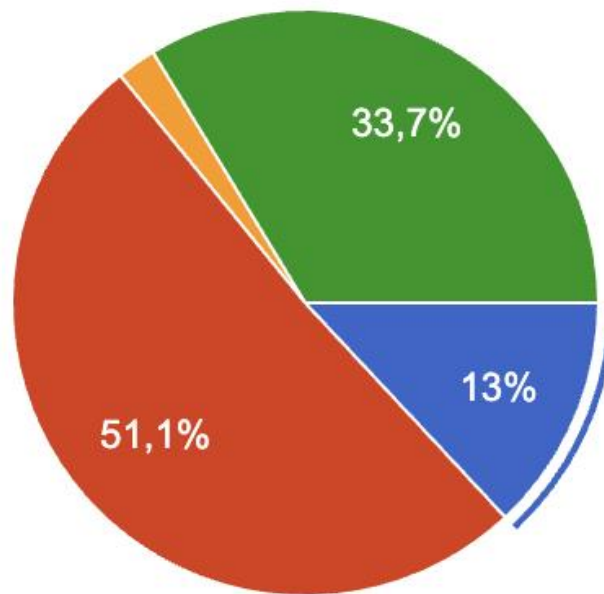
2. ANALYSIS RESULTS

Analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire provided a significant insight into customers' perceptions, behavior, and values towards sustainability in relation to furniture from recycled materials. The findings offer better understanding into consumer awareness, the real impact of sustainability on their purchase decisions, and personal involvement in responsible consumption patterns. The sample, consisting of 200 respondents with different socio-demographic profiles, expressed opinions that were relevant in defining the relationship between corporate communication, perceived product value, and personal values-affording the strategic evaluator and theorist a useful framework in Lewin's change model.

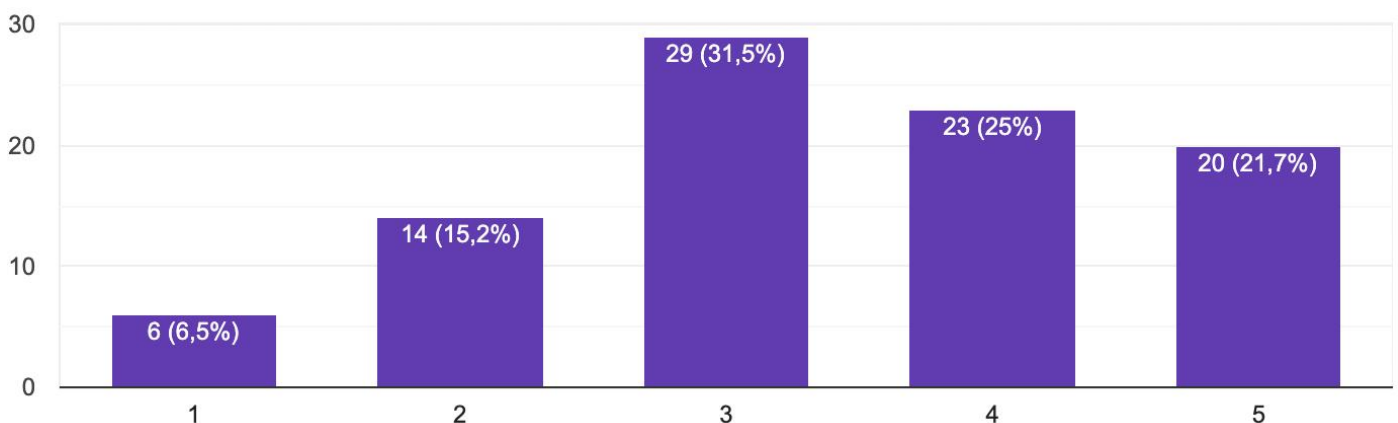
A first key aspect concerns the awareness of furniture made from recycled materials: in response to the question "Do you know about IKEA furniture made from recycled materials?", 53.8% of respondents answered yes; meanwhile, 46.2% declared they were not aware of it. Although most customers know these kinds of products, a significant percentage of the sample tends to lack knowledge on it, indicating that IKEA communication in this respect is not yet fully effective or widespread. The fact that nearly half of the respondents are unaware of such products may mean that the company still must strengthen its communication strategies towards more visibility and understanding of circular initiatives.



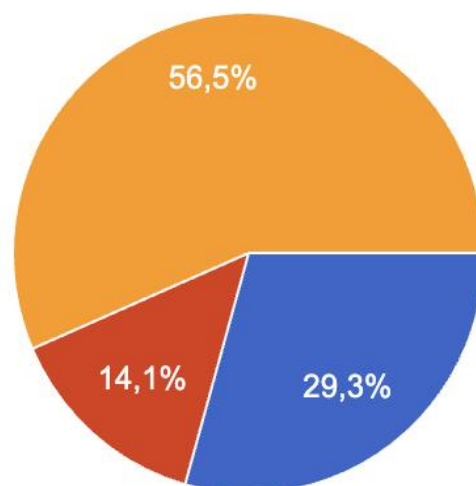
Concerning perceived quality, the question "In your opinion, furniture made from recycled materials is..." evinced that the relative majority (51.6%) evaluated that their quality was at par with furniture typically made from virgin materials. About 12.1% considered them to be less durable, while only 2.2% rated them to be more durable. Notably, 34.1% responded "I don't know", indicating a high level of uncertainty or lack of direct experience with the products. While the overall sentiment tends toward neutral or moderately positive, the significant level of indecision calls for better consumer education and hands-on experience. This represents a definite opportunity for IKEA: to promote its sustainable furniture more effectively by less ambiguous labeling, in-store displays, and education campaigns.



The question "How important is sustainability for you in choosing furniture?" revealed main aspects concerning the importance of environmental values in purchasing behavior. A rough division of judgments was given by approximately 30.8% who awarded a mid-scale score (3 out of 5), while 25.3% rated it with 4, and 22% with the maximum rating (5). Only 6.6% indicated that sustainability plays little or no role. These results show that over 77% refer to sustainability as moderately to very important, which confirms the sensitivity to environmental issues found to be increasing. Therefore, it may be concluded that most respondents seem to speak in favor of a sustainability-based argumentation, but also that they do not assign it the greatest importance in decision making.

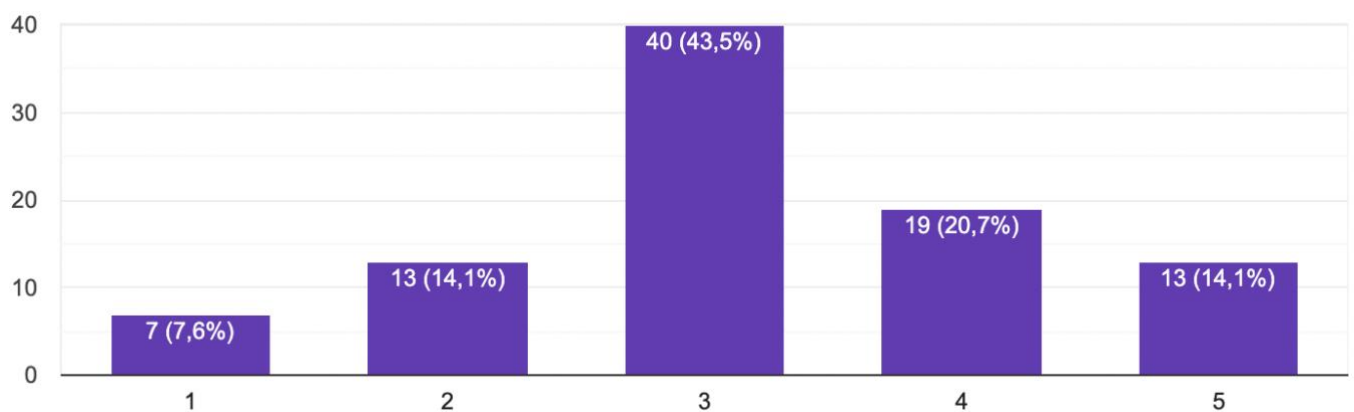


The survey also revealed another important dimension: consumers' willingness to spend a higher price for environmentally acceptable furniture. In response to the specific question posed in the questionnaire, 56.5% of participants stated that they would be willing to do so only if the price were similar to that of the non-sustainable one. This paints an image of favorable attitude laden with monetary considerations. A further 29.3% expressed a willingness to pay extra, indicating that a section of the sample recognizes added value in terms of environmentally friendly furniture, whereas 14.1% stated they would not. What these results show is that while awareness of environmental issues is growing, economic considerations remain central to the decision-making process. In the present climate of economic uncertainty and rising living costs, many consumers are forced to balance ethical values against financial restraints and to find a feasible compromise between sustainability and affordability.

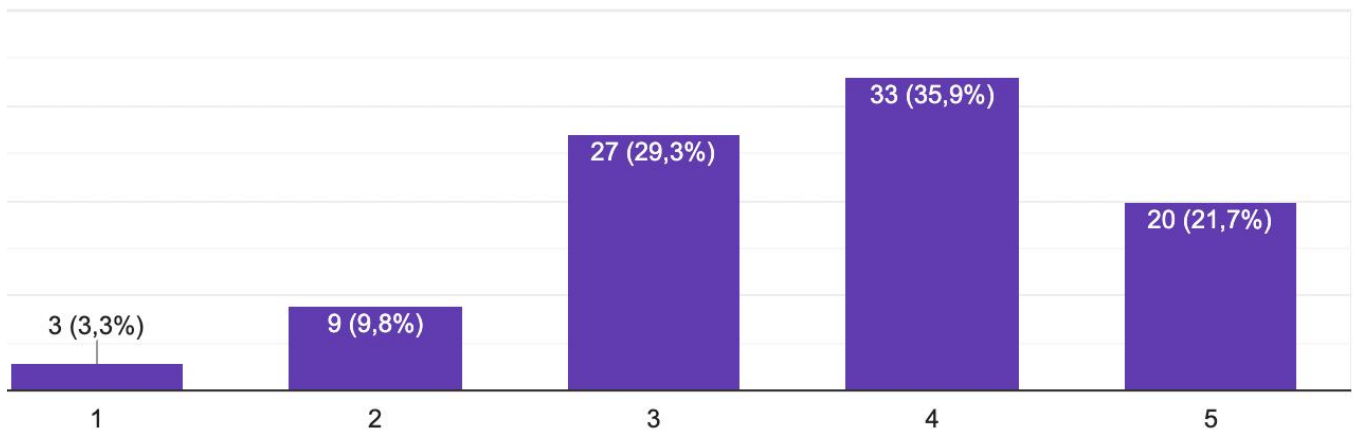


Yet, the encouraging and positive fact is that a sizable segment of consumers would be willing to pay more for sustainable products. An increasingly active segment of consumers is clearly aware of the environmental impacts of their buying decisions and is ready to reward companies by putting in a serious effort towards sustainability. For a company such as IKEA, this means fertile grounds to reinforce its sustainable positioning, if it manages to communicate the true (tangible as well as emotional) value of its circular products. The willingness to pay extra is often directly correlated with a company's ability to build a captivating narrative attaching the product with measurable and visible positive environmental impact.

Further interpretive insights come from the responses to the Likert scale statements, covering consumer attitude and personal engagement in the transition to more sustainable lifestyles. About “Sustainability influences my purchasing decisions”, most of the respondents gave scores around the middle of the rating scale (43% chose score 3), while 21% opted for 4 and 14% for the maximum score of 5. Looking at these findings, one can note that sustainability-related considerations are acknowledged by consumers, but they are not yet considerably influential. Sustainability thus becomes a secondary consideration next to price or aesthetic and functional concerns. This presents a picture of a consumer in transition, one who accesses sustainability on a rational level but has not yet fully incorporated it into habitual purchasing behavior.



The response to the statement “I feel involved in the shift toward a more sustainable lifestyle” is illustrated in Chart 2. Response mode scores 4 and 5 range from a very respectable 36% and 22%, respectively; 29.3% chose the neutral score of 3. The low agreement and disengagement were reached by a minority, pointing to a very high sense of personal awareness, with an increasing identification toward sustainability values, irrespective of whether it reflects in every one of their purchase decisions or not. It may be important to point out that sustainability is not being perceived just as a product feature, but more as a cultural and identity-based dimension, shaping the broader lifestyle of the individual. In this sense, the act of purchase transcends functionality and becomes a concrete expression of values, social responsibility, and participation toward a larger transformation.



In this context, IKEA positions itself not only as a producer of accessible and functional furniture, but also as an active player in the cultural change of consumer values. Its dedication to minimizing environmental footprint, recycling materials, encouraging the circular economy, and making customers more aware of sustainability matters puts the company in a strategic role—not just in a commercial sense but also in corporate social responsibility. Already initiated programs, for instance, Circular Hubs, recycling and buy-back programs, and the goal to have 100% of its products circular by 2030, reveal a consistent and focused vision in accordance with global sustainability goals.

Yet as the data shows, the effectiveness of these projects cannot be separated from clear and widespread communication, capable of making consumers fully aware of the environmental value of products and the active role they can play in the ecological transition. In order to change consumer purchasing behavior, it is not sufficient to make sustainable choices available, but a relationship of emotional and value-based connection between the company and the customer must be established. In this respect, IKEA can serve as a reference model: a company capable of balancing accessibility and sustainability, design and responsibility, customer orientation and long-term vision.

The growing customer engagement with environmental issues, reflected in the levels of personal identification with a sustainable lifestyle, suggests that the company's strategy is yielding positive effects on consumption culture. Nonetheless, this change is ongoing, and there remains a real risk of slipping backward into less conscious behavior if there are not good mechanisms for consolidation. It will therefore be important for IKEA to continue investing in innovation, education, and active

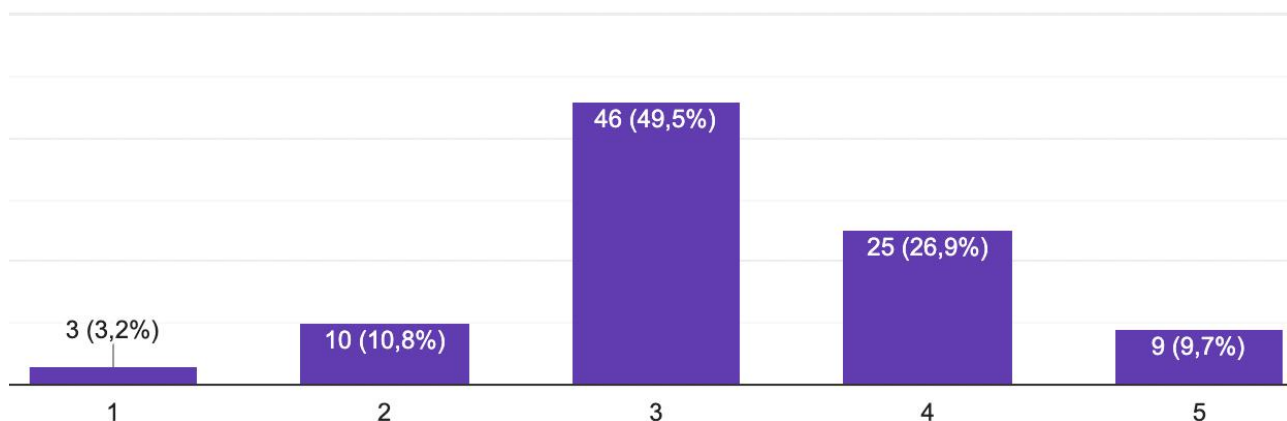
consumer involvement, in a manner that doesn't present sustainability as an add-on or elitist value, but as an integral and durable part of the customer experience.

Briefly, IKEA not only offers sustainable solutions, but it positions itself as a change agent: an enabler of new consumption patterns, with the potential to take the customer through a process of transformation that goes well beyond the product bought. The outcomes of this study are then a necessary starting point for the discussion of the current relationship between consumers and sustainability.

3.2.1 PERCEPTION OF VALUE FOR MONEY AND AFFORDABILITY FOR SUSTAINABLE FURNITURE

What is at the core of consumer opinion on value of recycled furniture and actual willingness of consumers to pay for sustainable products? This topic could be included in the broad umbrella of sustainability in consumption as it similarly generates tension in the customers' decision-making processes, contrary to the well-known fact that there is a conflict between responsible choices and economic limitations. As a leading player in the democratization of sustainable furniture, IKEA faces this duality directly; it becomes one of the major challenges and opportunities in implementing its circular strategies.

When asked whether furniture of recycled materials was worth the value, the results exhibit steep polarization in the central band of the Likert scale. 49.5% of the respondents selected the mid-point 3 on the 5-point scale, a choice which tends to indicate neutrality or indecision toward one side. Followed by an agreeableness judgment of a 4 to the statement are the 26.9% of respondents who have given their highest valued score of 5. The relatively lower negative answers comprise 10.8% who got a 2 and, an even lower number of 3.2%. All in all, it could be said that around 79% of the sample distributed themselves between neutrality and agreement, thereby outlaying a generally positive but not fully convinced perception of an economic value in recycled products.



This statistic is interpretable in several ways. In the first place, the fact that, for over one-third of participants, analysis results ended in a median evaluation might indicate relatively superficial or limited knowledge of the offer of recycled furniture. In keeping with the above findings in section 3.2, many consumers expressed that they had no idea of the existence of such products in increased price and had no experiential contact with them. On the other hand, this medium assessment may also follow from a lack of clear and comparative indications, the perceived value of product quality and the actual price of sustainable versus conventional products; that is, it may stem from a simple lack of objective elements upon which to base consumers' judgments.

The issue of whether furniture made from natural materials should be more expensive can thus be linked with the other dimension explored in the questionnaire: possibility of economic willingness to pay a premium for the purchase of such furniture. This time, the predominant response was that the price would have to be pretty much 'the same' to that of a conventional product - the choice of 57.1% of respondents. A further 28.6% said to be willing to pay a bit more, while 14.3% said they would prefer not to have to pay anything extra. These data suggest that even when an inclination exists

towards sustainability, it does not necessarily mean an automatic inclination to spend more; instead, in such cases, price remains a vital breast lever in a purchasing decision.

In fact, a person surveyed very clearly confirmed what many articles address in someone's study in sustainable marketing: sustainability is a second reason for coming to purchase something until the moment of perceiving the customer's advance benefit or not being perceived as very bad in terms of cost to the person. Even for the few consumers with high concern for environmental issues, cost matters, and often hinders virtuous behavior unless with full support by some benefit. The company has to offer sustainable products as well as effective communication to show what made those products worthy, in environmental, social, and economic terms.

Besides, price is not only an obstacle; it is also a chance to differentiate the offer and build brand equity. IKEA has therefore proven that barriers can be transformed into innovation opportunities when they exercise the power of low prices in conjunction with logistics optimization and functional design. The same strategy can indeed be used here with sustainability: making recyclable furniture environmentally friendly, yet clever, durable, inexpensive, and gorgeous. Thus the brand will be able to edge past the perceived conflict of ethics versus convenience, one of the cornerstone of psychological hurdles in championing sustainable consumption.

Overall, such an analysis based on perceptions of value-for-money and affordability confirms that sustainability is indeed appreciated, but constrained by the real and the fictitious, which need to be understood and approached with concrete tools. This gives IKEA a wonderful opportunity to one day leapfrog into the lead in this transformation through education, transparency, and innovation. Only then can it ever hope to shift sustainable purchasing behavior from the periphery of social consciousness, whereby it would be an elite-centered choice into one that is considered a real possibility for everybody.

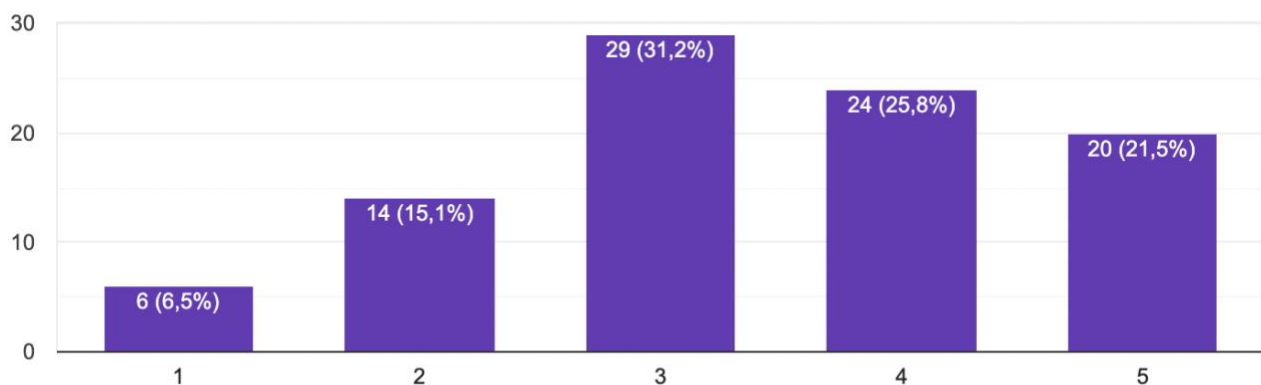
3.2.2 DETERMINING FACTORS FOR BUYING SUSTAINABLE FURNITURE

The data collected through the questionnaire made it possible to understand some of the main variables that drive the consumers' decisions in purchasing sustainable furniture. According to the objectives of the research as well as what we discussed in the previous chapters, the study focuses on three important questions: the weight attached to sustainability by consumers in their purchase

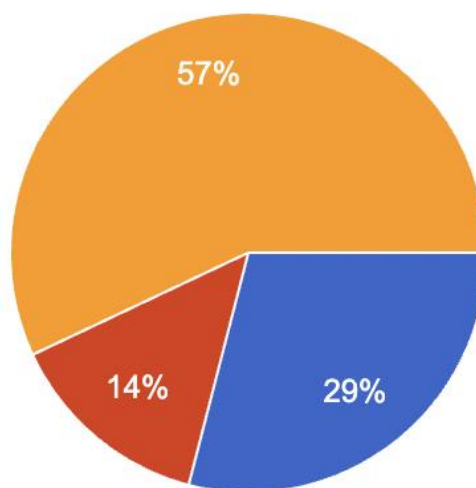
decisions, their willingness to pay more for sustainably manufactured furniture, and whether they use IKEA's buy-back and recycling programs at all. These questions allow an assessment of the consumers' environmental awareness and sensitivity level, as well as their practical involvement in the initiatives of the company.

Responses to the question, "How important is sustainability as an aspect for you in your choice of furniture?" show that a sizable part of the sample considers sustainability average to highly important. Of respondents, 25.8% selected value 4 out of 5, while 22 percent gave the highest value. Moreover, 31 %percent opted for value 3, indicating that sustainability has become quite a relevant criterion, although for many it is not yet decisive. Underpinning mindsets is an evolving process underway with consumers, slowly incorporating the dimension of environment into their consumer value system. As mentioned in Chapter 1, sustainability is emerging as a new paradigm of economy and culture, and survey results confirm that IKEA is faced with evolving consumer whose attention centers mostly on environmental impact of material, product durability and source of resources, as Joshi and Rahman (2015) point out, the sustainable purchasing decision is influenced by a variety of factors, including environmental education, brand trust and risk perception Hartmann, Ibáñez and Sainz (2005) show that an emotional green brand positioning can positively influence consumer attitudes towards sustainable products.

. But sustainability is subordinated to other traditional factors such as price or design, meaning that tangible benefits of responsible purchases must be made clearer and more understandable.

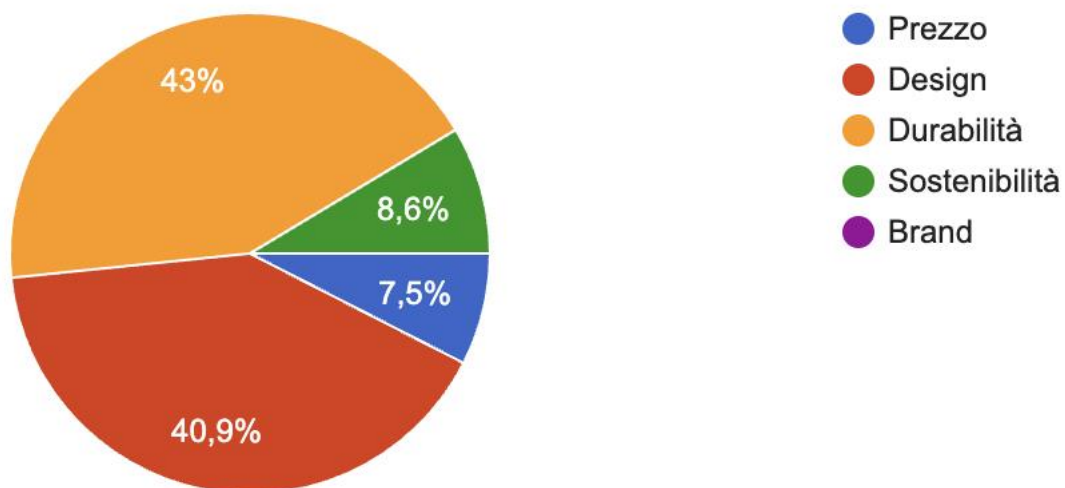


The other vital aspect concerns the economic dimension of sustainable choice. To the question 'Would you be willing to pay more for sustainably produced furniture?' the predominant response, with 57.1 percent, was 'only if it were around the same price as a non-sustainable product'. Only 28.6% of participants admitted being willing to pay this premium for the sustainable piece of furniture, while 14.3% rejected this view. This data indicates how strongly sustainable behavior is determined in perception terms by justice perceived about affordability: environmental value is somehow acknowledged, but it is not always enough to warrant higher outlay. There, meanwhile, as analyzed in chapter 2.3.2, only when the sustainability aspect in value scales is ranked alongside price becomes sustainable competitive. IKEA, owing to the mix of affordable, functional, and design aspects that made it its success story, is now called upon to prove that sustainability can really lead to enhancing the overall value of the product. With this focus, the new solutions provided by IKEA-modular-design, recycled material, disassembly, and reuse-are effective instruments of merging ethics with functionality yet fall short of incisive communication that would clarify into long-term economic advantages of sustainable buying.



Additional insights can be drawn from the response to the question "Which of these factors do you consider most important in purchasing furniture?" where most votes were cast for durability 43% or

design 41%. Only 8.6% respondents mentioned sustainability, while 7.5% selected prices. This is especially interesting considering IKEA's strategy—durability clearly being one of the cornerstones of a circular economy, with a long-lasting, repairable, dismountable, and reusable piece of furniture being the most obviously sustainable. So, consumers are not saying that sustainability is their main factor; they are implicitly accepting certain principles of sustainability. In this regard, that means in the case of IKEA, the goal is not just to promote sustainability but to show how it corresponds with things customers already want, such as durability and quality. This is a strategic shift: align environmental concerns with customer functional and stylistic expectations, challenging the false dichotomy of “sustainable” versus “practical”.



To sum up then, analysis indicates that the determinants of purchasing sustainable furniture are many and woven together. Sustainability, indeed, is a concept widely accepted as a value; however, it has not established itself as the most prime factor. Price remains the most significant variable, and circular services, despite being present, remain marginal in the purchasing experience. Now that IKEA has

demonstrated that sustainability can be integrated into its business models, it needs to further strengthen the nexus between corporate strategy and consumer culture. Accessibility must thus also be matched by desirability, affirmation by convenience, and proposition by participation. This presents the central challenge in effecting a stable and shared transition to a circular economy. Therefore, the inquiry results are based solidly to assess the effectiveness thus far of adopted policies and identify new lines of action possible to connect corporate actions to the reality consumed and lived by consumers. Real, but not yet complete, the transformation underway can be accelerated at IKEA by reinforcing consumer trust, transparency, and empowerment, thereby making the customer a protagonist in change rather than merely a recipient.

3.3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This analysis suggests that the experimental part of the thesis can be somewhat useful when providing an overview of sustainability perceptions among IKEA customers and hence also a link into corporate strategies, theoretical models and consumer behavior. Questionnaire results include some indications of relevant trends - not always clear but outlining an ongoing evolution in the manner consumers consider and integrate sustainability into their decision-making processes. Purchase decision-making today can no longer be viewed solely in terms of price and functionality, bringing new priorities, new evaluating criteria, and, especially, an increasing focus on the ethical and environmental dimensions of products, even if this has not yet been fully consolidated. Collected data show an audience in halfway transition: some IKEA customers begin coveting sustainable options without fully grasping or recognizing the systemic relationships from such acquisition value, which remains more valuable than initial tangible factors, such as price, durability, and design.

The very best indicator of this transition phase is the question responses to 'When choosing a piece of furniture, how important is sustainability?' Intermediate and high scores account for the greater share. Thus, the issue is present in the debate and in people's thinking; it is simply not one at the level of absolute priority. The same with the willingness to pay a premium for sustainable furniture: most of them would only support this if the price was somewhere close to that of a traditional counterpart. A minority, however, would pay just that little bit more. These data speak of the presence of a consumer who is aware but still conditioned by economic and pragmatic logic. It must clearly become a competitive value, not as a mere plus for only a few sensitive consumers, but rather as a structural

component of perceived value. Therefore, IKEA, by innovating in creating solutions that incorporate sustainability together with accessibility and functionality, has already started embarking on very virtuous ways. But apparently, there is still more high leaps needed in the level of awareness towards the end customer in terms of communication, training, and direct involvement.

Data perhaps the most interesting and part of least expected describes the hierarchy of factors guiding the purchase choice; faced with the option to choose among most important criteria for opting a furniture piece or item, most respondents said durability and design were the leading ones to ultimately have sustainability and price relegated to second place. It may appear contradictory, in fact, about the environmental specifications of IKEA but it indeed opens by way of interpretative opportunity. In truth, durability is one of the most concrete expressions of sustainability: a product that lasts longer, is repairable, disassembled, reused, is much less of an environmental impact. The fact that consumers attach so much importance to durability, even though they do not associate it directly with the concept of sustainability, indicates a communicative and strategic space still to be filled. IKEA, which has already implemented modular design, the sale of spare parts, production with recycled materials and buy-back programs, now has the task of making it clear that all these practices are part of a coherent system based precisely on sustainability. It is necessary, in other words, to make the invisible visible: to bring out the sustainable dimension of the choices that many customers already make based on criteria such as quality or robustness.

The gathered evidence falls perfectly into the theoretical framework outlined by the Lewin model tortuously discussed in previous chapters. The shift towards more sustainable consumption can be read through the three processes proposed by Lewin: unfreezing, changing and refreezing. The data from the questionnaire clearly shows that we are in the “unfreezing” phase, that is, consumers are starting to question traditional consumption paradigms; they are becoming more receptive to environmental or social concerns, but the actions they have taken so far do not reflect a consistent or stable behavior towards the ecological transition. IKEA has embarked on this journey through concrete and measurable actions concerning the choice of new materials, circular production models and services aimed at reducing environmental impacts. However, the perception of the consumer is not yet adequately matured; in others, the understanding that purchasing a recycled, up cycleable, or returned product at the end of its life cycle is not just a responsible choice but also an economical and culturally trendsetting choice is simply not there.

In order to drive the change, the intensification of some efforts will be necessary. On the one hand, investment in communication must be involved: just offering a sustainable product is not enough; it must be told and contextualized with an explicit explanation of its advantages. On the other hand, maintenance of sustainable acts must be simplified and put into practice: eg, a buy-back program must not only be perceptible and simple to activate but also includes some symbolical reward. Next, develop schemes to intercept as many customers as possible in their role as active agents of change rather than just passive receivers of an offer. It could mean developing strategies such as co-creation, education, and generating digital and physical communities capable of spreading best practices and reinforcing the bond between brand and user.

To sum up, the scene narrates about a commercial enterprise already on a substantial stretch of sustainability journey in the process of IKEA, but it wakes up to an audience still in-transform. The clients value sustainability, yet, as of now, sustains the same only in the periphery of the decision-making. While changes of behavior, from IKEA's side, may see some acceptance, another route must be forged in support of that pathway into new modes of living. For IKEA, transformation of well-established products or supply chains into new prototypes is not the most critical challenge. Encouraging timely transformation of culture that will stick in the principles of circular economy and agile organization will be.

3.3.1. APPLICATION OF LEWIN'S MODEL TO RESULTS

The latter allows for a good interpretation of the results from the experimental section of the study, drawing from the application of Kurt Lewin's model that was already discussed in earlier chapters. In its design of the change process into three phases - unfreezing, changing, and refreezing - the model serves as a dynamic and flexible tool in understanding organizational paths of transformation or, for that matter, individual behavior, resistance to change, and conditions favoring consolidation of change. If it is to be used for IKEA's case, whose strategy aims at achieving full circularity by 2030, it would also be mentioned here that the model would provide a basis to appreciate the solidity and viability of the trend in reference, as it would correlate the company's actions to the customers' reactions, perceptions, and involvement, as highlighted by the outcome of the questionnaire.

In Lewin's model, the first phase, unfreezing, is mostly about creating disruption to the status quo, questioning accepted habits, mental models and behaviors that have become entrenched over time. The awareness is raised, questions are created, new values are introduced, and the foundation for the willingness to change is laid. It is most evident from the data collected that this operates in the background. Even though sustainability is not yet on top of everyone's mind when making purchases, consumers have begun to recognize its importance in that debate whereas some are beginning to factor it in when considering purchases. About 78% of the respondents rating sustainability at 3 or above in purchasing consideration indicates a trend set in motion by IKEA through awareness alongside the socio-cultural milieu eating into the consciousness of consumers. Communication efforts, making eco-friendly products available, talking about durability and modularity - these initiatives help establish a phase of destabilization of the old habits. It is still an incomplete awareness, only partially integrated into their psyche. This is illustrated by the fact that many customers to this day still find it very difficult to connect durability with sustainability or find it hard to justify a price premium for sustainable products. Therefore, unfreezing is initiated but not completed. Certain interventions are necessary to further cement this stage, by utilizing educational tools, immersive experiences, and storytelling which could enhance the immediacy and tangibility of sustainable values.

The second phase of the model, changing, is where real change in current practices, behaviors, and value systems are instituted. This is the stage of transition, movement, uncertainty, and experimentation. The questionnaire data offer a snapshot coinciding with such a dynamic: it seems that consumers are in a liminal space, where some elements of change are already present but coexist with old decision-making logics. Durability and design appear to be the predominant factors in purchasing choices, and this represents an opportunity for IKEA, which has made sustainable design one of its strategic pillars. However, sustainability as such is still perceived as a secondary or ancillary criterion. The sustainable practices put in place by IKEA-such as Circular Hubs, buy-back programs, and using recycled materials-have been operational but have yet to be fully adopted by consumers. Few respondents claim to have employed these services, a clear indication that the change phase has yet to reach critical mass. Cultural and operational barriers related to the changing phase may also explain this figure: difficulties in changing habits, perceived complexity/inefficacy of new systems, resistance to perceived risks. Having clearly kicked off an important transformation, IKEA is however now in the position to put its full weight behind the transition, providing its customers with concrete tools, incentives, virtuous examples, and above all, an ecosystem in which sustainable behaviors are not just possible, but easy, convenient, and rewarding.

Since their refreezing is the last of the change phases, consolidation of the change is needed so that the new practices become part of the organizational culture, and hence, in this case, of the consumer culture. Reaching this point is the toughest since it requires that a change be perceived as “normal,” internalized and structurally shared. The questionnaire reports show that this phase still lies far in the future: A good number of positive indications, such as growing attention to quality and reparability, find that sustainable purchasing value is yet to be fully integrated into choice. That pretty much only a fraction of persons viewed sustainability as an important factor keeps paying premium timber in equity place, shows that the new practices are not yet set in. Here, IKEA must act as a cultural facilitator by creating a shared narrative in which sustainability is synonymous with top quality, modernity and sensible responsibility. Strategies for refreezing can go from sustainability-related loyalty programs and economic incentives to in-store training, to digital tools that monitor and reward virtuous choices. It is only when all of these are inserted into the daily life of the consumer that change can effectively become consolidated and become irreversible.

Application of Lewin's model to data analysis thus reveals an ongoing, albeit incomplete, change process. The unfreezing phase has in fact been activated by IKEA, the changing phase is being experienced with concrete and visible activities, but limited refreezing has yet been reached. Consumer behavior appears to be in the same path: Open, but not completely engaging; sensitive, but not yet loyal; willing, but hampered by habits, constraints, and perceptions. That may not be overly discouraging, rather, this indicates that building blocks for a change are there- that must now be consolidated through coordinated and uninterrupted action. Sustainability, as a value and practice, requires an enabling context for its existence: one nurtured by coherent public policies, economic incentives, brilliant communication above all, and purchase experience that makes change not just possible but desirable.

These thoughts indicate that Lewin's model serves as an optimal interpretative framework to further investigate the dynamics of transformation occurring in the relationships between IKEA and its customer's paradigm. The model helps to visualize transformation as a process and not as an event, as a shared journey that requires time, involvement, and adaptation. IKEA shows that the transition to sustainability involves more than simply product innovation or changing one's internal processes; it requires the participation of the customer and the construction of a new shared imagination. Only then can awareness lead to action and action become the normalization of sustainable behaviors. It is in this direction that IKEA must turn its future efforts, if it wishes to consolidate this transformation and lead the market towards fairer, more responsible and circular consumption models.

3.3.2IKEA STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR

That, of course, does not imply that the transition from felt sustainability to genuine sustainability is one's own initiative, as clearly evidenced by the outcome of the experiment on the research. What they say they intend to do is not necessarily congruent with their actual behavior. This disjunction between what they profess, and their lifestyle calls for an in-depth reflection on what strategies can be taken by a company like IKEA at such an early stage with its customers in enabling a stable, consistent and lasting change in the customer's behavior over the long-term. More particularly, it is very important that IKEA does not just present a technically or environmentally sustainable offer, but also accompanies the way towards a cultural and cognitive change in the consumer where regular evaluation and choice criteria are made habitual even as opposed to viewing that as a marginal or merely symbolic option.

As we've shown in previous analyses, most people who shop at IKEA recognize the fact that sustainability is very important to their everyday lives, particularly in their choice of furniture. However, when the actual purchase executes, logics pertaining to durability, design and most of all prices still prevail over sustainability. This does not mean that sustainability is disregarded when deciding on an item, but simply that it has not played a leading role in the hierarchy of decision-making values thus far. Hence, the strategies that would activate the process to decrease this dissonance between perceived value with respect to really acting out that value must happen on the three fundamental dimensions: awareness, facilitation of behavior, and building a shared identity between the customer and the company.

First, there is the issue of strengthening the awareness. Survey results showed that many customers are giving somewhat medium to high importance to sustainability, yet they do not really know the actions undertaken by IKEA. This means that it has initiated many concrete initiatives - recycling materials, Circular Hubs of buy-back programs or modules design - but their visibility or effective communication is not always ensured. IKEA will therefore have to do more about the clear, continuous, engaging communication that doesn't just list good practices, but stories, emotions, and real impacts out there according to the CSR Study by Cone Communications (2017), 87% of global consumers say they would buy a product based on the company's commitment to environmental or social causes. A story should be told in a context that's accessible, understandable, and close to the consumer's needs. An informed customer is a customer who can choose with greater awareness but

also with greater confidence. Thus, it is appropriate for IKEA to strengthen the narrative related to its products, which has been integrated from the source to impacts and elimination methods as direct communication channels within stores, online, and in labels, turning every moment of contact into educational opportunity with the brand.

A second area of intervention concerns the facilitation of sustainable behavior. Often, customers face a practical or psychological barrier: they do not know how to return a piece of furniture, do not find it convenient to access the recycling program, or perceive the process as long and complicated. IKEA has already introduced several solutions to overcome these difficulties, but now needs to work on making these options simpler, more automated and more integrated into the overall shopping experience. One example could be the digitization of return processes: through apps, QR codes or personal accounts, the user could easily manage the return, dismantling, tracking and retrieval of products. Economic incentives, in the form of discounts, vouchers or loyalty rewards, can also be a powerful lever to stimulate virtuous behavior. The objective is to make sure that choosing the sustainable option does not require additional effort, but is the most comfortable, convenient and obvious choice.

The third strategic axis involves creating a shared value identification. Buying is not just a purchase; it's symbolic, and relationally dimensioned, and the result of rational evaluations. Buying behaviors are the purchase of not only an object, but rather a piece of narrative, a lifestyle, a representation of themselves. IKEA has the potentiality of selling this collective identity to consumers as not just buyers but also as co-creators of a more just and sustainable world. For this to happen, it is necessary to activate active participation mechanisms: alongside their customers in defining the new services, feedback collection, sharing experiences of sustainability on social networks, building localized communities around the stores, and by launching collective mobilization campaigns. The more a customer feels he is part of a mission shared with other people, the more he will be inclined to make choices conforming to the values proposed by the company.

This can also be interpreted through the Lewin model. IKEA has already started the unfreezing process and is gradually unfastening itself from old consumption habits by progressive disruption of old consumption practices. In fact, it has started into the changing by introducing new solutions, new products, new services. But the refreezing, the final anchoring of these changes, will depend on being able to create a special feature of the relationship that the company has with its customers to remain on sustainability. Change cannot be imposed from above, but must be co-constructed, rooted in daily life, supported by simple tools, and motivated by a shared sense of belonging. The risk, if not, is that

these sustainable actions remain episodic, correlated to individual decisions, but not become stable and structural behaviors.

Lastly, this is for opening emphasis around which IKEA is most privileged to formulate that transformational orientation. All of this would come from the kind of customer base it has, its brand visibility, its chain supply of shops, and an enviable experience in managing innovation. But then, it all depends on the ability to integrate sustainability thinking into the entire experience of the customer and not just in the products. Each touch point with a customer must therefore be profiled as an opportunity to convey values, educate, and engage. So, IKEA should go with its future strategies along this path: better communicate, facilitate more, engage with authenticity. This is the only way that one can convert individual behaviors into a new collective normality, and thus play a concrete part in shaping a responsible and regenerative consumption model.

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