

ANALYZING FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS AFFILIATE MARKETING PROGRAMS. A CASE STUDY IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

With the advancement of social media platforms, affiliate marketing has become a key strategy for the majority of Vietnamese e-commerce companies. It has facilitated potential conditions for promoting advertising performance and customers' purchase intentions between E-commerce businesses when applying affiliate marketing tactics. Can Tho city was chosen for the geographical research with the goal of examining the factors influencing the youth's purchasing intentions via affiliate marketing programs in Vietnam. The experiment was conducted with 324 Can Tho consumers, and the model research was based on the TRA and TAM, previous models. The research results revealed that Perceived Usefulness has the most influence on purchase intention among youth in Can Tho, whereas "perceived risk" has a negative impact on their intentions.

Keywords: affiliate marketing, purchase intention, youth, Can Tho city.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive market conditions, particularly the increasingly fierce competition among all organizations and businesses after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, thanks to the advance of technology, the internet is becoming more vital to everyday life, which has helped marketers take advantage of this and turn marketing into one of the smart tools in business and buying and selling activities. Many new business models, including e-commerce platforms, have emerged as a result of the expansion of the internet and social networking sites. It is clear that the traditional economy is changing to become the digital economy. Changes in consumer behavior have led to fierce marketing and promotion competition among commercial firms. Online shopping has proliferated quickly throughout the world after the COVID-19 outbreak thanks to a "link" that any business can use to succeed through marketing, particularly affiliate marketing (Phan Giang, 2015). Affiliate marketing is considered a critical strategic component for sale promotion (Fox and Wareham, 2010). Recently, 80% of the top 100 online shops outsourced their affiliate programs, indicating that the market penetration of large advertising agencies and affiliate marketing programs are driving the continuously increasing adoption of e-commerce as a driver of potential development (eBay, 2007). Affiliate marketing is a form of advertising the products or services of brands and businesses on digital platforms, typically Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, etc. These platforms allow displaying advertisements for commercial activities, including buying and selling through affiliate links, and are popularly integrated with other e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, et cetera. This innovation could help customers place orders and confirm payments quickly. Additionally, both Gen Z and millennials are recorded as having more than half reporting having shopped on these

platforms (Stephanie Chevalier, 2022). However, in terms of the customer's intention, it is often referred to as the sum of cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward the adoption, et cetera (Dadwa, 2019). A study analyzing the impact on the youth's purchase intent should be conducted in Vietnam to provide more evidence on the factors influencing young consumers' purchase intent.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Literature Review

The concepts of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) are regularly used to explain the behavior of customers when they adopt an IT system, which is consistent with the basic theoretical background in the previous research: Zia Ul Haq (2012), Indrajit Ghosal et al. (2020). However, The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), put forward by Ajzen and Fishbein, was the original source of TAM. TRA was specifically created to forecast behavioral intentions. Davis proposed TAM, which was adapted from TRA and assumes that an individual's behavioral intention is influenced by the above two key variables. The subjective norms were removed from the TAM by Davis because he believed they had little bearing on behavioral intention. A subjective norm or social influence, according to Venkatesh and Morris (2000), is the degree to which a person believes that significant others believe to execute or not execute. A study by Wei et al. (2009) found that both attitude and social influence have a beneficial effect on online purchase intention. Furthermore, subjective norms have a considerable impact on purchase behavior. As a result, this variable is deemed eligible for inclusion in the suggested study model. On the basis of causal factors such as behavior intention, behavior, attitude towards behavior, subjective norm, and compliance, the model predicts behavior. This means that a person's purchase intention in social media settings can be influenced by someone significant to him or her who believes he or she should or should not make the transaction online. Because this study is being conducted in the context of social media and e-commerce platforms, subjective norms will be a significant influencing factor because the social impact among young users of these platforms is quite high. Simultaneously, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness have been found to influence shoppers' purchase intentions (Indrajit Ghosal et al., 2020). Based on both theories, the author believes that when the two theories (TAM and TRA) are combined and certain variables of a certain nature are mentioned, they directly relate to consumers' purchase intentions via Affiliate Marketing programs. Additionally, in this research proposal, we have collected new promotion and barrier factors from Zia Ul Haq (2012), Ducoffe (1996), Dr. Indrajit Ghosal et al. (2021), Nguyen Duy Thanh et al. (2013), and Ngo and Mai (2017) and explored how these factors have impacted customers' attitudes and intentions to make online orders via affiliate links or online advertising.

2.2 Hypotheses Development

TRA-related factors

Attitude is an important aspect in determining behavioral intent in TRA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977). They were defined by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) as "a psychological tendency indicated by judging a specific entity with some degree of favor or disfavor." The attitude's position as a fundamental variable for marketers arises from the fact that it is one of the principal factors that affect the consumer's final decision Çalığışu, F., (2009). Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Attitudes have a positive effect on purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

According to Ajzen (1991), "**social influence**" appears to be a subjective norm as a social effect on whether or not a person should buy something. Friends, relatives, or those who have had experiences with the products or agents can all have an impact. In this hypothesis, it can be understood as the spillover effect, which is a perceived tendency to have positive impressions of a person, company, brand, or product in one field that have a positive effect on one's opinions or feelings after exposure in other fields (Edward Thorndike, 1920). If the viewers of these social influencers are affected by the spillover from these influencers, they will feel that what the influencers say is the most original and accurate and believe in the products and brands they are advertising. From there, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2. Social Influence has a positive effect on the purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

TAM-related factors

Perceived Usefulness is defined here as "the degree of belief that utilizing a technological model increases job performance" (Davis, 1989). Perceived Usefulness (PU) is one of the perceived variables determining an its acceptance (Agag and El-Masry, 2016). Perceived usefulness will make it easier for consumers to increase their work performance, increasing their desire to employ new technologies (Davis, 1989). A system with high perceived usefulness is one for which a user believes in the existence of a positive use-performance relationship. From there, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3. Perceived usefulness has a positive effect on the purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

Perceived Ease of Use defined by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort." If technology is viewed as simple to use, potential users are more likely to accept it (Smith et al., 2013). Much research has been undertaken to demonstrate that Perceived ease of use has a significant impact on the intention to use, either directly or indirectly (Hernandez & Mazzon, 2007). As a result, the availability of perceived ease of use represents potential aspects and has a direct positive impact on consumer purchase intention. Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H4. Perceived ease to use has a positive effect on purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

Other factors applied in previous researches:

Informativeness

Informativeness is defined as the ability of advertising to provide information to consumers about product choices so that they perform the behavior in the most satisfied state (Waldt et al., 2009). The information provided by affiliate marketers are defined by their accuracy, timeliness, and usefulness to consumers (Siau & Shen, 2003). Apart from that, consumers can gain access to the information they need for their current use without having to search and rely on a variety of resources which they can attain through this technology marketing. Therefore, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H5. Informativeness has a positive effect on the purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be defined as an optimistic expectation about the outcome of an event or human behavior, or a consumer's perception of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of advertising and other products and affiliates in general (Bamoriya et al., 2012). In terms of affiliate marketing programs, Trustworthiness refers to the degree of trust consumers have in the messages and is based on trust placed in the provenance of advertisements in general and trust in said affiliates. According to research by Yaaktop et al. (2013) and Chowdhury et al. (2006), the trustworthiness of advertisements and marketing is influenced by other factors, especially the trustworthiness and reputation of the company and advertisers. Therefore, trustworthiness has a direct and positive impact on the purchasing attitude of consumers. Hence, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H6. Trustworthiness has a positive effect on the purchase intention through affiliate marketing intention through affiliate marketing.

Perceived risk

This can be a differentiating factor for the referenced models. All of this points to the fact that, in the context of mobile purchases, the role of elements of promotion (such as trust) and barriers (such as financial risk, social risk, privacy risk, and risky product quality) is critical (Pavlou, 2003). Perceived risk reduces the willingness of consumers to buy goods over the internet (Barnes et al., 2007). A greater perception of risk on the part of consumers' acts as a deterrent to their purchase intentions.

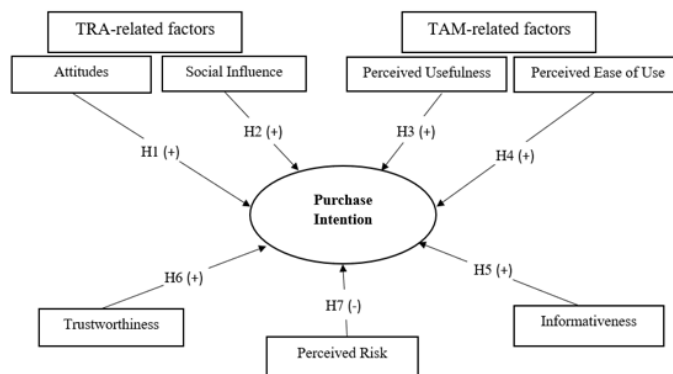


Figure 1: Proposed research model

H7. Perceived risk has a negative effect on the purchase intention through affiliate marketing.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample Selection

The applied survey based on previous research (Zia Ul Haq, 2012; Indrajit Ghosal et al., 2020; Nguyen Duy Thanh et al., 2013; Ngo and Mai, 2017) with 324 respondents living and working in Can Tho city, those ages 18 to 45, are the focus of this study because of their proximity to the new century and their education in an era of digital technology (Kaifi et al., 2012). Technology has had a significant impact on this generation, leading to an increasing openness for non-traditional family structures and values (Andert, 2011). When it comes to cutting-edge technology, they are common for who have access to it quickly and frequently. Therefore, it is believed that this survey will bring more reliable results for the study.

3.2. Estimation Method

For Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

According to Hair et al. (1998) and Hoang Trong and Chu Nguyen Mong Ngoc (2008) from Bollen's study, the sample size must be at least five times the number of variables in the factor analysis (1989). This is an adequate sample size when doing Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Comrey, 1973; Roger, 2006). The sample size can be estimated as follows:

$$N = 5 * m$$

In which,

N: sample size

m: a number of observed variables.

Thus, the amount of sample needed for this thesis as follows:

$$N = 5 * 39 = 195 \text{ (observation)}$$

For Multiple Linear Regression

According to authors Tabacnick and Fidell (1996), the minimum sample size to be collected is calculated by the formula:

$$N = 50 + 8*m$$

In which,

N: sample size

m: number of independent variables of the model

Therefore, using the formula to calculate the minimum number of samples to collect in order to be able to use the multiple linear regression analysis method is as follows:

$$N = 50 + 8* 7= 106 \text{ (observation)}$$

It is now obvious that in order to obtain an adequate sample size for the analysis of this thesis, the author will need to collect **at least 195 observations** to guarantee the reliability and validity of the research model.

A non-probability sampling method was used to collect the data. However, because the focus of this thesis is on youth (Gen Z and Millennials), convenience sampling, defined as a method used by researchers in which the author collects market research data from a readily available pool of answers, is especially pertinent. In many cases, members are readily approachable to be a part of the sample. The empirical data for this thesis was gathered utilizing a questionnaire to be distributed in two forms: 70% online surveys distributed via social media (Facebook, Zalo, Forum) and generated with Google Forms; 30% in-person surveys distributed using the sample questionnaire. The questionnaires will be sent to experts and supervisors before releasing the survey respondents. Based on the proposed research model and some previous survey samples, the questionnaire is divided into 3 main parts:

A screening section: in these questionnaires, single or multiple selection is used to identify populations of frequency in consumers' habits and interests related to the research topic.

A section on demographic data: the questionnaire survey evaluated the demography (personal information) of respondents in order to discover information about age, sex, occupation, and income (Hair, Celsi, Ortinau, and Bush, 2008).

Questions related to variables in the research model: The questionnaire was expected to take roughly 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaires utilized Google Forms to develop a form with an easy-to-use design that can be completed quickly and emailed to respondents. It was also distributed through social networking sites such as Facebook, Zalo, and forum websites. Data can be entered into such forms and saved in a text file.

The results of the questionnaires will be saved directly in a text file after respondents complete the survey. The author will underline that this study is restricted to personal ideas; there are no right or wrong answers, based on the perspectives of survey participants, in order to avoid bias in the answers. Respondents were asked to rate the degree of agreement with the responses on

a 5-point Likert scale. It requires survey respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a statement from the following options: (1) strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) strongly agree.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Empirical Results

The Table 1.1 shows the results of descriptive information of respondents including age, gender, occupation, income, education level.

Table 1: Descriptive Information

Demographic	Notation	Number of observations	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	119	36.7
	Female	205	63.3
Education	Intermediate	11	3.4
	College	8	2.5
	University	283	87.3
	Postgraduate	22	6.8
Occupation	Student	198	61.1
	Freelancer	46	14.2
	Officer	48	14.8
	Cadres, civil servants	24	7.4
	Others	8	2.5
Income	Below 3 million VND	86	26.5
	3 - 5 million VND	122	37.7
	5 – 10 million VND	73	22.5
	Above 10 million VND	43	13.3

Table 1 indicates that 63.3% of respondents are female and 36.7% are male. There is a considerable gender gap in the proportion of male and female respondents in the sample. In terms of education, young consumers with a university level had the highest ranking percentage (87.3%). Graduate degrees rank second, at 6.8%. Obviously, students made up the largest percentage of respondents (61.1%). Following that, the occupational group of officers and freelancers followed with 14.8% and 14.2%, respectively. The respondents who are cadres, civil servants account for 7.4%. The lowest percentage are the other occupations at 2.5%. It is straightforward to understand that students lead in the survey result, while the number of officers and freelancers is quite noticeable in terms of purchasing online through AM. It seems that online shopping is becoming more popular in Can Tho, regardless of education or occupation. The income group from 3 to 5 million VND per month made up the most significant portion of the survey results at 37.7%.

4.2. Situation of Affiliate marketing programs in Can Tho city

The situation study revealed that affiliate marketing programs are quite popular among Gen Z and millennials who are customers in Can Tho City; they are often inclined to use affiliate

marketing programs for searching product information before purchasing, and their buying frequency through AM programs is "quite often (from 2 to 3 times per month)". According to respondents in this survey, Facebook and TikTok now play an important role in developing and supporting affiliate marketing programs, and Shopee is the most common destination connected via these affiliate links on social platforms. The most popular products bought are fashion items and cosmetics. Young consumers prefer to buy through affiliate marketing programs because they believe product and service information is easily accessible and useful. Clearly, some of the propositions offered are not entirely unique when people think it is a safe and easy transaction when they do online shopping through affiliate links.

4.3 Factors influencing the purchase intention through

After removing some inappropriate variables in the Cronbach's Alpha test, the result of exploratory factor analysis elicited seven factors: attitude, social influence, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use, informativeness, trustworthiness, and perceived risk, without any disturbance between the observed variables belonging to the original factors. At a level greater than 0.05, however, there is no significant correlation between the variables attitude and intention. As a result, the model research was influenced by attitude. This result is consistent with previous studies because attitude played a role in mediating the effects of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on purchase intention. This is the reason why the variable "attitude" found in TRA was then removed from TAM since attitude did not function as an important determinant to influence the intention to purchase. It is concluded that the impact of attitude on intentions or behaviors is still dependent on other factors (Zia Ul Haq, 2012).

The variable **Perceived ease of use** has no statistical significance in the regression analysis. In other words, "perceived ease of use" has no impact on the intention to purchase through affiliate marketing programs. The results of this study are different from See et al. (2012), Kian, T. P., et al. (2017), and Indrajit Ghosal et al. (2020). According to Gefen and Straub (2000), one of the main reasons for leaving perceived ease of use out of the current study is that it has an indirect effect on user acceptance via perceived usefulness. According to Davis et al. (1989), the findings revealed that usefulness inspired intention to use, but perceived ease of use had only a minor impact on intention to use. The related studies by Gong et al. (2013), Roca et al. (2009), and Yusniza (2007) found that perceived usefulness is an important determinant of intention to use, but perceived ease of use has an insignificant influence on intention to purchase. This can be explained by the fact that young customers, especially gen Z and the latest millennials, are so familiar with online shopping through marketing channels and social platforms that, through AM programs, everything from movements to the tasks on e-commerce platforms are very easy to perform. Therefore, this variable has an insignificant impact on purchase intent in Can Tho city. Five of the seven initial variables are found to have meaning. Perceived usefulness (PU) is the most influential factor. Next, social influence (SI), informativeness (IM), and trustworthiness (T) were found to generate a positive relationship with the youth's intention to purchase via AM programs in Can Tho city. However, the perceived risk had a negative impact on their purchase intention. The percentage accuracy of

the model is 45%. It means there is a 45% variability of intention to purchase through AM programs, which is explained by independent variables.

Table 2: Factors influencing the purchase intention through

Variable	Symbol	Estimated coefficient	VIF
Social Influence	SI	0.161***	1.088
Perceived Usefulness	PU	0.414***	1.456
Informativeness	IM	0.238***	1.587
Trustworthiness	T	0.137***	1.418
Perceived Risk	PR	-0.133***	1.301
Constant			0.959
Percentage correct (%)			45%
Sig. of the model			0.000

Additionally, the research results show that the perceived usefulness variable has the most significant influence on the intention to purchase via AM programs among Can Tho people. Many customers report that purchasing online via AM programs saves their time and makes ordering more manageable, helping them improve their efficiency and shopping experience. The findings of this study have shown that the ability to perceive usefulness from this marketing has a positive effect and helps customers move faster toward choosing to use a product or service. It demonstrates that if customers have a positive perception, they are engaged in affiliate marketing programs, increasing their chances to choose products through this program when there is one. Therefore, businesses must engage in a variety of activities in order to increase their edge. The business should refresh the system regularly to guarantee that transactions are completed promptly and accurately at a reasonable cost and build up a standard affiliate network, which can increase perceived usefulness for customers and potential customers both before and after purchasing through AM programs.

Informativeness and trustworthiness in the group of promotion factors were also found to have a positive relationship with the intention to purchase via AM programs. However, informativeness affects Can Tho people's purchase intention more than trustworthiness, but the two factors are closely related. This shows that when consumers place trust and confidence in the information that AM programs offer, it can become a condition for businesses to attract customers to use their products and services. Especially in terms of social media in marketing, the information element is influenced by social relations and trust. Most respondents report that affiliate marketing programs provide essential and helpful product information and support them in making purchase decisions. Among them, they believed AM programs were a reference for shopping. It is undeniably true that being informative is the foundation of trust. If AM programs provide truthful and accurate information, customers will surely form their own trust in AM programs. Therefore, advertisers and marketers need to devise sharp strategies to reinforce consumers' trust in the effectiveness that information brings. **This study provided a correlation between intention to shop via AM programs and the variable social influencer (subjective norms of TRA theory) in addition to marketing informativeness.** This seems

to suggest that consumers are easily influenced by someone they value or who is important to them, such as friends, parents, KOLs, influencers, etc. This is because they have faith in and trust in the people they care about and value. In more detail, they tend to believe advice given by people whom they value and who have social influence over them. Thus, businesses and individuals who want to conduct business online via AM programs can consider this variable and utilize its benefits combined with the spillover effect to create practical evidence that effectively serves the main purpose of reinforcing trustworthiness among Can Tho people. Because social influence and trustworthiness have a strong causal relationship. As a result, increasing the value of social influence means increasing the variable trustworthiness.

On the other hand, this study found a negative impact between perceived risk and intention to purchase via AM programs. This is because product quality or product information is still a significant consideration when it comes to Can Tho people's utilization of online shopping. Aside from that, the confidentiality of personal information becomes a minor concern in internet transactions. To capitalize on the research findings, e-commerce applications must clearly provide information on the terms of purchase, online payment, return, and commitment to update the fact; build a security system for customer information, ensuring that transactions are performed correctly; and provide customer care service to ensure that customers can respond and get support from service providers if they encounter difficulties more quickly. To control this activity, it is necessary to strengthen the responsibilities of state management agencies and related organizations. At the same time, amend and supplement legal regulations in the direction of increasing administrative sanctions, increasing sanctions for traders conducting advertising activities, and effectively enforcing the law on consumer protection for those who suffer from advertising influence.

5. CONCLUSION

The study analyzes the influence of factors on youth via affiliate marketing programs, a case study in Viet Nam, and Can Tho as the research area. The experiment was conducted with 324 respondents, whose ages ranged from 18 to 45. Generally, the study has met the research objectives and explored four factors that positively impact the youth purchase intention, including perceived usefulness, social influence, informativeness, and trustworthiness, respectively, while perceived risks have a negative relationship with the intent. In addition to the obtained results, this study has some limitations. This is due to the fact that, despite Can Tho being a generous city with a high population density and a sophisticated information technology infrastructure, this study was based on only 324 observations, and as a result, its generalizability may not be substantial. For better coverage and an accurate depiction of the current state of online shopping via affiliate marketing programs, future studies must collect data from a larger sample size. Additionally, the study should be carried out in other provinces or cities to strengthen the validity of the research model.

Additionally, the model research in this study is formed from the synthesis of factors that have been studied in similar studies before, so in the following studies, it is possible to reuse those models. Additional dimensions for independent variables can be added into the research model

for the purpose of identifying the other dominant factors that affect online purchase intention, such as self-efficacy and perceived costs. It is possible to apply the Ducoffe (1996) model—a research model of the value that online advertising brings and the attitude of consumers instead of applying the TRA and TAM model to refresh and identify other factors affecting purchase intention through AM programs. In this day and age, since e-commerce is a global phenomenon, it is worthwhile for future researchers to investigate factors that affect consumers' online purchase intention through other types of online marketing in general and affiliate marketing in particular. The future research would consider analyzing the impact of affiliate marketing programs on the performance of e-commerce businesses in Vietnam or other provinces and cities.

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