



# **International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and Technology (IJARETY)**

**Volume 12, Issue 6, November-December 2025**

**Impact Factor: 8.152**



# Strategic Evaluation and Enhancement of Digital Marketing Practices in Traditional B2B Sales: A Case Study of Mars Enterprises, Kolhapur

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**ABSTRACT:** The industrial safety distribution sector in India has historically depended on physical meetings, catalogue demonstrations, personal persuasion, and field-driven relationship building. While this approach creates strong credibility and repeat orders, it also suffers from scalability constraints, high travel cost, and limited market outreach. This research paper evaluates the traditional sales system followed by Mars Enterprises, a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) distributor in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, based on a 12-week On-the-Job Training experience. A mixed-method research framework involving qualitative observation, competitor benchmarking, catalogue analysis, and theoretical validation was adopted. The findings highlight three core inefficiencies: excessive dependency on physical visits, static non-searchable catalogues, and absence of digital inbound lead generation mechanisms. A strategic four-pillar hybrid model is proposed involving SEO-enabled website redesign, content-based digital knowledge resources, B2B LinkedIn presence, and CRM-driven lead nurturing. The study demonstrates that a hybrid selling model can significantly improve capacity utilization, lower per-lead cost, document institutional knowledge, and enhance inbound marketing outcomes without compromising traditional relationship strengths. The paper contributes to the growing need for digital adaptation among regional industrial distributors in India.

**KEYWORDS:** B2B Sales, PPE Industry, Kolhapur, Digital Marketing, CRM, Content Strategy, Industrial Safety, Hybrid Selling, SEO

## I. INTRODUCTION

Traditional B2B selling in Indian industrial markets has been centered around personal trust, relationship building, catalogue demonstrations, and consultative field interaction. Regional PPE suppliers like Mars Enterprises have established strong customer loyalty through physical safety audits, technical recommendations, and repeat field visits. These personal engagements have historically resulted in recurring orders, long-term account retention, and close buyer-seller relationships.

However, industrial procurement behavior has changed significantly in the last decade. Buyers increasingly research product specifications, compliance norms, certifications, and vendor credibility online before initiating contact. Search engines, B2B directories, LinkedIn profiles, and industry content have become preliminary information checkpoints. Distributors without digital presence risk losing inbound visibility and falling behind competitors who appear on online listings.

Mars Enterprises operates with a deeply traditional sales cycle — catalogue-driven awareness, physical demonstration, on-site consultation, and manual quotation follow-ups. The absence of digital information assets, online discovery mechanisms, CRM, or measurable funnel analytics limits operational productivity. Thus, integrating digital touchpoints alongside traditional strengths can enhance scale, pre-qualification, and inbound demand without disrupting established personal rapport

## II. INDUSTRY BACKGROUND AND COMPANY OVERVIEW

### 2.1 PPE Industry in India

The Indian PPE sector is valued at approximately ₹13,000 crores as of 2023 and is expected to grow at 8–10% CAGR until 2028. Increasing workplace safety awareness, compliance enforcement, ISO/BIS norms, and corporate safety audits have driven continuous demand. Products such as helmets, hand gloves, harnesses, safety shoes, protective eyewear, coveralls, and respirators are required across industries including automotive, engineering, foundries,

chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and power plants. Procurement decisions are increasingly compliance-led rather than price-led.

Regional distributors play a critical role between manufacturers and end users, especially when procurement requires technical consultation. Local PPE decision-making often includes safety criteria, certification standards (ISI, EN, CE), on-site assessment, usage training, and tailored risk mitigation.

## 2.2 Company Profile: Mars Enterprises

Mars Enterprises is a Kolhapur-based PPE distribution firm established in 2013. It supplies certified safety products across Western Maharashtra and represents brands like Karam, Venus, and 3M. The company differentiates itself through consultative selling, product expertise, and shop-floor risk assessments rather than pure price competition. Its operations involve field visits, catalogue presentations, quotations, and technical clarifications. A flat organizational structure enables rapid communication, but the organization lacks digital documentation and centralized CRM systems.

## 2.3 Competitive Structure

PPE competition in Kolhapur includes:

- Local unorganized vendors using IndiaMART
- Regional distributors with basic online listings
- Established suppliers with SEO-enabled websites

Digital adoption varies widely. Competitors like Synergic Safety India and Paramhans Industry have started using searchable websites and inbound forms, whereas Mars Enterprises depends solely on physical interactions.

## III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite its strong reputation and consultative strengths, Mars Enterprises faces structural challenges due to:

1. **High manpower cost per lead due to field travel**
2. **Static printed catalogue lacking searchability**
3. **Manual quotations and WhatsApp follow-ups**
4. **No CRM-based lead tracking or nurturing**
5. **Lack of inbound digital discovery**
6. **Knowledge bottleneck at leadership level due to absence of digital content**

This creates operational inefficiency, geographical limitation, and missed lead qualification opportunities.

## IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### Primary Objective

To evaluate limitations of traditional field-driven selling at Mars Enterprises and propose a pragmatic hybrid digital-traditional enhancement strategy.

### Secondary Objectives

- To document physical sales cycle and capacity utilization gaps
- To assess catalogue dependency and repetitive clarifications
- To benchmark digital presence of regional PPE competitors
- To create a phased SEO-content-CRM adoption model
- To improve lead qualification, conversion, and visibility

## V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method exploratory and descriptive framework was used.

### 5.1 Primary Data

- **Participatory observation** during 12 weeks of field OJT
- **Client visit documentation** including duration, objections, information needs, and conversion stage
- **Time-motion observation** of travel hours vs. productive engagement

**5.2 Secondary Data**

- **Competitor benchmarking** through Google results, IndiaMART listings, and website review
- **Catalogue evaluation** to identify usability and communication gaps
- **Literature review** on inbound marketing, CRM, hybrid selling, and digital funnel strategies

**5.3 Analytical Tools**

- Value chain inefficiency assessment
- Capacity utilization interpretation
- Digital maturity comparison
- Inbound funnel mapping

This framework ensured triangulation and validation of observed inefficiencies.

**VI. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS****6.1 Capacity Utilization and Lead Cost**

A salesperson can visit only **2–3 clients daily**, consuming 2–3 hours of travel and waiting per visit. This raises manpower cost per conversion and limits geographical expansion.

**6.2 Catalogue Dependency**

Mars Enterprises relies heavily on printed catalogues. Drawbacks include:

- No searchability
- No digital access
- Difficult client documentation
- Immediate obsolescence upon compliance changes

Digitally unbundling catalogue content enables:

- Category pages
- Search filters
- Compliance data updates
- SEO indexing

**6.3 Competitor Benchmarking Table**

Company	Website	Online Inquiry	Catalogue	Digital Visibility
Mars Enterprises	Basic / Static	No forms	Print only	Very Low
Paramhans Industry	Active website	Inquiry forms	Digital catalogue	High
Synergic Safety India	Full SEO	Automated responses	Updated categories	Very High
Dinesh Tools	IndiaMART only	Phone	Product sheet	Low

Competitors with digital presence attract pre-qualified inbound leads and reduce field dependence.

**6.4 Reactive Marketing**

Traditional sourcing depends on referrals and cold visits. No structured inbound marketing funnel exists. Lack of SEO prevents automatic discovery when buyers search locally for PPE suppliers.

**6.5 Knowledge Bottleneck**

Technical knowledge resides with partners. Repetitive question handling consumes valuable time. Digital content (blogs, compliance FAQs, videos) can scale expertise without additional manpower.

**VII. STRATEGIC DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT MODEL**

A four-pillar hybrid solution is proposed:



**Pillar 1: Website + SEO**

- Location keywords such as “PPE supplier Kolhapur”
- Dynamic product pages with quote forms
- Google My Business optimization
- Analytics for funnel measurement

**Pillar 2: Content Marketing**

- Compliance explainers
- Product category landing pages
- Risk assessment checklists
- Downloadable catalogues as lead magnets

**Pillar 3: LinkedIn Presence**

- Safety updates, compliance insights, case posts
- Industry network building
- Digital authority positioning

**Pillar 4: CRM and Email Automation**

- Lead segmentation
- Automated follow-ups
- Dormant lead nurturing
- Order reminder cycles

This model preserves the consultative strengths of traditional selling while scaling reach.

## VIII. CONTRIBUTION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

**Industry Impact**

Regional PPE distributors can modernize without large investment. Digital tools reduce repetitive field travel, shorten buying cycles, and improve conversion planning.

**Managerial Insight**

Digitizing repetitive information liberates field teams to focus on strategic activities. CRM centralizes visibility, improves forecasting, and protects institutional memory.

## IX. CONCLUSION

A hybrid selling model is strategically superior for regional PPE suppliers. Traditional strengths — trust, expertise, consultation — remain intact, while digital assets improve inbound demand, search visibility, and capacity utilization. Mars Enterprises can gain competitive advantage with minimal financial risk by adopting phased digital changes.

## X. FUTURE SCOPE

- Predictive CRM analytics
- Webinars and industry knowledge assets
- SEO expansion into industrial belts
- E-commerce integration for repeat orders
- AI chat support for compliance queries

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## International Journal of Advanced Research in Education and Technology

**ISSN: 2394-2975**

**Impact Factor: 8.152**