

**PRACTICAL EXECUTION OF DIGITAL MARKETING FOR NATURAL BEAUTY: UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the digital marketing involvement of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Sri Lanka, focusing on Kurunagala that specializes in natural beauty products. This research provides a comprehensive analysis of the business's current operations, marketing strategies, target customer base, production methods, and the challenges it faces in digital marketing. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) conducted by marketing specialization students from the University of Jaffna, this study employs narrative inquiry to gather qualitative data on the transition from traditional to digital marketing. Photovoice enables participants to visually document community strengths and challenges, fostering insightful discussion. Focus group discussions and participatory mapping facilitate collaborative reflections on the spatial and social aspects of the business environment. Initial findings reveal significant barriers to digital marketing for Natural Beauty, including limited knowledge, insufficient time for social media marketing, budget constraints, and difficulties in producing high-quality digital content. The business relies heavily on minimal advertising strategies, particularly word-of-mouth marketing, maintaining customer relationships through personalized services, and producing a limited range of high-quality products. This study introduces novel digital tools and creative strategies to enhance the digital marketing practices of Natural Beauty products, addressing unique challenges and opportunities through PAR. These recommendations aim to significantly improve the digital presence of Natural Beauty, promoting and selling its products in a cost-effective and measurable way, thereby fostering growth and competitiveness in the digital era. This study also provides a valuable framework for similar MSMEs seeking to enhance their digital marketing strategy.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, MSMEs, natural beauty, participatory action research