



## Breaking Domestic Boundaries: The Role of Affiliate Marketing in Building Productivity Among Housewives in the Digital Age

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### How to Cite :

Istiqomah, Y, Setiawati, L., Somantri, A (2025). *Breaking Domestic Boundaries: The Role of Affiliate Marketing in Building Productivity Among Housewives in the Digital Age*. *Bima Journal: Journal of Business, Management and Accounting*, 6 (2). 1057 - 1064. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37638/bima.6.2.1057-1064>

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received [26 June 2025]

Revised [30 June 2025]

Accepted [28 November 2025]

### KEYWORDS

Affiliate marketing; e-commerce; women empowerment; housewives; digital economy; domestic productivity

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aims to explore how affiliate marketing in e-commerce contributes to improving the productivity and standard of living of housewives in the digital age. **Methodology:** This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with in-depth interviews with eight informants who are housewives actively participating in affiliate marketing programmes. Data collection techniques include semi-structured interviews, social media observation, and digital documentation, analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. **Results:** The findings reveal that affiliate marketing provides flexible income opportunities and has a positive impact on the social and psychological aspects of housewives. Platforms such as TikTok and Shopee are the primary media for affiliate promotion. **Findings:** This study reveals that affiliate marketing not only serves as an economic tool but also as a means of empowering women through increased self-confidence, productivity, and social recognition. **Novelty:** This study offers a new perspective by examining affiliate marketing as a medium for empowering housewives, not merely as a digital marketing strategy. **Originality:** The uniqueness of this study lies in its multidimensional approach, which combines economic, social, and psychological aspects in the context of housewives' participation in the digital space. **Conclusion:** Affiliate marketing contributes significantly to the empowerment of housewives in the digital age, although challenges such as digital literacy and dependence on platform algorithms remain obstacles.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has brought about major changes in the global economic structure, including in Indonesia. One of the main manifestations of this digital transformation is the rapid growth of e-commerce, which has changed the way consumers interact with the market. According to a 2023 report by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), internet penetration in Indonesia has reached 78.19% of the total population. This situation has created vast opportunities for the public to engage in digital economic activities, including through technology-based marketing strategies such as affiliate marketing.

Affiliate marketing is a performance-based digital marketing model, where an affiliate earns a commission for successfully promoting a product or service through a special link (Chaffey D & Ellis, 2019). The popularity of this model is increasing along with the ease of access to platforms such as Shopee Affiliate, Tokopedia Affiliate, and TikTok Affiliate. Unlike conventional marketing practices, affiliate marketing can be carried out with very minimal capital and is flexible in terms of time and place. This is particularly relevant for segments of society that have limited mobility in accessing the formal job market, such as housewives.

Housewives in Indonesia constitute a significant demographic group. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2025), Approximately 35% of Indonesian women are housewives who do not have formal employment. Limited mobility and domestic responsibilities often hinder them from earning an independent income. However, the emergence of digital technology and business models such as affiliate marketing has opened new opportunities for them to remain productive from home. In addition to contributing to family income, participation in these activities also impacts increased self-confidence, expanded social networks, and strengthened roles for women in the digital environment (Kabeer, 1999).

However, the reality on the ground shows that the implementation of affiliate marketing by housewives still faces a number of obstacles. These include limited digital literacy, dependence on platform algorithms, and the lack of formal training to improve online promotion skills (Harinie & Fahrul, 2024). Therefore, it is important to examine in greater depth how affiliate marketing trends in the e-commerce ecosystem can truly contribute to improving the standard of living of housewives.

A number of previous studies have discussed affiliate marketing from various perspectives. For example, Permana et al., (2024) ) The affiliate programme has become one of Shopee's most successful marketing strategies in achieving its marketing goals and business growth. Digitalisation has contributed significantly to increased productivity, job creation, and expanded financial inclusion, especially for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). However, challenges such as the digital divide, low digital literacy, and uneven infrastructure in various regions remain major obstacles (Purba et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, Hutagalung et al., (2025) examining women's economic empowerment through digital platforms, but the main focus is on MSME players who have their own products. Research Ramdani et al., (2025) touches on the involvement of housewives in online activities, but does not specifically examine the role of affiliate marketing in improving welfare. In addition, this study also refers to research conducted by Hamzah et al., 2023;Choirun Nisak Nur et al., 2022; Khoirun Nisa et al., 2024;Muhardono et al., 2023; Veranita et al., 2023).

Based on this review, a significant research gap can be identified. There have not been many studies that specifically and comprehensively explore how housewives utilise affiliate marketing as an economic strategy with multidimensional impacts, encompassing economic, social, and psychological aspects. Additionally, the approaches used in previous studies have predominantly been quantitative, without delving deeper into the subjective experiences and daily narratives of affiliate marketers from household backgrounds.

The main issue in this study is how affiliate marketing trends in e-commerce can truly contribute to improving the standard of living of housewives, particularly in terms of income, social welfare, and psychological empowerment, as well as the challenges they face in implementing it. Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth the motivations, processes, obstacles, and outcomes experienced by housewives in conducting affiliate marketing through various digital platforms in Indonesia.

The novelty of this research lies in its exploratory approach, which combines economic, social, and psychological dimensions in understanding the impact of affiliate marketing on the lives of housewives in the digital age. This research is expected to not only add to the academic literature on gender-based digital economics, but also serve as a basis for consideration in the formulation of more inclusive and sustainable technology-based empowerment policies and programmes.

### **Affiliate Marketing in the Digital Economy**

Affiliate marketing is a performance-based digital marketing strategy in which individuals or affiliates earn commissions from the promotion of products or services that are successfully converted into sales (Chaffey D & Ellis, 2019). This model is becoming increasingly popular with advances in technology and increased social interaction through social media. Platforms such as Shopee Affiliate, Tokopedia Affiliate, and TikTok Affiliate make it easy for anyone to act as a marketer without having to own their own products. In the digital economy era, affiliate marketing offers new economic opportunities based on flexibility and cost efficiency, as well as providing space for individuals from various social backgrounds to engage in online commercial activities (Laudon & Traver, 2021)

Systemically, affiliate marketing has become an integral part of the e-commerce ecosystem, connecting producers, distributors, and consumers directly through digital media. Technological convenience, performance-based algorithms, and digital tracking systems enable high efficiency and attractive economic incentives for affiliates. The success of affiliates is largely determined by their promotional capabilities, content quality, and understanding of consumer digital behaviour.

### **E-Commerce and Household Economic Inclusivity**

E-commerce itself is defined as a business transaction process that utilises internet technology to facilitate the exchange of goods, services, information, or services between parties (Harinie & Fahrul, 2024). The emergence of e-commerce has reduced geographical and structural barriers in conventional distribution systems and expanded market access for consumers and informal economic actors, including housewives. When combined with affiliate marketing, e-commerce becomes not only a space for consumption but also a new means of productivity for the domestic community.

In this context, the affiliate-based business model in e-commerce provides opportunities for individuals, especially women and housewives, to engage in independent economic activities from home. With only a device and an internet connection, they can become part of the digital economy chain without having to be involved in the production process.

### **Women's Economic Empowerment through Digital Technology**

According to Kabeer (1999), Women's empowerment can be defined as the process of gaining the ability to make strategic decisions that affect their lives. In the context of housewives, involvement in affiliate marketing gives them control over their income, enhances their social role, and strengthens their identity. Digital technology allows women to bridge the limitations of time and space that have traditionally been barriers to formal economic activity.

Study Ramdani et al., (2025) and Hutagalung et al., (2025) reveals that digital platforms can be a tool for women's economic empowerment, even though their involvement is often still limited to MSME actors. This study broadens the scope by highlighting women who do not have their own products but act as affiliate-based distributors working within the digital economy system.

### **Digital Productivity and Changing Domestic Roles**

The concept of digital economy proposed by Tapscott, (1996) emphasises the shift from an industry-based economy to an information and network-based economy. In this system, productivity no longer depends on physical presence in the workplace, but on the ability to manage data-based activities, social networks, and digital content. For housewives, this is a golden opportunity to transform from passive consumers to active participants in the technology-based economy.

Affiliate marketing activities encourage housewives to actively learn algorithm patterns, understand digital market preferences, and develop creative content skills (Ramdani et al., 2025). As such, they are not only part of the market, but also actors capable of creating economic value from home, transcending the domestic boundaries that previously limited their workspace and productivity.

## METHOD

### Analysis Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the role of affiliate marketing in improving the productivity and standard of living of housewives in the digital age. This approach was chosen because it is able to explain social phenomena contextually, as well as capture complex subjective experiences that cannot be measured numerically (Cresswell, 2015). The main focus of the research is on understanding the narratives and meanings constructed by housewives in carrying out their activities as affiliates on digital platforms.

This study was conducted in Cipadung Kulon Village, Panyileukan District, Bandung City, which is an area with a high level of internet penetration and e-commerce activity among urban communities. The research subjects were housewives who actively engaged in affiliate marketing through platforms such as Shopee Affiliate, Tokopedia Affiliate, and TikTok Affiliate. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting informants based on specific criteria. The criteria established include: (1) housewives who do not have formal employment, (2) have been actively engaged in affiliate marketing for at least six months, and (3) are willing to provide information openly and reflectively. A total of eight informants were selected until the saturation point was reached, which is when the data obtained no longer provided significant new information.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines, allowing informants to freely express their narratives while remaining within the framework of the research focus (Sugiyono, 2023). In addition to interviews, observations were made of informants' social media accounts and documentation of digital affiliate activities such as screenshots of commissions and promotional content.

The data was analysed using an interactive model Miles & Huberman (1994) through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing stages. Data validity was strengthened through source and method triangulation, as well as member checking with informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. During the research process, researchers also maintained reflexivity to avoid bias in data interpretation and maintain the credibility of the results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

The results of this study reveal that affiliate marketing provides new opportunities for housewives to participate in economic activities flexibly without having to abandon their domestic roles. From the data obtained through in-depth interviews and social media observation, five main themes were identified that reflect the experiences of the informants, namely motivation for involvement, platforms used, income earned, challenges faced, and the social and psychological impacts of involvement in affiliate activities. First, in terms of motivation, the majority of informants stated that the desire to earn additional income was the main reason they joined affiliate marketing programmes. In addition to economic reasons, the desire to remain productive from home, feel more independent, and engage in positive activities also served as significant motivations. One informant stated, "I initially joined the affiliate programme on TikTok on a whim, but it turned out that I could also earn money to help with household expenses."

Secondly, in terms of the platforms used, Shopee Affiliate, Tokopedia Affiliate, and TikTok Affiliate were found to be the three most widely used platforms. TikTok was the top choice for most respondents due to its visual, interactive content and viral potential. Informants mentioned that short videos with interesting formats were easier to reach a large audience, even with a small number of followers. Some housewives also used Instagram Reels to complement their promotions.

Third, the income earned varies greatly, ranging from IDR 500,000 to IDR 4,000,000 per month. This income depends on consistency in producing content, the number of audiences, and the ability to understand market preferences. Some respondents stated that their income fluctuates each month depending on product trends and platform algorithm performance. The money earned is generally used for household needs, such as daily shopping, children's school fees, and a small portion is used for savings.

Fourth, the main challenges faced by informants include limited digital literacy, difficulty adapting to changes in platform algorithms, and the burden of consistently creating content. Most of them are self-taught through YouTube tutorials, online communities, or by asking fellow affiliates. They do not participate in any formal training. One informant mentioned, "What's difficult is that sometimes the algorithm changes, and the content has been created but no one sees it. So you have to keep trying and learn on your own."

Fifth, involvement in affiliate marketing has a positive social and psychological impact on housewives. They feel more confident, productive, and valued by their community. This activity also expands their social network through online communities or fellow affiliates. Some respondents said that they are now more active on social media, learning video editing, understanding marketing, and feeling in control of their time and role in the family.

In general, these findings indicate that affiliate marketing is a means that not only has an impact on household economics, but also influences the social and psychological structure of its participants. Housewives are no longer merely passive participants in the domestic sphere, but are able to participate in the productive digital sphere through independently and creatively implemented affiliate marketing strategies.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that affiliate marketing is a form of digital economy that can create new opportunities for productivity for housewives. This activity not only serves as a means of earning additional income, but also as a mechanism for social and psychological empowerment that shapes a new identity for women in the digital realm. In this context, affiliate marketing has proven to transcend domestic boundaries that have long limited the mobility and productive roles of housewives.

The main motivation for housewives to engage in affiliate marketing is the desire to be financially independent without having to abandon their household responsibilities. This reflects the basic principles of the theory of women's empowerment put forward by Kabeer (1999), Empowerment occurs when women have access to resources, can make choices, and have control over decisions that affect their lives. In this case, access to technology, digital platforms, and social networks allows housewives to actively choose their involvement in economic activities without the structural barriers they commonly face in the formal sector.

The preference for using platforms such as TikTok and Shopee Affiliate also indicates the adaptability of housewives to the digital ecosystem. TikTok, with its visual and interactive content characteristics, provides a promotional channel that allows anyone, including housewives, to reach a wide audience at minimal cost. This affirms the argument Laudon & Traver (2021) that modern e-commerce is not only a place for buying and selling, but also a means of participatory engagement for users who were previously outside the formal production structure. This access transforms housewives from passive consumers into active participants in the digital distribution system.

The income earned by informants is not large in absolute terms, but it is significant in the context of strengthening household economies. This finding reflects the spirit of the gig economy concept in the digital economy, as explained by Tapscott (1996), in which individuals can create economic value through flexible, decentralised, and non-conventional technology-based engagement. For housewives, affiliate commissions serve as a form of micro-economy that strengthens the family's financial resilience and minimises dependence on the husband's sole income.

However, the results of the study also show that affiliate marketing activities present quite complex challenges, especially for those without a technological background. Changes in algorithms, pressure to consistently create content, and limitations in understanding digital marketing strategies are the main obstacles. This reinforces the findings. Hutagalung et al., (2025) ) that non-formally employed women face digital literacy barriers that reduce the effectiveness of their engagement in the digital economy. In addition, Karina et al., (2023) also emphasises that the use of digital marketing requires technical skills that cannot be fully assumed to be mastered through self-study.

From a social and psychological perspective, involvement in affiliate marketing has increased the self-confidence and social status of housewives. Many of them, who previously felt limited in their domestic roles, now have a sense of ownership over economic activities and feel valued by their families and communities. This shows a change in the power structure within households and an increase in women's agency, which is an important indicator of empowerment. according to Kabeer, (1999) . They are not only financial contributors, but also owners of the narrative of their own productivity.

Thus, it can be concluded that affiliate marketing is not merely a digital commercial channel, but can also be interpreted as a medium for social transformation that expands economic participation and strengthens the position of women in the digital ecosystem. To optimise this potential, systematic digital training support, the formation of communities based on women's economic engagement, and active involvement from digital platforms and the government are needed to create a more inclusive and sustainable ecosystem.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion

This study shows that affiliate marketing in the e-commerce ecosystem has opened up new productivity opportunities for housewives in Indonesia. This activity allows them to earn income flexibly, independently, and digitally, without neglecting their domestic responsibilities. Their main motivation for participating is driven by economic needs, the desire to remain productive from home, and the desire to build a new identity as digital economic actors.

The findings of this study also confirm that platforms such as TikTok, Shopee, and Tokopedia Affiliate provide inclusive opportunities, especially since they can be accessed without large capital and do not require their own products. However, affiliate marketers from the housewife community face several challenges, such as low digital literacy, changes in platform algorithms, and pressure to consistently create content. Socially and psychologically, this activity contributes to increased self-confidence, strengthened roles within the family, and engagement in online communities.

Thus, affiliate marketing is not only an economic alternative, but also a means of digital empowerment for women, capable of shifting the boundaries of domestic roles into a broader and more meaningful space for economic participation.

The theoretical implications of this study broaden our understanding of the digital economy as a space for social empowerment, rather than merely a channel for product distribution. The results of this study support the theory of empowerment. Kabeer (1999), that access to resources and personal agency are key determinants in the transformation of women's social roles. Affiliate

marketing can be positioned as a microeconomic instrument that simultaneously shapes new identity structures and social relations in the digital age.

In practical terms, the results of this study can be used as a basis for policymakers, digital platforms, and local communities to design digital literacy training programmes that are responsive to the needs of housewives. In addition, strengthening the capacity of affiliated communities can also be a strategic step in improving the quality and sustainability of women's digital economic activities in the household.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of informants was limited to eight housewives in an urban area (Bandung), so the results cannot be generalised to the entire population, including those living in areas with limited internet access. Second, the qualitative approach used does not include quantitative data that can measure the direct influence between variables such as income, duration of involvement, and social influence. Additionally, the focus of this study is still limited to personal experiences and does not include an analysis of the institutional structure of the affiliate platform itself, such as platform regulations, payment systems, or algorithms that play a significant role in influencing the success of affiliates.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, it is recommended that further research involve more participants from various geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds to obtain a broader and more representative picture. In addition, quantitative or mixed research can be used to test the relationship between the use of affiliate marketing and improved household welfare in a more measurable way. For the government and digital platforms, it is important to design training and mentoring programmes that focus on strengthening the digital literacy of housewives so that they can optimise their role in the digital economy in a sustainable manner. Strengthening digital-based women's communities also needs to be encouraged as a collaborative forum for addressing technical and social challenges in the world of affiliate marketing.

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