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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF TIKTOK AFFILIATE CONTENT STRATEGY ON AFFILIATOR EARNINGS THROUGH CONSUMER TRUST

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has created a new economic ecosystem through the integration of social media and marketing activities, particularly the TikTok Affiliate program. This program allows affiliates to earn performance-based income by influencing consumer purchasing decisions through creative and interactive content. This study aims to analyze TikTok affiliate content strategies in increasing income through consumer trust and behavior. The research employed a qualitative method with a literature review approach by analyzing various scientific sources related to affiliate marketing, consumer behavior, and social media algorithms. The results show that creative, relevant, and consistent content strategies significantly influence consumer trust and loyalty, which in turn increase affiliate income. Understanding the TikTok algorithm also plays an important role in determining the reach and effectiveness of promotional content. However, challenges such as limited promotional regulations, intense competition, and inequality between large and small affiliates remain obstacles. Overall, the TikTok Affiliate program has a positive impact on digital economic growth and the empowerment of Indonesia's creative economy.

Keywords: TikTok Affiliate, Content Strategy, Consumer Trust, Affiliate Income, Digital Economy

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to global consumption patterns and marketing strategies. Social media is no longer merely a platform for social interaction but has evolved into a new economic space that fosters the concept of social commerce. One of the fastest-growing platforms in this field is TikTok, which is now not only used as an entertainment application for short videos but also as a source of income through the TikTok Affiliate program. This program allows individual or group content creators to earn commissions by promoting third-party products. The mechanism is based on a performance-based marketing model, where affiliates earn income only when a transaction occurs through the shared link or shopping cart.

From a digital economic perspective, the TikTok Affiliate program offers significant opportunities for businesses to expand their market reach without incurring large promotional costs. Through collaboration with affiliates, products can be promoted more effectively to specific market segments, thereby increasing sales conversion potential. To optimize their earnings, beginner TikTok affiliates need to adopt more structured strategies based on digital literacy and an understanding of consumer behavior. By understanding how consumers search for information, respond to trends, and make purchasing decisions, affiliates can tailor more personal and relevant marketing approaches. The implementation of the right strategy enables beginner affiliates not only to increase income potential but also to contribute to the growth of Indonesia's increasingly competitive social commerce ecosystem, which is driven by digital consumer behavior.

Consumer behavior, which rapidly transforms alongside evolving trends, social media algorithms, and the influence of online social environments, requires affiliates to continuously create new creative ideas that align with current consumer needs. Therefore, affiliates must conduct regular trend research to understand audience consumption patterns and lifestyles. Creativity in content creation is not only aimed at capturing attention but also at building an emotional connection between consumers and promoted products. When the content produced reflects consumer needs and aspirations, the level of trust and purchase intention increases. Thus, innovation and content relevance become key elements in an effective affiliate marketing strategy amid the increasingly dynamic changes in consumer behavior.

The analysis of the influence of TikTok Affiliate content strategies on affiliate income through consumer trust is an interesting topic to study, as it reflects the dynamics of digital entrepreneurship and the transformation of contemporary marketing patterns. Through a structured approach such as trend-based content utilization, personal branding enhancement, and TikTok algorithm optimization affiliates have the potential to increase sales conversions while building consumer trust in purchase decisions. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the influence of TikTok Affiliate content strategies on affiliate income through consumer trust, aiming to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Indonesia's social commerce ecosystem.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Global marketing has undergone a profound transformation in recent years, driven by rapid technological advancements that have significantly altered consumer behavior. Consumers today increasingly prioritize efficiency and convenience in their purchasing

activities. Chaffey and Smith (2020) highlight that social media based marketing remains a dominant strategy used by companies to reach consumers more interactively and efficiently. Through buyer reviews, product information, seller feedback, and peer recommendations, social media functions not only as a promotional channel but also as an interactive space connecting sellers and buyers. Consumer behavior, as described by Kotler and Keller (2016), explains how individuals or groups select, purchase, use, and evaluate products to satisfy their needs and desires.

Affiliate marketing has emerged as one of the most effective digital marketing strategies over the past five years, allowing companies to increase sales with minimal marketing risk since commissions are paid only based on sales performance (Duffy, 2021). This program has gained popularity because it offers a low-cost business model, where content creators can collaborate with brands to promote products to their audiences in a style that suits their content identity, without being bound by long-term contracts.

Affiliate marketing activities conducted through TikTok videos serve as stimuli that evoke consumers' emotional responses and purchase intentions. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) explain that consumer behavior is shaped through three stages: stimulus (the promotional content), organism (psychological reactions such as interest or emotion), and response (the purchase decision). Consumers tend to be more attracted to products that provide comprehensive information, from detailed explanations to authentic customer reviews, which strengthen consumer trust in making purchase decisions.

Dermawan (2024) found that TikTok's personalized algorithm enhances affiliate content reach, leading to increased income for creators. The algorithm operates through a combination of machine learning and user data analysis to determine the most relevant and engaging content for each user, thereby improving user experience by showing content that matches optimal viewing times. Kim and Park (2023) also emphasize that the credibility of affiliates is a major factor influencing audience trust and purchasing decisions. Consumer trust in a product often arises from the tendency to rely on recommendations from trusted individuals or sources with a good reputation.

Affiliate marketing strategies on TikTok play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior through complex psychological and social processes. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974), content delivered by affiliates serves as a primary driver that shapes consumer perceptions, attitudes, and purchase intentions. When affiliates create content that is relevant, informative, and entertaining, consumers not only gain satisfaction from media consumption but also develop trust toward the affiliate as a credible source of recommendations. This positive perception evolves into an attitude that fosters purchase intention and ultimately leads to purchasing behavior. Therefore, the effectiveness of affiliate marketing strategies largely depends on the affiliate's ability to understand consumer needs and motivations, ensuring that promotional messages successfully influence actual buying behavior.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a literature review approach. The method was conducted by collecting and analyzing various relevant literature sources,

including scientific journals, articles, books, and other materials related to the topic of affiliate marketing across several e-commerce platforms. The data obtained were analyzed descriptively to understand existing concepts and to draw conclusions that support the objectives of the study. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for explaining the research topic based on available information without conducting direct field research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis and research findings regarding the influence of TikTok Affiliate content strategies on increasing affiliate income through the understanding of consumer behavior and trust are as follows:

The Influence of Content Strategy on Increasing Income

Content strategy plays a vital role in determining the success of digital marketing, particularly in the context of income growth through social media platforms. Well-designed content can effectively capture audience attention, generate interaction, and encourage sales conversions. Ramadhanti, Idris, and Holisah (2025) state that videos with high engagement such as comments, likes, and shares are more likely to appear on the *For You Page (FYP)*, thereby expanding audience reach.

According to the findings of Sidik, Roswaty, and Veronica (2024), creative and relevant content strategies have been proven to increase consumers' interest and trust in affiliate products on TikTok. This, in turn, directly impacts sales performance and indirectly enhances affiliate income. Creative content also provides consumers with better understanding and experience of a product, which fosters stronger trust and interest, ultimately leading to purchase decisions.

Engaging and audience-relevant content not only drives higher interaction but also strengthens consumer trust and purchase intention. Sanny, Chairunnisa, Sari, Gulo, and Tampubolon (2025) argue that creative, relevant, and interactive content strategies are capable of attracting audience attention and building emotional connections with consumers, thus encouraging loyalty toward the promoted product or brand. Their study found that content strategy has a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.

Therefore, it can be concluded that optimizing effective content strategies serves as a key factor in increasing sales and affiliate income. Attractive and authentic content has been proven to convert audiences into loyal customers on digital platforms such as TikTok Shop, highlighting the central role of creative and consistent content development in sustaining affiliate marketing success.

The Role of TikTok's Algorithm in Determining Reach and Income

TikTok algorithm plays a major role in determining how widely a piece of content can reach audiences and how much potential income affiliates can earn through the TikTok Affiliate program. The platform's algorithmic system operates by identifying user tendencies based on patterns of interaction, watch duration, and the types of content users frequently engage with. Consequently, every uploaded video has the potential to reach a broader audience, even if it originates from accounts with a relatively small number of followers. Setyawan (2024) emphasizes that understanding how the algorithm works is crucial for marketers in creating creative, interactive, and relevant content, thereby ensuring that digital marketing outcomes become more optimal and sustainable.

Perception that TikTok "knows what users want" is not due to intuition but to the platform's powerful ability to predict user behavior and interests through detailed analysis of digital activity. TikTok's recommendation accuracy results from its use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) systems that continuously learn from user interactions with displayed content. The higher the engagement intensity toward a certain type of content, the more the algorithm interprets it as preferred by the user, thus showing similar content more frequently and vice versa.

For You Page (FYP) on TikTok serves as concrete evidence of algorithm-driven content selection, where the video stream is curated almost entirely based on explicit and implicit user interactions with the platform. Baumann et al. (2025) note that as user engagement with preferred content increases, engagement with unrelated hashtags or new content tends to decrease. Therefore, it can be concluded that the TikTok algorithm determines both reach and income primarily through content performance. When content performs poorly in terms of engagement and relevance, its visibility within the algorithm's recommendation system becomes limited; conversely, high-performing content gains greater exposure and income potential for affiliates.

The Role of Affiliators in Understanding Consumer Behavior

An affiliator functions not only as an intermediary between producers and consumers but also as an influencer who understands the needs, preferences, and motivations of their audience. Indasari (2023) explains that affiliate marketing, as carried out by affiliators, has a significant impact on online sales because affiliators are able to influence consumers' purchase intentions. A successful affiliator in implementing an effective promotional strategy is one who can reach their audience by aligning with their preferences, needs, and consumption patterns.

Abbas et al. (2023) further emphasize that the ability to understand and influence consumer behavior is a crucial factor in maintaining customer loyalty and optimizing a company's profit margins. Through careful observation of consumption trends and user interaction patterns on social media, affiliators can design more personal and relevant communication strategies. Therefore, the affiliator's role in understanding consumer behavior becomes a fundamental aspect in ensuring the effectiveness of affiliate marketing strategies.

Factors Influencing Affiliator Income

The ease of access to information and price transparency across various digital platforms have made consumers increasingly critical in assessing the value of a product. The price comparison factor plays an essential role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions, as consumers tend to evaluate multiple offers before making a purchase. Therefore, rational and communicative pricing strategies become key factors for businesses to attract consumer interest, enhance competitiveness, and increase sales opportunities within dynamic digital ecosystems such as TikTok Shop.

According to the findings of Lestari, Sari, and Kurniaty (2024), several factors have a positive and significant influence on *perceived value*, which ultimately impacts affiliates' income through increased consumer purchase intention and loyalty. These factors include:

1. Word of Mouth (WOM) and Social Media Interaction
   WOM and social media engagement strengthen perceived value through recommendations and positive reviews. The more positive reviews provided by previous

consumers, the stronger the confidence of potential buyers in a product. Likewise, endorsements from influencers significantly affect consumer purchasing decisions.

2. Privacy and Security Levels
   High standards of privacy and data security foster a sense of safety and comfort among consumers when transacting online. On platforms such as TikTok Shop, transparent security systems, data encryption, and clear privacy policies enhance trust among users, affiliates, and platform providers. Conversely, when data security is in doubt, consumers tend to hesitate to continue transactions or share personal information. Therefore, strengthening digital security standards is essential to build sustainable trust and engagement between the platform and its users.
3. Consumer Trust
   User trust is a key element driving consumers to make repeat purchases. The higher the consumer's trust in a product, the greater the likelihood of repurchase. Consumer trust emerges when they believe that the seller or e-commerce platform demonstrates integrity, competence, and commitment to delivering on promises without causing risk or harm. Product consistency and quality also contribute to sustaining consumer confidence.

Furthermore, Ariffudin Islam (2022) identifies several key factors influencing the success of utilizing TikTok and Instagram algorithms to enhance brand awareness, which are also relevant to affiliate marketing performance:

1. Content Quality
   Engaging, relevant, and high-quality content is more likely to capture user attention and stimulate interaction between users and creators. Therefore, it is crucial for affiliates to produce creative, informative, and entertaining content to attract audience attention and foster a stronger emotional connection.
2. Consistency
   Consistency in updating and uploading content regularly helps maintain user engagement and strengthens brand awareness, ensuring sustained visibility among users.
3. Hashtags
   The strategic use of hashtags helps users discover desired content more easily without relying solely on algorithmic promotion through the *For You Page (FYP)*. Hashtags also serve as a form of identity and attractiveness that can be measured by how frequently a particular tag related to a brand is used.
4. Understanding User Preferences
   Companies or brands must identify and understand the characteristics, interests, and needs of their target users in order to create relevant and appealing content. Additionally, leveraging existing platform features effectively can help maximize content exposure to the right audience.

In summary, these factors collectively determine the effectiveness of affiliate marketing strategies and the potential income affiliates can earn. A balance between creative content, audience engagement, and digital trust remains essential for achieving sustainable success in the competitive social commerce environment.

Challenges in the TikTok Shop Affiliate Program

The study conducted by Musyiquddin and Insiyah (2025) reveals that although the TikTok Affiliate program holds great potential in enhancing the digital economy and

supporting community income through online marketing, several challenges still need to be addressed by affiliates. These challenges include:

1. Lack of Promotional Regulation
   The absence of clear promotional guidelines often leads to the misuse of product information. It is common to find promotional content on TikTok that does not match the actual product, as some affiliates use sample items or replicas that differ from the original products. Consequently, this discrepancy results in misleading product information and damages consumer trust.
2. High Competition Among Affiliates
   The intense competition among affiliates to capture audience attention can lead to excessive and even addictive content creation behaviors. Moreover, the saturation of similar promotional content may cause audience fatigue, reducing engagement and overall marketing effectiveness.
3. Issues of Transparency and Trust
   A portion of consumers report dissatisfaction due to exaggerated promotions or products that fail to meet expectations. Such issues highlight the importance of transparent communication, honest product representation, and ethical promotional practices to maintain consumer confidence.
4. Gap Between Large and Small Creators
   There exists a significant disparity between major and minor creators. Affiliates with limited followers often struggle to achieve sales due to TikTok's algorithm favoring accounts with broader reach and higher engagement levels, creating inequality in promotional visibility.

Furthermore, Riu and Radjab (2023) note that despite TikTok's potential to enhance brand reach and consumer engagement through affiliate and influencer marketing, several challenges persist for both brands and creators. One of the main difficulties lies in aligning objectives between participation-based contracts and sales-based contracts, which often create disharmony in brand affiliate collaborations. Their study also emphasizes that the rapidly changing trends and algorithmic shifts on TikTok require creators to continuously adapt. Therefore, developing creative strategies, fostering strong collaborations between brands and affiliates, and deepening understanding of the platform's algorithm are essential to ensure effective marketing promotion and sustainable success in the TikTok Affiliate ecosystem.

Economic Impact and Development Opportunities

Musyiquddin and Insiyah (2025) indicate that the TikTok Affiliate program has a significant economic impact and opens new opportunities for the development of digital entrepreneurship. Their study highlights that the integration of affiliate marketing within the TikTok ecosystem has empowered digital creators to monetize their influence and creativity, thereby fostering a competitive and innovative marketplace within the digital economy sector.

The implementation of the affiliate marketing model also has a notable economic effect on improving competitiveness and sales performance among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the digital economy era (Andrianata, Suharsono, Nafis, & Fithrianto, 2025). Collaboration with affiliates enables MSMEs to expand their market reach, increase sales volume, and strengthen brand image without bearing substantial advertising

costs. The study by Andrianata et al. (2025) demonstrated an increase in average market reach by more than threefold and a surge in sales of nearly 250% following the adoption of the affiliate system. Based on these findings, affiliate marketing programs are proven to play a significant role in enhancing community economic opportunities.

Affiliate marketing serves as both a solution and a development opportunity within the creative market economy, as it can be carried out easily without requiring high start-up costs or physical business space. However, success in this field demands strong experience and creativity in producing engaging content aligned with contemporary consumer behavior. Through this approach, affiliate marketing contributes not only to individual income growth but also to the broader empowerment of the digital creative economy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the affiliate marketing program on the TikTok Shop platform plays a significant role in driving digital economic growth, increasing affiliates' income, and creating opportunities for content-based creative business development. Creative, relevant, and interactive content strategies are the primary factors determining the success of digital marketing, as they effectively capture audience attention, build consumer trust, and encourage sales conversions. On the other hand, several challenges remain for affiliates, including the lack of promotional regulations, intense competition among creators, transparency issues, and disparities between large and small accounts influenced by algorithmic factors. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that affiliate marketing not only contributes to individual income growth but also fosters the development of the creative economy and strengthens competitiveness among affiliates. Therefore, optimizing content strategies, understanding platform algorithms, and reinforcing consumer trust are essential keys to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the TikTok Affiliate program as a catalyst for digital economic growth in Indonesia.

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