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THE ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA-BASED MARKETING STRATEGIES AND GLOBAL TRENDS: DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY

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Abstract

This study examines the role of English language education in shaping social media–based marketing strategies within the context of global trends. In the era of digital globalization, English has become a strategic competence that influences how brands communicate, construct identities, and engage audiences across borders. The purpose of this research is to explore how English language proficiency, acquired through formal and informal education, is utilized by digital marketers in designing content, narratives, and interactions on social media platforms. This study employs a qualitative approach using digital ethnography, with data collected through online observations, in-depth interviews, and analysis of social media content across platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The findings reveal that English language education plays a significant role not only as a communication tool but also as a cultural and symbolic resource that enhances brand credibility, global appeal, and trend alignment. The study concludes that English language education contributes strategically to contemporary marketing management by enabling marketers to adapt to global trends while maintaining local relevance, highlighting the need for integrative language education aligned with digital marketing practices.

Keywords : *English Language Education; Digital Marketing Strategy; Social Media Marketing; Global Trends*

Introduction

English has evolved into a global lingua franca that plays a crucial role in cross-border communication and professional contexts, particularly in the contemporary digital era. Proficiency in English not only facilitates verbal interaction but also provides access to global resources, knowledge, and international market opportunities (Bajuri Sahnan, 2025). Previous studies indicate that English language competence has a significant impact on the effectiveness of digital marketing and consumer engagement in global markets (Haryadi et al., 2025). In the context of digital marketing, word choice and linguistic strategies strongly influence consumer perception and brand competitiveness on social media platforms (Haryadi et al., 2025).

The rapid growth of social media as a primary marketing channel has intensified the demand for language use that is not only communicatively effective but also capable of capturing the attention of global audiences. English language skills have become a

strategic asset in creating persuasive, engaging, and trend-responsive digital content (Haryadi et al., 2025). Amid the widespread use of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, English functions as a key tool for constructing marketing narratives that resonate with multilingual and multicultural audiences. Other studies demonstrate that the integration of digital literacy and English language skills enhances the effectiveness of marketing strategies among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the digital era (Sirait & Batubara, 2022).

From a policy perspective, the strengthening of English language education has also gained increased attention in Indonesia. Through the Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Number 13 of 2025, the government has introduced adjustments to the national curriculum, including the reinforcement of English as a subject within the structure of primary and secondary education (Permendikdasmen No. 13/2025). This policy reflects a systematic effort to prepare Indonesian youth to compete globally by equipping them with strong language competencies. Such policy directions align closely with the needs of the workforce and marketing practices in the digital era, where English has become an essential skill for building effective digital-based marketing communication.

Nevertheless, a gap remains between the English language skills possessed by marketing practitioners and the demands of contemporary digital marketing practices. Research conducted by Sirait and Batubara (2022) highlights that enhancing digital literacy alongside the integration of English within marketing contexts serves as a strategic component for expanding market reach and strengthening product and service competitiveness on global digital platforms. Similarly, the increasing use of English by young content creators in digital marketing narratives reveals persistent challenges, including disparities in language proficiency and the negotiation of local cultural contexts, which warrant deeper scholarly analysis (Af'ida & Faruk, 2025).

Accordingly, this study explores the role of English language education in social media–based marketing strategies within the framework of global trends, employing a digital ethnography approach to investigate how language skills are understood and applied by marketing actors in increasingly dominant digital media environments. This approach is expected to generate rich insights into evolving linguistic practices in marketing alongside ongoing digital transformation and recent educational policy developments.

Research Method

Research Design and Type

This study employs a qualitative research design with a digital ethnography approach to explore the role of English language education in social media–based marketing strategies within the context of global trends. Qualitative research is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of social practices, meanings, and interactions embedded in digital environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Digital ethnography extends traditional ethnographic methods into online spaces, enabling researchers to examine cultural practices, language use, and social interactions as they naturally occur on digital platforms (Pink et al., 2023). This approach is particularly relevant for investigating how English language competencies are enacted in marketing narratives and strategies across social media.

Research Site and Context

The research was conducted in digital spaces, specifically on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which are widely used for marketing communication and content creation. These platforms were selected due to their prominence in shaping global digital trends and their intensive use of English in marketing discourse. Digital platforms function not merely as communication tools but as social and cultural spaces where language practices and marketing strategies are continuously negotiated (Hine, 2020). Therefore, the research location is defined as a virtual field site, consistent with contemporary ethnographic research in online environments.

Data Sources

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary qualitative data. Primary data were obtained from digital marketing practitioners, content creators, and social media managers who actively utilize English in their marketing activities. These participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus (Etikan, 2016). Secondary data include social media posts, captions, videos, comments, and engagement metrics that reflect the use of English in marketing content. Such multimodal data are essential in digital ethnography, as meaning is constructed not only through text but also through visuals, audio, and interaction patterns (Pink et al., 2023).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through online participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and digital content analysis. Online observation was conducted by systematically monitoring marketing content and audience interactions over a specific period to capture naturally occurring language practices (Hine, 2020). In-depth interviews were conducted virtually to explore participants' educational backgrounds in English, their perceptions of global trends, and their strategic language choices in marketing activities. Additionally, digital artifacts such as hashtags, captions, and brand narratives were documented and archived as qualitative data. The use of multiple data collection techniques enhances data richness and credibility through methodological triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure, involving data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns related to the role of English language education, strategic language use, and adaptation to global marketing trends. Coding was conducted iteratively to allow themes to emerge inductively from the data. To strengthen trustworthiness, the study applied credibility strategies such as prolonged engagement in the digital field, peer debriefing, and reflective memo writing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; now reaffirmed in Tracy, 2020). The analytical process enabled the researcher to interpret how English language education functions as a strategic and cultural resource in social media-based marketing practices.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section presents the empirical findings derived from digital ethnographic data, including online observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis of social media marketing content. The results demonstrate how English language education shapes marketing strategies, content creation, and engagement practices in relation to global trends.

Overview of Data Collection

Data were collected from:

a) 12 digital marketing practitioners and content creators active on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube
b) Online observations of 120 marketing posts (captions, videos, hashtags, and comments)
c) Digital documentation, including screenshots of posts, analytics summaries, and branding materials

Table 1. Summary of Research Data Sources

Data Source	Description	Quantity
In-depth interviews	Digital marketers & content creators	12 participants
Social media observations	Marketing posts using English or bilingual content	120 posts
Digital documentation	Captions, hashtags, visuals, and engagement metrics	85 files

Findings from Online Observation

The observational data indicate that English is dominantly used in brand positioning, hashtags, slogans, and call-to-action phrases, especially when targeting international or trend-oriented audiences. English expressions such as *"limited drop," "global quality," "inspired by world trends,"* and *"shop worldwide"* were frequently observed across platforms.

The observation also revealed a hybrid linguistic strategy, where English is combined with local language to maintain cultural proximity while projecting a global brand image. This pattern reflects strategic language adaptation rather than random code-switching.

Findings from In-depth Interviews

Interview data reveal that participants perceive English language education as a strategic foundation for their marketing practices rather than merely a communication skill.

One participant stated:

"My background in English education really helps me understand global trends faster and create content that feels international but still relatable to local audiences." (Participant 4, Digital Marketer)

Another participant emphasized confidence and credibility:

"Using English captions makes the brand look more professional and trustworthy, especially for global consumers." (Participant 9, Content Creator)

These responses suggest that English language education enhances strategic thinking, trend interpretation, and brand credibility in social media marketing.

Findings from Documentation Analysis

The analysis of documented content shows that posts utilizing English or bilingual formats received higher engagement rates, particularly in terms of shares and comments from international audiences.

Table 2. Engagement Comparison Based on Language Use

Language Used in Content	Average Likes	Average Comments	Audience Reach
Local language only	Medium	Low–Medium	Mostly local
English only	High	Medium–High	Global
Bilingual (English + Local)	Highest	High	Local & global

These findings indicate that English functions as a symbolic and strategic resource that expands audience reach and aligns marketing content with global trends.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that English language education plays a multidimensional role in social media–based marketing strategies, encompassing communication, branding, cultural signaling, and strategic adaptation to global trends. This aligns with recent studies suggesting that English proficiency enhances digital marketing effectiveness and global consumer engagement (Haryadi et al., 2025; Af'ida & Faruk, 2025).

Consistent with Pink et al. (2023), this digital ethnography reveals that language use on social media is embedded in broader cultural and symbolic practices. English is not merely a linguistic tool but a marker of global identity and trend awareness, reinforcing brand positioning in competitive digital environments. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on quantitative engagement metrics, this research provides contextual and interpretive insights into how and why English is strategically employed in marketing narratives.

Furthermore, the findings support Sirait and Batubara's (2022) argument that the integration of digital literacy and English competence strengthens marketing performance, particularly among small and emerging brands. However, this study extends their work by demonstrating that formal and informal English language education influences marketers' confidence, creativity, and strategic decision-making, not just technical execution.

A key contribution of this research lies in its ethnographic perspective, which captures naturally occurring language practices across platforms. Unlike survey-based studies, this research reveals the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of marketers as they negotiate global trends and local cultural contexts. This highlights the advantage of digital ethnography in uncovering the symbolic and cultural dimensions of marketing language use (Khoiruman, et al., 2025).

In addition, this study identifies a persistent challenge: disparities in English proficiency and cultural adaptation skills among marketers. This finding echoes recent concerns raised by Af'ida and Faruk (2025), who note that linguistic competence alone is insufficient without cultural sensitivity. Therefore, the study emphasizes the need for English language education that integrates digital marketing contexts, cultural awareness, and global trend analysis.

Overall, this research contributes to the existing literature by positioning English language education as a strategic and cultural asset in social media marketing

management. It offers empirical evidence that language education, when aligned with digital and global trends, enhances brand competitiveness, audience engagement, and market expansion in the digital era.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that English language education plays a crucial and strategic role in shaping social media–based marketing strategies in response to global trends. Through a digital ethnography approach, the findings reveal that English is not merely used as a communication tool but functions as a cultural, symbolic, and strategic resource that enhances brand credibility, expands audience reach, and supports alignment with international market trends. The integration of English language competence with digital literacy enables marketing practitioners to design persuasive content, engage multicultural audiences, and negotiate local–global dynamics effectively. This study contributes to the literature by providing in-depth, context-rich insights into lived marketing practices in digital spaces, highlighting the importance of aligning English language education with contemporary digital marketing needs to strengthen competitiveness in the global digital economy.

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