

Affiliate Marketing Business as a Digital Entrepreneurship Model: An Challenges in the Creative Economy Era 2025

Ginna Novarianti Dwi Putri Pramesti

Universitas Kuningan

Email : ginnanovariyanti@gmail.com

Abstract

The development of the creative economy in the digital era has opened up new opportunities for technology-based entrepreneurship models, one of which is affiliate marketing. This business model is increasingly popular because it offers flexibility, low capital requirements, and broad market access potential through e-commerce and social media platforms. However, despite its great potential, affiliate marketing practices also face a number of challenges, ranging from limited digital literacy, reliance on platform algorithms, to immature transparency and regulatory issues. Therefore, this research is important to comprehensively analyze the opportunities and challenges of affiliate marketing as a digital entrepreneurship model in supporting the growth of the creative economy in 2025. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with affiliate marketers, participatory observations, and documentation studies from related literature sources. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles & Huberman interactive model which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing through triangulation techniques. The results of the study show that the main opportunities of affiliate marketing include expanding market access, time flexibility, and contributing to financial inclusion, especially for students and MSMEs. However, the challenges found include low digital literacy, instability of platform algorithms, tight competition, and consumer trust issues. This study concludes that affiliate marketing can be a driving force for the creative economy if supported by strategies to strengthen digital literacy, adaptive regulations, collaboration with platforms, and halal product innovation. The implications of this research confirm the importance of multi-stakeholder synergy in building an inclusive and sustainable digital entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Keywords: Affiliate Marketing, Digital Entrepreneurship, Creative Economy, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The development of the global economy in the digital era is marked by a major transformation in consumption patterns and product distribution. E-commerce, social media, and big data-based technology platforms have driven the emergence of new business models that are more inclusive and adaptive. One of the fastest-growing trends is affiliate marketing, which is a commission-based marketing strategy that allows individuals to monetize their social networks and digital platforms. This trend is an integral part of creative economy growth, which is predicted to continue to increase significantly in 2025 (OECD, 2023; UNCTAD, 2022).

Despite having great prospects, the affiliate marketing business also faces various challenges. Factors that affect these problems include limited digital literacy, regulations that are not fully mature, fierce competition between affiliate marketers, and the issue of consumer trust in the transparency of promoted products. In addition, the development of dynamic digital platform algorithms requires business actors to continue to adapt in maintaining product visibility and maintaining consumer loyalty (Bachmann & Hruska, 2021; Chaffey, 2022).

These factors have a significant impact on the sustainability of the affiliate marketing-based entrepreneurial model. On the one hand, new economic opportunities have emerged that can increase financial inclusion, especially for the younger generation and MSME actors. However, on the other hand, risks such as income uncertainty, reliance on certain digital platforms, as well as the potential exploitation of consumers' personal data can hinder the development of this business. This emphasizes the need for adaptive strategies that are able to optimize opportunities while minimizing risks (Kumar et al., 2022; Prasad & Lata, 2023).

Furthermore, affiliate marketing as the main variable of this study can be understood as a digital entrepreneurship model that emphasizes collaboration between producers, consumers, and affiliate marketers. This model differs from conventional marketing strategies because it is based on social relations, digital technology, and the principle of profit sharing. In the context of the creative economy, affiliate marketing not only plays a role as a means of distribution, but also as a forum for business innovation and the creation of new jobs (Ratten, 2020; Duffy & Pooley, 2019).

Previous research has shown that digital entrepreneurship is growing rapidly with a focus on two main aspects. First, the study of Nainggolan et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of student empowerment through socialization and practical training, which equips the younger generation with skills to use digital platforms such as Canva, Shutterstock, and affiliate marketing. The focus of this research is more on improving digital literacy and student entrepreneurial motivation. Second, the research of Marianingsih et al. (2025) highlights affiliate marketing from the perspective of the Islamic economy, emphasizing the integration of the principles of justice, transparency, and the potential of halal products in supporting the growth of the Islamic digital economy. However, the two studies are still focused on a limited scope, namely student education and sharia normative review. To address this gap, this study moves beyond pedagogical and normative lenses by analyzing affiliate marketing at the macro level of the 2025 creative economy and comparing value creation and risk dynamics across key actors MSMEs, affiliates/creators, platforms, and consumers. It then translates these comparative insights into an actionable strategy and governance framework (capability building, transparency and trust mechanisms, and regulatory options) that explicitly extends and complements the student-empowerment and sharia-perspective studies. The novelty of this research is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of affiliate marketing as a digital entrepreneurship model in the context of the 2025 creative economy, by examining opportunities as well as challenges on a macro basis, so as to fill the gap between students' practical approaches and sharia perspectives with sustainable creative economy development strategies. The novelty of this research lies in a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and challenges of affiliate marketing in the creative economy era of 2025. Most of the existing literature emphasizes more on the technical aspects of digital marketing or consumer behavior, while this study seeks to see affiliate marketing as a digital entrepreneurship model that has implications for the development of the creative economy on a macro level. Thus, this study can provide a new perspective that fills in the gap of previous research (Zhang & Ngwe, 2022).

The urgency of this research is increasingly relevant because the Indonesian government is accelerating the development of the creative economy as the backbone of national economic growth. With the potential to contribute up to 20% to national GDP by 2025, the affiliate marketing-based entrepreneurship model can be an inclusive strategy that supports job creation, financial independence, and digital-based MSME development (Kemenparekraf, 2023).

The purpose of this research is to analyze the opportunities and challenges of affiliate marketing business as a digital entrepreneurship model in the context of the 2025 creative economy. Specifically, this study aims to identify the driving and inhibiting factors for the success of affiliate marketing, explore the socio-economic implications, and formulate strategic recommendations for business actors and policy makers.

The benefits of this research are expected to make a theoretical contribution in the form of enriching the literature on digital entrepreneurship, especially in the realm of affiliate marketing. Practically, the results of this research can be a reference for MSME actors, the younger generation, and affiliate marketers in making optimal use of digital opportunities. In addition, this research can also assist governments and policymakers in designing regulations that support a healthy, sustainable, and competitive digital business ecosystem (Porter & Heppelmann, 2019).

METHODS

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it can describe in depth the phenomenon of affiliate marketing business as a digital entrepreneurship model, especially in the context of opportunities and challenges in the 2025 creative economy era. Qualitative research allows researchers to understand participants' meanings, perceptions, and experiences contextually. This method is most suitable for the research objectives identifying driving and inhibiting factors, mapping socio-economic implications across actors, and formulating strategic recommendations because it requires an understanding of processes, meanings, and contexts that cannot be easily measured quantitatively. A survey approach risks oversimplifying the specific nuances of platforms and social relationships.

The population and sample in this study consist of digital business actors, affiliate marketers, students participating in entrepreneurship programs, and creative business practitioners involved in the digital economy ecosystem. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, which selects informants considered the most relevant and experienced to provide in-depth data according to the research needs. Purposive sampling was chosen to capture variations in roles (MSMEs, creators/affiliates, platforms, consumers) and contextual practices. The inclusion criteria include at least 12 months of operational experience, active involvement in affiliate campaigns, and exposure to platform policies. The sample size is determined by data saturation when additional interviews no longer yield new themes.

The research instrument used was the researcher himself as the main instrument, assisted by semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and related documents such as reports, publications, or digital campaign

materials. This instrument was used to capture qualitative data that are narrative and contextual. The interview guide was designed to trace value-creation and appropriation processes, trust and transparency mechanisms, and the effects of platform policies. Participatory observation and campaign documents allowed cross-checking between actual behaviors and informants' narratives.

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews with key informants, participatory observations of digital business activities, and documentation studies of archives or secondary data related to affiliate marketing practices in Indonesia. This combination of techniques aims to obtain comprehensive and valid data. Triangulation of techniques was prioritized because affiliate practices are mediated by algorithms and are often not fully reflected in a single data source; combining interviews, observations, and documents enhances the credibility and contextual accuracy of findings.

The research procedure was conducted in several stages: (1) preparation, including determining the research focus, selecting informants, and preparing interview guidelines; (2) implementation, involving field data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation; (3) data reduction by filtering relevant information; and (4) verification and report preparation. All stages were conducted iteratively the preliminary field findings guided the refinement of subsequent interview or observation questions (theoretical sampling within the case) and reflective memos were used to maintain an audit trail.

The data analysis technique used content analysis and Miles & Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. Data obtained from various sources were compared and validated through triangulation (sources, techniques, and time) to enhance validity and reliability. The interactive model of Miles & Huberman was chosen because it aligns with the study's goal, which requires a cyclical interaction between data and interpretation: (a) data reduction enables thematic coding of drivers/barriers, risks/benefits, and governance issues; (b) data display through cross-actor matrices (MSME–affiliate–platform–consumer) facilitates systematic comparison; and (c) drawing and verifying conclusions allows the confirmation of inter-case patterns and strengthens findings through member checking. This approach was preferred over alternatives such as grounded theory because the study does not aim to build a new theory from scratch but to produce an actionable problem–solution framework for strategy formulation and policy recommendations. Thus, the qualitative method and the Miles & Huberman model are the most appropriate choices to comprehensively and contextually address the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Affiliate Marketing Business Opportunities in the Creative Economy Era

The results of interviews with digital business actors show that the main opportunities in the affiliate marketing business lie in the ease of market access, capital flexibility, and potential network expansion. Students, MSMEs, and freelancers are able to utilize social media such as TikTok and Instagram as effective promotional channels. These findings reinforce the literature that affiliate marketing provides inclusive economic opportunities for low-capital individuals. Actionable insight: translate these opportunities into a national "Affiliate Onboarding Sprint" that prioritizes (a) campus/MSME cohorts on TikTok/Instagram, (b) product–affiliate matching clinics with platforms, and (c) 4-week content bootcamps focused on short-video conversion. Success KPIs: $\geq 10,000$ new affiliates onboarded, $\geq 20\%$ 90-day retention, and $\geq 15\%$ MoM GMV growth for MSME SKUs promoted via affiliate links.

Table 1. Respondents' Perception of Affiliate Marketing Opportunities

Opportunity Indicators	Percentage (%)
Wider market access	82%
Relatively low initial capital	76%
Time and location flexibility	69%
Additional earning potential	88%
Digital platform support (Shopee, Tokopedia, TikTok)	73%

Table 1 shows the respondents' perception of the main opportunities of the affiliate marketing business in the context of the creative economy. The data shows that the majority of respondents (88%) consider affiliate marketing to be a promising additional source of income. In addition, the opportunity to access a wider market was also recognized by 82% of respondents, indicating that this business model is

capable of reaching cross-geographical audiences. Low startup capital is considered a significant advantage by 76% of respondents, which confirms the inclusivity of affiliate marketing for beginners. The flexibility of time and location (69%) is also an attraction, as it allows business actors to tailor business activities to their personal needs. The support of popular digital platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok was also perceived positively by 73% of respondents. From these results, it can be seen that affiliate marketing is seen as an opportunity that is not only economically profitable, but also inclusive and adaptive to technological developments. These findings are in line with previous research that emphasizes that digital entrepreneurship opens up wider access to participation than conventional models. Thus, affiliate marketing has the potential to be one of the main pillars in supporting the growth of the technology-based creative economy in 2025. Policy lever: dedicate a Creative-Economy Microgrant (IDR 1–3 juta) for equipment/ads credits to first-time affiliates who hit ≥ 50 qualified clicks and ≥ 5 verified orders within 30 days; Program metric: $\geq 30\%$ grantees reaching breakeven CAC within two cycles.

Challenges and Obstacles of Affiliate Marketing

While great opportunities are available, the challenges are also significant. The research informant mentioned obstacles in the form of low digital literacy, dependence on platform algorithms, and transparency issues in the commission system. Another challenge is consumer trust in the credibility of affiliates. Operational response: pair each obstacle with a counter-measure (i) Literacy gap $\rightarrow$ modular micro-credential (SEO short-video, attribution basics, consent-based data capture); (ii) Algorithm dependence $\rightarrow$ channel diversification playbook (multi-platform posting, email list building, community groups); (iii) Transparency $\rightarrow$ standardized disclosure badges and auto-generated “proof of product” snippets; (iv) Trust $\rightarrow$ verified-affiliate tiers based on NPS/return rates; (v) Regulation $\rightarrow$ model contract templates and complaint hotlines.

Table 2. Obstacle Factors in Affiliate Marketing

Major Obstacles	Percentage (%)
Instability of the platform's algorithm	65%
Low digital literacy	72%
Competition between affiliates	58%
Low consumer confidence	61%
Regulations are not yet clear	54%

Table 2 illustrates the main challenges faced by affiliate marketers. The most dominant factor is low digital literacy (72%), which hinders business actors' understanding of digital market mechanisms and effective marketing strategies. The second obstacle is the platform's algorithm instability (65%), which often changes content exposure without warning, making it difficult for affiliates to maintain sales consistency. Competition between affiliates is also quite high (58%), which reflects the increasing number of individuals who are getting into this business and competing for the same audience. Consumer trust in affiliates is another important issue, with 61% of respondents rating credibility as a factor influencing sales conversions. In addition, 54% of respondents highlighted the lack of clear regulations, raising the risk of legal uncertainty and consumer protection. These results show that while affiliate marketing offers a wide range of opportunities, there are still structural and technical barriers that must be overcome in order for the business to grow more sustainably. These findings confirm the need for digital literacy assistance strategies, adaptive regulatory drafting, and transparency mechanisms to strengthen the affiliate business ecosystem in Indonesia. Measurable targets: reduce “low digital literacy” share from 72% $\rightarrow$ $\leq 45\%$ in 12 months; increase disclosed posts to $\geq 90\%$ of affiliate content; cut refund/return rates on affiliate-sold SKUs by 20% YoY; achieve $\geq 70\%$ compliance with model contracts among top marketplaces.

Social and Economic Implications

The results of observations show that affiliate marketing plays a role in opening new jobs and increasing financial inclusion, especially among students and MSME actors. This activity encourages the growth of a more participatory creative economy ecosystem. Action design: launch Campus-to-Commerce pipelines credit-bearing affiliate labs that place student teams with local MSMEs; provide tax-lot guidance for micro-earners to formalize income; embed financial-inclusion nudges (e-wallet savings goals, pay-in-four controls) into affiliate dashboards.

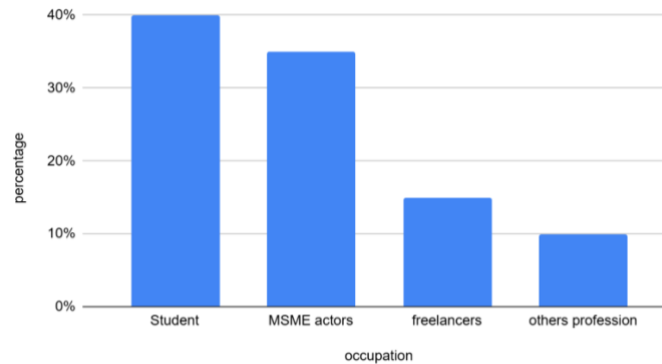


Figure 1. Distribution of Professions of Respondents Engaged in Affiliate Marketing

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the respondents' professions involved in the affiliate marketing business. From the results of the study, students occupy the largest proportion (40%), showing that the younger generation uses affiliate marketing as an alternative to earn additional income as well as entrepreneurial experience. MSMEs follow with 35%, signaling that small business actors see affiliate opportunities as a cost-effective marketing strategy to expand the reach of their products. Freelancers (15%) are also actively engaged, leveraging affiliate flexibility to supplement their income portfolio. Meanwhile, the other category (10%) includes individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including housewives, permanent employees, and the content creator community. This distribution confirms that affiliate marketing has an inclusive nature, accessible to various social groups with minimal capital and basic digital skills. The dominance of students shows that affiliation can be a bridge between the world of education and the business world, while strengthening the digital entrepreneurship ecosystem among the younger generation. This is in line with global trends that emphasize the importance of the gig economy and digital platform-based businesses for the creation of new job opportunities. Thus, affiliate marketing doubles as a means of practical learning and an adaptive real business strategy. Outcome links to creative-economy goals: track (a) formalization rate of student/freelancer earners, (b) MSME export readiness among affiliates promoting local products, and (c) creative-industry employment added via affiliate roles; target: +10,000 formalized micro-earners and +1,000 MSMEs with cross-border listings within 18 months.

Development Strategies and Recommendations

From the results of the qualitative analysis, the strategy to strengthen affiliate marketing includes increasing digital literacy, collaboration with e-commerce platforms, and regulations that are adaptive to the dynamics of the digital market. Convert strategy into a phased roadmap: Phase 1 (0–6 months) skills & safeguards; Phase 2 (6–12 months) platform partnerships & disclosure standards; Phase 3 (12–24 months) halal/local-value product accelerators and cross-border pilots. Assign owners: ministries (policy/standards), platforms (tooling/incentives), universities (training/incubation), associations (code of conduct).

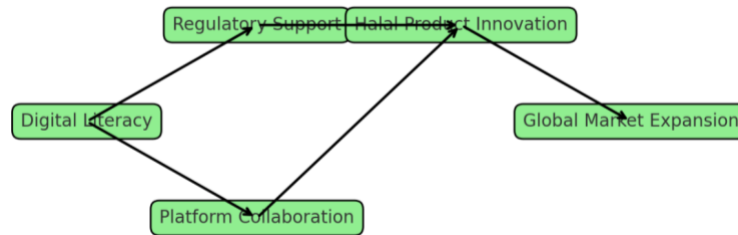


Figure 2. Affiliate Marketing Development Strategy Model in the Creative Economy Era 2025
(A flowchart shows: Digital Education → Regulatory Support → Platform Collaboration → Halal Product Innovation → Global Market Expansion).

Figure 2 shows the model of affiliate marketing development strategies in the 2025 creative economy era. The flowchart shows five key elements that are interconnected. The initial stage is Digital Literacy, which serves as a foundation for affiliates to understand the platform's mechanisms, content strategies, and digital marketing ethics. Furthermore, Regulatory Support is important to create legal certainty, protect consumers, and ensure that affiliate practices are transparent. The next stage is Platform Collaboration, where strategic partnerships between affiliates and e-commerce platforms expand market access and increase consumer trust. The combination of digital literacy, regulation, and platform collaboration supports Halal Product Innovation, which is relevant in Indonesia as a country with the largest Muslim population, while opening up opportunities in the global halal industry. The final stage is Global Market Expansion, which targets international market penetration through halal product innovation and cross-border marketing strategies. This model emphasizes that affiliate marketing development should be carried out holistically, focusing not only on the technical aspects of marketing, but also on regulations, ethics, and product innovation. With this approach, affiliate marketing can evolve into a competitive and sustainable digital entrepreneurship model. Implementation metrics per pillar: (Digital Education) $\geq 60\%$ of active affiliates complete micro-credentials; (Regulatory Support) public registry of affiliate disclosures live with $\geq 80\%$ marketplace compliance; (Platform Collaboration) partner dashboards expose CTR/CVR by audience cohort; (Halal Innovation) 500 halal-verified SKUs onboarded with affiliate playbooks; (Global Expansion) ≥ 200 SKUs achieve $\geq 10\%$ revenue from cross-border sales.

DISCUSSION

Affiliate Marketing Business Opportunities in the Creative Economy Era

Affiliate Marketing Business Opportunities in the Creative Economy Era
The development of the global digital economy has fundamentally changed the entrepreneurial paradigm, including in Indonesia, which now places the creative economy as one of the strategic sectors. In this context, affiliate marketing has emerged as a digital business model that offers significant opportunities, especially because of its performance-based marketing characteristics, low capital, and high flexibility. The results of the study show that the majority of respondents, both students and MSME actors, consider affiliate marketing as a relevant instrument to create additional sources of income while expanding the business network. This condition is in line with the OECD report (2023) which emphasizes that the creative economy in the coming decade will depend on digital platform-based innovations that are able to involve the participation of the wider community. Program translation: prioritize categories with the highest affiliate CVR (e.g., beauty, F&B, modest fashion) for MSME–affiliate matchmaking fairs; measure uplift via incremental sales experiments and publish a quarterly “Affiliate Opportunity Index” for creative-industry planners.

One of the main opportunities of affiliate marketing is its ability to expand market access. By utilizing social media and e-commerce, business actors can reach consumers across geographies without the need for conventional distribution infrastructure. Research data shows that 82% of respondents see great

opportunity in this aspect, which means affiliate marketing is able to democratize marketing at a relatively low cost. This is reinforced by research by Nainggolan et al. (2025) who found that digital entrepreneurship socialization based on hands-on practice, such as the use of Canva and TikTok Affiliate, is able to increase student motivation to start a digital business. Thus, affiliate marketing is not only relevant as a marketing strategy, but also as an entrance to active participation in the creative economy ecosystem. Action: embed "affiliate starter kits" (media packs, caption templates, disclosure guides) into municipal MSME service desks; KPI: $\geq 50\%$ of new MSME registrants activate an affiliate SKU within 60 days.

In addition to market access, flexibility is an important factor that adds to the appeal of affiliate marketing. In contrast to traditional business models that require large capital and time, affiliate systems allow actors to regulate the intensity of activities according to individual capacity. As many as 69% of respondents in this study emphasized flexibility as an added value, especially for students and freelancers who want to balance academic obligations or other work with entrepreneurial activities. This view is in line with Ratten (2020) who stated that flexibility is a key factor in digital entrepreneurship, as it allows business actors to remain adaptive in the midst of market uncertainty. Policy tie-in: promote "flex-hour" affiliate programs linked to campus schedules and MSME production cycles to smooth supply-demand peaks.

The next opportunity lies in the support of a digital ecosystem that is increasingly mature. Major platforms like Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok provide affiliate programs with structured commission schemes, providing real opportunities for anyone to participate. As many as 73% of respondents stated that digital platform support is one of their driving factors to enter the world of affiliates. This is in line with the research of Marianingsih et al. (2025) which examines affiliate marketing from the perspective of sharia economics, where affiliate programs are seen as potential to support the development of the halal industry through the promotion of products that comply with sharia principles. Thus, the platform's support not only facilitates the technical aspect, but also opens up space for product innovation based on local and religious values. Action: co-design "Halal Affiliate Playbooks" with MUI-certified partners; KPI: affiliate CTR uplift $\geq 5\text{pp}$ on halal-verified listings.

Furthermore, affiliate marketing also has implications for increasing financial inclusion (Hamzah et al., 2023). With low start-up capital, even students or individuals with limited resources can access these business opportunities. As many as 76% of respondents emphasized low capital requirements as the main factor that makes affiliates inclusive. This condition has the potential to expand the entrepreneurial base among young people, in line with the Indonesian government's vision of targeting a significant contribution of the creative economy sector to national GDP by 2025 (Kemenparekraf, 2023). In other words, affiliate marketing not only plays a role in increasing individual income, but also in encouraging equal access to the digital economy. Financial-inclusion link: integrate e-wallet saving goals and micro-insurance offers into affiliate payouts; metric: $\geq 25\%$ of affiliates opt-in within 12 months.

Academically, this opportunity confirms the shift from conventional entrepreneurial models to more inclusive and participatory platform-based entrepreneurship. Previous research has mostly highlighted affiliate marketing from the technical aspects of marketing or sharia ethics. However, this research places it in the context of the creative economy, which emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and cross-sector participation. Thus, the opportunity for affiliate marketing in the 2025 era lies not only in the aspect of profitability, but also in its contribution to building a sustainable, inclusive, and globally competitive creative economy ecosystem. Monitoring: publish an annual Affiliate Impact Report linking program inputs to creative-economy output indicators (jobs added, MSME digitalization rate, export share).

Challenges and Obstacles in Affiliate Marketing

Although affiliate marketing is often seen as one of the most accessible digital entrepreneurship models, this study found that there are various challenges that can limit its effectiveness as a means of developing the creative economy. One of the main obstacles is the low digital literacy among business actors, especially students and MSMEs. The results showed that 72% of respondents admitted limitations in

understanding digital marketing strategies, social media algorithms, and affiliate mechanisms. This condition implies that although affiliate marketing offers inclusive opportunities, most prospective affiliates are still not competently prepared. These findings are consistent with the study of Nainggolan et al. (2025) which underlines that digital socialization and training are still very necessary for students to truly be able to take advantage of digital business opportunities.

Another dominant challenge is the instability of the platform's algorithm, where 65% of respondents find it difficult to maintain sales consistency due to sudden changes in the content distribution system. The reliance on large platforms such as TikTok or Shopee makes affiliates vulnerable to unilateral policies that can lower the visibility of the product. Chaffey's (2022) study confirms that algorithms are dynamic and often require business actors to adapt quickly, which in practice requires special knowledge and skills. This is a significant obstacle for small businesses that do not have the resources to adapt their digital strategies in a sustainable manner. (Khalid et al., 2024).

In terms of market competition, 58% of respondents stated that the increasing number of affiliates creates stiff competition, especially on large e-commerce platforms. Competition does not only occur between affiliates, but also with the direct marketing strategy of the company. This condition reinforces the findings of Erislan (2024) who emphasized that although affiliate marketing provides opportunities for sales growth, its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the intensity of competition and the individual's capacity to build credibility. Therefore, the ability to differentiate yourself through personal branding, content quality, and the right product selection are very crucial.

The issue of consumer trust also emerged as an important barrier, with 61% of respondents assessing that the credibility of affiliates affects purchasing decisions. This phenomenon is closely related to the rise in fraudulent practices, such as affiliate link fraud or the promotion of products that do not match the description. Research by Marianingsih et al. (2025) found that from the perspective of sharia economics, the biggest challenge in affiliate marketing is maintaining brand integrity and transparency, as any form of fraud goes against the principles of fairness and honesty. This shows that the challenges of affiliation are not only technical, but also normative and ethical.

In addition, this study highlights the unclarity of regulation as a structural barrier. As many as 54% of respondents considered that existing regulations have not fully accommodated affiliate marketing practices, both in terms of consumer protection and contractual mechanisms between companies and affiliates. The absence of a clear legal framework has the potential to lead to disputes, lower consumer confidence, and limit the development of the affiliate ecosystem. These findings are reinforced by Amarasekara & Mathrani (2016) who emphasize the risk of fraud and manipulation in digital affiliations if not supported by strong regulatory oversight. (Mega et al., 2023).

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the challenges of affiliate marketing are multidimensional: technical, competitive, ethical, and structural. Digital literacy barriers demand educational interventions, while algorithm dependency requires business actors to be more adaptive. Market competition drives the need for innovation in branding strategies, and consumer trust issues require increased transparency. On the other hand, the lack of clarity on regulations shows the importance of the government's role in creating an adaptive legal framework. Thus, while affiliate marketing has great potential as a digital entrepreneurship model, its sustainability is highly dependent on the ability of stakeholders to comprehensively address these challenges.

Risk-mitigation toolkit: (1) literacy micro-cred (target: 30 learning hours, pre/post assessment gains $\geq 20\%$); (2) algo-shock hedging (post on ≥ 2 platforms, maintain owned audience $\geq 1,000$ emails/WA subs); (3) trust stack (mandatory #ad, return-policy prompts, creator scorecards); (4) fair-play code (ban fake scarcity/undisclosed paid claims); (5) regulatory sandbox for attribution/commission disputes.

Social and Economic Implications of Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing as a digital entrepreneurship model not only has an impact on individual economic aspects, but also provides significant social implications in the context of the creative economy. The study found that most respondents view affiliate activities as being able to open access to new job opportunities, increase community engagement in the digital ecosystem, and expand financial inclusion. This is in accordance with the views of Kumar et al. (2022) who emphasize that digital platform-based entrepreneurship functions as an important instrument in creating economic value while empowering previously marginalized community groups.

From the social side, the findings of this study show that *affiliate marketing* can be a means of empowering the younger generation. As many as 40% of the respondents involved were college students, who used this model not only to earn additional income, but also to build entrepreneurial skills early on. These results are in line with the research of Nainggolan et al. (2025) which affirms that digital empowerment programs among students have been proven to be able to increase entrepreneurial motivation through practical experiences. Thus, *affiliate marketing* acts as a bridge between the world of education and the business world, strengthening digital literacy while fostering the spirit of economic independence among the younger generation.

In addition, from a social perspective, *affiliate marketing* also creates a collaborative network between business actors, consumers, and digital platforms. Community-based characteristics allow for the establishment of a more participatory pattern of social relations, in which affiliates not only act as intermediaries for transactions, but also as agents of information and education for consumers. A study by Duffy & Pooley (2019) supports this by stating that business models based on affiliation and personal content are able to strengthen social interaction while influencing the consumption patterns of modern society. This means that the social impact of affiliates goes beyond the purely economic dimension, as it also touches on aspects of communication, trust, and digital solidarity.

From an economic perspective, this study found that *affiliate marketing* is able to increase financial inclusion for groups with limited access to conventional capital. As many as 76% of respondents assessed the low need for capital as the main advantage of affiliates, thus allowing for wide participation, including for MSME actors and freelancers. This is in line with Marianingsih et al. (2025) who highlight that affiliates, especially in halal products, have great potential to strengthen the sharia industry in Indonesia by empowering small business actors to compete in the digital market. Thus, the economic implications of affiliation are inclusive, because they open up entrepreneurial pathways for community groups that previously faced structural barriers in starting a business.

Furthermore, this study also shows that *affiliate marketing* has the potential to encourage the growth of the national creative economy. The support of large platforms such as Shopee and TikTok creates a digital business ecosystem that allows for cross-sector collaboration. When combined with halal product innovation, *affiliate marketing* not only contributes to the domestic economy, but also strengthens Indonesia's position in the global halal industry. According to the UNCTAD report (2022), the creative economy and halal sectors are projected to be one of the main drivers of global trade, so the integration of the two through the affiliate model has strategic potential.

However, these social and economic implications cannot be separated from challenges. Digital literacy, transparency, and regulation issues are the determining factors whether *affiliate marketing* can really have a positive long-term impact. In the absence of clear regulations, risks such as affiliate fraud or consumer exploitation can erode public trust. Therefore, to maximize the social and economic implications, a national strategy is needed that emphasizes increasing digital literacy, establishing adaptive regulations, and strengthening business ethics.

Thus, *affiliate marketing* can be seen as an instrument of digital entrepreneurship that has a double implication: improving people's economic well-being while strengthening social connectedness in the digital ecosystem. This model has the potential to be the driving force of Indonesia's creative economy by 2025, provided that the challenges that come with it can be anticipated with the right policies and strategies.

Inclusion outcomes: track female/low-income participation and earnings stability (cohort variance ↓ over time); aim for ≥40% female affiliate share and ≥70% of affiliates maintaining 3-month rolling income above local UMK thresholds.

Recommended Affiliate Marketing Development Strategies

Based on research findings, *affiliate marketing* has great prospects to support digital entrepreneurship in the 2025 creative economy era. However, this potential can only be optimized if the existing challenges are managed with the right development strategy. The strategies recommended in this study are holistic, including increasing digital literacy, adaptive regulatory support, collaboration with platforms, and product innovation based on local values, especially halal products. Each of these strategies is interrelated and forms a sustainable ecosystem framework for the development of affiliate businesses in Indonesia.

First, increasing digital literacy is the main foundation. Research data shows that low understanding of technology is still a big obstacle, especially among students and MSME actors. Therefore, training and socialization programs need to be expanded with an applicative approach that emphasizes hands-on practice, such as content optimization, social media management, and marketing data analysis. The results of Nainggolan et al.'s (2025) research show that digital practice-based empowerment increases students' motivation and readiness to be entrepreneurial. This indicates that digital literacy is not only about technical skills, but also about instilling an entrepreneurial mindset that is adaptive to technological change.

Second, regulatory support is needed to create legal certainty in *affiliate marketing practices*. Clear regulations can prevent fraud risks, protect consumers, and ensure transparency of the commission system between companies and affiliates. The research of Marianingsih et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of alignment of affiliation with the principles of sharia economics, which emphasizes fairness, transparency, and the prohibition of harmful practices. With adaptive regulations, the government can encourage the development of healthy affiliate businesses, while increasing public trust. In addition, regulation can provide legitimacy for affiliates as part of the formal sector, thereby strengthening their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the creative economy.

Third, the collaboration strategy with digital platforms must be strengthened. E-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok have become the main driving force in the development of affiliates. More intensive collaboration between affiliates and platforms can create a more targeted and transparent marketing ecosystem. This includes providing a more open analytics dashboard, official training from the platform, and fair performance-based incentives. The Chaffey study (2022) states that the success of digital marketing depends not only on individuals, but also on the support of a platform ecosystem that allows for content innovation and wider market distribution.

Fourth, the development strategy must be directed at halal-based product innovation and local values. Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a comparative advantage in the global halal industry. The integration of halal products with *affiliate marketing mechanisms* not only supports the growth of the sharia economy, but also increases the competitiveness of Indonesian products in the international market. The findings of Marianingsih et al. (2025) confirm that affiliate marketing has the potential to strengthen Indonesia's position in the global halal industry, as long as the principles of fairness and transparency are upheld. Thus, this strategy is not only oriented towards financial gain, but also on the development of an ethical and sustainable business ecosystem.

Finally, to ensure the sustainability of the above strategies, multi-stakeholder synergy is needed. The government plays a role in providing regulation and policy support, digital platforms in providing infrastructure and incentives, while universities and educational institutions are tasked with improving digital literacy through a modern entrepreneurship curriculum. This collaboration will strengthen the position of *affiliate marketing* as a digital entrepreneurship model that not only contributes to the growth of the national creative economy, but is also able to penetrate the global market. (Ratna et al., 2024)

Thus, this development strategy recommendation emphasizes that the success of *affiliate marketing* does not only depend on individual affiliates, but on strengthening the ecosystem as a whole. Digital literacy, regulation, collaboration, and innovation must be placed as the main pillars that support each other, so that *affiliate marketing* can develop into an inclusive, competitive, and sustainable creative economy driving force.

OKR framing: Objective scale a trustworthy, export-ready affiliate ecosystem. Key Results(KR1) $\geq 60\%$ affiliates certified; (KR2) refund/complaint ratio -20% ; (KR3) 1,000 halal SKUs with affiliate playbooks; (KR4) cross-border GMV $\geq 10\%$ for 200 SKUs; (KR5) regulatory compliance $\geq 80\%$ across top platforms.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that affiliate marketing has significant potential as a digital entrepreneurship model in supporting the growth of the creative economy in 2025. Key findings show that the greatest opportunities lie in easy market access, time flexibility, and low capital requirements, which make them inclusive for students, MSMEs, and freelancers. However, the challenges faced are no less important, including low digital literacy, reliance on platform algorithms, fierce competition, consumer trust issues, and regulatory uncertainty. From a social and economic perspective, affiliate marketing has implications for increasing financial inclusion, establishing collaborative networks, and contributing to strengthening the halal industry in Indonesia.

Thus, this study answers the main objective, namely to analyze the opportunities and challenges of affiliate marketing as a digital entrepreneurship model, as well as provide strategic recommendations in the form of increasing digital literacy, regulatory support, platform collaboration, and halal product innovation. The limitation of this study is that the sample is geographically concentrated in Indonesia and demographically dominated by students and MSME actors; results may therefore not generalize to larger firms, full-time creators, or affiliates operating in different regulatory or platform contexts. In addition, the cross-sectional, self-reported design and purposive sampling may introduce recall and selection biases, while platform heterogeneity (e.g., TikTok vs. marketplace affiliates) was not analyzed with sufficient granularity. However, this research contributes to the enrichment of the digital entrepreneurship literature in Indonesia, especially by placing affiliate marketing in the framework of the creative economy and sharia economy. Future research should: (1) conduct multi-country comparative studies across ASEAN and the Middle East to test external validity; (2) use longitudinal designs tracking income volatility, retention, and formalization over 12–24 months; (3) integrate mixed methods with platform log data (CTR/CVR, refund rates) to complement interviews; (4) run field experiments/A-B tests on literacy interventions, disclosure prompts, and commission structures; (5) expand stakeholders to include consumers and platform policy teams to assess trust and governance mechanisms; and (6) examine sector-specific and halal-verified product categories to estimate export readiness and cross-border sales impacts. The next research is suggested to expand the object of study to other creative industry sectors in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

REFERENCES

- Bachmann, K., & Hruska, J. (2021). Digital marketing strategies in the platform economy. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 56–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.013>
- Chaffey, D. (2022). *Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice*. Pearson Education.
- Duffy, B. E., & Pooley, J. (2019). Idols of promotion: The triumph of self-branding in the social media economy. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(3), 317–335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718818364>
- Erislan, E. (2024). Affiliate Marketing Strategy to Increase Online Sales. *Scientific Journal of Unit Management*, 12(2), 321. <https://doi.org/10.37641/jimkes.v12i2.2460>
- Hamzah, M. W., Mulyana, A., & Faisal, Y. A. (2023). Community Economic Empowerment through Affiliate Marketing and Increasing Affiliate Income. *Al Qalam: Scientific Journal of Religion and Society*, 17(5), 3241–3257.
- Khalid, N. (2024). Affiliate Marketing Business in the View of Islamic Law and Its Implications for the Welfare of Students in Subang Regency. *Journal of Major Economics*, 3(3), 304–322.
- Kumar, V., Dixit, A., Javalgi, R., & Dass, M. (2022). Digital entrepreneurship: Creating value in the platform economy. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50(4), 714–739. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00837-0>
- Marianingsih, I., Zainullah, M. I., & Musyarrofah, W. (2025). Digital Business Opportunities Through Affiliate Marketing in the Perspective of Sharia Economics. *Al-Idarah: Journal of Islamic Management and Business*, 6(2), 157–172. Ibrahimy University. <https://journal.ibrahimy.ac.id/index.php/idarrah>
- Mega, S. (2023). Implementation of Affiliate Marketing on the Tiktok platform from the perspective of Sharia Economic

- Law (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung).
- Nainggolan, M. B. B., Pebrianti, R., Pratama, N. A., & Hanoselina, Y. (2025). Entrepreneurship Empowerment in the Digital Era Among Students of Padang State University. *Journal of Empowerment: Publication of Community Service Results*, 2(4), 845–860. <https://jurnal.ittc.web.id/index.php/jipm>
- OECD. (2023). *Digital Economy Outlook*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307193-en>
- Porter, M. E., & Heppelmann, J. E. (2019). How smart, connected products are transforming competition. *Harvard Business Review*, 93(10), 65–88.
- Prasad, R., & Lata, S. (2023). Affiliate marketing and its challenges in digital economy. *International Journal of E-Business Research*, 19(2), 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJEER.315796>
- Ratna, P., Rahman, S. A., Holid, H., & Santoso, R. (2024). INCREASE ENTREPRENEURIAL INTEREST FOR SMKN 1 KALIANGET STUDENTS WITH TRAINING AND MENTORING FROM THE SHOPEE AFFILIATE PROGRAM. *ABDINA: Journal of Social and Community Service*, 3(2).
- Ratten, V. (2020). Coronavirus and entrepreneurship: Changing life and work landscape. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 32(5), 503–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1790167>
- UNCTAD. (2022). *Creative Economy Outlook 2022: Overview*. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2022>
- Zhang, J., & Ngwe, D. (2022). Influencer networks and affiliate marketing. *Marketing Science*, 41(5), 835–852. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2021.1343>
-

Copyright holder:

Ginna Novarianti Dwi Putri Pramesti (2023)

First publication right:

Insight: International Journal of Social Research

This article is licensed under:

