

# Teaching and Learning Digital Marketing through Participatory Action Research: A Student-Led Initiative with Super Tea

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## *Abstract*

This study explores the possibility of learning and teaching digital marketing through a participatory action research (PAR) approach in the form of a student-led digital transformation project for Super Tea, a traditional micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) with limited market outreach, brand exposure, and opportunities for growth as it was not digitally integrated. The project suggested to overcome the challenges through introducing low-cost digital solutions with the assistance of a collaborative iterative process through marketing specialization students of the University of Jaffna. The PAR framework enabled students to work closely with the business owner through planning cycles, action cycles, and reflection cycles. Activities included an initial needs analysis, customer surveys, and creating the most important digital assets such as Google Maps registration, and formal business profiles on Instagram, WhatsApp Business, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Students also produced promotional material such as branded posts and short videos, and taught the owner basic digital marketing and social media management skills. As a result, Super Tea gained more online visibility, customer inquiry response, and social media interaction, with the number of likes, sharing, and comments indicating their stronger brand interaction. The business owner also indicated initial unawareness of digital tools but evolved to acquire the ability to post messages and respond to customers on their own. The process also generated enhanced intellectual literacy and marketing capability for the owner and staff. This PAR shows how affordable, phased digital strategies can help resource-poor MSMEs to improve market presence without compromising their niche identity. It highlights the importance of integrating functional digital training, student participation, and infrastructure facilitation to build small businesses in rural or remote areas. Originality of the project lies in its educational worth and practical application of digital tools, which reflects a sustainable model for teaching and implementation of digital marketing in real-life MSME contexts.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Digital Transformation, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Practical Learning, Rural Business Development, Student-Led Projects