

Affiliate Marketing Strategies for Effective Product Promotion in the Digital Era: Literature Review

Lidya Veronica Christy Rihidima^{1*}, Mima Kurniasih², Billy Purwocaroko Noeringtyas³, Selvi Permata Groda⁴, Muazila Norisnita⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Universitas Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jawa Timur

lidya.veronica.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id¹, mima.kurniasih.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id²,

bp.noeringtyas.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id³, selvi.groda.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id⁴,

muazila.norisnita.fisip@upnjatim.ac.id⁵

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how affiliate marketing contributes to the effectiveness of product promotion in the digital era. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research synthesizes findings from 15 relevant peer-reviewed articles published in recent years. The analysis highlights four key strategies that influence the success of affiliate marketing: information quality, subjective knowledge, interactivity, and affiliate characteristics. Results show that high-quality information builds consumer trust, while subjective knowledge helps affiliates deliver persuasive messages. Interactivity, especially through live streaming and two-way communication, enhances audience engagement. Furthermore, emotional expression, credibility, and authenticity of affiliates significantly influence consumers' purchasing decisions. The study concludes that affiliate marketing is a cost-effective promotional strategy that enhances product visibility and purchase intention through trusted intermediaries. These findings provide important implications for businesses to develop more strategic, data-driven affiliate marketing campaigns.

Keywords: *Affiliate Marketing, Marketing Innovation, Product Promotion Effectiveness, Digital Marketing, Live Streaming*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana pemasaran afiliasi berkontribusi terhadap efektivitas promosi produk di era digital. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis (SLR), penelitian ini menyintesis temuan dari 15 artikel *peer-review* yang relevan yang diterbitkan dalam beberapa tahun terakhir. Analisis ini menyoroti empat strategi utama yang memengaruhi keberhasilan pemasaran afiliasi: kualitas informasi, pengetahuan subjektif, interaktivitas, dan karakteristik afiliasi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa informasi berkualitas tinggi membangun kepercayaan konsumen, sementara pengetahuan subjektif membantu afiliasi menyampaikan pesan persuasif. Interaktivitas, terutama melalui *streaming* langsung dan komunikasi dua arah, meningkatkan keterlibatan audiens. Selain itu, ekspresi emosional, kredibilitas, dan keaslian afiliasi secara signifikan memengaruhi keputusan pembelian konsumen. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemasaran afiliasi adalah strategi promosi hemat biaya yang meningkatkan visibilitas produk dan niat pembelian melalui perantara terpercaya. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi bisnis untuk mengembangkan kampanye pemasaran afiliasi yang lebih strategis dan berbasis data.

Kata kunci: *Pemasaran Afiliasi, Inovasi Pemasaran, Efektivitas Promosi Produk, Pemasaran Digital, Live Streaming*

INTRODUCTION

In this digital era, everyone is familiar with and no longer skeptical about the use of mobile phones. In fact, they have come to appreciate the benefits of mobile phones, which make their lives easier. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, many people have begun to switch to instant solutions and have grown comfortable with them. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, people became accustomed to shopping from home, and they were even restricted from leaving their homes. To this day, this has become a habit, and online shopping has started to become a common practice among the public due to its convenience and ease, as opposed to having to spend time making purchases directly at offline stores (Rihidima et al., 2022).

This phenomenon presents an intriguing opportunity for entrepreneurs and business owners. In this digital era, businesses must transition to online operations to increase revenue and ensure the sustainability of their operations. Online sales have become a trend and are now widely adopted in the business world. With the increasing number of businesses developing their operations to sell online, this also presents a new challenge for them, as competition in online sales will continue to grow and become increasingly intense (Paramastri, 2024).

In response to this, innovation in marketing is necessary. Therefore, every business owner must be able to offer the best deals or promotions to influence the public to purchase the promoted products. For online marketing, such as through social media, creating digital content, marketing on various digital platforms, or e-commerce, these have become commonplace, and this also requires companies to allocate more funds for their marketing efforts. This is because companies must set aside specific capital dedicated to digital marketing. To minimize this, it would be better for companies to consider affiliate marketing.

Affiliate marketing is highly effective in helping companies promote their products (Mangio & Domenico, 2022). This marketing innovation also reduces the burden on companies. Companies do not need to spend a significant amount of capital to hire live streaming hosts. By using affiliate marketing, companies only pay commissions based on the products sold that have been promoted by the affiliate (Suman, 2022). Affiliate marketing is also free to promote any product because there is no binding contract between the company and the affiliate marketer. However, the party responsible for mediating the affiliate marketing collaboration between the company and the affiliate marketer is typically the e-commerce platform.

Given the growing trend of people becoming less inclined to shop outside their homes, researchers argue that affiliate marketing is an extremely effective marketing innovation in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to trust and be interested in a product if there are reviews available about it, as they cannot physically touch or see the product when shopping online. The presence of affiliate marketing helps consumers conduct research before making a purchase, as

word-of-mouth influence is more effective in swaying consumers. (Nadroo et al., 2024)

This study aims to examine in depth how affiliate marketing contributes to the effectiveness of product promotion in the digital era. Through a literature review approach, this study explores the key strategies used in affiliate marketing and the factors that need to be considered so that affiliate campaigns can attract consumer interest.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a performance-based digital marketing strategy in which businesses collaborate with affiliates/publishers to display links to their products or services on the affiliates' platforms. This strategy uses a commission-based model, so affiliates earn commissions when consumers make purchases by accessing the affiliate's links or social media accounts that direct them to the promoted merchant (Mangio & Domenico, 2022). This offers a unique innovation in digital marketing compared to previous approaches. Traditional digital marketing promotions primarily focused on social media content, uploading posters on social media, and enhancing social media visuals to attract consumers. However, today, reviews from individuals (affiliates) play a crucial role for businesses in achieving higher revenue. Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a digital communication tool that enables consumers to share their opinions, support, and recommendations regarding a product, service, or brand (Chopra et al., 2024). In the context of affiliate marketing, eWOM plays a significant role when affiliates share their personal experiences, reviews, or testimonials on their online platforms, which then influence the perceptions and purchasing decisions of their audience (Nadroo et al., 2025).

Product Promotion Effectiveness in the Digital Era

According to Hultink et al. (1997), product promotion is a strategic approach to attract the attention of existing consumers and potential new customers, with the aim of stimulating purchasing interest and indirectly improving the company's financial performance. In the context of affiliate digital marketing, the effectiveness of promotion does not only depend on the message conveyed but also on how well affiliate content (such as reviews, testimonials, or recommendations) can capture users' attention and foster their interest in a particular product. Low et al. (2021) argue that despite the rapid development of digital technology, recommendation systems that rely on trust remain the primary factor influencing the effectiveness of online product promotions. Thus, it can be concluded that reviews prioritizing the quality of information can enhance the effectiveness of product promotions.

When measuring the success of promotions in digital marketing, including affiliate strategies, there are several key indicators commonly used: reach, engagement, conversion, and return on investment (ROI). Reach describes how

widely the promotional message has been disseminated to the audience. In other words, the more individuals who view the promotional content through the affiliate digital platform, the greater the potential influence on consumers. In the context of affiliate marketing, engagement levels indicate how interested and active the audience is in responding to recommendations made by affiliates. In affiliate marketing, conversion serves as a measure of how effective affiliate links are in directing the audience toward specific actions, such as making a purchase. Return on Investment (ROI) measures the efficiency of promotional costs incurred compared to the results obtained. (Ramli et al. (2024)

The Relationship Between Affiliate Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior, or the consumer's response to affiliate marketing, has a very close relationship. Every consumer has expectations when searching for desired products. When they are in the information-gathering stage to convince themselves before making a purchase, they seek information that aligns with their expectations and hopes. This aligns with the research by Ko & Ho (2024), which explains that there are key factors in driving consumer purchase intention in the context of affiliate marketing, namely satisfaction, perception of the value offered, and trust in the affiliate or streamer. Some elements affiliates can use to create engaging promotional content include product pricing, clear descriptions, authentic photos or videos, product benefits or features, the level of trust in the affiliate, and reviews from other users.

Additionally, in the digital era, impulse buying behavior is becoming increasingly common as consumers are constantly exposed to various forms of promotions that are fast-paced, interactive, and easily accessible. One promotional channel proven to be effective in triggering impulse purchases is affiliate marketing. This behavior is what strengthens the relationship between affiliates and consumers. Such stimuli can prompt consumers to seek immediate satisfaction or form a deeper emotional connection with products that catch their attention. This then creates a strong urge that appears suddenly, lasts continuously, and is difficult to control, thus encouraging consumers to make purchases quickly. (Gulfranz et al., 2022)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to comprehensively examine how Affiliate Marketing Strategies impact the effectiveness of product promotion in the digital era. The SLR approach was chosen because it provides a structured and in-depth understanding of previous research findings and helps summarize relevant knowledge objectively, systematically, and free from bias (Tam & Lung, 2024).

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

The data sources used in this study are secondary literature, including peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, and other relevant

academic publications (Hoang et al., 2023; Madhavan et al., 2022). The search process was conducted through several electronic databases such as Elsevier, Sage, and Emerald Insight. The search keywords used were developed through discussions among the authors and based on references from previous studies, with a focus on the terms: “Affiliate Marketing” and “Product Promotion.”

Literature Selection Process

In the initial stage, researchers identified 925 articles from various databases. There were 47 articles from Elsevier, 714 articles from Sage, and 164 articles from Emerald Insight. These articles were then screened through several stages, including reviewing titles, abstracts, and keywords to assess their relevance to the research focus. After the initial screening, 57 full-text articles were downloaded and reviewed in detail. From this number, 15 articles were ultimately selected as the basis for analysis, as they were deemed most relevant to the research focus: the impact of affiliate marketing on the effectiveness of product promotion in a digital environment.

Data Analysis Techniques

The selected literature was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved identifying the main themes of each article, grouping them based on topic or perspective, and synthesizing the findings to address the research question. As a result, the researcher was able to develop a comprehensive understanding of how affiliate marketing contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of product promotion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the SLR review, it was found that affiliate marketing uses various digital marketing strategies to increase the effectiveness of product promotion in the digital era. There are at least four main strategies that are often used, including information quality, subjective knowledge, interactivity, and affiliate characteristics.

Table 1. Overview of studies about Affiliate Marketing Strategies for Effective Product Promotion in the Digital Era

Relevant Research	Total Number of Studies	Affiliate Marketing Strategies for Effective Product Promotion in the Digital Era
Zhu et al. (2020)	1	Kualitas informasi
Ameen et al. (2023)	1	Pengetahuan subjektif
Kang et al. (2020); Gosh (2021); Yang et al. (2023); Yingqing et al. (2024); Porto & Borges (2024)	5	Interactivity

Meng et al. (2021); Guoetal (2022); Xu et al. (2022); Felbert & Breur (2024); Tian & Frank (2024); Yingqing et al. (2024); Yang et al. (2024); Wahab et al. (2024); Zhang & Prebensen (2024)	9	Karakteristik afiliasi
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Source: Managed by the Author

Discussion

Information Quality

In digital marketing through affiliates, the exchange of information from an affiliate is paramount. In providing this information, an affiliate usually reviews a product or clearly promotes a specific product. However, in providing this information, consumers who are the audience in live streaming and content really want the information provided to be of high quality.

In Zhu et al. (2020) study, it is explained that the higher the perceived quality of information from affiliate promotional content, the greater the consumers' trust in the product and the recommending party. This ultimately strengthens consumers' confidence in product descriptions and enhances the effectiveness of promotions. Furthermore, the quality of information can also be assessed by consumers themselves. Consumers can determine whether the information provided is truly high-quality and accurate or merely aimed at profit (Yoo et al., 2023). High-quality information ensures that product information is accurate and aligns with the actual product, and the information provided is reliable (Kim et al., 2020). If all these quality points are met by an affiliate, the effectiveness of their product promotion will also be achieved because consumers will be satisfied and will take the steps to make a purchase.

Subjective Knowledge

Adapted from Tassiello & Tillotson's (2020) research, the subjective knowledge that affiliates have about the products they promote is an important element in the early stages of a promotional strategy. In digital affiliate marketing, a high level of subjective knowledge enables affiliates to present information in a more convincing and relatable manner, thereby creating a sense of closeness between the product and potential consumers and minimizing potential doubts in the purchasing decision-making process.

Therefore, the more an affiliate understands the product they are promoting, the greater the consumers' trust in that product. This is because good subjective knowledge can reduce the level of risk consumers perceive (Sharifpour et al., 2014).

In affiliate marketing strategies in the digital era, this trust encourages consumers to be more interested in trying or purchasing the products offered (Ameen et al., 2023). Thus, it can be concluded that subjective knowledge is something that an affiliate must not overlook. Even before promoting a product, it is advisable for affiliates to first research the product thoroughly. Consumer trust is the primary goal that an affiliate must achieve. If consumers already feel confident and satisfied with the knowledge possessed by an affiliate, there is a high likelihood that they will make a purchase by clicking on the affiliate's link or platform.

Interactivity

Furthermore, another important factor in affiliate programs is that affiliates must be able to communicate well with their audience, who will eventually become consumers. Interactivity refers to direct communication between affiliates and their audience, which is made possible through real-time features and high visibility on live streaming platforms. This mechanism enables two-way engagement without time or location constraints, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of product information delivery (Yingqing et al., 2024). According to Kang et al. (2020), interactivity in digital communication plays a crucial role in shaping positive attitudes and behaviors among the audience. In the context of affiliate marketing, high levels of interaction between the affiliate and their followers can build perceptions of authenticity toward the affiliate. This connection contributes to increased interest in the products or brands promoted through the affiliate (Gosh, 2021). Therefore, an affiliate must be able to create a comfortable atmosphere in their virtual interactions.

Interactivity in affiliate marketing not only involves two-way communication but also participatory audience behavior, such as actively providing comments, praise, or support to the affiliate (Foxall, 2021). This behavior is often motivated by the desire to create a pleasant or attractive self-image in the eyes of others. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2023) explain that what makes interactions effective in promoting products is the visualization of content when affiliates conduct reviews or live streams. Therefore, affiliates are expected to prepare themselves and their content thoroughly, as the colors and design of live streams from start to finish also influence consumers' interest and trust in affiliates (Yang et al., 2023). In the digital ecosystem, interactivity not only strengthens the connection between affiliates and followers but also indirectly boosts product visibility and appeal through consumers' emotional and social engagement (Porto & Borges, 2024).

Affiliate Characteristics

In addition to information quality, subjective knowledge, and interactivity, it turns out that affiliate characteristics are also a driving factor in ensuring that product promotions work optimally. This is because the emotions displayed by an affiliate, such as enthusiasm, warmth, and authenticity in delivering promotional content, can directly influence consumers' interest in purchasing the recommended product. Additionally, affiliates typically have their own unique characteristics as part of their

branding. Furthermore, the emotional resonance built through an affiliate's expressions and communication style indirectly creates psychological closeness with the audience, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of promotional strategies in the context of affiliate marketing in the digital era (Meng et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of product promotion is also significantly influenced by the credibility and professionalism of the affiliate, which are characteristics of the affiliate (Xu et al., 2022; Yingqing et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024; Wahab et al., 2024). Therefore, an affiliate must be able to present themselves in a manner consistent with the products they promote. For example, if an affiliate is promoting skincare products, it would be more effective for them to display convincing characteristics such as a clean appearance, makeup, elegance, femininity, and others, so that the audience viewing them feels trustworthy toward the affiliate.

An attractive affiliate (both visually and in terms of personality) can increase consumer interest in interacting and making purchases. Furthermore, affiliates with high expertise and trustworthiness can build consumer confidence in the promoted brand and increase the desire to purchase (Felbert & Breur, 2024). Another factor contributing to the effectiveness of product promotion is the warmth and humor of influencers, as these can create positive emotional experiences for the audience (Tian & Frank, 2024). An affiliate must also have positive characteristics when delivering messages or reviewing products, as motivational messages during the trial phase are crucial for consumers, and this is closely tied to the affiliate's credibility (Zhang & Prebensen, 2024). All of this makes it easy to create effective product promotions, as consumers are highly influenced by electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Wahab et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of a systematic literature review, it can be concluded that affiliate marketing is a highly relevant and effective digital marketing strategy for promoting products in the digital era. This strategy has proven to enhance promotional effectiveness through several key elements, including the quality of information provided by affiliates, the subjective knowledge affiliates possess about the product, the interactivity between affiliates and their audience, and the personal characteristics of affiliates such as credibility, warmth, and authenticity. These four elements contribute to the formation of consumer trust, emotional influence, and purchase motivation, including impulse buying behavior. Thus, affiliate marketing not only helps businesses reach a broader market at relatively efficient costs but also serves as a bridge between digital consumer experiences and practical, persuasive purchasing decisions.

Given the potential offered by affiliate marketing, businesses in the digital era are advised to be more open and strategic in leveraging affiliate marketing as part of their product promotion efforts. Companies need to build relationships with affiliates who have strong, credible, and relevant characteristics to their target market.

Additionally, companies should provide adequate product training or information to affiliates so they can deliver informative and convincing promotional content. For future development, further research could focus on quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of affiliate marketing campaigns based on product type, digital platforms used, and the preferences of specific consumer generations to deepen understanding of segmentation and personalization in digital promotions.

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