



Affiliate Video Trend Marketing Strategies: Factors and Selection Among Students

Raja Nor Aminah Raja Ayob, Nurina Akma Zulakmal

Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation, University Technology MARA, Malaysia

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.914MG00178>

Received: 01 October 2025; Accepted: 06 October 2025; Published: 31 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamics of affiliate video marketing among university students, emphasizing their dual role as content creators and affiliates. Affiliate marketing on sites like TikTok has become a popular way for digital entrepreneurs to make money and get their brands seen in the last few years. However, there has not been enough attention paid to how students do this, especially when it comes to how they choose videos and how those choices affect what people buy. This study employs the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and the AIDAR model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, Retention) to investigate the impact of credibility and persuasive marketing processes on students' strategies and perceptions in the production of affiliate videos. A qualitative methodology was utilized, involving in-depth interviews with three student affiliates from UiTM Puncak Perdana who are actively involved in the creation of affiliate content. The data underwent thematic analysis and were interpreted in alignment with the chosen theoretical frameworks. The results show that students find affiliate videos interesting because they offer flexible ways to make money, fit in with popular social media trends, and have content that is fun and relatable. The perceived credibility of affiliates, clear product reviews, creativity in video design, and consistency in content delivery are all important factors in making and choosing videos. In addition to financial incentives, students are motivated by aspirations for skill enhancement, digital literacy, and peer recognition. This study enhances the existing literature on digital marketing and student entrepreneurship by merging SCT and the AIDAR model, emphasizing the relationship between credibility and persuasion in the formulation of affiliate strategies. In practical terms, the results offer useful information for businesses looking for trustworthy student influencers and for universities that want to help students get involved in digital entrepreneurship. In the end, the study shows how important it is to be real, creative, and consistent to keep people interested in affiliate marketing ecosystems.

Keywords: TikTok, affiliate marketing, student affiliates, Source Credibility Theory, AIDAR model, and digital entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

The growth of social media has completely changed how people and businesses market themselves. TikTok has quickly become one of the most popular places for short-form video content. It combines entertainment with chances to start a digital business. Since its international launch in 2017, the platform has gained over a billion active users around the world, making it one of the most important places for creative expression and product promotion. Affiliate marketing is a big part of its ecosystem. In this type of marketing, content creators promote products or services and get paid a commission for each sale or click they make.

Affiliate marketing has changed from traditional website-based models like blogs and review sites to highly interactive video-based ads on social media. Affiliate marketing on TikTok takes advantage of the platform's algorithm-driven virality and user-generated content to help even small creators reach a lot of people and get them to interact with their content. Young people, like students, are especially interested in the practice because it gives them a chance to become financially independent, learn new skills, and be creative online. This is in line with what is happening around the world in the gig economy, where more young people are doing side jobs and starting businesses online.



Social media use is very high in Malaysia, especially among young adults aged 18 to 24. This group is turning to platforms like TikTok increasingly, not just for fun but also to make money. This makes student affiliate marketers a unique case to study. The convergence of education, social media, and entrepreneurship prompts significant inquiries regarding students' perceptions of affiliate video marketing and the determinants influencing their engagement in this domain.

Problem Statement

Although affiliate marketing has been studied extensively in the context of influencers and consumer behaviour, limited research has focused on students as affiliators. Most of the current research investigates the affiliate strategies employed by professional influencers or analyzes general consumer reactions to influencer credibility. Students, on the other hand, are a unique group of people who affiliate with each other because they must balance schoolwork with digital business ventures.

Their motivations are different from those of professional influencers. They want more than just money; they also want peer recognition, chances to improve their digital skills, and the freedom to make money while they study. Affiliate video marketing has its problems, even though there are a lot of chances to make money. Some common problems are making content on a regular basis, being seen as untrustworthy, and having trouble getting people to trust you. A lot of student affiliates have trouble keeping up with regular posting schedules or writing honest product reviews, both of which can hurt consumer trust. This is a big problem on TikTok, where algorithms favor creators who are consistent and real. If they don't have these traits, affiliates risk losing visibility and power over what customers buy.

Given these concerns, the central research problem of this study is to explore how students perceive affiliate video marketing in terms of its credibility, opportunities, and challenges? and, what factors influence students' selection and creation of affiliate videos, including their motivations, strategies, and constraints. By addressing this gap, the study contributes to both academic literature and practical knowledge in digital marketing and youth entrepreneurship.

Thus, the research objectives for this study are (1) To identify the perceptions of affiliate video selection among selected students, and (2) To explore the factors influencing affiliate video selection among selected students. From these objectives, two research questions are derived; (1) What are the perceptions of affiliate video selection among selected students? and, (2) What are the factors influencing the selection of affiliate videos among selected students?

Significance Of the Study

Academic contribution: It expands the literature on affiliate marketing by focusing on students as affiliators, a relatively under-researched group. By integrating Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and the AIDAR model, the study provides a dual-lens framework that explains both the role of credibility and the process of persuasion in affiliate video marketing.

Practical contribution: The findings can guide businesses in selecting credible student influencers, highlight strategies for effective affiliate marketing, and inform universities about the potential of digital entrepreneurship among students. Students themselves may benefit by learning how to balance credibility, creativity, and consistency in affiliate video creation.

Ultimately, the study sheds light on how affiliate marketing can be both a learning experience and a source of income, empowering students to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is informed by two synergistic theoretical frameworks that influence the analysis. The first is the Source Credibility Theory (SCT), which tells us how people judge a communicator's trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. In affiliate marketing, credibility is very important because students usually trust affiliates



more when they seem honest, consistent, and real, and they are less likely to trust affiliates who lie or use misleading ads.

The second framework is the AIDA model, which has been expanded to include the AIDAR model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, Retention). This model shows how persuasion works in steps. In affiliate video marketing, the process goes like this: videos first get people's attention with interesting visuals and popular content, then keep their interest by staying relatable, create desire with convincing testimonials, encourage action with embedded purchase links, and keep people coming back by always being credible and authentic.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research on influencer marketing, three gaps remain:

1. Limited focus on students as affiliators: Prior research has examined influencers broadly, but not students balancing academics with digital entrepreneurship.
2. Insufficient integration of SCT and AIDAR: few studies combine credibility theory with persuasion models to explain affiliate marketing in a social media context.
3. Contextual lack in Malaysia: While affiliate marketing is booming, studies specific to Malaysian youth and TikTok remain scarce, despite high usage rates.

By addressing these gaps, this study contributes a novel perspective on affiliate marketing, highlighting the unique experiences of students as both content creators and digital entrepreneurs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Affiliate Marketing in the Digital Age

Affiliate marketing has changed a lot in the last ten years. It has moved away from traditional website-based advertising and toward more dynamic, social media-driven strategies. Affiliate marketing is basically a way to make money by promoting goods or services and getting paid for sales, clicks, or leads that come from those promotions. In the digital age, it is becoming more popular because it is cheap, easy to use, and can grow. This means that people can market things without spending a lot of money. Researchers say that social commerce has blurred the line between personal expression and commercial endorsement. Affiliate marketing is now a way to make money and meet new people.

TikTok has changed the world of affiliate marketing by putting ads right into short videos that do well because of algorithmic amplification. TikTok is not like older affiliate programs that used blogs or static websites. It lets affiliates easily add promotions to content that is fun, visually appealing, and on trend. This change shows that creator-led marketing is becoming more important. In this type of marketing, credibility, relatability, and creativity are often more important than traditional advertising campaigns. Because of this, affiliate marketing on TikTok is not just a way for people to make money; it's also a way for people to change each other's minds online. This makes it especially appealing to younger people who want to be real and make friends.

Students Taking Part in Affiliate Marketing

Recent research shows that students are becoming well-known in the field of digital entrepreneurship, especially in the growing gig economy. Many people like affiliate marketing because it lets them make extra money without getting in the way of their schoolwork. This is consistent with findings from other studies indicating that youth pursue digital side jobs not solely for financial gain, but also to enhance their independence and acquire valuable digital competencies.

In Malaysia, the fact that mobile data is cheap, and the internet is widely used makes digital entrepreneurship an even more appealing option for students. Students' interest in affiliate marketing goes beyond just making money, though. Digital platforms also give people a place to recognise each other, connect with others, and



express themselves creatively (Mohd Azul & Nurul Madiha, 2017). This means that affiliate marketing does two things. First, it helps students improve their financial security, and second, gives them skills in content creation, branding, and marketing. But these chances also come with problems.

A lot of students have trouble keeping up with regular posting schedules, do not have many resources to grow their platforms, and find it hard to build credibility compared to well-known influencers. These challenges underscore the necessity of investigating students' perceptions of affiliate video marketing and the factors that facilitate or impede their engagement.

TikTok and Social Media Connections

TikTok has quickly become one of the most important platforms for digital marketing. This is mostly because of its interactive design, viral algorithm, and strong appeal to younger people. Researchers say that TikTok's recommendation system makes it different from other social media sites. It lets even new or relatively unknown creators get a lot of attention and interaction in a short amount of time. TikTok focuses on making content go viral, while YouTube relies on growth through subscribers, and Instagram focuses on carefully curated aesthetics. The platform lets affiliates reach a wide range of audiences through trending sounds, hashtags, and user-driven challenges.

In Malaysia, TikTok is very popular with people between the ages of 18 and 24, making it a great place for affiliate marketing. Studies show that Malaysian students use TikTok for more than just fun. They also use it to learn and start businesses. This shows that TikTok is a place for both business and social activities. This is a great fit for affiliate marketing because short videos can be both fun and effective ways to sell something. TikTok also makes it easier for people to start online businesses by getting rid of a lot of the usual problems that come with doing so. This means that students who do not have a lot of money or technical skills can still use online marketing in a useful way.

Trustworthiness of Sources in Influencer Marketing

Studies indicate that Malaysian students utilize TikTok not solely for entertainment, but also for educational purposes and entrepreneurial ventures. This demonstrates its dual social and economic functions. Short videos are a great way to do both things because they can be both fun and convincing. TikTok also makes it easier for people to start their own online businesses by getting rid of a lot of the usual problems that come with starting a business. This means that even students who do not have a lot of money or technical skills can still do online marketing that works.

How to check the reliability of influencer marketing sources trust is the most important thing in affiliate marketing. SCT is the best way to understand this idea. Hovland and Weiss (1951) formulated the SCT, which asserts that the persuasive efficacy of a message is dependent on the sender's credibility, authority, and attractiveness. This theory is often used to explain how social media influencers work in the digital world today. People often trust and connect with them more because they seem real and trustworthy than because of their formal credentials. Recent studies confirm the significance of SCT in digital environments. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) discovered that individuals are more inclined to purchase from and place their trust in influencers who appear genuine and sincere.

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2019) noted that Generation Z is especially swift to disengage from influencers perceived as inauthentic or excessively commercial. Hudders et al. (2021) emphasize that credibility in the digital era is tenuous and susceptible to erosion due to inconsistencies, inflated assertions, or perceived deceitfulness. Famous people trust each other more than students do. They do this by being friends who can understand each other and share stories from their own lives. Students might trust influencers because they are honest, consistent, and make them feel like they belong. Ohanian (2020) also talks about why SCT is interesting, like how it is easy to like, relate to, and be like. These are especially important in digital spaces where people share their experiences and identities to change how they affect others. This is why SCT is so important for figuring out how student affiliates get and keep their audiences' trust.



The AIDAR Framework and Consumer Behavior

One of the oldest ways to talk about how to convince people is the AIDA model, which was made in the late 1800s. It talks about four important steps: getting people's attention, getting them interested, getting them to want something, and getting them to do something. Researchers eventually added retention to this model to make the AIDAR model. This shows how important it is to keep customers coming back after they buy something for the first time.

In today's world of digital marketing, AIDAR is still a good way to think about how people go from knowing about something to being interested in it over time. Recent studies indicate that AIDAR is particularly pertinent in social media environments. Hanlon (2023) says that TikTok affiliate videos are in the Attention stage because they use eye-catching visuals, popular audio clips, and the 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) effect to get people's attention right away.

As the process goes on, people become interested when they see content that relates to their lifestyle, goals, or financial needs. Real testimonials, live product demonstrations, and emotional storytelling that let people picture themselves using the product build desire. Clear calls to action, like clickable affiliate links or limited time offers, help people move from the Attention stage to the Action stage.

Finally, retention is maintained when affiliates keep their credibility and regularly interact with their audiences, which leads to more interactions and loyalty. This model is great for looking at TikTok affiliate videos because the platform is built around these steps. Its algorithm favors content that grabs attention quickly, keeps it by personalizing it, and encourages people to interact with it more than once. Song et al. (2021) points out that TikTok's structure makes the AIDAR model not only useful but also a part of how people use the app.

For student affiliates, this means that success depends on more than just making a viral video. They need to get their peers to go through the whole persuasion process, from initial attraction to lasting trust and engagement. Combining SCT and AIDAR have looked at influencer credibility and how they can persuade consumers on their own. But not many have tried to combine SCT and the AIDAR model into one framework.

Lou and Yuan (2019) propose that the integration of credibility theories with persuasion models yields a more comprehensive understanding of the functioning of digital marketing. This study employs SCT to elucidate the reasons behind the trust or distrust of student affiliates by their peers, while the AIDAR model delineates the sequential process through which affiliate videos influence perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately behaviors. This integration is especially useful for student affiliates.

Professional influencers may use their fame or big brands to get people to pay attention, but students mostly rely on peer credibility, traits like being relatable, real, and consistent, to get people to pay attention and keep their interest. Their affiliate videos will only work if they can help people move through the AIDAR stages: getting their attention, getting them interested, making them want something, getting them to act, and keeping them interested. This study integrates two frameworks to examine both the source of influence (credibility) and the mechanism of persuasion (AIDAR). This combined view gives us a better understanding of how affiliate video marketing works for students. It also shows us the unique problems and chances that young digital entrepreneurs face when they try to balance schoolwork with business goals.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research employs two synergistic frameworks: Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and the AIDAR model of persuasion. These theories together give a complete picture of how student affiliates build trust and get people's attention during the influence process. Hovland and Weiss (1951) developed SCT, which posits that the impact of a message on individuals is contingent upon their perception of the communicator's credibility, expertise, and attractiveness. Credibility is very important for online influencers in the digital age, especially on sites like TikTok where being real is more important than having formal qualifications. Research indicates that followers are more inclined to react favorably to influencers who are authentic and relatable.



Conversely, younger demographics, especially Generation Z, quickly disengage when they perceive insincerity or excessive commercialization. This is especially important for student affiliates because their credibility comes from being peers, not from being famous. Peers are people in your network who you can trust because they are relatable, consistent, and honest. Ohanian (2020) asserts that attractiveness in SCT encompasses not only physical appeal but also likeability and similarity, thereby amplifying peer influence in digital environments.

The AIDAR model shows how persuasion works, while SCT shows who people trust. The model builds on the classic AIDA structure (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) by adding Retention to show the long-term relationship between the influencer and the audience. This process is very clear in affiliate video marketing. Creative use of visuals, trending sounds, or hashtags can grab people's attention. People stay interested when the content is fun and relatable. Testimonials or real-life product demonstrations that make people think about how the product will help them build desire. Direct purchase links in the video encourage people to act, while retention depends on the affiliator's ability to stay credible and consistent over time.

This study acknowledges both the source and the process of persuasion by synthesizing these two theories. SCT stresses how important credibility is for building trust with an audience, while AIDAR shows how that trust can lead to consumer action. For student affiliates, this combined lens shows that good affiliate marketing means not only making interesting content but also being honest and making friends with other students that will last.

METHODOLOGY FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilized a qualitative research design to investigate students' perceptions of affiliate video marketing and the determinants affecting their video selection behaviors. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate, as it allows researchers to obtain thorough, nuanced understandings of lived experiences and social realities that numerical data alone cannot sufficiently represent. Affiliate video marketing among Malaysian students is a largely unexplored phenomenon. Thus, qualitative methods enabled the investigation of the intricate motivations, strategies, and challenges influencing students' roles as affiliates.

The study was executed within an interpretivist framework, positing that social reality is shaped by individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations. This paradigm was particularly pertinent for analyzing how student affiliates perceive concepts such as credibility, persuasion, and peer engagement within TikTok's affiliate marketing framework. The study sought to enhance comprehension of the intersection between digital entrepreneurship and academic life by highlighting students' perspectives and lived experiences. Participants and Sampling A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants who could provide significant and relevant insights into the research questions.

The study focused on three students from University Technology MARA, Puncak Perdana, Selangor, Malaysia who were actively engaged as affiliates on TikTok. The researcher picked these students because they were a unique group that could do their schoolwork and run a digital business at the same time. They also had firsthand experience making content for affiliates and talking to other students. The sample size, while limited, was adequate for the study's exploratory intent. Guest et al. (2020) assert that qualitative research can yield significant findings even with a limited participant pool, if the sample is information-dense and closely aligned with the research objectives.

In this study, the three student affiliates provided detailed accounts that clarified the processes of credibility enhancement and persuasion in affiliate video marketing. Their experiences offered substantial insights into the opportunities and challenges faced by youth involved in digital entrepreneurship within an academic context.

Collecting Information

The data for this study was gathered via semi-structured interviews, enabling participants to articulate their experiences comprehensively while affording the researcher the opportunity to explore emerging themes more thoroughly. This method was very helpful because the research was exploratory. It helped this research get both organized ideas and new ways of looking at things that came up during the talks. From April to May 2025, the interviews have been done in person and online, depending on when the participants were free.



Each session lasted 45 to 60 minutes, which was long enough for people to think about what they had learned without feeling rushed. The study's theoretical framework was used to make the interview guide. The informants have been grouped the questions according to the AIDAR model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, Retention) and the parts of Source Credibility Theory (trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness).

Informant were asked things like, 'What do you notice first about affiliate videos?', 'How do you know that an affiliate's review of a product is real?', 'Why do you want to keep making or watching affiliate videos?', 'Have you ever bought or talked about a product because of an affiliate's video?'.

This structure made sure that the interviews met the research goals in a systematic way, while also giving participants a chance to talk about what was most important to them. So, the semi-structured format was a good balance between being the same for all interviews and being able to change. This made informants want to share long, personal stories instead of just short answers.

Reliability

To improve the reliability and rigor of the results, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria were used, (1) Member checking, in which participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of their statements and interpretations, increased credibility; (2) Transferability was facilitated by offering comprehensive descriptions of the research context, participant backgrounds, and affiliate marketing practices, enabling readers to evaluate applicability to alternative contexts; (3) Dependability was guaranteed through meticulous documentation of the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures, thereby establishing a transparent audit trail; and (4) Confirmability was attained by anchoring all interpretations in participants' narratives and proactively mitigating researcher bias.

Ethics

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee gave approval for the study. Before taking part, students were given an information sheet that explained the study's purpose, how it would be done, and how their data would be kept safe. Written informed consent was secured, and participants were guaranteed their right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions.

To keep things private, the names of the people who provided information (Informant A, B, and C) were used in the report. The researcher was the only person who could access all the recordings and transcripts. To keep ethical standards and make sure participants could trust the study, anonymity and data protection were very important.

Data Analysis

The interviews underwent thematic analysis, a commonly employed and adaptable approach for discerning, interpreting, and exhibiting patterns in qualitative data. This method was especially appropriate as it allowed the researcher to obtain both the personal experiences of student affiliates and the broader conceptual dimensions of the theoretical framework.

The analysis adhered to Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, which are (1) Learning about the data: The researcher read and reread the interview transcripts to get a complete picture of the information; (2) Making the first codes: Meaningful units related to how people felt about affiliate videos and what factors influenced those feelings were systematically coded; (3) Looking for themes: Codes were put together into possible themes that fit with the parts of SCT and the steps of the AIDAR model; (4) Reviewing themes: The researcher made sure that themes were clear and that there were no overlaps between them; (5) Defining and naming themes: The final themes were clearly defined and named, taking into account both factors that affect credibility and processes that affect persuasion; and (6) Writing the report: The themes were analyzed in light of the study's research questions and theoretical framework, which served as the basis for the findings.

This systematic process made sure that the analysis not only showed what the participants had experienced but



also dealt with the study's main ideas about credibility and persuasion.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to analyze students' perceptions of affiliate video marketing and the determinants influencing their engagement. The findings, informed by SCT and the AIDAR model, present novel insights into the convergence of credibility, persuasion, and digital entrepreneurship.

Affiliate Marketing as a Student-Centric Approach

Earlier studies show that students were very interested in affiliate marketing because it let them make money without interfering with their schoolwork. It was not just a 'side hustle', but it was a way to learn how to use technology, talk about themselves, and come up with new business ideas. This was also agreed by Mohd Azul and Nurul Madiha (2017) that students are seeing digital platforms more as places to be recognized, be creative, and be influenced by their peers.

This study significantly contributes to the literature by demonstrating that student affiliates are not solely motivated by financial incentives. Instead, they saw affiliate marketing to grow as a person, build their identity, and be creative online, putting themselves in larger networks of peers. This hybrid role shows how affiliate marketing can help young people in both social and economic ways.

Credibility as the Foundation of Influence

The results strongly support the idea that SCT is important for understanding affiliate video marketing. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) and Hudders et al. (2021) agree that credibility was the most important factor in deciding whether people believed, interacted with, or acted on affiliate content. Students did not rely on celebrity status like professional influencers did; instead, they relied on their ability to be relatable peers. SCT was especially useful in peer-driven situations because their credibility was based on honesty, authenticity, and similarity. This expands SCT by emphasizing its relevance in micro- and nano-influencer contexts, where credibility is associated with proximity and relatability rather than scale.

Persuasion as a Sequential Process: AIDAR in Action

The AIDAR model was very useful in showing how student affiliates organized their content and led the audience's reactions. Trends and visuals got people's attention, lifestyle relevance kept their interest, real-life demonstrations sparked their desire, and promotions and credible reviews encouraged them to act. Retention, on the other hand, turned out to be the most difficult part, as it relied on long-term trustworthiness and honesty. This corroborates prior research by Chetoui et al. (2020) regarding testimonials influencing desire and Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) concerning the impact of credibility on retention.

This study demonstrates that persuasion extends beyond professional influencers to include students who effectively utilize peer trust within the student affliator context. Affiliate marketing was seen as more than just a way to make extra money. It was also seen to learn digital skills, improve skills, and express oneself. This corroborates the assertion by Mohd Azul and Nurul Madiha (2017) that students are progressively perceiving digital platforms as venues for peer acknowledgment and entrepreneurial prospects. The findings contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating that students' participation as affiliates is influenced by factors beyond economic considerations.

On the other hand, informants said that their affiliate marketing work helped them grow as people, be more creative, and make friends. This shows how affiliate marketing can help young people become financially independent and build their online identities at the same time.

Credibility as the Basis of Influence

The results strongly support the importance of SCT in explaining affiliate video marketing. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) and Hudders et al. (2021) discovered that credibility significantly influenced individuals' engagement



with, trust in, and response to affiliate content. The affiliates in this research consistently underscored the significance of honesty, consistency, and relatability in maintaining audience trust.

This research enhances SCT by situating it within the peer-to-peer framework of student affiliations. A lot of people follow professional influencers, which gives them credibility. On the other hand, student affiliates relied on being real and relatable. People did not think they were trustworthy because their business was well-run. However, they thought they were trustworthy because they could act like real friends. This shows that SCT is still a good way to understand credibility in social media, but it needs to be used in a more careful way when looking at student influencers.

AIDAR's Insights on Persuasion as a Sequential Process

The results also show that the AIDAR model is useful for studying how affiliate videos move people through the stages of persuasion. The stories of the three affiliates followed the stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, Action, and Retention, which shows that the model works in digital marketing. For instance, visually appealing, trend-driven content caught people's attention, and content that was relevant to students' needs and lifestyles kept their interest.

Demonstrations and testimonials-built desire, while promotional offers and trustworthy reviews pushed people to act. Retention was identified as the most vulnerable phase, reliant on sustained credibility and authenticity over time. These results are consistent with Chetoui et al. (2020), who highlighted the influence of testimonials on desire, and Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), who underscored the importance of credibility in retention. This study extends the application of AIDAR to student affiliators, highlighting contexts where persuasion is facilitated by peers rather than professionals, thereby emphasizing the increasing significance of micro- and nano-influencers in digital commerce.

Combining SCT and AIDAR: A Two-Lens Contribution

The most important thing this study does is combine SCT and AIDAR to look at affiliate video marketing. Prior research has predominantly focused on influencer credibility or consumer persuasion models in isolation. This study illustrates how credibility serves as the foundation of persuasion, impacting each stage of AIDAR through their combination. The results indicate that affiliate videos fail to advance audiences beyond the initial Attention stage in the absence of credibility.

Trustworthiness increases Interest, expertise increases Desire, and consistency keeps Retention. So, SCT and AIDAR should not be seen as two separate frameworks. Instead, they should be seen as two different ways of looking at the same thing that together explain both the source of influence (who) and the process of influence (how). This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive theoretical framework for affiliate marketing, especially in peer-driven environments such as student influencers on TikTok.

The results give stakeholders a lot of useful information, including (1) For students, affiliate marketing is more than just a way to make money. It is also a way to improve their digital skills, build their confidence as entrepreneurs, and promote themselves. Students who value being real and consistent are more likely to keep their audience's attention; (2) For businesses, student affiliates are a unique and trustworthy group of micro-influencers who can connect with young people in a real way. Companies should realize their potential and build partnerships that use relatability instead of just professional influencers; (3) Digital entrepreneurship is an important part of students' lives, which shows that universities need to help them. To get students ready for jobs in the digital economy, universities could teach them how to make content, market themselves online, and build their own brand.

This study shows that student-driven affiliate video marketing is affected by the relationship between credibility (SCT) and persuasion (AIDAR). Students can use affiliate marketing to start their own businesses. They can also be creative, learn new digital skills, and become better people at that place. But it only works if their fans believe in them and keep that belief. This study utilizes both SCT and AIDAR, providing a dual perspective, which SCT elucidates the reasons individuals trust affiliates, while AIDAR delineates the sequential process of persuasion.



These frameworks help us understand how TikTok works for students who are friends with each other. They show that influence can be creative, promotional, and real and easy to relate to.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This study investigated how UiTM Puncak Perdana students felt about and took part in affiliate video marketing on TikTok. The study examined the correlation between credibility and persuasion in influencing viewer engagement with affiliate videos, utilizing Source Credibility Theory (SCT) and the AIDAR model as fundamental frameworks.

The results show that students see affiliate marketing as a flexible and helpful way to balance schoolwork with running an online business. Success was not just about having new visuals and popular content. But it was mostly about the affiliate's credibility, which included how trustworthy, knowledgeable, and relatable they were.

These traits influenced how people went through the steps of persuasion; (1) People were drawn in by creativity and how it related to them; (2) Authenticity and relevance kept people's interest; (3) Desire grew stronger through honest product demonstrations and expertise; (4) Trustworthy endorsements and promotions made people want to take action; and (5) Retention was guaranteed through consistent, genuine engagement. In general, the study shows that credibility is the basis of persuasion, while AIDAR shows how influence works step by step. By contextualising these findings within students lived experiences, the study frames affiliate marketing as both a commercial practice and a means for youth to cultivate digital literacy, entrepreneurial identity, and self-expression.

This study is insightful but has multiple limitations. The sample size of three student affiliates provided comprehensive insights but restricts generalizability. Subsequent research may broaden its scope to encompass a greater number of participants from various institutions and cultural backgrounds or implement mixed-methods strategies to reconcile narrative depth with quantitative breadth. The study also only looked at TikTok. The platform is very useful, but its algorithm and culture are different from those of other platforms.

Future research may analyze affiliate marketing strategies across Instagram, YouTube, and emerging platforms, emphasizing variations in audience engagement. Longitudinal research could investigate the evolution of students' affiliate marketing practices over time and their influence on career trajectories in the digital economy.

In conclusion, this research illustrates that affiliate video marketing among students is influenced by the convergence of credibility and persuasion. While making money is a clear goal, trust, honesty, and the ability to help people through the AIDAR stages are what will lead to long-term success. The study enhances theoretical understanding and provides practical significance by merging SCT and AIDAR, establishing affiliate marketing as both a marketing strategy and a modality of youth-driven digital entrepreneurship.

REFERENCES

1. Awang, A. H., Nor, N. A. M., & Shah, A. M. (2022). TikTok as a platform for youth entrepreneurship: Opportunities and challenges in Malaysia. *Journal of Creative Industries*, 14(2), 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jci2022.14.2.55>
2. Chetioui, Y., Lebdaoui, H., & Chetioui, H. (2020). Factors influencing consumer attitudes towards online shopping: The mediating role of trust. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 48(5), 477-495. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-08-2019-0275>
3. Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
4. Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). 'Instafamous'—credibility and self-presentation of micro-celebrities on social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432-1446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491>



5. Edmans, A. (2021). *Grow the pie: How great companies deliver both purpose and profit*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*. SAGE Publications.
7. Hanlon, A. (2023). AIDA model in digital marketing. *Smart Insights*. Retrieved March 12, 2025, from <https://www.smartinsights.com>
8. Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The commercialization of social media stars: A literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 40(3), 327-375. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925>
9. Jenneboer, S., van der Heijden, H., & Verhagen, T. (2022). The impact of affiliate marketing programs on online consumer purchase behavior. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 52, 101104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2021.101104>
10. Lewis, E. St. Elmo. (1898). Financial advertising. *The Magazine of Wall Street*.
11. Li, J., Wu, Y., & Xu, H. (2021). Youth in the gig economy: Motivations and challenges. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(7), 845-862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1869190>
12. Lim, X. J., Lee, S. H., & Goh, K. H. (2022). Understanding consumer engagement in short-video platforms: The role of entertainment, credibility, and trust. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 58, 45-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2022.03.002>
13. Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
14. Mohd Azul, H., & Nurul Madiha, A. (2017). Digital entrepreneurship among Malaysian students: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 115-122.
15. Montag, C., Yang, H., & Elhai, J. D. (2021). On the psychology of TikTok use: A first glimpse from empirical findings. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.641673>
16. Novita, D., Putra, H., & Sari, Y. (2023). Social media and affiliate marketing: Trends and consumer perspectives. *Journal of Business & Digital Marketing*, 5(2), 89-101. <https://doi.org/10.5555/jbdm.2023.05.89>
17. Ohanian, R. (2020). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
18. Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
19. Udemezue, C. (2024). Students and digital entrepreneurship: A systematic review. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(1), 445-466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11501-4>
20. Wijaya, B. S. (2015). The development of hierarchy of effects model in advertising. *International Research Journal of Business Studies*, 5(1), 73-85. <https://doi.org/10.21632/irjbs.5.1.73-85>