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THE EFFECT OF AFFILIATE MARKETING ON PURCHASE DECISIONS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

(A Study on Shopee Electronic Product Consumers in Cirebon City)

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Abstract

The rapid growth of online shopping has driven businesses to adopt affiliate marketing as a promotional strategy on the Shopee platform, yet its effectiveness in directly driving purchase decisions remains debated, making it necessary to empirically test the mediating role of customer satisfaction. This study aims to analyze the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions, both directly and through the mediation of customer satisfaction, among electronic product consumers of Shopee in Cirebon City. A quantitative causal-associative approach was employed using purposive sampling on 124 respondents, analyzed with Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4. The results show that affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.338; t = 4.692; p = 0.000), so H1 is accepted. Affiliate marketing also has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.341; t = 4.592; p = 0.000), so H2 is accepted. Customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.387; t = 5.283; p = 0.000), so H3 is accepted. Customer satisfaction is also shown to partially mediate the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (indirect β = 0.132; t = 3.274; p = 0.001), so H4 is accepted. These findings indicate that affiliate marketing effectively drives purchase decisions both directly and through enhanced customer satisfaction, suggesting that sellers and affiliators should improve the quality of content, incentives, accessibility, and credibility of affiliation to strengthen customer satisfaction while sustainably driving purchase decisions.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way Indonesian consumers shop. Online shopping is no longer merely an alternative but has become part of everyday lifestyle. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) on more than 8,700 respondents across 38 provinces shows a continuing increase in internet penetration in Indonesia (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2025), positioning Indonesia as one of the largest and most active e-commerce markets in Southeast Asia.

Within this landscape, Shopee is the most accessed e-commerce platform in Indonesia, with a market share of 53.22%, up from 41.65% the previous year, followed

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by TikTok Shop (27.37%), Tokopedia (9.57%), and Lazada (9.09%) (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2025). Regionally, Shopee controlled 52% of Southeast Asia's e-commerce gross merchandise value (GMV) in 2024, up from 48% in 2023, with a total GMV of USD 66.8 billion, compared to TikTok Shop's USD 22.6 billion (Momentum Works, 2025). Electronic products represent a segment with considerable potential on Shopee, yet they differ from other categories because of their relatively high transaction value, complex technical specifications, and greater risk of product-description mismatch, which makes consumers more selective before purchasing.

Affiliate marketing, in which third-party affiliators promote products through content such as reviews, unboxing videos, and specification comparisons in exchange for commission, has become an increasingly influential promotional channel on Shopee. This phenomenon is also visible in Cirebon City: a study on Shopee's e-service quality among users in Cirebon (Abid & Purbawati, 2023) found that customers actively evaluate electronic service quality as a basis for their online shopping satisfaction, indicating that online shopping activity through Shopee in Cirebon has developed considerably. However, that study did not examine the role of affiliate content as a factor influencing customer satisfaction and purchase decisions, particularly for electronic products, whose complexity and purchase risk are higher than other product categories – a gap this study seeks to address. At the same time, consumer complaints on online forums and social media reveal disappointment when products received do not match affiliators' descriptions, especially for electronic products with complex technical specifications. A mismatch between affiliate content and actual product quality can trigger dissatisfaction, which in turn may erode trust in the platform. This double-edged nature of affiliate marketing – encouraging purchase decisions on one hand while potentially creating unmet expectations on the other – makes customer satisfaction an important variable to examine in the relationship between affiliate marketing and purchase decisions, particularly for electronic products whose purchase risk is comparatively high.

According to the Consumer Decision Making Theory (Kotler & Keller, 2022), the purchase decision process consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. For Shopee's electronic products, these stages are rarely straightforward given the complex specifications and high transaction values involved. During the information-search stage, affiliate content such as reviews, unboxing videos, and specification comparisons functions as an external information source that accelerates the search and evaluation of alternatives. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), affiliate content acts as a marketing stimulus that is processed internally by the consumer (the organism) before generating a behavioral response in the form of a purchase decision. The Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) further explains that customer satisfaction arises when the product received matches the expectations shaped by affiliate content, which subsequently affects post-purchase behavior such as repurchase intention and willingness to recommend the product to others.

A growing body of research supports a significant effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (Salsabila et al., 2024; Marsally & Dwiani, 2025; P & Iswati, 2024), while customer satisfaction and trust have been shown to mediate this relationship in several contexts (Sibulan & Limos-Galay, 2024; Rismawati et al., 2024; Adrian & Syaefulloh, 2023; Dewi & Munawaroh, 2025). However, findings are not entirely

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consistent: some studies report a non-significant effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (Marsally & Dwiani, 2025; Rismawati et al., 2024), leaving an inconsistency that warrants further investigation. Moreover, most prior studies focus on low- to medium-involvement products with trust as the more commonly tested mediator, while research that specifically positions customer satisfaction as a mediator for high-complexity products such as electronics remains relatively limited. Building on this theoretical foundation and the inconsistency of prior findings, this study examines the role of customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between affiliate marketing and purchase decisions among Shopee electronic product consumers in Cirebon City.

Based on the background above, this study addresses four research questions: (1) does affiliate marketing significantly affect the purchase decisions of Shopee electronic products in Cirebon City; (2) does customer satisfaction significantly affect purchase decisions; (3) does affiliate marketing significantly affect customer satisfaction; and (4) does affiliate marketing significantly affect purchase decisions through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable.

Accordingly, this study proposes four hypotheses:

H1 – affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions;
H2 – affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction;
H3 –customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions; and
H4 –affiliate marketing has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative, causal-associative approach aimed at testing the relationships among affiliate marketing, customer satisfaction, and purchase decisions. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS version 4. PLS-SEM was selected because it can simultaneously test direct and indirect (mediating) relationships among variables and is suitable for studies with relatively small to medium sample sizes without requiring strict multivariate normality (Hair et al., 2019).

The population of this study comprises all Shopee users in Cirebon City who have purchased electronic products through affiliate marketing referrals, a population whose exact size cannot be identified (infinite population) because Shopee does not publish detailed data on buyers by product category and marketing channel. Since the population size is unknown, sample size determination followed Hair et al. (2019), who recommend a minimum sample size of ten times the largest number of indicators pointing to a single latent variable for PLS-SEM analysis. As the affiliate marketing construct has the largest number of indicators (12), the minimum required sample was 12 × 10 = 120 respondents. Using non-probability purposive sampling, this study obtained 124 valid respondents who met the following inclusion criteria: aged 17–48 years; active users of the Shopee application; had made at least one electronic product purchase on Shopee; had been exposed to or used affiliate marketing content (e.g., via Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube) in their purchase process; and resided in Cirebon City.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Form

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using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire measured three variables: Affiliate Marketing (X), operationalized with 12 items across four dimensions – content quality, incentive, accessibility, and credibility, adapted from Ardianah and Badi'ah (2025); Customer Satisfaction (Z), operationalized with 10 items across four dimensions; and Purchase Decision (Y), operationalized with 8 items across four dimensions reflecting the stages of the purchase decision process.

Data were analyzed in two stages. First, descriptive statistics were used to describe respondent characteristics and response distributions. Second, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through convergent validity (outer loading ≥ 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted/AVE ≥ 0.50), discriminant validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio/HTMT < 0.90), and construct reliability (Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70 and Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.60). The structural model (inner model) was then evaluated through the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and model fit indices (SRMR and NFI), followed by hypothesis testing using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. A hypothesis was accepted when the path coefficient was positive, the t-statistic exceeded 1.96, and the p-value was below 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 124 respondents, 71 (56.9%) were female and 53 (43.1%) were male, indicating that female consumers dominate the electronic-product affiliate-content audience on Shopee in this sample. By educational background, the majority held a bachelor's degree (S1) (61 respondents, 49.2%), followed by senior high school graduates (50 respondents, 40.3%), diploma (D3) graduates (9 respondents, 7.3%), and vocational high school (SMK) and master's degree (S2) holders (2 respondents each, 1.6%).

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	53	43.1
	Female	71	56.9
Last Education	Senior High School	50	40.3
	Vocational High School	2	1.6
	Diploma (D3)	9	7.3
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	61	49.2
	Master's Degree (S2)	2	1.6

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the three research variables (n = 123 valid responses) are presented in Table 2. Mean scores across the item pools ranged from 4.01 to 4.22 for affiliate marketing, 4.02 to 4.11 for customer satisfaction, and 4.06 to 4.15 for purchase decisions, indicating that respondents generally rated all three constructs favorably.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD

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Affiliate Marketing (X)	123	14	59	36.00	10.027
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	123	13	49	30.00	8.825
Purchase Decision (Y)	123	10	40	24.00	6.797

Source: Primary data processed by the researcher, 2026.

Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation

Convergent validity was first assessed through outer loadings. Two indicators, X8 and Y5, showed loadings below the 0.70 threshold (0.669 and 0.698, respectively) and were removed from the model. After re-estimation, all 26 remaining indicators exceeded 0.70, ranging from 0.706 to 0.813 for affiliate marketing, 0.747 to 0.817 for purchase decisions, and 0.728 to 0.848 for customer satisfaction, confirming adequate convergent validity at the indicator level.

Table 3. Convergent Validity, Discriminant Validity, and Reliability

Variable	Outer Loading Range	AVE	HTMT (max)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Affiliate Marketing (X)	0.706–0.813	0.573	0.507 (X–Y)	0.937	0.926
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.747–0.817	0.604	0.545 (Y–Z)	0.914	0.891
Customer Satisfaction (Z)	0.728–0.848	0.626	0.361 (X–Z)	0.944	0.933

Source: SmartPLS output processed by the researcher, 2026.

All three constructs exceeded the AVE threshold of 0.50 (0.573–0.626), and all HTMT values between construct pairs were below 0.90 (X–Y = 0.507; X–Z = 0.361; Y–Z = 0.545), confirming discriminant validity. The Fornell-Larcker criterion corroborated this result: the square root of AVE for each construct (X = 0.757; Y = 0.777; Z = 0.791) exceeded its correlation with the other constructs. Construct reliability was also confirmed, with Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 for all constructs (Table 3). Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all 28 indicators ranged from 1.812 to 2.990, well below the threshold of 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity. Model fit indices further supported the model, with SRMR = 0.058 (below the 0.08 cut-off) and NFI = 0.833, indicating an acceptable model fit.

Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

The coefficient of determination (R^2) for purchase decisions was 0.354, meaning affiliate marketing and customer satisfaction jointly explained 35.4% of the variance in purchase decisions, while the R^2 for customer satisfaction was 0.116, meaning affiliate marketing explained 11.6% of the variance in customer satisfaction. Effect sizes (f^2) were 0.156 (X→Y, medium), 0.132 (X→Z, small-to-medium), and 0.205 (Z→Y, medium), indicating that customer satisfaction contributed a comparatively stronger individual effect on purchase decisions than affiliate marketing's direct path.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results (Bootstrapping)

Hyp.	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Conclusion
H1	X → Y	0.338	4.692	0.000	Accepted
H2	X → Z	0.341	4.592	0.000	Accepted
H3	Z → Y	0.387	5.283	0.000	Accepted
H4	X → Z → Y	0.132	3.274	0.001	Accepted

Source: SmartPLS bootstrapping output processed by the researcher, 2026.

As all four path coefficients were positive with t-statistics above 1.96 and p-values below 0.05, hypotheses H1 through H4 were all accepted. Because the direct effect of

affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (H1) was also significant, customer satisfaction functions as a complementary partial mediator rather than the sole pathway of influence.

DISCUSSION

Affiliate marketing had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.338; t = 4.692; p = 0.000), supporting H1. This finding indicates that the better the quality of content, incentives, accessibility, and credibility affiliators provide when promoting Shopee's electronic products, the greater consumers' tendency to make a purchase decision. This is consistent with the S-O-R framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), in which affiliate content functions as a stimulus that drives consumers' purchase response, and aligns with prior findings that affiliate marketing significantly affects purchase decisions among Shopee users (Reviani, 2022; P & Iswati, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024).

Affiliate marketing also had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.341; t = 4.592; p = 0.000), supporting H2. Informative and credible affiliate content – reviews, unboxing videos, and specification comparisons – provides a more realistic picture of a product before purchase, aligning consumer expectations with the actual product received; when this expectation is confirmed after purchase, satisfaction is formed, consistent with the Expectation Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980). This result parallels studies on conceptually related content-based marketing constructs: content and influencer marketing were found to significantly affect consumer satisfaction on TikTok (Satiawan et al., 2023), and digital marketing activities were similarly found to positively and significantly affect consumer satisfaction (Mesquita & Jaya, 2024; Haja et al., 2025).

Customer satisfaction had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions (β = 0.387; t = 5.283; p = 0.000), supporting H3, with the strongest effect size among the three direct paths (f^2 = 0.205). Satisfaction formed from the alignment between expectation and shopping experience reduces consumers' perceived risk of subsequent transactions and increases trust toward the seller and the platform, encouraging repeat or continued purchase decisions, consistent with the Consumer Decision Making Theory (Kotler & Keller, 2022), which positions post-purchase evaluation as a determinant of subsequent purchase decisions. This is consistent with prior findings that customer satisfaction positively and significantly affects purchase decisions in e-commerce and micro-enterprise contexts (Aisyah et al., 2025; Sacrivi et al., 2024).

Customer satisfaction was also found to partially mediate the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (indirect β = 0.132; t = 3.274; p = 0.001), supporting H4. Because the direct effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions was also significant, customer satisfaction serves as a complementary pathway that strengthens – rather than replaces – the direct effect of affiliate marketing. In practice, this partial-mediation pattern suggests that affiliate content drives purchase decisions through two simultaneous routes: some consumers decide to purchase directly because of the content itself (for example, price or discount appeal), while others first form a positive evaluation of how well the content matches their expectations before deciding to buy. This implies that affiliators and sellers should not only pursue direct conversion from affiliate content, but also ensure that the content they produce builds customer satisfaction, since this second pathway also contributes to purchase decisions. A similar partial-mediation pattern was found in prior research on TikTok Shop, where customer trust significantly

affected purchase decisions both directly and through customer satisfaction (Sholikhin et al., 2025).

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the applicability of the S-O-R framework, the Expectation Confirmation Theory, and the Consumer Decision Making Theory in the context of affiliate marketing on e-commerce platforms, particularly for electronic products, which carry higher transaction value and mismatch risk than other product categories. The finding that customer satisfaction acts as a partial mediator contributes to the development of models linking digital marketing stimuli to consumer purchase decisions. Practically, these results suggest that affiliators and sellers of electronic products on Shopee should continuously improve the quality of their content (honest and detailed reviews and unboxing videos), incentives, accessibility, and credibility, given their demonstrated direct and indirect effects on purchase decisions. Because electronic products carry a higher risk of specification mismatch, affiliate content should ideally include accurate technical information so that consumer expectations align with the product actually received; sellers are also advised to pay attention to consumers' post-purchase experience, since customer satisfaction is shown to be a significant driver of subsequent purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions, the effect of customer satisfaction on purchase decisions, the effect of affiliate marketing on customer satisfaction, and the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable among electronic product consumers on Shopee in Cirebon City. Based on bootstrapping results using SmartPLS 4, all four hypotheses were supported. Affiliate marketing was found to have a positive and significant direct effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.338$; $t = 4.692$; $p = 0.000$) and on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.341$; $t = 4.592$; $p = 0.000$); customer satisfaction, in turn, had a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions ($\beta = 0.387$; $t = 5.283$; $p = 0.000$); and customer satisfaction was shown to partially mediate the effect of affiliate marketing on purchase decisions (indirect $\beta = 0.132$; $t = 3.274$; $p = 0.001$). Taken together, these results indicate that affiliate marketing effectively drives the purchase of electronic products on Shopee in Cirebon City, both directly and indirectly through improved customer satisfaction, and that customer satisfaction operates as a complementary rather than a sole pathway of influence. Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The use of purposive sampling through an online questionnaire means respondents were not selected with equal probability, so the results should be read as descriptive of consumers matching the study's inclusion criteria rather than as a full generalization to the wider population of Shopee users. The cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time and cannot explain how these relationships evolve. Furthermore, the study is confined to a single city, a single platform, and a single product category, and the self-reported nature of the questionnaire data may be subject to social-desirability bias. Future research is therefore encouraged to apply probability sampling to improve generalizability, extend the geographic scope beyond Cirebon City, replicate the model on other e-commerce platforms or product categories, incorporate additional moderating variables such as brand trust, and consider longitudinal designs to capture how these relationships change over time.

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Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (Claude, Anthropic) was used in the preparation of this manuscript to assist in restructuring and translating the author's undergraduate thesis into this journal article format, in accordance with the journal's writing guidelines, as well as for language refinement, grammar checking, and editing for clarity and readability. The author reviewed, verified, and takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and academic content of this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this research and its publication.

Author Contributions

As the sole author, Ramdan Nurjati was responsible for conceptualization, data collection, data validation, formal analysis, writing – original draft preparation, writing – review and editing, and visualization. The author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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