

CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS AFFILIATE MARKETING IN CHENNAI DISTRICT

Dr.S.V.Divya¹, D.Jansi²

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam. Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

²Part time Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Sri Parasakthi College for Women, Courtallam.

ABSTRACT

With easy access to all kinds of products and services across the globe, the world has become a 'global village'. Many marketers have resorted to new age marketing techniques or rekindling the proven classic marketing techniques, one such strategy being widely adopted by marketers and influencers is Affiliate Marketing. It involves performance based marketing model which proves effective to both marketers as well as the influencers. Moreover, it also benefits the consumer by providing curated product recommendations, access to niche or lesser known products. Additionally, Affiliates often offer special discount codes, bundle deals, or free trials as part of promotions. Hence, customers get more value than buying directly. Thus, it can be said that affiliate marketing has created a strong hold as the most popular mode of marketing. In this regard, the present study has been taken up to examine the consumer perception towards affiliate marketing in Chennai district. The district being the State Capital of Tamil Nadu was purposely chosen due to its growing tech-savvy population, urban economic base and the rapid increase of businesses and industries along with a strong social media presence of the residents. A well structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The sample respondents were contacted on the basis of purposive sampling, where a sample of 483 was arrived at after considering several factors into account. Kruskal Wallis test and Mann Whitney U test have been employed to analyse the collected data.

Keywords: Affiliate marketing, consumer, perception, factors.

INTRODUCTION

In this ever changing digital marketing era, there is a wide scope for growth in every sector. With easy access to all kinds of products and services across the globe, the world has become a 'global village'. Many marketers have resorted to new age marketing techniques or rekindling the proven classic marketing techniques, one such strategy being widely adopted by marketers and influencers is Affiliate Marketing. It involves performance based marketing model which proves effective to both marketers as well as the influencers. Moreover, it also benefits the consumer by providing curated product recommendations, access to niche or lesser known products. Additionally, Affiliates often offer special discount codes, bundle deals, or free trials as part of promotions. Hence, customers get more value than buying directly. Customers are exposed to new products and services with the help of affiliates. Thus, it can be said that affiliate marketing has created a strong hold as the most popular mode of marketing. In this regard, the present study has been taken up to examine the consumer perception towards affiliate marketing in Chennai district. The district being the State Capital of Tamil Nadu was purposely

chosen due to its growing tech-savvy population, urban economic base and the rapid increase of businesses and industries along with a strong social media presence of the residents.

OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the consumer perception towards affiliate marketing
- To understand and examine the factors involved in the perception towards affiliate marketing

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A well structured questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The sample respondents were contacted on the basis of purposive sampling, where a sample of 483 was arrived at after considering several factors into account. Kruskal Wallis test and Mann Whitney U test have been employed to analyse the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Age-Based Variations in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

This table investigates the impact of age demographics on consumer perceptions of affiliate marketing characteristics. With affiliate marketing becoming an increasingly significant component of digital marketing strategies, understanding how different age groups perceive and respond to various affiliate marketing dimensions is crucial for developing targeted and effective marketing approaches. The research examines five key dimensions across four age brackets to identify significant perception patterns.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There are no significant differences in consumer perception towards affiliate marketing characteristics based on age group.

Table No. 1 Age-Based Differences in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

Affiliate Marketing Characteristics	18-30 years (n=106)	31-40 Years (n=171)	41-50 Years (n=127)	Above 50 Years (n=79)	K-W H	p-value
Affiliate Content Attributes	347.03a	310.32a	161.24b	83.04c	259.063	0
Affiliate Transparency Factors	351.60a	315.53a	152.79b	79.20c	292.325	0
Affiliate Channel Characteristics	348.14a	298.46a	171.93b	90.04c	229.012	0
Affiliate Incentive Design	307.93a	301.43a	174.33b	133.67b	149.821	0
Affiliate-Brand Relationship	382.83a	296.22b	132.36c	111.92c	313.697	0

Note: Different superscripts (a, b, c) indicate statistically significant differences between age groups. Same superscripts indicate no significant difference between those groups.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results show statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$) across all five affiliate marketing dimensions based on age groups, rejecting the null hypothesis.

For most dimensions, the 18-30 and 31-40 age groups show similarly high positive perceptions, with no statistically significant difference between them. These younger consumers demonstrate consistently strong affinity toward affiliate marketing characteristics, particularly in content attributes (347.03 and 310.32) and transparency factors (351.60 and 315.53).

The exception is the affiliate-brand relationship dimension, where the 18-30 group (382.83) has a significantly higher perception than the 31-40 group (296.22), indicating younger consumers place exceptional value on the endorsement element of affiliate marketing.

A clear perception drop occurs with the 41-50 age group, showing significantly lower positive perception across all dimensions compared to younger groups. The above 50 years group shows the lowest perception in most dimensions, particularly regarding transparency factors (79.20) and content attributes (83.04).

For incentive design, the 41-50 and above 50 groups share similar perceptions (174.33 and 133.67), suggesting that once consumers reach middle age, their response to affiliate incentives becomes more consistent. Similarly, for affiliate-brand relationships, the two oldest groups share comparable low perceptions (132.36 and 111.92).

These findings reveal a generational divide in affiliate marketing reception, with consumers above 40 years demonstrating substantially more skepticism toward affiliate marketing practices. Marketers should develop age-targeted strategies, with particular attention to transparency and content approaches when targeting older demographics, while capitalizing on the stronger receptivity of consumers under 40 years of age.

Analysis of Gender-Based Differences in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

This table examines the influence of gender on consumer perceptions of affiliate marketing characteristics. Understanding gender-based differences in how consumers perceive various dimensions of affiliate marketing is essential for developing targeted marketing strategies. The research analyzes five key dimensions: content attributes, transparency factors, channel characteristics, incentive design, and affiliate-brand relationships across male and female consumers.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There are no significant differences in consumer perception towards affiliate marketing characteristics based on gender.

Table No. 2 Gender-Based Differences in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

Affiliate Marketing Characteristics	Male (n=200)	Female (n=283)	Mann-Whitney U	Z	p-value
Affiliate Content Attributes	269.60a	222.50b	22781	-3.749	0
Affiliate Transparency Factors	278.45a	216.24b	21010	-5	0
Affiliate Channel Characteristics	243.11a	241.21a	28077.5	-0.152	0.879
Affiliate Incentive Design	271.27a	221.31b	22446	-4.126	0

Affiliate-Brand Relationship	241.54a	242.33a	28208	-0.064	0.949
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Note: Different superscripts (a, b) indicate statistically significant differences between gender groups. Same superscripts indicate no significant difference between groups.

The Mann-Whitney U test results indicate statistically significant gender-based differences in three of the five affiliate marketing dimensions, partially rejecting the null hypothesis.

Male consumers demonstrate significantly higher positive perceptions than female consumers in three key dimensions: affiliate content attributes (269.60 vs. 222.50), affiliate transparency factors (278.45 vs. 216.24), and affiliate incentive design (271.27 vs. 221.31). These differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that male consumers generally respond more favorably to these aspects of affiliate marketing.

The most pronounced gender difference appears in transparency factors ($Z = -5.000$), where male consumers (278.45) show substantially higher positive perception compared to female consumers (216.24). This suggests that female consumers may be more skeptical or have higher expectations regarding disclosure and transparency in affiliate marketing.

In contrast, no significant gender differences were observed in perceptions of affiliate channel characteristics (243.11 vs. 241.21, $p = 0.879$) or affiliate-brand relationships (241.54 vs. 242.33, $p = 0.949$). These findings indicate that male and female consumers share similar perceptions regarding the channels through which affiliate marketing is delivered and the perceived relationships between affiliates and the brands they promote.

These results highlight the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in affiliate marketing, particularly when designing content, implementing transparency measures, and creating incentive structures. While marketers may use similar channel strategies and affiliate-brand relationship approaches across genders, they should consider tailoring content attributes, transparency practices, and incentive designs to address the differing perceptions between male and female consumers. Specifically, additional transparency measures and more carefully crafted content might better engage female consumers, who appear to be more critical of these dimensions.

Analysis of Employment Status-Based Differences in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

This table investigates how employment status influences consumer perceptions of affiliate marketing characteristics. Understanding these differences is crucial for developing targeted marketing strategies that resonate with consumers in different occupational situations. The research examines five key dimensions across four employment status categories: employed, self-employed, unemployed, and students.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There are no significant differences in consumer perception towards affiliate marketing characteristics based on employment status.

Table No. 3 Employment Status-Based Differences in Consumer Perception Towards Affiliate Marketing Characteristics

Affiliate Marketing Characteristics	Employed (n=169)	Self-employed (n=143)	Unemployed (n=96)	Student (n=75)	K-W H	p-value
Affiliate Content Attributes	324.14b	189.03c	66.83d	382.10a	322.167	0
Affiliate Transparency Factors	328.24a	210.19c	77.50d	318.90b	244.937	0
Affiliate Channel Characteristics	321.65b	187.42c	88.00d	363.70a	267.23	0
Affiliate Incentive Design	289.01b	222.15c	88.25d	370.70a	229.478	0
Affiliate-Brand Relationship	309.72a	205.94b	121.50c	312.40a	156.409	0

Note: Different superscripts (a, b, c, d) indicate statistically significant differences between employment status groups. Same superscripts indicate no significant difference between groups.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results show statistically significant differences ($p < 0.001$) across all five affiliate marketing dimensions based on employment status, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Students consistently demonstrate the highest positive perceptions across most dimensions, particularly in affiliate content attributes (382.10), affiliate channel characteristics (363.70), and affiliate incentive design (370.70). This suggests that students are the most receptive audience to affiliate marketing strategies, possibly due to their higher digital engagement, greater exposure to online content, and stronger interest in incentives and discounts.

Employed consumers show the second-highest positive perceptions across most dimensions, with particularly strong affinity for transparency factors (328.24) and content attributes (324.14). For affiliate-brand relationship (309.72), employed consumers share similarly high perceptions with students (312.40), indicating both groups value the relationship between affiliates and the brands they promote.

Self-employed consumers consistently demonstrate moderate perceptions across all dimensions, positioning between employed and unemployed consumers. Their perceptions are notably lower than those of employed individuals, particularly regarding content attributes (189.03 vs. 324.14) and channel characteristics (187.42 vs. 321.65).

Unemployed consumers show significantly lower positive perceptions across all dimensions, with remarkably low mean ranks for content attributes (66.83), transparency factors (77.50), and channel characteristics (88.00). This group appears to be the most skeptical or least engaged with affiliate marketing practices, possibly due to limited purchasing power, different online activity patterns, or heightened sensitivity to commercial content.

The findings indicate that employment status significantly influences how consumers perceive affiliate marketing, with students and employed individuals showing the most favorable perceptions, while unemployed consumers demonstrate substantial skepticism. Marketers should consider these differences when developing targeted affiliate strategies, perhaps emphasizing incentives and engaging content for student audiences, focusing on transparency

and brand relationships for employed consumers, while carefully considering alternative approaches or enhanced value propositions when targeting self-employed and unemployed segments.

CONCLUSION

The study has elaborately concentrated on the demographic factors such age, gender and employment status to assess their perception towards affiliate marketing. It is clearly evident from the findings that marketers should come up with age-related marketing policies to overcome the skepticism of older customers, gender-based policies would ensure covering all genders and formulating strategies for unemployed customers like offers and incentives would go a long way in establishing strong base amidst people from all walks of life. By adopting these policies, marketers and influencers can overcome the shortcomings and tap the market to its full potential.

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