

Research Article

# The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing on Willingness to Buy on Shopee in Medan City

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**Abstract:** This study seeks to examine the impact of Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing on Purchase Intent on the Shopee platform in Medan City. The research employed a quantitative methodology via a survey of 384 Shopee user respondents. We used Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) to analyze the data. The findings indicated that Social Media Marketing exerts a positive and significant influence on Willingness to Buy, evidenced by a coefficient value of 0.104 (T-statistic = 2.987; P-value = 0.003). Affiliate Marketing likewise has a positive and substantial effect on Willingness to Buy, with a coefficient value of 0.284 (T-statistic = 5.947; P-value = 0.000). The study's findings suggest that management of e-commerce platforms like Shopee should make the most of social media to reach more people and get more people involved. Also, working with the correct affiliate partners can make product suggestions stronger and bring in more customers, which can lead to a big increase in sales conversions.

**Keywords:** Affiliate Marketing; Medan City; Shopee; Social Media Marketing; Willingness to Buy.

## 1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has profoundly transformed marketing practices, especially within the e-commerce domain (Thamrin et al., 2025). People are no longer using traditional ways to shop; instead, they are using digital platforms that are faster, easier, and provide a wider range of products (Sutejo et al., 2024). In Indonesia, Shopee is an e-commerce platform that has grown quickly. It uses digital marketing to get people to buy from it (Azman et al., 2026). Social media marketing is one of the best ways to reach customers in today's digital age, especially young people (Perera et al., 2022). Companies may connect with customers more closely on social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook by posting material that is fun, useful, and interactive (Syahrani & Nirawati, 2025). Social media marketing is more than just a technique to promote something; it can also be a way for people to talk to each other and get more involved with a product or brand (Luqman A Arethusa & Taneo, 2024).

Affiliate marketing is another emerging marketing method. In this type of marketing, people or companies promote products through unique links and get a cut of each sale. Affiliate marketing is common among content creators, influencers, and regular users on e-commerce sites like Shopee. They share their experiences and product suggestions with their followers. People think this method works because it takes advantage of the fact that the audience trusts the person who recommends the product.

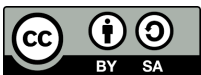
Received: March 17, 2026

Revised: March 29, 2026

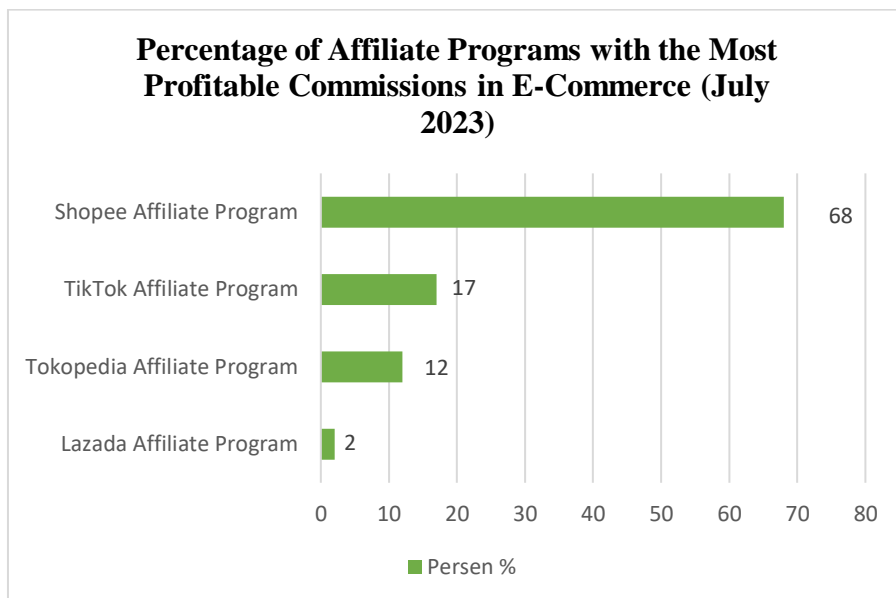
Accepted: April 20, 2026

Published: April 23, 2026

Curr. Ver.: April 23, 2026



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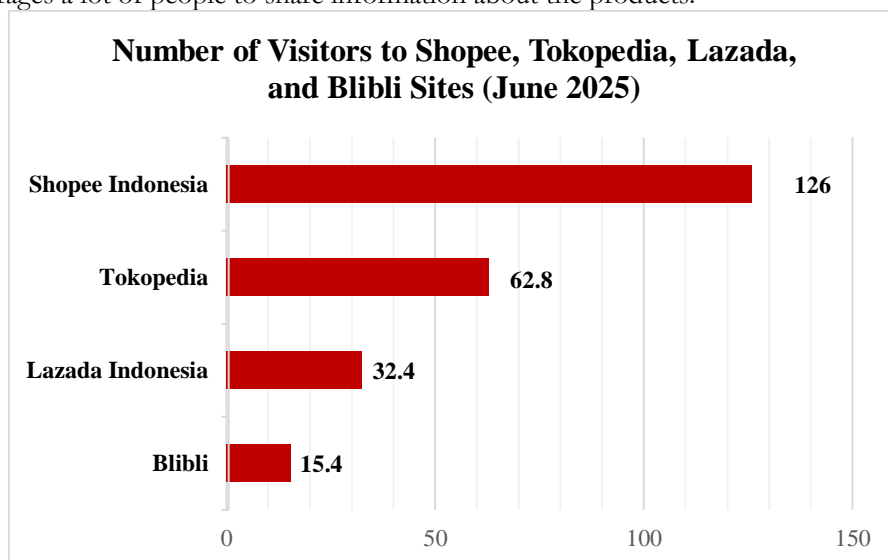


**Figure 1.** Percentage of Affiliate Programs with the Most Profitable Commissions in E-commerce (July 2023).

Affiliate marketing, which includes influencer marketing and affiliate programs, has quickly become a popular way to get new customers. Affiliate programs can bring in more traffic and higher conversions by using strategies like endorsements, reviews, or affiliate links that give consumers a reason to buy. Recent studies show that affiliate marketing not only boosts sales but also has a big impact on whether or not people want to buy anything. This effect is considerably stronger when the affiliate is very trustworthy and the product value is shown in a clear and relevant way. Affiliates who have good relationships with their audiences can build trust and give more personalized and real suggestions. This gives customers more confidence when they buy things (Syrdal et al., 2023).

According to Semrush data from June 2025, Shopee Indonesia is the most popular e-commerce site in Indonesia, with 126 million visits per month. This number is far higher than those of its key competitors, like Tokopedia (62.8 million), Lazada Indonesia (32.4 million), and Blibli (15.4 million). Shopee's domination shows that its digital marketing strategy works to get people to notice it, keep their interest, and make sales.

Using social media marketing and affiliate marketing methods is one reason why so many people are coming to the site. Shopee uses a lot of different channels, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, to show interesting ads, take advantage of the short video trend, and get influencers to work with them. Shopee's affiliate marketing technique also helps spread the word about its products by recruiting affiliates who get paid a fee for each sale. This encourages a lot of people to share information about the products.



**Figure 2.** Number of Visitors to Shopee, Tokopedia, Lazada, and Blibli Sites (June 2025).

However, even if different digital marketing methods have been used, not all of them immediately make people more likely to buy (WTO). Willingness to Buy is an important sign of how people act as consumers. It shows how ready and willing a person is to buy something. Several things affect this buying intention, such as the quality of the information, trust, user experience, and how well the marketing campaign works. Medan is one of Indonesia's biggest cities and has a lot of internet and social media use. The way people shop online there is very interesting. There are several e-commerce platforms to choose from, so shoppers can pick one depending on their preferences, trust, and past experiences.

This research is crucial because it is important to know what makes people want to buy things on e-commerce sites like Shopee, especially in Medan. Even though Shopee has done well with Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing to get people interested, the biggest problem is turning visits into sales. This study seeks to examine the impact of these two marketing methods on customer purchasing interest in local markets with distinct online shopping attributes. The data could help e-commerce platform managers come up with better marketing plans, especially for getting more people to buy things and keeping consumers.

## 2. Literature Review

### Willingness to Buy

Willingness to Buy, or purchasing interest, is when a buyer is likely to buy a good or service after thinking about a number of aspects, both inside and outside of themselves (Joshi, 2021). When a consumer sees marketing materials, purchase interest is their response. This shows their interest before they decide to buy something (Bachtiar Hariyadi et al., 2023). Purchase interest is the first step in buying something. It shows how much a person is paying attention to, interested in, and believes in a product (Nasoha et al., 2024). Willingness to Buy is greatly affected by a number of internal elements, such as past experience, trust in the product, and the quality of the information obtained. Promotions from the firm, product reviews, and suggestions from influencers or affiliates are other things that have a big impact on what people want to buy (Huo et al., 2025). Product recommendations from affiliates or influencers on e-commerce sites like Shopee can make people more likely to buy because their audience trusts them more (Shanti, 2022).

A company's ability to get more people to buy will have a big impact on its long-term performance, especially in the very competitive e-commerce business (Wu, 2015). Affiliate marketing and social media marketing are two digital marketing tactics that work well together in this way (Mushi et al., 2025). Companies may reach more people and get to know their customers better by interacting with them directly on social media through social media marketing (Owens et al., 2024). Affiliate Marketing, on the other hand, lets businesses reach more people by using a network of partners that promote their items to their own audiences (Djohan et al., 2025). For example, Shopee uses influencers and content creators to get people to buy things, which leads to more sales and more devoted customers (Aditi et al., 2022).

### Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing (SMM) has proven a very effective way to get people to buy things online (Asad, 2024). The goal of SMM is to use digital channels to form long-term connections with customers, generate value for both sides, and affect what customers buy (Villarreal & Díaz, 2022). Companies can use social media sites like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter to market their products, get more people to know about their brand, and connect with their audience in a deeper way (Leite & Baptista, 2022). Companies can learn more about what customers want, like, and how they react to the things they offer through direct interactions on social media. This can make people more likely to buy (Celestin, 2024).

Also, getting people to share material and talk directly to brands can make them more likely to buy (Salhab et al., 2023). This kind of connection increases engagement, spreads the word about promotions, and has a direct effect on whether or not people buy something (Tesar Arianto et al., 2021). Companies may build stronger ties with customers and get them to stick with them by using interactive features like comments, direct messages, and content sharing (Salqaura & Nasib, 2026). Interesting and relevant material also makes people more likely to buy since they feel more connected to the product or brand (Widy & HS, 2021).

### Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a type of digital marketing in which a third party, called an affiliate, advertises a business's goods or services and gets paid when someone buys anything through

a link or referral code they provide (Dayanti, 2024). Modern marketing includes not just businesses, but also outside groups that help businesses reach more customers (Suyanto & Karundeng, 2025). Affiliate Marketing is a way for firms and affiliates to work together in a way that benefits both parties (Oktavia et al., 2025). Affiliate marketing is a type of digital marketing that uses a network of partners to sell things online based on how well they do (Maulida et al., 2025). On e-commerce sites like Shopee, users, influencers, or content producers broadcast links to products on social media. When others buy those products through those links, the users, influencers, or content makers get a commission (Azmi et al., 2025).

The best thing about affiliate marketing is that it can make people more willing to buy (Shahinoor & Jahid, 2024). This happens when those who are seen as closer and more trustworthy by the audience, like influencers or content creators, do the promotions (Butarbutar et al., 2026). This trust makes people think more positively about the thing being promoted, which in turn makes them more likely to buy it (Nurhidayah et al., 2025). Also, a commission-based system gives affiliates reasons to work harder on their promotions, which makes it more likely that customers will buy something (Sihombing et al., 2023). Companies can boost buying intention (Willingness to Buy) and turn it into actual sales by working with affiliates that have strong ties to their audiences. This helps the company stay in business and thrive in the competitive digital market (Nurbayan et al., 2025).

### 3. Method

This research employs a quantitative methodology with an explanatory framework to investigate the correlation between Social Media Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, and Purchase Intent on the Shopee e-commerce platform. The main way to collect data was through an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale that was sent out through Google Forms, WhatsApp, and social media. The participants in the study were active Shopee customers living in Medan City. To be included, they had to have shopped at least twice in the recent three months and have seen Shopee ads on social media. We used a purposive sampling strategy to get a sample size of at least 385 respondents. This was done using the Lemeshow formula and was adjusted to account for people who didn't answer.

The Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was utilized to analyze the data, and SmartPLS software was employed to do this. PLS-SEM was selected due to its capacity to examine the relationships among variables in intricate models and to enable the analysis of mediation models without the necessity of satisfying the assumption of normal data distribution. This analysis was performed in two phases: a descriptive analysis to delineate the features of respondents and research variables, and a structural analysis to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. Descriptive analysis gives fundamental information about the profile of the respondent, while structural analysis looks at how different factors are related, like how Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing affect Willingness to Buy.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### Research Results

**Table 1.** Outer Loading Test Results.

	AM	SMM	WTB	Information
AM1	0.779			Valid
AM10	0.770			Valid
AM11	0.822			Valid
AM12	0.878			Valid
AM2	0.801			Valid
AM3	0.714			Valid
AM4	0.706			Valid
AM5	0.791			Valid

AM6	0.798	Valid
AM7	0.796	Valid
AM8	0.859	Valid
AM9	0.808	Valid
WTB2	0.794	Valid
WTB3	0.843	Valid
WTB4	0.805	Valid
WTB5	0.853	Valid
WTB6	0.877	Valid
WTB7	0.859	Valid
WTB8	0.877	Valid
smm10	0.767	Valid
SMM2	0.819	Valid
SMM3	0.775	Valid
SMM6	0.819	Valid
SMM7	0.818	Valid
SMM8	0.836	Valid
SMM9	0.807	Valid

After removing indications that didn't satisfy the requirements, the test results showed that the criterion employed in this study was an outer loading value of 0.70 or higher. All other indicators in the Affiliate Marketing (AM), Social Media Marketing (SMM), and Willingness to Buy (WTB) variables have passed the tests for convergent validity. In the Affiliate Marketing (AM) variable, all indicators (AM1 to AM12) have outer loading values above 0.70, ranging from 0.706 to 0.878. This shows that these indicators are quite good at measuring the Affiliate Marketing architecture.

All of the indicators utilized for the Willingness to Buy (WTB) variable (WTB2 to WTB8) were also found to be valid, with outer loading values between 0.794 and 0.877. This means that each indication can accurately show how interested consumers are in buying anything. In the Social Media Marketing (SMM) variable, all other indicators (smm2, smm3, smm6, smm7, smm8, smm9, and smm10) have outside loading values above 0.70, which means they are between 0.767 and 0.836. This means that these metrics have accurately measured the Social Media Marketing concept.

**Table 2.** AVE Results of Convergent Validity Test.

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Information
AM	0.632	Valid
SMM	0.65	Valid
WTB	0.713	Valid

Along with the outer loading value, this study also used the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value to test convergent validity. AVE is a way to determine how well latent variables can explain the differences between their indicators. If a construct has an AVE value of 0.50 or above, it is said to have convergent validity. The Affiliate Marketing (AM) variable has an AVE value of 0.632, the Social Media Marketing (SMM) variable has an AVE value of 0.650, and the Willingness to Buy (WTB) variable has an AVE value of 0.713. All of these numbers are higher than the minimum of 0.50. These results show that each variable can account for more than 50% of the variation in its indicators. Consequently, it may be inferred that all constructs in this study satisfy the criteria for convergent validity as determined by the AVE value and are deemed valid.

**Table 3.** Cross Loading Results of Discriminant Validity Test.

	SM	AM	WTB	Information
SMM10	0.767	0.716	0.385	Valid
SMM2	0.819	0.535	0.338	Valid
SMM3	0.775	0.543	0.295	Valid
SMM6	0.819	0.617	0.366	Valid

SMM7	0.818	0.634	0.359	Valid
SMM8	0.836	0.648	0.371	Valid
SMM9	0.807	0.671	0.385	Valid
AM1	0.682	0.779	0.458	Valid
AM10	0.618	0.77	0.348	Valid
AM11	0.649	0.822	0.479	Valid
AM12	0.705	0.878	0.526	Valid
AM2	0.607	0.801	0.504	Valid
AM3	0.511	0.714	0.482	Valid
AM4	0.482	0.706	0.442	Valid
AM5	0.599	0.791	0.394	Valid
AM6	0.604	0.798	0.446	Valid
AM7	0.622	0.796	0.456	Valid
AM8	0.675	0.859	0.441	Valid
AM9	0.64	0.808	0.413	Valid
WTB2	0.339	0.44	0.794	Valid
WTB3	0.408	0.534	0.843	Valid
WTB4	0.41	0.546	0.805	Valid
WTB5	0.367	0.479	0.853	Valid
WTB6	0.332	0.42	0.877	Valid
WTB7	0.36	0.441	0.859	Valid
WTB8	0.403	0.479	0.877	Valid

The test findings showed that the Social Media Marketing (SMM), Affiliate Marketing (AM), and Willingness to Buy (WTB) variables all had the highest loading values on their own constructs. For instance, the loading value of the smm2 indicator on the SMM variable is 0.819, which is larger than the loading value on the AM variable (0.535) and the WTB variable (0.338). The same thing happens with other indicators: each one has the highest value on the variable it stands for. In the Affiliate Marketing (AM) variable, indicators like AM12 have a loading value of 0.878 on the AM construct, which is greater than the loading values on the other constructs. In the Willingness to Buy (WTB) variable, the WTB6 indicator has a loading value of 0.877, which is the highest value of all the constructs. These results show that each indicator can clearly tell the difference between the construct being measured and the other constructs.

**Table 4.** Fornell-Larcker.

	SMM	AM	WTB
SMM	0.806	0.778	
AM		0.795	
WTB	0.445	0.567	0.845

The test findings showed that the Social Media Marketing (SMM) variable had a  $\sqrt{AVE}$  value of 0.806, the Affiliate Marketing (AM) variable had a value of 0.795, and the Willingness to Buy (WTB) variable had a value of 0.845. After that, these values were compared to the correlation between the variables. The  $\sqrt{AVE}$  value (0.806) for the SMM variable was higher than its association with AM (0.778) and WTB (0.445). The  $\sqrt{AVE}$  value (0.795) for the AM variable was similarly higher than its association with WTB (0.567). The  $\sqrt{AVE}$  value (0.845) for the WTB variable was also higher than its association with SMM (0.445) and AM (0.567). These findings demonstrate that each construct possesses a strong capacity to distinguish itself from other constructions. Consequently, it can be inferred that this research model

**Tabel 5.** Nilai Cronbach's Alpha.

	Cronbach's alpha	Information
SMM	0.91	Reliabel
AM	0.947	Reliabel
WTB	0.933	Reliabel

The data processing results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha values for each variable were 0.910 for Social Media Marketing (SMM), 0.947 for Affiliate Marketing (AM), and 0.933 for Willingness to Buy (WTB). The minimal limit is 0.70, and all of these figures are higher than that. These findings demonstrate that each variable exhibits a high degree of internal consistency. So, we can say that all of the constructs in this study meet the reliability standards and can be used for more investigation.

**Table 6.** Composite Reliability Values.

	<b>Composite reliability (rho_c)</b>	<b>Information</b>
SMM	0.928	Reliabel
AM	0.954	Reliabel
WTB	0.946	Reliabel

The findings of the data processing showed that the Composite Reliability value for each variable was 0.928 for Social Media Marketing (SMM), 0.954 for Affiliate Marketing (AM), and 0.946 for Willingness to Buy (WTB). All of these values are higher than the minimum that has been established. These results show that all of the study's constructs are remarkably consistent with each other. So, it can be said that the variables Social Media Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, and Willingness to Buy have passed the reliability tests and can be used in more research.

**Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)**

**Table 7.** R-Square (R<sup>2</sup>).

	<b>R-square</b>	<b>R-square adjusted</b>
WTB	0.535	0.525

The Willingness to Buy variable has a coefficient of determination (R-Square) value of 0.535, which means that the model has moderate to strong explanatory power. This means that the model is good at explaining the buying interest variable, but there are still other factors outside of the model that have an effect.

**Table 8.** Path Coefficient.

	<b>Original sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P values</b>
SMM -> WTB	0.104	0.104	0.035	2.987	0.003
AM -> WTB	0.284	0.283	0.048	5.947	0.000

**The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Willingness to Buy**

This finding is consistent with several prior studies, indicating that Social Media Marketing exerts a favorable and significant influence on Willingness to Buy. For instance, study by (Wilopo & Nuralam, 2025) showed that fascinating and interactive material on social media can get people more involved, which can then lead to them making a purchase. When customers and brands interact on social media, it makes their relationships stronger and makes them more likely to buy (Kothari et al., 2025). The suitability of content with existing trends can strengthen positive perceptions of products, increasing consumer interest (Shaheen, 2025). The amount of time people spend on social media is linked to how likely they are to buy anything (Ying et al., 2025). Social media helps brands connect with their customers, which makes them more loyal and more likely to buy from them (Ismael et al., 2025).

The findings of this study offer managerial insights that can assist organizations in formulating more efficient marketing strategies. Since affiliate marketing has a bigger effect on people's willingness to buy, organizations should focus more on affiliate-based marketing methods. This could mean working with influencers or content creators that have a lot of reputation to build trust with customers. Additionally, even if social media marketing is powerful, businesses need to make the most of it by making material that is more creative, relevant, and in line with current trends to get more people to pay attention and interact. Combining these two tactics can make marketing more complete, which not only makes

people more likely to buy but also builds stronger long-term relationships with customers and helps the company stay in business in the very competitive e-commerce sector.

### **The Influence of Affiliate Marketing on Willingness to Buy**

The test results indicate a coefficient value of 0.284, a T-statistic of 5.947, and a P-value of 0.000, leading to the conclusion that Affiliate Marketing exerts a positive and substantial influence on Willingness to Buy. This outcome corroborates other studies indicating that marketing communications incorporating external entities might enhance message delivery efficacy and foster consumer trust (Oktavia et al., 2025). Affiliate marketing works because it is based on real results, such sales made from referrals made by affiliates (Maulida et al., 2025). Affiliate marketing has a big impact on buying decisions since it can make information more trustworthy and promotions more widely seen [26]. Recommendations from influencers and affiliates help people decide what to buy (Azmi et al., 2025). Affiliate marketing done by other people has a big effect on Willingness to Buy because it makes people feel more trustworthy and involved as consumers. Affiliate marketing makes people more likely to buy by using the credibility of third parties and their capacity to reach a larger audience, which makes sales conversion more likely (Giron et al., 2025).

This study suggests that organizations should make affiliate marketing their main marketing approach. They should work with influencers or content creators who have a lot of reputation and an audience that is relevant to their business. Influencers can help people trust a product more and get them to buy it. Companies should also keep an eye on and analyze their affiliates' performance on a regular basis to make sure they are helping them make the most sales. Companies should also combine affiliate marketing with other types of marketing, including social media marketing, to make their marketing more complete and well-rounded. Using both of these tactics together will help you reach more people, make your brand more well-known, and get more people interested in buying your products. Companies should make their affiliate programs stronger by giving affiliates good incentives or commissions to get them to promote the product more.

### **The Influence of Social Media Marketing and Affiliate Marketing on Willingness to Buy**

The test results indicated that Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Affiliate Marketing (AM) had a favorable and significant impact on customer Willingness to Buy (WTB). This finding aligns with other research demonstrating that social media marketing significantly enhances Willingness to Buy by elevating brand recognition and customer engagement, hence affecting purchase intention through interactions on social media platforms (Dzreke & Dzreke, 2025). SMM plays a big role in customer purchase intention by stressing how important it is to make content that is both interesting and useful in order to affect buying decisions (Shahinoor & Jahid, 2024). Affiliate marketing has been proven to have a stronger effect on Willingness to Buy. Studies have demonstrated that promotions done through affiliates greatly boost the intention to buy online (Batubara et al., 2024). Affiliate marketing plays a key role in affecting buying decisions, and it is important for businesses to improve results-based digital marketing tactics to boost Willingness to Buy in an e-commerce industry that is becoming more competitive (Firmansyah et al., 2024).

This study's results suggest that organizations should make affiliate marketing a top priority to get more people to buy from them. They may do this by working with well-known influencers or content providers. Affiliate marketing has been shown to have a stronger effect on buying decisions, therefore businesses need to make sure they work with affiliates that are relevant and trustworthy for their consumers. Companies should also improve their social media marketing (SMM) by making material that is interesting, interactive, and relevant to current trends. This will help people remember their brand and get them more involved with it. In the extremely competitive e-commerce sector, these two techniques must work together to make the business more visible, reach more customers, and eventually improve sales.

## **5. Conclusion**

Research indicates that social media marketing and affiliate marketing both positively and significantly affect consumer purchasing intentions on the Shopee platform. Affiliate marketing is more effective than social media marketing at getting people to buy. This shows that suggestions from third parties, like influencers or affiliates, are better at generating trust and getting people to buy things. Social media marketing, on the other hand, can also have a

big impact on people's willingness to buy by using creative and interactive material. However, its effect is not as strong as that of affiliate marketing.

According to this study's results, businesses should improve their affiliate marketing by working with influencers or content creators who are well-known and trusted to build trust with customers. Companies can also keep working on social media marketing by making more unique, interactive material that follows new trends to get more people interested. These two tactics should work together to help each other get more people to buy, reach more people, and build stronger long-term relationships with customers.

There are a few problems with this study. First, the study was limited to Medan City and involved respondents who were frequent Shopee users, thereby restricting the applicability of the findings to other locations or e-commerce platforms. Second, using an online survey could make participants' answers less honest and accurate. Third, this study just looked at two digital marketing variables and didn't look at any other outside elements, including demographic data, that can also affect buying choices.

These findings show that managers should focus their affiliate marketing efforts on influencers or affiliates with a lot of influence to develop trust with customers. Social media marketing is powerful, but not as powerful as affiliate marketing. This means that organizations need to make sure that the two techniques work well together. Companies who can successfully combine the two can get customers to buy more, which will help them stay in business in the competitive e-commerce sector.

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