

A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF AFFILIATE MARKETING STRATEGIES IN E-COMMERCE

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Abstract: Online shopping keeps changing how companies advertise their products, pushing many toward using partner promotions that pay only when results happen. Instead of paying upfront, stores work with writers, social media users, product reviewers, and others who share unique purchase links or offer deals to followers. In Coimbatore, this method's effect on what buyers think and how they act became the focus of investigation. A clear structure guided the inquiry, depending on firsthand answers from 110 people who shop online regularly. Each person filled out a fixed set of questions, helping gather consistent details about income, age, habits, opinions. To make sense of these replies, researchers looked at how often certain patterns appeared across groups.

Results show affiliate marketing sways what people notice, believe, or buy - especially college-educated, mid-earning youth. When influencers seem genuine, clearly state sponsorships, offer real perks like price cuts or refunds, shoppers respond more positively. Yet shady ads or hidden paid links can erode confidence over time. Honest methods, original content, clear messaging matter most if brands want these campaigns to work well online.

Keywords: Affiliate Marketing, E-Commerce, Consumer Behaviour, Digital Marketing, Trust, Transparency, Online Purchase Decision.

I. Introduction

Online shopping keeps growing fast because of new tech changes. Staying ahead means websites now lean on results-driven ads more than before. One key method? Team-ups where outsiders push goods and get paid per sale or sign-up. These partners use links, social posts, articles, or videos to bring in buyers - a move that ties effort directly to outcome.

Nowadays more people go online using phones, so they see lots of product tips linked to rewards for the recommender. Seeing these suggestions shapes what items catch attention, whether they feel trustworthy, even if someone buys them. Still, how honest a pitch feels, how clear the motives are, that decides if buyers listen or look away.

A closer look at how people see products shifts when they encounter affiliate promotions - this work explores that shift in Coimbatore. Instead of broad claims, it focuses on real reactions shaped by online referral methods. While some might expect a neutral response, actual choices often bend toward what feels personally recommended. Because trust plays a role, the way messages are delivered matters just as much as the product itself. Through local responses, patterns emerge about who buys why. Not every campaign works the same; location colors the outcome.

II. Literature review

Lately, research has shown that affiliate marketing strategies significantly influence consumer behavior in e-commerce, particularly in shaping purchase intentions, trust levels, and engagement with digital content. However, much of the existing literature focuses primarily on sales performance and traffic generation, giving comparatively less attention to consumer perception, transparency, and ethical concerns associated with affiliate promotions.

Sharma and Mehta (2025) examined the effectiveness of affiliate marketing strategies in e-commerce platforms and found that affiliate programs enhance website traffic and sales conversions when implemented responsibly. Their study highlighted that affiliate credibility and transparent promotional practices positively influence consumer purchase decisions, while misleading content reduces long-term trust.

Raghavan and Priyanka (2024) analyzed consumer perception toward affiliate marketing in online shopping environments. They concluded that consumers rely heavily on affiliate reviews and recommendations before making purchase decisions. The study emphasized that disclosure of sponsored content improves consumer confidence, whereas biased or exaggerated reviews negatively affect satisfaction and trust.

Kumar and Anitha (2024) studied the role of social media influencers in affiliate marketing and observed that influencer-based affiliate promotions significantly affect purchase intention, especially among younger consumers. Their findings revealed that authenticity and engaging visual content increase effectiveness, but over-promotion can weaken credibility and reduce consumer trust.

Patel (2023) examined the impact of affiliate marketing strategies on impulse buying behavior in e-commerce. The study found that limited-time offers, discount codes, and urgency-based promotions encourage spontaneous purchases. Emotional appeal and promotional incentives were identified as key psychological drivers influencing consumer decision-making.

Suresh and Lakshmi (2023) focused on consumer trust in affiliate marketing links and reported that transparency, secure platforms, and clear communication strengthen consumer confidence. The study emphasized that privacy concerns and misleading affiliate practices can negatively affect repeat purchase intention and long-term brand perception.

III. Research Gaps

Even so, affiliate marketing now matters a lot in online shopping. Most research looks at how it boosts visits to websites, helps more people buy things, also improves general ad results. Yet little effort checks how customers truly see it - how they feel about honesty, openness, believability, what sticks around in their choices later. What lies beneath often stays ignored. Earlier studies mostly focus on influencer campaigns or broad online ads, yet rarely treat affiliate marketing as its own results-driven approach. Little real-world data exists showing how specific types - like blogger collaborations, review sites, discount platforms, or referral programs - affect what people think and whether they buy.

What happens when younger shoppers meet online ads? Not enough research says. Older adults might click less often - still unclear. Education levels could change how people react, but findings are thin. Money matters too, though few papers dig deep. Job types may shift behaviour; evidence is scattered. Knowing tech helps, yet data stays patchy. Big cities in developing regions get little attention. Most work looks at whole countries instead. Local patterns slip through the cracks.

Even so, few studies tackle how shady practices chip away at buyer confidence. Hidden agendas, sketchy ads, missing disclaimers - these gaps in openness often go unchecked. What sticks around unanswered? How years of referral selling shape a company's reputation. Loyalty shifts. Buying again - it's barely touched by researchers. Truth be told, the quiet parts about ethics get ignored too easily. Few studies look closely at how affiliate marketing shapes what people think and buy in one region. Instead, most overlook key elements like honesty, openness, trust levels. What stands out is the lack of attention to age, gender, income when measuring impact. A focused exploration into these areas remains missing so far.

IV. Summary of Literature

One thing clear from looking at past research - affiliate marketing shapes how people buy online. Trust grows when affiliates seem honest, share useful content, show clear disclosures, offer deals like price cuts or money back. Younger shoppers who spend more time online respond well to influencers and story-rich promotions. What stands out is not just the message, but who delivers it and how they do so.

Still, false ads, hidden terms, or too much hype often chip away at how much people believe in or enjoy a brand. Most reports zero in on boosts in sales or website visits instead. Few look closely at what buyers actually think, who they are, or if things feel fair. That gap shows why fresh work must centre real users when judging how well referral selling really works.

V. Statement of the Problem

Nowadays online shopping keeps growing fast. Because of that, more companies use affiliate marketing to get visitors and boost sales. These partnerships involve people like influencers or bloggers spreading the word about items. They share special links, offer promo codes, sometimes post paid reviews. Not everything goes through big campaigns - some happens quietly across blogs and social updates. One person's honest opinion might nudge someone else toward buying. Even though brands save money using these methods, results can be hard to pin down exactly. What customers think after seeing such promotions? That part stays unclear. The impact shifts subtly depending on where it shows up. Nowadays people see more ads tied to affiliate links, yet hidden fees, fake-sounding praise, over-the-top promises, plus partnerships that go unmentioned can shake their faith. Even though scholars investigated internet ads before, few zeroed in on exactly how referral-based campaigns shape what buyers notice, believe, or decide to purchase.

Looking at e-commerce today, one thing stands out: how online selling ties into outside promoters matters. This work digs into those links, focusing on what makes them click or flop. What drives results? Not just effort, but setup, trust, timing. From there, it shifts toward buyer views - how people see brands when they come through shared links. Choices change, often quietly, based on who shares what. Attention lands on Coimbatore, a place where digital habits are shifting fast.

VI. Objectives

- To examine the influence of affiliate marketing strategies on consumer perception and purchase behaviour in e-commerce.
- To analyse the role of trust, transparency, and credibility in determining the effectiveness of affiliate marketing strategies.

VII. Methodology

A closer look at how affiliate marketing shapes what shoppers think and do online drives this work. Numbers tell the story here, gathered through structured methods meant to measure patterns clearly. Instead of broad impressions, exact figures take center stage. Analysis follows a path built for clarity using statistical tools. The goal stays fixed: uncover links between promotion tactics and real customer choices.

Out there in Coimbatore, people who shop online and see things like referral links or posts by influencers became part of this look into behavior. One hundred ten individuals joined in, picked simply because they were reachable when needed. While none were

chosen at random, each had experience clicking through shared links or using special offers found online. Though not everyone shops the same way, these folks gave enough detail to spot some patterns. Since access mattered most, those easier to reach made up the group studied. Behind it all, the goal stayed clear - watch how exposure shapes what buyers do. Because habits differ, only active shoppers got included here.

A set of targeted questions formed the core of the survey, focusing on how aware buyers are, whether they believe affiliate suggestions, also how those endorsements shape buying choices. Responses fed into calculations where percentages revealed patterns in background traits alongside answers given by participants.

VIII. Limitations of the Study

One thing to note - the study has limits worth keeping in mind when looking at the outcomes. For starters, it only covers Coimbatore city, so what was found might not hold true elsewhere, especially where people live differently or interact with technology in another way. What happens next ties back to firsthand info gathered using fixed survey forms. Answers rest entirely on how individuals see things, shaped by their own views. Because of that, replies might tilt one way or another when memory slips or meaning gets fuzzy. Mistakes can creep in simply because understanding varies from person to person. Eleven hundred folks took part - still, that number might miss broader shopper habits. Affiliate tactics in online stores grabbed attention here, yet ads you click or search tricks stayed out of view.

Change happens fast in online marketing. Because of that, how people work together to promote products might shift too. These shifts could happen faster than the research can keep up with. Some new ways might not show up in the findings at all

IX. Scope of the Study

A closer look at affiliate marketing shows its role in shaping what shoppers think and do online. Instead of just listing products, websites now guide buyers through special links that track choices. Influencers share items they like, which shifts how people view brands. Discounts appear when users click through partner sites, nudging decisions without obvious pressure. Sponsored posts blend into feeds, making suggestions feel natural rather than forced. Big shopping platforms rely on these methods, quietly steering traffic while measuring results. Only within Coimbatore does this look at shoppers who actually buy things online. People reached by affiliate promotions show up here - seen on apps, shared via social posts, mentioned in write-ups, found through sites that compare products.

One thing the research looks at is how much people know about affiliate marketing, along with whether they believe what they see online. What matters just as much? Whether those promoting products are seen as honest or not. Clear labeling shows up too - if it is obvious that a link might earn someone money, that changes reactions. Another piece involves who buys and why, shaped by where someone lives or works. Age plays a role, sure, but so does schooling and paycheck size. Gender enters the picture without standing out above everything else. Each detail adds texture to how messages land differently across groups.

Beyond that point, it focuses only on online tactics where results tie directly to actions taken. Instead of covering old-school ads like billboards or print, the work sticks to web-driven campaigns. Where physical events or TV spots might apply, those fall outside its reach entirely. Rather than blend channels, it narrows in on what happens when clicks lead to conversions. Offline efforts - no matter how effective - are left out by design.

X. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Socio economic Factors	Level of Satisfaction		Total	Chi-square test
	Low	High		
Age				
18–25 years	18(15%)	38(31%)	56(46%)	X ² = 2.299 DF=3 Sig.=.513
26–35 years	19(16%)	27(22%)	46(38%)	
36–45 years	7(6%)	9(8%)	16(14%)	
Above 45 years	2(1%)	1(1%)	3(2%)	
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)	
Gender				
Male	29(24%)	56(46%)	85(70%)	X ² = 1.843 DF=1 Sig.=.175
Female	17(14%)	19(16%)	36(30%)	
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)	
Occupation				
Student	17(14%)	35(29%)	52(43%)	X ² = 4.103 DF=3 Sig.=.251
Professional	19(16%)	33(27%)	52(43%)	
Business Owner	7(6%)	4(3%)	11(9%)	
Others	3(2%)	3(3%)	6(5%)	
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)	
Income Range30-0-...				

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Less than Rs.20,000	17(14%)	25(21%)	42(35%)	$X^2 = 3.544$ DF=3 Sig.=.315	shift
Rs.20,000 – Rs.40,000	14(12%)	21(17%)	35(29%)		
Rs.40,000 – Rs.60,000	11(9%)	13(11%)	24(20%)		
More than Rs.60,000	4(3%)	16(13%)	20(16%)		
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)		
Frequency of Online Shopping					
Weekly	15(12%)	21(17%)	36(30%)	$X^2 = 7.972$ DF=2 Sig.=.019	
Monthly	24(20%)	25(21%)	49(40%)		
Occasionally	7(6%)	29(24%)	36(30%)		
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)		
Preferred E-Commerce Platforms					
Amazon	13(11%)	28(23%)	41(34%)	$X^2 = 5.027$ DF=3 Sig.=.170	
Flipkart	13(11%)	24(20%)	37(31%)		
Myntra	8(7%)	15(12%)	23(19%)		
Others	12(10%)	8(7%)	20(17%)		
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)		
Device used for Shopping					
Mobile	22(18%)	36(30%)	58(48%)	$X^2 = 1.531$ DF=2 Sig.=.465	
Laptop/Desktop	18(15%)	34(28%)	52(43%)		
Tablet	6(5%)	5(4%)	11(9%)		
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)		
Payment Preference					
Cash on Delivery	18(15%)	25(21%)	43(36%)	$X^2 = .659$ DF=3 Sig.=.883	
Credit/Debit Card	8(7%)	17(14%)	25(21%)		
UPI	15(12%)	25(21%)	40(33%)		
Wallets	5(4%)	8(6%)	13(10%)		
Total	46(38%)	75(62%)	121(100%)		

contentment shows up among various social classes - still, gaps stay narrow. When looking at age, contrasts are barely noticeable. Gender does not tilt the scale much either. Jobs and pay bring almost no change in reported well-being. Numbers fail to link background traits like wealth or status to higher satisfaction. It seems life conditions matter less than assumed. Personal stories shape views more clearly. What people expect adjusts their sense of fulfilment. Feelings about daily moments weigh heavier than facts on paper. How one sees their journey stands out as the main force behind ratings.

XI. Major Findings

1. The majority of respondents belong to the younger age group, indicating that affiliate marketing strategies have a stronger influence on digitally active consumers.
2. Both male and female consumers are almost equally influenced by affiliate promotions, showing no significant gender difference in online engagement.
3. Higher educational qualification, particularly among undergraduate respondents, is associated with greater awareness and participation in affiliate-driven online shopping.
4. Students and employees form the major segment of consumers influenced by affiliate marketing strategies, as they frequently use digital platforms and social media.
5. Middle-income consumers show higher responsiveness to affiliate promotions, especially discount codes, cashback offers, and limited-time deals.
6. Urban consumers are more actively engaged in affiliate-influenced online shopping due to better internet access and exposure to digital content.
7. Trust, transparency, and credibility of affiliates are key determinants influencing consumer purchase decisions. Misleading or undisclosed promotions negatively affect consumer confidence.
8. Overall, affiliate marketing strategies significantly influence consumer awareness, purchase intention, and buying behaviour in the e-commerce environment.

XII. Suggestions

1. **Enhance Transparency:** E-commerce platforms and affiliates should clearly disclose sponsored content and affiliate relationships to build consumer trust and credibility.
2. **Improve Content Authenticity:** Affiliates should provide honest, detailed, and experience-based product reviews instead of exaggerated promotional claims.
3. **Strengthen Ethical Practices:** Strict guidelines should be implemented to prevent misleading promotions, fake reviews, and hidden affiliate links.

4. **Focus on Target Segmentation:** Affiliate marketing strategies should be designed based on demographic characteristics such as age, income, and digital usage patterns to improve effectiveness.
5. **Build Consumer Trust:** Platforms should ensure secure payment systems, reliable delivery, and transparent pricing to support affiliate-driven purchase decisions.
6. **Encourage Feedback Mechanisms:** Allowing consumers to rate or report affiliate recommendations can help improve quality and maintain long-term credibility.

XIII. Conclusion

What drives people to buy online? Affiliate marketing stands out because it rewards results. Referral links, posts by known figures, product reviews - these shape choices more than many realize. Younger buyers with college backgrounds react strongly when deals feel genuine. Income level matters too; those in the middle often weigh options carefully before clicking through. Trust builds slowly yet vanishes fast if promises are exaggerated. Clear disclosures help. Hidden sponsorships hurt. Location shifts perception - one city's popular trend might flop elsewhere. A teacher might view an ad differently than someone in tech. Offers work best when they match real needs, not just flash discounts. Honesty shapes lasting interest far better than urgency ever could. Influence grows where actions align with words.

Nowhere is online influence clearer than in how shoppers follow referral links. Yet long term success? That hinges on honesty during pitches. Picture real talk instead of flashy claims building loyalty slowly. Trust grows best when motives stay visible, not hidden behind pushy ads. What sticks isn't slick copy, but genuine recommendations shared quietly. Over time, buyers reward openness with repeat clicks.

XIV. References

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